



June 2, 2015

Mr. Lester J. Friedman, Chair
Mr. Jake Manaster, Vice Chair
Traffic & Parking Commission
455 North Rexford Dr.
Beverly Hills, CA 90210

Dear Chair Friedman and commissioners:

I thank you for talking about bike-involved collisions during last month's meeting. It's crucial that we recognize our relatively high incidence of collision injuries if we are to make our streets safe for all travelers. And given the commission's remit to advise on "ways and means to improve general traffic conditions in the city," I'd argue that there is indeed a safety role for this commission as the city embarks on the USDOT 'Mayor's Challenge.' (Recall that former Mayor Bosse signed us on for that safe streets campaign.)

I probably don't have to underscore the challenge: Beverly Hills ranks near the bottom among small-cities in California for our elevated rate of collision injuries. Here just about every week (on average) someone traveling by bicycle reports a crash injury. The rate is comparable for people who simply walk our streets. As for auto occupants in Beverly Hills collisions, they report a new injury to police on average nearly every day.

The Mayor's Challenge is intended to reduce the harm done to vulnerable road users (like bicycle riders) who bear a disproportionate burden of unsafe streets nationwide. It's no different in Beverly Hills: though bike riders comprise less than 1% of our road traffic we account for fully 12% of reported crash injuries in Beverly Hills last year (48 sufficiently serious to report to police). That is, we're represented in police injury reports at *more than twelve times* the rate of auto occupants involved in crashes.

More distressing, we're not seeing a positive trend: monthly traffic report data show that last year's bike-involved collision injuries was a seven-year high - and more than any year since 2008. In fact, last year's bike-involved collision injuries bested our annual bike injury average by 28% since that year. The data also show that the proportion of injured riders (relative to all other traffic injuries) last year compared to year 2008 was 66% higher. Today, those who choose to ride a bicycle are we're even *more likely* than ever to be hurt while riding.

Indeed in Beverly Hills we've hardly more more safe in traffic no matter our chosen mode. The data last year show an increase of 5% (from 2008) for auto-occupant injuries. Motorcyclist injuries held steady. Only pedestrians fared marginally better: just 3% fewer people were injured crossing our streets on foot than in 2008.

Better Bike

Mark Elliot, Organizer
mark.elliott@betterbike.org

June 2, 2015
To: Traffic & Parking Commission
Re: Collision injuries & citation trends

Our record on bicycle safety is particularly concerning now that our city is moving ahead on bicycle sharing. Bike availability is likely to encourage more people to take to the saddle (including tourists). Aren't we putting them at risk? We could mitigate the harm by enforcing our traffic laws, but even with stepped up efforts lately we're hardly meeting the challenge.

Just consider how steeply traffic law enforcement has declined over time. Between 2009 (the year outgoing City Manager Jeff Kolin gained appointment) and last year, signed traffic citations decreased by 50%. So did the rate of issued speed violation citations. Signal violations suffered a whopping 80% decrease over that time. Under Mr. Kolin's management, it appears, our traffic division was simply eviscerated. Hasn't diminished enforcement *put us all at greater risk* of injury?

Enforcement aside, other more tangible factors are at play. Our streets are not well-maintained: crosswalks are badly faded and our most dangerous intersections go for decades without significant improvement. But are our streets are hardly engineered for safety in the first place; unlike other cities we have deployed few mode-separated traffic controls (like bicycle lanes) and painted few shared-lane markings (aka: 'sharrows').

We should use those controls and also stripe dangerous intersections (like Wilshire-NSMB) with broken guide lines to direct riders (and drivers) safely through them. We should specify construction mitigation measures that take into account alternative-transportation road users. That can include at a minimum signs that apprise riders (and drivers) that those on a bicycle are entitled to use the full lane under the law. That's particularly important where travel corridors are narrowed (like near the Hilton project, and where there is no such mitigation today).

At this upcoming meeting you will discuss North Santa Monica Boulevard mitigation measures. Please suggest to the transportation division (and our consultants) that safe passage for bicycle riders is a priority. Both City of Los Angeles and City of Santa Monica already deploy rider-friendly mitigation (like signage and sharrows) in construction areas. Can't Beverly Hills use these devices too?

And where transportation policy is concerned, this commission needs to do more. As mentioned at the last meeting, commissioners could breathe new life into the moribund bicycle ad hoc committee. Please direct the two commissioners sitting on it to prepare to undertake the long-delayed updated to our 1977 bicycle plan (which I believe is still in effect though it is only an appendix).

As for pedestrian safety, improvements like curb extensions and pedestrian 'refuges' make crossing safer for all of us. So why don't we deploy these devices more frequently? Outside of the business triangle, for example, few commercial districts have them. In fact, federal and state DOTs recommend deploying such 'complete streets' measures, yet they – and the principles behind them - find no place in our transportation

Better Bike

Mark Elliot, Organizer
mark.elliott@betterbike.org

June 2, 2015
To: Traffic & Parking Commission
Re: Collision injuries & citation trends

planning toolbox in Beverly Hills. No ‘complete streets’ specification ever makes its way into a project bid package. Commissioners should talk to our traffic division and Department of Public Works about considering ‘complete streets’ when we make any significant transportation decision.

What I’m suggesting here is nothing that this commission doesn’t already know. Indeed every month the commission receives a traffic report, and over time the data aggregate into a fine-grained picture of largely avoidable harm. These reports also provide an opportunity for commissioners to ask our staff how ‘complete streets’ improvements might make our streets more safe; and they allow you to ask the police department how we might begin to turn the tide on the conspicuous, elevated rates of collision injuries we suffer across Beverly Hills.

We can no longer afford to put the safety of our more vulnerable road users – or indeed any traveler – at unnecessary risk. I hope that the new commission will take a renewed interest in our high rate of collision injuries and generally work to elevate our commitment to safe and complete streets. If that work can’t begin with this commission, will it ever find a place in our programs and policies?

Sincerely,



nb: Should the commission be interested in the aggregated data that underlay these findings, as well as related charts that will illustrate these trends, I will be happy to present them.

Better Bike
Mark Elliot, Organizer
mark.elliott@betterbike.org