



THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK OFFICE OF MARGARET S. CHIN

250 Broadway, Suite 1882
New York, NY 10007

****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

NOVEMBER 10, 2014

Contact: Sam Spokony (212) 788-7259, sspokony@council.nyc.gov

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN, FAMILIES OF CRASH VICTIMS, LOWER MANHATTAN COMMUNITY LEADERS AND ADVOCATES RESPOND TO RECENT PEDESTRIAN DEATHS AND ANNOUNCE LEGISLATION SEEKING TO IMPROVE SAFETY ON CANAL STREET

4 pedestrian deaths in 2 months in Lower Manhattan, including 2 on Canal Street

Council Member Chin continues to call for tougher enforcement of Section 19-190 against drivers who hit pedestrians or cyclists with the right of way

Council Member Chin drafting bill to require Department of Transportation study of how pedestrian safety is negatively impacted along New York City's major truck routes

Today, Council Member Margaret Chin joined families of crash victims, community leaders and street safety advocates to bring attention to the recent series of tragic pedestrian deaths in Lower Manhattan, call for greater enforcement against drivers, and announce new legislation aimed at reevaluating pedestrian safety on Canal Street.

Over two months — late-August to late-October — four pedestrians were hit and killed by motor vehicles in Lower Manhattan, with two of those deaths taking place on Canal Street:OUNC

- **On August 28**, 82-year-old Shu Fan Huang was crossing South Street at Rutgers Slip, walking from her nearby home to the East River Esplanade. She was walking with two friends. They were all in the crosswalk. They were all hit by a car. Ms. Huang was killed, and her two friends were seriously injured.
- **On September 25**, 82-year-old Sui Leung was crossing Elizabeth Street at Kenmare Street, probably walking from her home in the East Village to her family in Chinatown. She was in the crosswalk. She was hit by a commercial van making a left turn. Ms. Leung was killed.
- **On October 14**, 90-year-old Sau Ying Lee was crossing Canal Street at Elizabeth Street. Her home was right over there in Confucius Plaza. She was in the crosswalk. She was hit by an SUV. Ms. Lee was killed.
- **On October 30**, a 59-year-old Canadian citizen was hit and killed by a private sanitation truck. Although it's unclear exactly where on Canal Street the man was struck, he was dragged until the truck reached Canal and Centre Street, where the truck never stopped driving. He was killed.

At this point, no charges have been filed against the drivers in any of these cases. However, it seems clear that there has been ample evidence — at least in the first three cases — for the drivers to at least be charged under Section 19-190, which went into effect earlier this year and which states that a driver is violating the law if they hit a pedestrian or cyclist who has the right of way.

“This recent spate of pedestrian deaths has hit our community hard, and I have found the aftermath of these tragic deaths to be extremely troubling because no charges have yet been filed against any of the drivers,” **said Council Member Chin**. “I’ve been a strong supporter of the city’s new 25mph speed limit, and I was pleased to see it go into effect last week, but the Vision Zero culture shift that we’re striving for must go even deeper than that. We need to see the law — particularly Section 19-190 — being strongly enforced against drivers who hit pedestrians in the crosswalk, and I need to see it happening in my district here in Lower Manhattan.”

“Losing my mom like this has been an unthinkable tragedy for our family, and it’s just as tragic that no charges have been filed against the driver who hit and killed her,” **said Michael Cheung, son of Sau Ying Lee, who was hit and killed by a car on Canal Street on October 14**. “Our city must learn from this failure of justice, and we need to see changes to prevent this from happening to other families. There needs to be real enforcement of the law after crashes like the one that

took my mom, and Canal Street needs to be made a safer place for pedestrians. I am sure that all drivers will drive safely when they know that they will be held accountable for their wrongdoings while driving their cars.”

“If a person kills someone, it is expected that they will be held accountable, but this is almost never done when the weapon is a vehicle,” **said Hsi-Pei Liao, father of 3-year-old Allison Liao (killed on October 6, 2013) and founding member of Families for Safe Streets.** “Enforcement and accountability for reckless driving on NYC streets is imperative to changing driving culture and save lives. The NYPD, District Attorneys and Department of Motor Vehicles need to take traffic violence seriously — their failure to do so has created a culture of law-breaking that undermines the goals of Vision Zero. The driver who killed our daughter had two crashes previously. If there was more enforcement, Allie would likely still be alive today.”

Aside from the recent pedestrian deaths, anyone who lives, works or regularly travels near Canal Street — which is one of New York City’s major truck routes — knows that it remains one of the city’s most chaotic and congested streets. As a result of that chaos and congestion that comes from being a major truck route, it is also one of the most dangerous streets for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers of all ages, whether they are local residents, workers or tourists.

According to the statistics compiled between August 2011 and February 2014 on nyc.crashmapper.com, the situation on Canal Street is deeply disturbing. The totals of traffic collisions at some of the street’s busiest intersections show the severity of the problem:

- **Canal and Bowery: 267 traffic collisions over 31 months (average of 8.61 collisions per month).**
- **Canal and Lafayette Street: 186 traffic collisions over 31 months (average 6 collisions per month).**
- **Canal and Hudson Street: 168 traffic collisions over 31 months (average of 5.42 collisions per month).**
- **Canal and Centre Street: 112 traffic collisions over 31 months (average of 3.61 collisions per month).**
- **Canal and West Broadway: 110 traffic collisions over 31 months (average of 3.55 collisions per month).**
- **Canal and Elizabeth Street: 84 traffic collisions over 31 months (more than two collisions per month).**

For these reasons, Council Member Chin today announced that she is currently drafting legislation that would require the city’s Department of Transportation to specifically study how the designation of major truck routes affects the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and drivers. Introducing this bill will be an initial move towards seriously considering the public safety benefits of taking Canal Street off the list of major truck routes in New York City.

“I believe this bill will be an important first step in helping us seriously consider the possibility — and the benefits — of taking trucks off Canal Street,” **said Council Member Chin.** “It’s well known that this is one of the most chaotic, congested and dangerous streets in New York City. Looking toward the future, if we can take the trucks off Canal Street, I think we’ll see a safer place for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers.”

“People are being hurt and killed by trucks and tour buses that are overcrowding the streets of Community Board 1,” **said Catherine McVay Hughes, chair of Community Board 1.** “It is too much. Taking trucks and tour buses off of Canal Street will make CB1 a safer and healthier neighborhood. Let’s fix Asthma Alley, cut the traffic, and save lives. This is better for our families and better for our businesses.”

“Community Board 3’s Transportation Committee has worked tirelessly with our elected officials and the Department of Transportation to ensure that our roads are safer for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers,” **said Gigi Li, chair of Community Board 3.** “Chinatown and the Lower East Side are densely populated neighborhoods, with high volume roadways on all sides, including Canal St., the Bowery, Allen St., Delancey St., and E. Houston St. We join Council Member Chin today to call attention to the recent fatalities and to highlight the need for additional planning on truck routes in local residential streets.”

“Who made the decision to install a truck route with untolled river crossings at either end on Canal Street, a bustling pedestrian thoroughfare in a densely populated neighborhood? The answer is no one—generations of city planners simply allowed it to happen without considering the consequences, and while ignoring the mounting death toll,” **said Steve Vaccaro, a lawyer and advocate for crash victims and their families.** “The lost and shattered lives of crash victims and their families are the result. Thank you to Council Member Chin for insisting that the safety and well-being of pedestrians be considered before we roll out the red carpet to interstate truck traffic on our neighborhood streets. The sooner we do, the better.”