

Is Hylan Boulevard the new “Boulevard of Death”?

Introduction

Staten Island stands apart from the rest of New York City when it comes to transportation. The borough’s high car ownership rates and streetscapes designed to prioritize high speeds and automobile travel over all other modes of transportation have resulted in a culture of car-dependence on the Island. Today, the makeup of Staten Island’s street users is changing and recent statistics reveal that **traffic crashes are affecting pedestrians and cyclists disproportionately**.

Since the beginning of 2014, **12 people have been killed in traffic on Hylan Boulevard** - the 14-mile long corridor that connects Northeastern Staten Island to the Southwestern portion of the borough - with 9 of those fatalities taking place just this year. The boulevard is a major thoroughfare for Island residents, serving as both a commercial hub and a heavily trafficked roadway that connects some of the borough’s most populated neighborhoods.

This most recent spate of fatal pedestrian and cyclist crashes led us to consider: how do crash rates on Hylan Boulevard stack up to comparable arterial corridors elsewhere, on streets like Queens Boulevard, a road so deadly it’s often referred to as the “Boulevard of Death”? A recent Transportation Alternatives analysis conducted using NYC DOT crash data¹ from the beginning of 2012 through the end of October 2015 demonstrated that **injury and fatality rates for all traffic crashes on Hylan Boulevard greatly exceeded rates on Queens Boulevard**. Queens Boulevard was recently named a “Vision Zero Great Street” and received dedicated funding for a complete street redesign to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists with infrastructure such as a protected bike lane, shortened crossing distances and pedestrian islands. While Hylan Boulevard shares many of the dangerous design characteristics the QB redesign is intended to address, the NYC Department of Transportation has largely ignored the corridor.

Implementing complete street redesigns on Hylan Boulevard, with designated space for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists alike would reduce speeding and improve safety along the corridor. Complete street design changes have reduced fatalities by 34 percent in New York, twice the rate of improvement at locations where there were no design changes². **While the city’s Staten Island Borough Pedestrian Safety Action Plan identifies Hylan Boulevard as a problem corridor within its report, no plans or proposals for a redesign of the street have been implemented.**

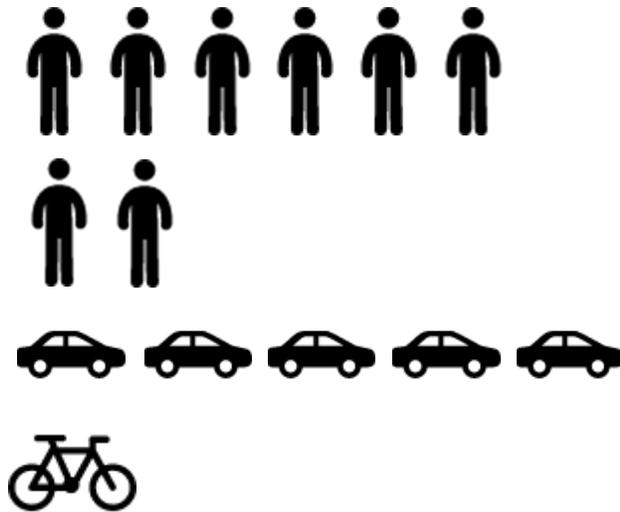
The recent spike in pedestrian and cyclist fatalities on Hylan Boulevard has revealed the need for a series of street design improvements on the corridor. Every year since 2013, more pedestrians have been killed along Hylan Boulevard than motorists despite high rates of car use within the borough. The fatal collisions detailed above underscore two particular street design issues currently plaguing Hylan Boulevard: a severe lack of pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure and the need to design along existing desire lines – which are the paths that pedestrians and cyclists desire to use, rather than where traffic patterns direct them.

¹ New York City Department of Transportation. *Vision Zero View*. Retrieved electronically from: <http://www.nycvzv.info/>

² City of New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, *Vision Zero Action Plan*, 2014

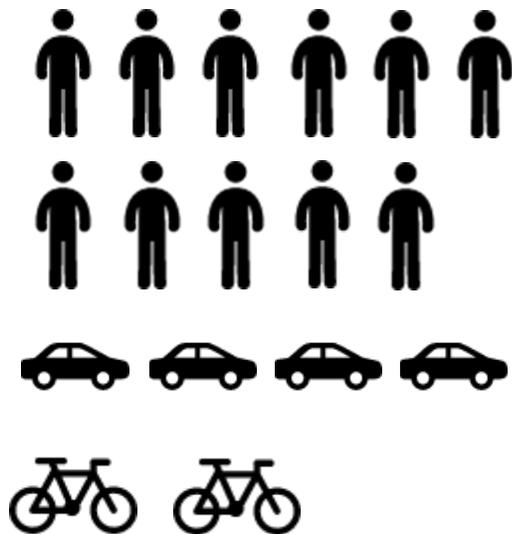
The borough's relatively low fatality totals compared to the rest of NYC, the Island's dominant car culture and suburban feel combined with political indifference to the fate of pedestrians or cyclists has resulted in little attention to the traffic crash epidemic that is plaguing the people that live and work along the heavily-travelled corridors of Staten Island, like Hylan Boulevard.

Since January 2012, 14 people have been killed on Hylan Boulevard:



473,279
residents

Since January 2012, 17 people have been killed on Queens Boulevard:



2,321,580
residents

Accounting for the borough's low population density, Hylan Boulevard's fatality rate is:

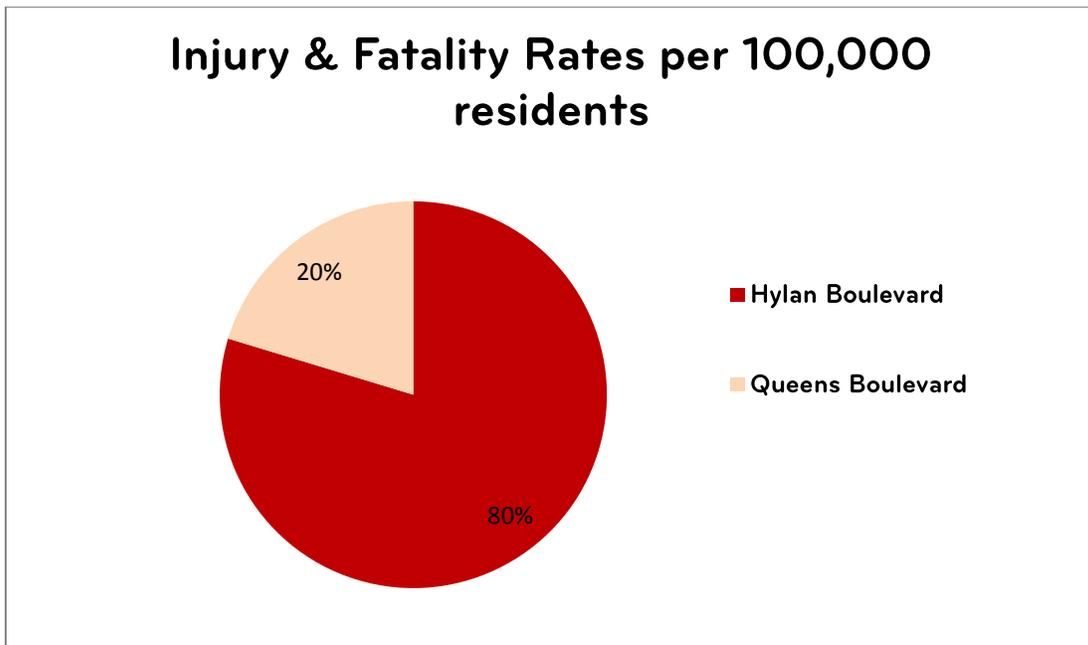


**2.95 fatalities per
100,000 residents**

Accounting for the comparatively high population density in Queens, Queens Boulevard's fatality rate is:



**0.73 fatalities per
100,000 residents**



4X

Injury and fatality rates on Hylan Boulevard are nearly quadruple the rates on Queens Boulevard.

40%

Percent of pedestrians killed while crossing the street mid-block on Hylan Boulevard in 2015.

33%

Percent of pedestrians killed while crossing mid-block citywide