

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Damage VI Roads And You'll Pay For It; New Rivera-O'Reilly Bills Ascertain

VIC News / **Published On October 30, 2015 01:08 PM /**

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ST. CROIX -- Two measures sponsored by Senator Nereida Rivera-O'Reilly places the onus of repairing roads on those who damage them.

The first bill, [31-0157](#), aims to strengthen existing laws that places responsibility of roads damaged by heavy equipment on the owners of said equipment, and shares a \$500 fine between the Virgin Islands Police Department and the Department of Public Works, the idea being to encourage the VIPD to enforce the measure as it too would benefit financially.

Sen. Rivera-O'Reilly used the construction of the Virgin Islands National Guard (VING) complex in Estate Bethlehem as one of the reasons behind the measures. According to the senator, VING hired an off-island contractor to perform work on the complex, and in turn the off-island subcontracted the job to a local company, whose equipment badly damaged the Estate Bethlehem road.

"Just for clarity, the measure that we are dealing with deals uniquely and specifically with heavy equipment," Mrs. O'Reilly said. "To the extent that the person is identified and fined, the police department would issue a citation, then it becomes the duty of Public Works to gather the costs of the repair, and to charge the person accordingly."

Public Works Commissioner Gustav James, present for the hearing held at the Fritz E. Lawaetz Legislative Hall in Frederiksted on Thursday, agreed with the measure, and said whenever he sees heavy equipment on the territory's roads with steel tracks, he deems it a violation of local law -- and it should be enforced by Public Safety.

Rivera-O'Reilly, the main sponsor of [a measure that sets aside some \\$60 million for road repairs](#) on this island, said road repair laws must be enforced so as to limit damage when reconstruction occurs. But Mr. James said his intent is to make sure the roads are built to withstand heavy equipment instead of restricting them altogether.

Rivera-O'Reilly also introduced bill [No. 31-0163](#), another measure dealing with fines for damaged roads in the territory, stating that while the first measure changed the law for damages caused by heavy equipment, 31-0163 deals with damages aside from heavy machinery.

The measures received the Committee on Government Services, Consumer and Veterans Affairs' full approval, with Senators Justin Harrigan, Samuel Sanes, Terrence Nelson and Tregenza Roach voting in the affirmative. Sen. Myron Jackson, Neville James and Janette Millin Young were absent.

Feature Image: Truck carrying backhoe on the Sion Hill road.

Image Credit: VIC.