

2019: The most Traffic fatalities in Portland since 1997, why it's not a surprise, and what can be done.

****(red indicates a poster)

Speaker: Lee Cowles

I was here last June to discuss concerns and point out red flags about Vision Zero's NE 102nd project. I also related concerns from seven major community groups, churches, and schools, with no apparent result. Because I care deeply for Parkrose, and Portland, I'm back.

Vision Zero was adopted by the City Council in 2015, with plans for Portland's thirty most accident-prone arterioles.

****Vision Zero has two goals:

- 1) Eliminate all traffic fatalities
- 2) Eliminate all traffic serious injuries

----traffic fatalities 2016 through 2019

2016	42	55% DUII
2017	47	+ 765 Serious Injuries
2018	34	52% DUII
2019	52	

While there is naturally some variance each year, note that 2019 is, unfortunately, the highest total in over twenty years, despite Vision Zero's many completed projects and changes. Regarding this extremely alarming trend, in August, 2019, Transportation Comm. Eudaly, said,

*****"It's not just frustrating, it's deeply troubling. I've been asking myself, 'What are we doing wrong, and what can we do faster?'"*

We're going to answer her question today, and I'm going to use the NE 102nd project as an example of the problem that has led to these fatalities.

ODOT's Crash Analysis Division keeps remarkably detailed stats on accidents on every street, and I'm quoting from their report for NE 102nd, 2005 through 2016, plus PBOT through 2019.

****Since 2005, there have been three fatalities on NE 102nd. All have been due to DUII—alcohol.

Vision Zero's 102nd project construction was begun in July, 2019. Here are the changes that were and will be made to accomplish the two goals to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries:

****(poster showing lane reductions, speed limit changes, crosswalks, bus stopping in only traffic lane, bike lanes) written at the top---PBOT states: no enforcement of any kind!

Last June, Comm. Hardesty mentioned that "this is my neighborhood," so I assume she's somewhat familiar with NE 102nd. Perhaps she could help me. Commissioner, considering the changes made on NE 102nd in regards to Vision Zero eliminating fatalities, do you now feel 100% secure that there will be NO more DUII drivers on NE 102nd?

Vision Zero's plans completely ignored the causes of past fatalities on NE 102nd, so it's no surprise that their changes will have no effect on future fatalities of the same cause. This is a common element of PBOT and Vision Zero's projects, and that's why fatalities are not decreasing, and why they're actually increasing.

To check their history of successes, I asked PBOT manager Leor Schweitzer, which cities have completed Vision Zero changes.

****"I would not say that Vision Zero has been completed in any cities. Roadway deaths are continuing to occur around the world."

In 2015 this Council approved Vision Zero, even though Vision Zero had no cities with completed project, and still doesn't! There was and is no way to judge Vision Zero's effectiveness based on their work around the country!

NYC has had Vision Zero for five years, yet their fatalities have not appreciably changed, for the same reason as NE 102nd...the causes were not identified and solutions made based on those causes.

For example, per Vision Zero's national web site, in NYC in 2018, 56% of bicycle fatalities involve a truck, so, future plans will be made to resolve that problem. That's a stat that should have been identified the very first year, and changes planned to prevent such combination fatalities. But, it wasn't, and it's taken five years for Vision Zero to even acknowledge that cause of fatalities, let alone make plans to eliminate it.

We're here today because we are very concerned for our city. Homelessness is a problem. Housing is a problem. But with this problem, Portlanders are dying! That cannot be ignored.

The next speaker will discuss Vision Zero's second charge, "Eliminate serious injuries," and discuss why the consequences of projects already in place have resulted in widespread negative attitudes in drivers. Our final speaker will discuss a proven solution, and make recommendations.

Speaker: Sue O'Neale

(poster is still up----****Vision Zero's two goals: 1) Eliminate traffic fatalities 2) Eliminate serious injuries)

I'll discuss Vision Zero's second goal: "Eliminate serious injuries", and discuss consequences of Vision Zero projects. Again, we'll use the NE 102nd project as an example for those projects completed and planned, since they have the same problem.

****NE 102nd Serious Injuries

- 2 DUII
- 2 Speeding
- 4 Turning onto or off of 102nd
- 2 Rear-end
- 2 Side-swipe trying to go around another vehicle

Note that two thirds of the causes of serious injuries involve congestion, accidents that occur with more than one vehicle involved, usually involving poor judgement due to any number of reasons.

A multitude of studies nationwide conclude that, by far and away, the best method to decrease speeding, and also DUII drivers, is enforcement. Again, PBOT has made it clear that there will be no enforcement of any type on 102nd.

Regarding accidents of congestion, accounting for 67% of serious injuries on 102nd, back to the August 2019 interview, Comm. Eudaly said,

*"We have a lot of frustration born out of **heavy congestion**. We have a **lack of enforcement** which makes people think they can take more risks on the road. We can't engineer our way out of reckless behavior and human error. We need to do more, and we need to do it faster."*

****ODOT's Crash Analysis Supervisor has confirmed that increased congestion results in increased crashes:

*"To my knowledge, ODOT has not published a publication that states that our "increased congestion leads to increased crashes. I have read some of the publications you have quoted and this is the general belief, it is **pretty firmly held in the safety community**."*

Again, here are the changes made to NE 102nd. ****NE 102nd changes

Comm. Hardesty, if we may use you again?

Seeing the changes, and knowing the causes of serious accidents, and considering that there is no planned enforcement of any kind, do you feel secure that serious injury accidents from the causes of DUII, speeding, and congestion have been eliminated?

Clearly, as with fatalities, the causes of serious injuries have not been addressed, so changes to stop them have not been instigated.

Answering a question about NE102nd being a six month “pilot” project, PBOT’s Leor Schweitzer said the following, which betrays the wide gap between Vision Zero’s goals and their project plans.

****“As you mentioned, the pilot period is not long enough to accurately measure the impact on crashes. The pilot is instead intended to test two things:
---How does that project impact **fatal and serious injury crash risk factors**, such as speed along NE 102nd Avenue, and
undesirable consequences of the project, such as increased congestion or traffic diverting onto side streets.”

As we just described, the factors leading to fatal and serious injuries---DUII, speeding, and congestion---were NOT addressed in the project changes. Regarding “undesirable consequences”...

****“Undesirable consequences”

---PBOT survey, after project completion: 560 respondents 62% disapproved of the changes

----Multiple media articles report a common, negative, public attitude

-----Increased congestion could lead to increased crashes.

****photo-poster of drivers intentionally driving in the wrong direction in order to avoid a crosswalk barrier and long line of vehicles

Yet, in their “update” meetings for 102nd, Vision Zero will not be honoring the negative public attitude, there will be no enforcement of any type, and PBOT plans to go ahead with further changes that will slow traffic flow even more, resulting in even more congestion.

****Results of NE 102nd Project

- 1) Fatalities and serious injuries will not decrease because the causes were not identified, so the project changes will not help.
- 2) Useless changes are magnified by their \$ costs
- 3) Public frustration and anger have increased, and PBOT has ignored such (most likely voters)
- 4) Congestion accidents may increase.

Speaker: Leila Cowles

Right now, Vision Zero, PBOT, and ultimately the City Council, are the bad guys in the eyes of the public, for the record number of fatalities. But, you can still come out as the heroes.

****The only way to eliminate, or even reduce, fatalities and serious injuries is to identify the causes, and make specific plans to overcome those causes. Vision Zero and PBOT have failed to do so.

The solution is clear, since PBOT and Vision Zero haven't made "Eliminating Fatalities" their first priority.

In the Portland area, there are highly trained, very experienced, specialists in Transportation Safety analysis, *independent* of Vision Zero and PBOT.

This would be like someone similar to Robert King, retired, 30-year Police Captain, who now serves the City Council as a Public Safety consultant.

One such professional Transportation Safety expert, Chris Chemlow, recently discussed the NE 102nd project changes and the reason that they will fail to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries.

*****I have reviewed the crash data and the NE 102nd improvement project identified on the PBOT Vision Zero website. Your concerns are well-founded, particularly as they relate to serious injury crashes.*

These improvements are less effective at reducing/eliminating excessive speeding and alcohol-related crashes. While most corridor crashes (turning, angle, sideswipe, rear-end) occur during congested periods and have less severity, most speeding and alcohol crashes do not occur during these periods.

The two elements of truly improving corridor safety are missing - increased enforcement and increased societal accountability."

We suggest that the Council should realize that Vision Zero has NOT completed their projects for any U.S. city, and Vision Zero has not realized their two promised goals. Their projects for Portland have failed in those goals, have generally made traffic problems worse, and resulted in a great deal of negative public response.

Solution. *****Stop Vision Zero projects until an **independent** expert can analyze each project in relation to eliminating fatalities and serious injuries, and make appropriate changes.*

People can accept and avoid frustration and anger due to increased congestion, increased travel time, increased minor accidents, etc., as long as there's a very, very positive result--eliminating fatalities and serious injuries. When those two goals aren't even remotely realized, Comm. Eudaly's earlier quote occurs,

*****"We have a lot of frustration born out of heavy congestion. We have a lack of enforcement which makes people think they can take more risks on the road.*

Because Vision Zero's projects involve Portland's thirty major arterioles and many side streets, it will eventually touch everyone. As the 62% disapproval score after the 102nd project shows, the public isn't happy.

We've not even touched on wasted money, which is and will be significant.

To help educate Portland about Vision Zero's stated goals for making changes, and the City Council's power to do something, we've made some plans to help.

A summary of this presentation has been prepared, and emailed to:

**** 95 Neighborhood Associations,
36 Business Associations,
37 School Boards,
27 Media, Civic Groups, and major Religious groups.

Included in the email is a request to educate their communities, and, kindly, but firmly, request the City Council to hire an independent expert to analyze each Vision Zero Project and report solutions that will be the best to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries.

And, if the Council will not act, they should consider making a change in the City Council at the ballot box.

This is about Portlanders actually losing their lives in traffic accidents, and listening to what the public is saying.

From: cowles499@juno.com
To: [Moore-Love, Karla](#)
Subject: Fw: request for city council time
Date: Friday, November 1, 2019 12:05:11 AM

Dear Karla,

I would like to speak for three minutes before the Portland City Council, in conjunction requests from Sue O'Neale and Leila May Cowles. That is, if possible, please schedule all three of us in succession, with me going first.

Also, because we'll be discussing issues on NE 102nd, a street apparently in Comm. Hardesty's home area, please schedule us on a day when both Comm. Hardesty and Comm. Eudaly are expected to be in attendance.

The topic will be regarding a quote from Comm. Eudaly regarding an increase in Portland traffic fatalities in the first half of 2019, "It's deeply troubling. I've been asking myself, 'What are we doing wrong, and what can we do faster?'"

Thank you for your patience and help.

Sincerely,

Lee Cowles

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