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Date: Thu, 28 Aug 2014 12:28:13 -0700
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Cc: "Jeffrey C. Kolin" jkolin@beverlyhills.org, Aaron Kunz
akunz@beverlyhills.org
Subject: Re: Northside is not the only traffic safety hazard

Thank you very much for your reply, Susan, and for reiterating the steps taken (or not taken as the case may be). I will point out a couple of points I hope are worth considering.

Speed humps may well be the best choice. They may have shown only a decrease of 5mph in a study at one time, but I'm not sure how it's relevant. We can simply take as a case study the prevailing speeds on the 100 block of South Crescent with humps (5-20 mph) and the test-track speeds we live with here on Reeves without them. That's more than 5mph reduction. If the presence of humps on Reeves will force the worst offenders to heed the speed limit, the city has an obligation to deploy humps.

But speed humps need not be the only answer. Back to the case study, both Crescent and Reeves have parking on only one side. Crescent is more narrow than Reeves, and that seems to calm traffic. Traffic studies support it. So perhaps we need to revisit those 'livable streets' proposals? The intervening 20 years have brought new ideas to the task, so maybe it's time to try some. For example, communities across Europe and America deploy all manner of traffic calming measures including chicanes, diverters, tree planters, and even streets striped to simply look more narrow. These measures need not be dismissed out-of-hand, which, from your reply, sounds like you're ready to do.

Traffic and prevailing speeds on my block are certainly much worse than they were 20 years ago - even two years ago. Perhaps local opposition might melt away if the city frames the effort in terms of safety.

But we need not travel far to see good planning ideas in action. Next door we see Santa Monica undertaking an expansive street safety program, from crosswalk upgrades to bicycle lanes (and many more) the city moves ahead on planning for safer mobility. You see it for

yourself since you live there. And Aaron lives in West Hollywood, a small city comparable to Beverly Hills. WeHo has not only undertaken an extensive, community-centered multimodal mobility study (unlike BH) but is also installing a variety of traffic calming measures. Soon, City of LA will embarrass Beverly Hills by implementing bicycle lanes only on its *side* of San Vicente and Robertson.

Heck, we can look within our city for good examples to replicate. Take triangle improvements: let's roll out continental-style striping where faded crosswalks put pedestrians in harms' way. Also, we take other measures to keep some pedestrians safe: of course we stripe school crossings yellow (per the law) to increase awareness; but we also lower speed limits near schools and focus traffic enforcement there because we want to create a safe environment for kids. Why not take that care at other intersections?*

Missing from our streets, and from City Hall policymaking generally, however, is a broader discussion about our duty to protect those who walk and ride. TPC is silent on the problem despite having data in hand. The transportation division has a responsibility to plan for safe streets - and to represent the need to policymakers. Isn't it your department's responsibility to ensure that public safety as a highest value permeates our plans, programs, and even staff reports & recommendations to TPC or Council? We have a deputy director and a transportation planner on staff (not to mention consultants on call) to handle it, right?

Working for safer streets in Beverly Hills for four years, I've learned that our transportation division is an obstacle to be overcome. (I'm not being cheeky; I believe that our transportation officials don't view safety as a professional responsibility.) City of Los Angeles though, however imperfect, has taken the reins: DOT presses for traffic-calming measures in local communities because they've been reminded that IT IS THEIR RESPONSIBILITY to make streets safe. Road diets come easily to no community, so praise be to the DOT for working to get parochial interests to sign on.

In Beverly Hills, you seem to look to the community to bootstrap safety measures in lieu of official action. But solving the city's street safety problems should not fall on our residents. What is the City Manager's position on this? Should my neighbors stand on the corner with a clicker and clipboard to tally the year-over-year increase in vehicular traffic on Reeves? (The situation instead begs a traffic study.)

Should we squat mid- block with a \$100 radar gun to clock speeders? (We already have officers trained to use calibrated equipment for the purpose.) Need we create a Kickstarter campaign to fund street safety improvements? That would take our city's predilection for outsourcing to a farcical extreme, but it would make for media fodder. As for Reeves, we bear the consequences of the city's inaction, as well as the broader negative impacts from the adjacent commercial district. Those Crescent residents don't put up with block-circlers looking for parking; or post-dinner hot-rodders; or, lately, competitive drag-racers. You didn't address the South Beverly district negative impacts. Doesn't the city have an obligation to address them?*

And you know, speed humps may not be the best answer to those traffic-related negative impacts. But if it is the uniquely best solution, must I prevail on my neighbors to do the city's work? Here's a section of the muni code that I haven't heard you or Aaron yet mention:

7-3-509: CITY COUNCIL AUTHORITY: The provisions of this article shall not be construed to limit in any manner the city council's power to order the installation or removal of speed humps without complying with the provisions of this article. (Ord. 93-0-2163, eff. 2-26-1993)

According to the ordinance, it need not fall on me or my neighbors; that's why we have a transportation planner, right? We need only to identify the issue. Of course it would help if we had support to quantify the problem. But the transportation division seems not inclined to take its measure.

I need not remind anyone in City Hall that few Loma Vista residents today would compliment City Hall for prudently waiting out their safety complaints until a couple of fatal collisions made it too difficult to wait any more. Must it come to that here too?

Respectfully,
Mark Elliot

*I recall our planning commissioners, out for a Western Gateway field visit, having skittle across a Wilshire crosswalk to avoid being struck by oncoming traffic. A better crosswalk would have helped them get across safely by signaling to drivers that our city values pedestrian safety over traffic flow - a claim we can't make today, IMO.

**As I recall, my household has not been noticed on any discretionary permit application that could add more traffic to our street. There are probably 25% more restaurant seats on South Beverly Drive than a decade ago (and without an increase in public parking capacity). Indeed I saw a rooftop lunchroom application go to Council without anyone on my block getting noticed. And I know that our revised noticing guidelines won't help us when, say, a property owner applies for a generous outdoor dining area permit (an administrative approval no less). Yet we live with the consequences: more traffic, faster traffic, more dangerous traffic, and no city action.