

Dear PBOT Director Williams, Commissioner Mapps, and other Council members,

On Saturday, July 15, 2023, one of our beloved local librarians, Jeanie Diaz, was killed by a driver while waiting for the bus on César Chávez Blvd, directly across from the Belmont Public Library where she worked.

Jeanie was the 8th victim of traffic violence in just 7 days, in the deadliest month of traffic violence ever, during the deadliest 3 years of traffic violence for our city in living memory.

Jeanie's death, like all traffic deaths, is a tragedy. But it is a tragedy that should have been prevented by better street design. This area of César Chávez, adjacent to a public library and active commercial area, has 4 driving lanes, narrow sidewalks, and a 30mph speed limit that is regularly exceeded. We know roads like this are not just dangerous – they are time bombs, and the question of serious injuries and death is not if, but when.

In addition to this danger, this stretch of César Chávez is a source of significant delays for TriMet's Line 75, the 4th most popular bus route in the city. Driving and traffic conditions on César Chávez led to PBOT designating it to receive **Rose Lanes** (dedicated transit/turn lanes). The current plan calls for Rose Lanes between I-84 to the north and Stark St to the south, a few blocks north of where Jeanie was killed.

It's difficult to avoid the conclusion that Jeanie would be alive today if this area of César Chávez had a Rose Lane. Rose Lanes are a type of 'Road Diet', which is a federally recognized way of improving street safety. The impaired driver lost control of their car when they changed lanes. If César Chávez were 2 lanes, rather than 4, this lane change would not have happened. Portland's list of traffic deaths reflects this, with very few deaths on 2 lane roads.

The Sunnyside, Richmond, and Mount Tabor Neighborhood Associations call on PBOT to strengthen the safety of all road users by taking the following actions immediately:

- 1) Amend the current César Chávez/Line 75 Rose Lane plan by extending the southern boundary from Stark St, to Division St or Powell Blvd. By PBOT's own measurements,

Line 75 experiences significant delays in this area. The unsafe pedestrian and transit conditions persist south as well. Deaths are just as likely at any of these bus stops, as evidenced by the crumpled bus stop bench at Lincoln and César Chávez. Our neighbors in these areas deserve safe bus stops and sidewalks, too.

2) Expedite the painting of the Line 75 Rose Lanes. Rose Lanes require no hard infrastructure, and are some of the cheapest projects to implement, with a per-mile cost of about \$200,000. It may be convenient to point to PBOT's ongoing financial woes as a reason to do nothing, but such an attitude is the reason we have dual crises in budget and human safety in the first place. These sorts of low-cost, high-benefit projects are absolutely essential to pursue and prioritize.

We cannot delay these improvements. We do not need to wait for millions of dollars in funding and grants, and years of traffic studies, to make a serious difference. It is a statistical certainty that more people will be killed on roads like César Chávez Blvd. On September 11, 2021, Austin Boyd, just 23 years old, was killed crossing César Chávez at Clinton St, less than a mile from where Jeanie was killed. While we were writing this letter, another pedestrian was killed, this time on Glisan St, with similar conditions to Jeanie's death: 4 driving lanes, 30 mph, and little sidewalk buffer. The cost of PBOT's inaction is human lives.

Sincerely,

Robert Galanakis, Mt Tabor NA, Board member (rob.galanakis@gmail.com)

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