



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael Gianaris

Senator Gianaris Writes in STREETS BLOG: Astoria Pols Propose 31st Ave. Protected Bike Lane, Other Changes After Tragedies

MICHAEL GIANARIS September 12, 2023

| ISSUE: **STREET SAFETY, 31ST AVENUE, OPEN STREETS, NYC DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**



Queens has witnessed a surge in traffic violence this year — there were 40 traffic fatalities in the first six months of 2023, a Vision Zero-era record. Additionally, all five child fatalities in New York City in the first half of this year occurred in Queens. Our city has routinely failed to take the necessary steps to save lives, and we see the ramifications in the communities we represent.

Tamara Chuchi Kao was biking home on Jan. 5 of this year when the driver of a cement truck struck and killed her at the intersection of 24th Avenue and 29th Street, neither of which has a protected bike lane. One month later, seven-year-old Dolma Naadhun was crossing the street when she was killed by a driver in Astoria. Then, in April, 16-year-old Jayden McLaurin was killed in a hit-and-run in Astoria while biking on a street with an unprotected bike lane.

No one should have to worry that a loved one won't make it home from a walk or bike ride, yet far too many families in Queens this year have had to live their worst fears. This is despite the fact that experts have shown for years that interventions like bike lanes, raised crosswalks, daylighting, and mid-block traffic calming save lives.

Ninety percent of New York City's cyclist fatalities occur on streets without bike lanes. Protected bike lanes not only help cyclists — **all road users** see a decrease in crashes on streets that have them. Daylighting, the practice of removing the parking spots closest to an intersection to increase visibility, also saves lives. Universal daylighting has led to cities like **Hoboken** achieving and maintaining zero traffic deaths over multiple years, something NYC has never been close to accomplishing. Other interventions like chicanes and curb extensions force drivers to slow down and become more aware of their surroundings, leading to decreased crashes.

That's why we are [partnering with the DOT to host a traffic safety workshop](#) this Thursday, Sept. 14. This workshop will focus on potential pedestrian, cycling and public space enhancements for 31st Avenue between Vernon Boulevard and 51st Street. For months, we have been engaging with parents, teachers, and neighbors visiting the 31st Avenue open street about the urgent need for protected bike lanes both on 31st Avenue, and an additional north-south bike lane. In response, our offices have advocated for protected bike lanes and additional street safety measures in press conferences, letters, and meetings.

Astorians envision a 31st Avenue that contains a fully protected bike lane, multiple car-free zones, and traffic calming measures along the length of the corridor. In order to make it happen, we must raise our voices together.

Time and time again, Astorians have shown that organized communities get what they demand. Street safety organizers in Astoria have won fights like this before, such as the Crescent Street bike lane and daylighting at Newtown Road and 45th Street, the intersection where Dolma Naadhum was killed.

This Thursday's [workshop](#) is an opportunity for members of the community to collectively demand better protections for cyclists and pedestrians. The meeting is the first of many steps we're taking as elected officials who represent this community to deliver low-cost, life-saving protections in Astoria. The [NYC streets plan](#) requires the city to build 50 miles of new lanes in 2023. Nearly halfway through the year, the city [has only completed ten miles](#).

One death due to traffic violence is one too many. We have already seen three such deaths in Astoria in the first quarter of 2023.

Join us on Sept. 14.

Sen. Michael Gianaris serves as Deputy Majority Leader of the State Senate and represents western Queens; Sen. Kristen Gonzalez is a Democratic Socialist representing Senate District-59 spanning parts of Brooklyn, Queens, and Manhattan; Assembly Member Zohran Mamdani is a Democratic Socialist representing Astoria and Long Island City; Council Member Tiffany Cabán is a Democratic Socialist representing Astoria, Rikers Island, and parts of East Elmhurst, Jackson Heights, and Woodside. Assembly Member Jessica González-Rojas (Democrat/Working Families Party) represents areas of Astoria, Corona, East Elmhurst, Jackson Heights, and Woodside.