

Pacific & Brooks; Residents, VNC and City work to Improve Traffic Safety

The Venice Neighborhood Council has been working on the problem of traffic accidents at the intersection of Brooks and Pacific through its Neighborhood Committee (led by VNC Vice-President Marc Saltzberg) and its Public Safety Committee (led by VNC Board Member Daffodil Tyminski and Nick Hippisley-Coxe). We've asked the City for accident and traffic information (speed, turns, volume, etc.) and the data is starting to trickle in.

Residents recognized this problem years ago. Cars keep hitting cars at this location. Explanations for the large number of incidents vary from excessive speed (both north and south) on Pacific; to right-turns-on-red from Brooks onto Pacific (drivers who brave this maneuver do so without being able to see oncoming traffic on Pacific due to obstructed site lines); to the lack of left turn lanes on Pacific (creating hazardous conditions for left turners coming from the opposite direction who turn without seeing traffic approaching them because visibility is blocked); to the impatience of drivers on Brooks who try to jump the light; and so on.

The problem is there are far more explanations than data. That's because the City does not keep records of accidents unless personal injury is involved or a citation issued. With fragmentary data, the traffic engineers of the Department of Transportation are unable to pinpoint causes and address them.

Residents finally contacted the VNC to see if we could help. In a meeting held last month between the VNC and DOT, the engineers have decided to:

1. Repaint the cross-walk and Pacific and Brooks
2. Bring the cross-walk at Sunset and Pacific up to code
3. Increase the length of the traffic light shrouds (so drivers don't try to "game" the lights by anticipating signal changes)
4. Investigate changes to signal timing (to protect vehicles turning left from Pacific onto Brooks when the light changes)

Most residents consider these changes to be preliminary; they may help ease the situation (they certainly can't hurt), but more will need to be done. That's why the VNC's Neighborhood and Public Safety committees are working with residents to get their input on specific changes that could be implemented in the near term to help alleviate the risk of future accidents.

Changes specified by residents would be requested by way of petitions to the City Council's District 11 Office. From there they would need to be approved by the full City Council, requiring DOT to implement the additional changes (so despite the term "near term" used above, we're talking about months to get additional changes to occur).

The VNC needs your help; we need to know about any accidents you observe; we need pictures and eyewitness accounts of any incidents - we need your opinion about what happened and why. This information is critical; it will supplement the official reports going to DOT and it will be far timelier than the data DOT gets now.

Please email Marc.Saltzberg@VeniceNC.org or Daffodil.Tyminski@VeniceNC.org and let us know what you see.