

Comments of Mike Wilson  
Before the Berkeley City Council—March 15, 2016

Mayor Bates, Councilmembers, my name is Mike Wilson, and I'm Meg Schwarzman's husband. As you know, Meg was nearly killed when she was run over on her bike on February 2<sup>nd</sup> and dragged under a car across the intersection of Fulton and Bancroft.

When Berkeley firefighters lifted the car off of her, she was bleeding internally from a serious laceration to her liver. She was unresponsive from blood loss when she arrived at Highland Hospital. You can imagine the strain on our family as Meg struggled to live through the first 12 hours, with a bleeding liver, 20 fractured ribs, a smashed pelvis, two partially collapsed lungs, and complex facial fractures.

This is the human experience of a collision between a car and a cyclist. The same can be said for pedestrians. A crash like this changes life irreparably—not only for victims and their families, but for drivers as well.

Thanks to quick and expert action by Berkeley Fire and outstanding care by the Highland trauma team, Meg survived. Now, more than anything, she wants to turn this awful experience into something positive. Because the fact is, this was by no means an accident.

Yes, the driver in this case made poor decisions and was impaired, and that contributed to the severity of the collision. But the *origins* of this collision lie in *choices* made by traffic planning managers in the *design* of this busy intersection.

The design terminates the bike lane suddenly, dropping cyclists into the midst of fast-moving traffic, greatly increasing the probability of a serious collision. And we've seen it: a cyclist has been hit at this intersection almost every year for over a decade (10 collisions between 2001–2014). Solutions must focus on physical design changes in our streets and intersections to separate cars from bicyclists and pedestrians.

We know how to do this. Meg and I used to live on the Channing St. bike boulevard in central Berkeley. A parade of bikes flows each morning up Channing toward downtown and the UC campus. This section of the Channing Bicycle Boulevard is engineered with forced turns and other features that make it feel reasonably safe to cyclists. It carries little vehicle traffic. And people show up and ride on it with their families every day.

I'm proud of Berkeley's bike boulevards and our early investments in infrastructure to support cycling as a viable means of transportation. But we've fallen way behind. Let's aim for zero collisions, rather than holding our collective breath for the next collision that will bring this matter back to the Council.

Let's learn from what happened here and implement the long-overdue improvements in bicycle and pedestrian safety that are already embodied in Berkeley's bicycle plan and Downtown plan. Meg and I will thank you, as will the thousands of cyclists and pedestrians who rely on your decisions to keep them and their families safe.