

Testimony to the NYC Council Transportation Committee
Bernadette Karna, Families for Safe Streets Member
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Good afternoon Chairman Rodriguez and members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Bernadette Karna. I am a member of Families for Safe Streets and a survivor of a hit and run crash. On June 8, 2016, a reckless driver hit me as I crossed the street in the crosswalk with the light. The driver dragged me 50 feet and then fled, leaving me for dead.

Two years later, I was traumatized again when I learned that police had positively identified the vehicle that struck me, but dropped the investigation because the vehicle owner denied involvement. *That owner had been involved in two other crashes in the prior year alone*, but police just took his word for it and dropped the investigation.

Let me give you some idea of my first trauma. While in the ambulance, I thought I was going to die. I couldn't breathe, as I drifted in and out of consciousness. While in the ER, the pain from the insertion of the chest tube was unbearable. I laid in the ICU recovery room for days attached to various tubes and monitors. I was overwhelmed and in constant pain. My ribs were crushed, requiring surgical fixation with metal plates, and I had numerous other fractures to my back, shoulder, knee and foot. I was in physical therapy for nearly two years and unable to work for twenty months.

The day after my crash, a detective was assigned. I was hopeful that the driver would be found and prosecuted. But police never reported back, forcing us to pursue a Freedom of Information Request for 20 months before I learned the truth.

What I learned is that the City has a network of video cameras that captures millions of license plates of vehicles each day, called the Lower Manhattan Security

Initiative, or LMSI. LMSI cameras caught the license plate of the car that hit me. But because no one could identify the driver, the police just took the owner's word for it when he said he didn't do it. ***Even though he admitted that no one else had use of his vehicle, making this his third crash in a single year.***

What I also learned was that ***it is the NYPD's official policy to end the investigation when a vehicle owner denies involvement in a hit-and-run, even when a video or an eyewitness positively identifies the vehicle.*** The policy was applied in my case and I will share evidence of that in my written testimony.

There are parallels to the crash caused by Dorothy Bruns, who struck and killed two children and injured their mothers in Park Slope earlier this year. Bruns had a previous hit-and-run, eight moving violations caught on enforcement cameras, and a seizure disorder, but no one took any steps to get her off the road before she killed those toddlers. ***Why does the City collect all this information on reckless driving but fail to use it to prevent reckless driving?***

Please enact Intro 971 and 972, which allow the City to analyze together all the information it has to identify and intervene with reckless drivers to get them off the road ***before*** they injure and kill.

Surviving a crash is traumatic, exhaustive and life-altering. When a vehicle is identified as being involved in reckless driving, whether it is a camera-based violation or a hit-and-run, if we give the vehicle owner an ***automatic pass*** or a slap on the wrist, they'll just do it again. Either the owner must take responsibility, or the owner must identify the responsible driver. That is what Intro 971 and 972 would do — give the City

the tools to intervene and change driver behavior *before* the next devastating injury. *Before* the next death.

Every six minutes, another person in New York City is injured in a motor vehicle crash. The clock is ticking. Please pass Intro 971 and 972 before the next person is hit.