

PennDOT's Roads Are the City's Most Dangerous for Bicyclists

For Immediate Release

Pittsburgh, PA - Within only eight days of the reopening of West Carson St. in the West End neighborhood of Pittsburgh, tragedy struck. A driver hit and killed a bicyclist, Dennis Flanagan. We are deeply saddened by this crash, and our thoughts go out to his friends and family.

While details of the crash are unclear, what is clear is that PennDOT designed the new roadway with only one user in mind: drivers. Even the brand new sidewalk is not wide enough for two people in wheelchairs to pass one another safely. Their retrograde design placed a high speed road between City neighborhoods, dictating to those who have access to a car to drive as if it were a highway, while telling bicycle riders to fend for their lives.

Despite numerous calls over the past several years to install bike lanes from BikePGH, residents, City of Pittsburgh Planners, Councilwoman Kail-Smith, the McKees Rocks CDC, and even then Mayor-elect Bill Peduto, PennDOT chose to prioritize the swift movement of automobile traffic, over the safety of everyone.

"Very simply, the designs will do nothing to curb the illegal speeding in an already fast moving corridor, and we fear it will do little if anything to reduce crashes," said Scott Bricker, Executive Director of BikePGH in a 2011 letter to PennDOT.

Ironically, one reason that West Carson St was under construction was because it was one of the most dangerous roads in the state. PennDOT, however, chose to ignore a collective request of safety for all users, and instead pushed forward a design that has proven deadly within a week.

The bulk of recent bicyclist fatalities in and around the City have occurred on PennDOT roads, most recently with Susan Hicks on Forbes Ave in Oakland, Michael McDermott on Ardmore Blvd., Wilkinsburg, James Price on Penn Ave, Point Breeze, Anthony Green on Penn Ave, Wilkinsburg, and Emily Jancart on Rt 51, Moon Twp.

Within the City (and nation) crashes are on the rise. Between 2011 and 2015, the Pittsburgh went from experiencing 4,213 crashes to 4,421 crashes happening within its borders. Bicyclists comprise only about 1.5 percent of all crashes, yet account for 4 percent of the fatalities. It's even worse for pedestrians, who collectively account for 6 percent of all crashes, yet comprise 26 percent of total fatalities.

"Roadway designs like West Carson Street only exacerbate the problem. The best way to reduce death and injury for everyone is to design roads to slow down vehicles and make room

for bicyclists and pedestrians,” says Scott Bricker, “If PennDOT wants to save lives then they must prioritize our most vulnerable users first and the overall safety of the road will follow.”

Actions

Tonight, Wednesday, August 31, 2016, PennDOT, CMU, OTMA will be hosting a public meeting on a roadway redesign of Forbes Avenue, from Beeler St to S Craig St. It is imperative that PennDOT connects these bike lanes to the City’s existing bike lanes on Bigelow Blvd, during their planned Forbes Ave Betterment Project slated for 2017-2018. The Betterment Project will repave Forbes Ave, from the Birmingham Bridge to Beeler St, and include safety upgrades. As of this writing, there are no plans to connect to the existing bike lanes, or take the bike infrastructure through to Central Oakland and westward into Uptown and Downtown.

Protest/Bike Ride Tonight, After Meeting - Wed. Aug 31, at approximately 6:30pm. Meet: 5034 Forbes Avenue, Cohon University Center. There will be a bike ride, meeting directly after the public meeting, that will tour the Fifth/Forbes Corridor through Oakland.

Remember, Protest, Ride for Dennis Flanagan - Tues. Sept 6, 7pm-9pm. Meet: S. 27th and Tunnel Blvd. We will ride the West Carson St corridor.

BikePGH is transforming our streets and communities into vibrant, healthy places by making them safe and accessible for everyone to bike and walk.

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