

March 17, 2014 Beverly Hills Weekly

To the Editor:

On April 1st our City Council will likely decide a future direction for Santa Monica Boulevard. Will they suggest that this key regional corridor continue to serve only motorists? Or should tomorrow's corridor ensure safe passage for everyone, regardless of whether they walk, ride or drive? While the discussion has largely turned on bicycle lanes to date, but the truth is that we all have a stake in making this corridor safer.

Federal and state policies call a street 'complete' when it is designed for safety above all. For example, the 'complete street' would include well-marked crosswalks, striped bicycle lanes and pedestrian 'refuges' on the median for slow walkers. But safety as a priority often goes missing in our talk about transportation. Earlier this month, our councilmembers had many questions about the project but not one asked of our consultants: How can we make this street safest for all users?

It shouldn't fall to bicycle riders to call out unsafe streets. But it's time somebody did. According to state figures, Beverly Hills is among the most dangerous small cities in California for collision injuries. We would expect our Traffic and Parking Commission to address that problem. Indeed commissioners receive a collision injury report from BHPD every month. But they don't ask why we see so many injuries, or why the rate hasn't declined over time. Moreover, two of those commissioners sat on our boulevard Blue-Ribbon Committee and neither talked about safety.

Of course we know not to expect our city officials to raise the issue either. Were our transportation planners to speak up, say, they would remind us that our bike plan envisions a citywide network of streets that would be safe for everyone to walk, ride and drive. In fact, that plan, drafted thirty-five years ago, anticipated our support for multimodal mobility. Yet when adopted (in 1977) it was more ambitious than anything put on the table since...including the Santa Monica Boulevard Blue-Ribbon Committee-recommended bicycle lanes.

Sincerely,

Mark Elliot Beverly Hills

Better Bike