

# 2023 TRAILNET STREET STORIES FULL QUOTES

# STL STREET STORIES

I moved very close to the intersection of South Jefferson Avenue & Utah Street in May of 2020, and ever since there has been at least 1 nearly fatal (at least by the time ambulances left) accident at that intersection every year since, in addition to multiple serious accidents. During at least 3 of these incidents my neighbors and I became the first responders to these accidents as ambulance, fire and police were slow to come and to act once they arrived. During one of these accidents in October 31, 2020 one car with 4 passengers went through the window facade of Guardian Angel's building @ 3300 S Jefferson. After nearly 30 minutes of EMS/Fire not arriving after multiple calls & attempting to comfort & assure the screaming injured passengers in the vehicle my neighbors and I helped the injured passengers who could be moved & had been begging for help - to get out of the car.

One of the passengers could not be removed from the car due to damage to the car trapping her inside & when EMS/Fire did come, they had to get the jaws of life to pry the car open to get her out of the vehicle. My neighbors and I had been holding her hand comforting her and giving her updates on what was happening, as she was sobbing and saying, "I'm going to die" or asking if she was going to die over and over again. Eventually EMS/fire made us move away from the vehicle and no EMS/fire or police spoke to her or told her what was happening and her screams grew louder and more desperate not having anyone speak to or assure her. She was finally put in ambulance about an hour later and taken to a hospital and I was never able to find out if she made it.

In another incident in 2022 there was a multiple car (4 or 5) accident at Jefferson and Utah. Again there was a vehicle with at multiple passengers. One of the passengers had sustained an extremely serious head injury, after initially getting out of the car with her friends she went unconscious and her friends had to lay her out on the sidewalk, despite trying not to move someone who had sustained a head injury. She was bleeding profusely from her skull and I and neighbors found ourselves once again helping the injured passengers. I brought her friend who was a nurse some towels to try and stop some of the bleeding. After an hour and a half and multiple calls, no ambulance, fire or police responded.

Police finally arrived but an ambulance took over 2 hours and every call to share how urgent her situation was, was met with no updates and no ambulance. She was finally loaded into an ambulance and headed for a hospital after nearly 3 hours of laying on the ground bleeding out from her head. Again, I was never able to find out if she lived. When Police arrived, they said that none of the cameras in the area work, and they wouldn't have any idea what actually happened in the accident.

After this incident and talking to multiple people who were part of the accident, it sounded as if there may in fact be an issue with the timing of the traffic light, as everyone involved that I spoke to said they had a green light. I again attempted to reach out to the traffic division and my alderman through neighborhood organization and contacts and got no response. On Nov 15, 2020 my neighbor was struck by a car in a hit and run accident while he was crossing the street on foot. There was yet another multiple car accident that shut down all lanes of traffic there last month.

South Jefferson Avenue is in serious need of a Road diet from Chouteau to I-55. I would love to see protected parking lanes, protected bike lanes (with connectivity across the city, to bus & Metrolink transportation and to the existing greenways), street/right of way narrowing, dedicated turn lanes, protected pedestrian crossings, middle islands, etc. This could be a thriving walkable community if we were to slow down traffic, increase pedestrian walkability, increase driver safety & make it a more friendly environment for all of its users. I do not want to see any more people dying or seriously injured from traffic accidents because our city fails to invest in essential infrastructure & prioritizes the flow of traffic over the safety and lives of it's residents. South Jefferson needs a road diet to keep motorists, pedestrians and neighbors safe.

- Erica, Benton Park West

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*I am a neighbor and freelancer in Gravois Park. I don't own a car and travel primarily by bicycle, foot, and public transit. I'm privileged to live fairly closely to most amenities and work, and when I need to travel further than six or seven miles I can usually get a ride with a colleague or utilize my scheduling flexibility to haul it with a bike-bus combination.*

*I feel least safe when biking or walking across the major thoroughfares like South Jefferson and Gravois. On my walks I like to cross at S. Jefferson and Potomac Street (I notice others who shop at the Save A Lot on S. Jefferson frequently try to cross here as well), but there is no crosswalk marked, so sometimes I spend several minutes waiting for cars to go by. I've nearly been hit a few times, even when being extremely cautious, as a result of drivers not having their headlights on at night, or not using a blinker, or using the opposite blinker from the direction they're turning.*

*On bike, I almost never feel safe. The exception would be when I'm biking within Tower Grove Park or Forest Park. I've been hit on North Grand (I'm done biking on Grand until there is protected bike infrastructure), and I've been targeted on my own relatively quiet street by a driver in an SUV who sped up, drove at me, and forced me off the road. I constantly feel like motorists feel that I'm competing with them, though I'm just using the shared lane. It's common to be cut off at intersections by drivers who are turning, ignoring the fact that I have the right of way when going straight through a green light.*

*It's common to be nearly hit by drivers running red lights. In terms of specific intersections, most of the intersections that feel the most dangerous are on Gravois, because they are spacious and so many roads come together, which increases the amount of automobile traffic moving in a multitude of different directions. At these intersections you can only do so much to keep an eye on all the directions of traffic; as a result there is an element of just "hoping for the best," when deciding to cross here. It becomes even worse at intersections like Potomac and Gravois because the topography conceals on coming traffic, often moving very fast, at the next intersection at Grand.*

*Large, lifted trucks and SUVs make me feel unsafe. I don't care if they are being driven by a safe driver; they are too big and I know how deadly they are compared to smaller vehicles, and their presence on the roads brings up the anxiety to another level. Speaking more generally, I feel like we've lost any respite from cars. The cars are bigger and louder, and all day I hear them zooming by outside my house. They even flood the parks with noise pollution.*

*Things that would make me feel safer include more frequent transit, for one. Biking is not my first choice when it comes to commuting, but I end up doing it because it often saves me close to 45 mins compared to bus routes, even if it's just a few miles. That said, with an interconnected system of cycle tracks I would probably elect to bike even more willingly. But I'd still like the choice of catching a bus quickly when it is 100 degrees outside or raining. I'd feel safer if there were less cars, smaller cars, and slower cars, side-by-side with practical bike and public transit options. True safety will emerge when the colloquialism "oh, you have to have a car to get around St. Louis" is no longer a colloquialism.*

**- Christian, Gravois Park**

*Potholes are obviously the second biggest threat to cyclists, after cars. The unmaintained bases of wayward concrete balls on Compton, whose metal rods have not fully been removed make me feel unsafe. The faded bike lane and crosswalk lines make me feel unsafe. The way cars pull through crosswalks, blocking paths for pedestrians needs to be addressed. People not stopping on red to turn right needs to be addressed. It'd be great if we could get crosswalks that have a pedestrian-only signal cycle, where NO cars have greens (thinking Magnolia and Grand). The bus stops need to be lit (for the safety of riders but also so the drivers can see people waiting for the buses).*

**- Anonymous Resident**

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*Biking in St. Louis is painfully relative. There are people who bike regularly for fun that claim biking in St. Louis is safe, drivers are decent, and roads and paths are well maintained. These cyclists wisely avoid major arteries like Kingshighway, Grand, Gravois, Natural Bridge, etc. Because they don't bike for a commute or to make a living, it is easy to minimize the dangerous condition of St. Louis roads; biking isn't linked to your livelihood. When you only bike for fun, to relax, when you are free and not stressed and on a schedule, and only when the weather is nice, the overall experience is completely different from the daily commuter. Roads are exponentially worse when wet and icy (duh) because of their poor condition and poor behavior by drivers.*

*In respect to drivers, many of their smallest actions (or inactions) regularly imperil cyclists. See, the burden of safety is unfortunately always placed on the cyclist. The risk of death or serious injury is insanely higher for the biker than the driver. A driver doesn't need to pay as close attention to everything going on around their car. I say "around their car" rather than "around them" intentionally because the external threats to drivers, in a large part, are actually material threats to their car. The car has been meticulously designed to protect the users. Drivers and their company are so safe, they now don't need to pay nearly the same amount of attention to their driving. "What's the worst that can happen? Fender-bender? I'm driving a well insured tank."*

*Cyclists, on the other hand, have only their skill, reflexes, and public trust separating them from serious injury or death. I don't say this to dissuade cycling in the city; I'm a regular cyclist, and frankly I really enjoy biking on the streets of St. Louis. But the cyclist has to take in much more information as they are traveling on the streets than drivers do. They have to be acutely alert to the smallest of environmental changes because their lives depend on it. Cyclist must be aware of: holes and divots in the pavement, debris in the pavement, street lighting, pedestrians, opening doors on parked cars, pets/wild animals, turn signals, sounds of alarms or approaching vehicles, sidewalk or trail condition, hanging branches, standing water of unknown depth.*

*Cyclists rely on consensus and the status quo. We need to rely on the street condition being well enough maintained that the puddle is not hiding a pothole. We need to trust that drivers will follow traffic laws, because mistakes are costly. That's why little things like drivers not indicating a turn are frustrating and deadly. Cyclists are tasked with taking in environmental information, and they have to trust that information or act with careful caution. When we see a car at a stop sign and no turn signal is blinking, we should be able to trust that this driver will be going straight, not turning.*

*Yet the careful cyclist knows we can't trust the driver. Many "good" drivers forgo the blinker if they don't see any cars around them. I know because I have done the same thing. What arrogance! What blindness to other street users! It is central to the issue here. Drivers, in large part, not only think roads are only for them, they are inadvertently blinded to other road uses. The little things matter. The more drivers can consider potential present users, the safer everybody will be. It can be very hard to see and near impossible to hear a cyclist when you are in a car. Simply sharing the burden of safety more equally between drivers, cyclist, and pedestrians would go a long way. Promoting the notion that streets actually are for ALL will save lives.*

*-Street lighting is unequal in the City. Some of us have no choice but to bike at night, and poorly lit streets hide potholes, debris, glass, etc that could injure me or by bike. My personal frustration: Magnolia along the north side of Tower Grove. Poor pavement condition, and terrible lighting at night.*

*-I stopped bike commuting for six months after two high profile cyclist deaths on Grand Ave. I was truly afraid. I had to sacrifice my ideals (sustainability, healthy lifestyle) because the risk of injury or death frightened me. That is unfair. Thank goodness I actually have the privilege and means to switch back to car commuting.*

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*-The way the City funds sidewalk replacement is antiquated and racist/classist. Only those with the means are getting repaved sidewalks. People using mobility devices tend to be lower income. Shouldn't they get preference, when the sidewalk is their safest way to get around town? The 50/50 match program should probably be abolished outright, and a study of how other cities fund maintenance should be conducted.*

*-On any street not owned by MoDOT, the city needs to get more creative. Stop the studies. Stop the extensive design review. Honestly, stop with the excessive community engagement (which often is used as an excuse for moving slowly or eliminating progressive ideas). Try stuff out. Make a protected bike lane. Get adventurous. People are already pissed, so you don't have much to use. You will NEVER please drivers completely, so stop trying!*

*-I would love to see more cycle tracks installed on city streets that replace parking. Cars will find and fill any amount of parking spaces, you can never build enough. Let's take some back and see the benefits.*

*-More raised intersections! Make the drivers slow down and think at intersections. The easier it is, the less you have to think, the faster people will go and take turns.*

*-More public art, painted crosswalks, and street trees near the road! Visual stimulants are distracting in the right way. Wide, barren roads induce speeding.*

*- James, Southwest Garden*

*Our streets are unsafe for drivers and pedestrians alike with so many holes, bumps, and uneven surfaces. Whether it's City or County, the streets are a mess and I find it more and more difficult to drive without hitting a pothole. I have seen cars swerve to avoid these holes and almost hit other cars. I have seen cars almost hit pedestrians after losing control from bouncing out of these holes.*

*- Katie, Boulevard Heights*

*Potholes, cracked, sunken or elevated sidewalks are amongst the main issues. The biggest problem for me is the large number of careless drivers in the City. South Grand is very dangerous between the pavement, potholes and drivers.*

*- Anonymous Resident*

*As a pedestrian or biker, it is clear to see most of the City was not designed with you in mind. Non-vehicular infrastructure is piecemeal at best and prohibited at worst.*

*- Anonymous Resident*

*Can someone please explain why virtually not a single sidewalk is illuminated by street lights, but virtually everything for cars is illuminated? I do not feel comfortable walking at night simply because there is frequently no light unless I walk in the middle of the street with car traffic. I see all the light poles that do a really good job giving the cars light and I sometimes think (maybe naively) that if the lights were just turned 90 degrees then perhaps the sidewalks would be a little less dark at night.*

*There was an instance where I was walking across Kingshighway, the light was red and the walk signal was on. A car in the right turn lane came in going very fast, and almost hit me. I wish that drivers would pay more attention to their surroundings. If I had not been paying attention to the cars around me, I could have been hit, even though I had the right-of-way. I would say most busy main streets are unsafe to cross, since drivers are going at such high speeds.*

*- Anonymous Resident*

*I was an avid rider, now I rarely do because I am scared of drivers and can't trust I can take the whole family on a bike ride around town.*

*- Anonymous Resident*

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I live one block from my kid's elementary school but I would never let them walk to school without me because cars fly through my neighborhood. We live on a street that people use as a cut-through to get to Interstate 44. Rather than traveling up and around using the main arterial, they save a minute and speed down our street. Walking a couple feet from the street to take my kids to school is unnerving.

Cars are large, and make a lot of street noise. It's clear the speeders are the ones cutting through the neighborhood. I wish we could put a bollard on each street to prevent people from cutting through. Yeah drivers would hate it, and it would add a minute or two to my commute if I had to leave the neighborhood the opposite direction, but boy would it make our lives better and I could let my kids walk to school. I recently turned 40 so I'm trying to stay fit so I live longer, so I bought an ebike to help with the hills. I've lost 14 pounds already. Just the act of going out and moving around even with the assistance burns a lot of calories, and the assistance up big hills makes it a lot of fun. I'm lucky to be able to easily get to Deer Creek Greenway and ride up to Brentwood Park pretty safely, or down to Grant's Trail relatively safely.

The problem of course with riding bikes is drivers. If they're behind you they will try to pass you. It's very scary to have a car behind you. I could be going the speed limit on my street (20 during the school day) and a car will overtake me even if I'm holding the lane. They just have to get in front of a bike. We need protected bike lanes. It's the only way to stay safe outside of a car and prevents people from parking in them. Paint is not enough. All crosswalks should be raised crosswalks. Make the roads narrower so drivers feel uncomfortable and slow down. Design safe streets. Don't let cars go everywhere, block them from the shorter route to encourage walking, biking, scooters, anything that doesn't destroy our environment and kill us. Drivers will never be ok with this, we're going to have to make them mad in order to make progress.

- Anonymous Resident

I wish that every bus stop was covered. There have been times myself or others have had to stand in the rain, snow, etc. to wait for the bus and no one wants to show up wet or freezing cold to their destination - work, school, the grocery store, etc. It does not make taking public transit desirable. Also, the time and the lengths it takes to get places using public transit make it not worth it most of the time for me. I would need to go to a place ten minutes from my house, but I'd have to take two or three buses/MetroLink to get there and it would take an hour. Why would I do that? Most of the time then I would not be able to go. Or would have to pay \$20 for an Uber one way.

I absolutely hate it when people are driving and using their phone to text, scroll, watch videos, etc. It is so dangerous and drivers think they have it under control, when that is not true. I know a law was passed recently that you can get a ticket for using your phone while driving but I'm not sure how much that will curb the use unless people actually routinely get ticketed for that. I think further distance of cars from those walking on the sidewalk would make me feel safer. I'm not sure how that would be accomplished but whenever I'm walking beside a main road, it feels scary as the cars are flying down the road like 3 feet away.

- Anonymous Resident

I've commuted to work on bike for a couple years now, and have had my share of issues with drivers being aggressive - there have been two separate occasions where drivers have thrown stuff out their windows at me and I've been honked at and tailgated while riding multiple times as well.

- Anonymous Resident

Kingshighway is probably the place I feel the least safe, with the many lanes, high speeds, potholes that encourage swerving.

- Anonymous Resident

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St. Louis has a great opportunity to be a bike friendly city, but the driver's reckless behavior endangers both cyclists and pedestrians. The city's layout and geography are a great foundation to be one of the best bike friendly cities in the US, but the infrastructure and drivers are a huge detriment to achieving this.

One of the longest stretches of bike lanes runs on Gravois Ave, which (in theory or on paper) seems to be a convenient bike route, except that Gravois is one of the most dangerous streets to be on as a biker, pedestrian, or a driver. The drivers on Gravois blatantly blow through red lights and stop signs - which is a death sentence for pedestrians and bikers (and drivers, really). Additionally, because Gravois runs at an angle, many of the intersections are 6-way intersections with angles that are challenging to see other cars, let alone bikers or pedestrians. The bike lane, while marked, offers no physical barrier.

St Louis drivers have no regard for the bike lane markers, driving in bike lanes, passing cars on the right side using the bike lane, parking in the bike lane, driving through the bike lane to take turns at intersections. They show no comprehension of what a bike lane is or how to act around it. This painted lane offers no protection to bikers. The driving on Gravois is dangerous for drivers in cars and I generally avoid driving on it in my car. I would NEVER bike on that road despite the fact that there is technically a painted lane for bikes.

With cars blowing through stop signs and lights, it is also unsafe to cross streets like Gravois, Grand, even Arsenal. I have almost been hit just crossing those roads - not even biking in the lanes - at crosswalks too! At Grand and Arsenal, I have to make direct eye contact with drivers before crossing because so many drivers run the lights or turn when there is a walk sign on for pedestrians.

On Arsenal, I crossed the street at a stop sign and crosswalk and a car blew through the stop sign and almost hit me. When I threw up my hands because they almost hit me, running the stop sign, they rolled their window down and yelled at me from up the street.

Not only was I almost hit by their car, but when I reacted to that, they threatened me. As a pedestrian and biker, I am always in a defensive position, but when I have the right of way and someone almost hits me and then threatens me verbally, it does not give me any confidence of being safe.

I've also lived in the Skinker-Debaliviere area, north of Forest Park. The park is a refuge for biking and walking with traffic free zones. Being able to walk and bike there without cars was a large part of why I moved to this area of the city. I've also almost been hit by cars crossing (in crosswalks) in the park - the drivers still think they have the right of way there.

However, getting to the park is another story. Crossing Forest Park Parkway (both at Union and Debaliviere) can be very dangerous. At the Union intersection, there are multiple lanes intersecting, a long way to cross the street and poor visibility. There are always cars running red lights at this light.

At Debaliviere and Forest Park Pkwy, the walk sign is not long enough to cross over. I am a normal speed walker and I can only get halfway across before the do not cross starts flashing. Every single day, there are cars speeding (driving south on DeBaliviere turning east on Forest Park Pkwy) to turn left and they have no regard for the pedestrians and bikers crossing. I've had multiple cars almost hit me. The worst is walking south toward the park because I know they are speeding up from behind me to try to take a quick left to make the light and I can't see them because they are over my right shoulder behind me. Even though I still have the right of way when the crosswalk starts flashing, cars will blow through there (keep it mind it starts flashing when you're only halfway across). Drivers have blown through there, turning left, while I'm on the sidewalk and have yelled AT ME because they think they have the right of way when the crosswalk is flashing.

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Many St Louis drivers blatantly ignore traffic laws - speeding, blowing through red lights, and ignoring stop signs. I see it every single day in all the neighborhoods I've lived in. It is dangerous to other drivers, but it's a death sentence to pedestrians and cyclists. The city has a lot of potential to be a great biking city, but without SAFE connected corridors, free from traffic violence, it will never get there.

Lastly, the Metrolink consistently offers me the safest route. While I don't always feel safe alone or at night on the Metrolink, I feel much safer than driving around the city. The city roads have a lot of potholes, steel plates, sinkholes that make it unsafe for my vehicle and increase my risk of crashing. When it rains, ALL the painted lines disappear and you cannot tell where one lane ends and the other begins (horrible for drivers and bikers). I dread having to drive anywhere in St Louis City.

When I moved here, I learned that every light there will be someone who runs the red - I know count to ten and make sure cross traffic is fully stopped before I venture into any intersection, whether I'm on foot, bike, or in my car. Not only do I fear injury from unsafe streets and traffic violence, but I worry that if I do get into a crash, fender bender, or my car gets hit that I will be vulnerable to carjacking, violent encounters with other drivers, or hit and run.

I love biking around St. Louis because the geography is great for it and being able to get to work, go out to meet friends, or check out cool neighborhoods by bike is a joy! But drivers make it very dangerous. I still do it, but I calculate my routes very carefully, I always take traffic-free trails (if possible), and I always assume that every driver is going to choose the dumbest and more dangerous decision and I bike (and walk and drive) defensively knowing that.

- Anonymous Resident

I was standing on the sidewalk at Lindell and Euclid waiting to cross the street. A fast-moving car came over the curb onto the sidewalk, exactly where I was standing. Fortunately I saw it and ran out of the way. The car crashed into a large concrete planter or it would have gone through the window of the restaurant on that corner. I called 911 and nothing happened.

- Anonymous Resident

I live just off Olive and am legally blind. Crossing Olive is no longer safe, too many people run the light and as much as we have complained and even had the police watch the intersection we are always told there is not a problem. Olive is a racetrack. Sometimes it is actually safer to walk in the road than risk falling, especially since I have had two knee replacements and a shoulder replacement.

- Anonymous Resident

My 4th grade walks and bikes to North Glendale Elementary. He reports that cars frequently fly through the crosswalk, not stopping for students, at Albert and Kirkham and speed near the school.

- Anonymous Resident

# STL STREET STORIES

*I rode an electric scooter to work for six months. Almost my entire route was along Gravois, and I just stayed in the bike lane and obeyed traffic laws. Everybody I told was concerned that I was doing something very dangerous. I tried and failed to convince a coworker who lived nearby to join me. Most of the time it was fun and preferable to driving my car just 3 miles and bothering with downtown parking.*

*Unfortunately, one time I angered a dangerously speeding (maybe hit 60 or 70mph) driver by trying to make a left turn. It was like 830 on a week night, and there were no other cars until they suddenly raced up behind me. I got out of their way, but I made the mistake of telling them off for being reckless. They threw trash at me, then followed me and attempted to intentionally door me. I still didn't back down, so they got out of their car and literally picked me up and threw me in the middle of California Ave. Luckily, I was unhurt. The police were absolutely no help. They at least took a report, but clearly didn't care and put no effort into finding the guy.*

*I continued commuting by scooter until my scooter was destroyed by a man clearly under the influence who turned right into me when I had the green arrow at the corner of Clark and Tucker. I jumped clear, but my scooter was crushed. The intoxicated man just sat in the car saying random things and then drove off onto the highway. The cops said there was nothing for them to report, as my scooter was not a motor vehicle, and I was not injured. I was late to work and my will to use alternative transportation was as wrecked as my scooter.*

*Many car accidents happened at the corner of Arsenal and Oregon which is literally the location of a school and senior center, which led to speed bumps being installed on Oregon, but that doesn't do much to help senior citizens who still have to scurry across Arsenal from the Five Star Senior Center parking lot to the front door. Kids at Cabrini are still carefully supervised and shepherded across Oregon by crossing guards. Huge, overbuilt roads like Gravois make drivers feel entitled to drive dangerously.*

*The burden should be on traffic engineers to justify why an intersection doesn't need improved safety, and not for safety advocates to prove safe routes are needed by showing how much blood has been shed at a particular site. For every crash, there are dozens of close calls and hundreds of area residents who have almost unanimously judge the existing infrastructure to be too unsafe to navigate outside a car. It impoverishes our communities to treat safe, comfortable transportation infrastructure as a luxury or engineering impossibility. The city budget needs to reflect that police only sweep up the mess after traffic violence; the way to prevent it is by investing in safe infrastructure.*

*Curb bump outs and protected bike lanes should be the design standard on any road that isn't purely low speed residential. Piecemeal safety projects leave safety gaps everywhere in the transportation network, and the fact that they are special projects means they don't get maintained long-term and are always at risk of being undone by the carelessness or complete lack of city maintenance.*

*Long after the hands-free cell phone law was passed, I saw a LEO driving while facetimeing with a phone in his hand on Tucker. The lack of driver education in Missouri means drivers don't know the law and feel no responsibility to keep other more vulnerable road users safe. Law enforcement are themselves extremely hazardous drivers, so it makes no sense to expect them to effectively enforce laws and model conscientious driving.*

*Laws/policies that don't recognize an incident unless a motor vehicle is damaged ignore the financial value and transportation importance of all other transportation modes and fail to hold bad drivers accountable. The lives of all road users are needlessly jeopardized by the indifference of both transportation engineers and law enforcement. Until roadway design is reformed system-wide (not just with speed bumps, but with other traffic-calming and some aggressive roadway diets) and the police both learn and enforce safe driving practices, avoidable crashes will continue to happen and alternative modes of transportation will not be viable options.*

*- Erin, Benton Park West*