



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Tony Avella

# DOT Doesn't Care About Safety

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By: Tony Avella

In last week's Queens Chronicle, a Fresh Meadows resident wrote a well-intentioned op-ed supporting the recently installed Northern Boulevard bike lane and the need for safety along that stretch of road. The op-ed, however, seemed to ignore the fact that DOT has consistently ignored community requests for more traffic controls to improve safety for motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists.

Our streets are less safe because of their inaction.

The author of the op-ed shared the heartbreaking story of how their family lost their young daughter to a reckless driver four years ago. Throughout my time in elected office, I have heard from countless families who have suffered through horrible tragedies at the hands of reckless drivers. Hearing their stories would break anyone's heart. That is exactly why I am so adamant that DOT listen to the community and install a bike lane that actually protects people.

DOT's handling of the Northern Boulevard bike lane has proven that when it comes to safety and listening to the community they simply do not care. If DOT cared about

safety they would devote resources to installing more “All-Way” stops and traffic lights that actually help to control traffic. If they cared about safety, they would listen to community members who beg for speed bumps on their street. By DOT’s own admission, it now takes a year to evaluate a speed bump request.

Yet they were able to rush through a massive bike lane project that the community has come out against in force on a major road. The hypocrisy is astounding.

DOT’s actions—or lack thereof—are of a city agency who cares more about a press release that brags about meeting bike lane quotas.

The way DOT has ignored Community Board 11’s plan for a bike lane highlights their record of valuing the input of special interest groups over the input of any community member. CB 11 is looking to install a bike lane that takes cyclists off a very heavily trafficked truck route and puts them onto an extended sidewalk that interacts with motor vehicles as little as possible. DOT, however, has tried its best to paint the community board’s plan as irresponsible, despite the fact that it is clearly the safer approach. Unfortunately, there are groups who take DOT’s word as Gospel and believe every word they say. DOT claims that the Community Board plan would take 5 years and 10 million dollars. That estimation is absurd.

I applaud the community’s engagement on this issue and encourage more discourse in local politics for it is the only way to truly have a government of, for, and by the people. And I respectfully ask those that support the DOT’s plan to take a look at DOT’s record on safety issues and realize that they don’t have our best interests in mind; but seem to be more interested in playing politics with people’s lives.

*Tony Avella is the State Senator for New York’s 11<sup>th</sup> Senatorial District, which includes most of Northeast Queens.*