

THIS IS A SAFETY ISSUE

Mayor Pachota and City Council Members -

As residents on Bayshore Circle, my husband Ed and I appreciate this opportunity to share our safety concerns with you this morning. Thank you.

I am here today because we understand that Council is discussing, once again, the sidewalk project on Bayshore Drive (Bayshore).

Ed and I have been part of the Venice Island community since 1976 when his parents retired here, and we have owned properties here since 1995. As residents we regularly walk, bike, and drive Bayshore Drive and Laguna. Many of our walks include our two grandsons, age 4 and 2. Safety is our top priority and we have had far too many close calls while walking and biking.

The Island's infrastructure is little changed since 1976, what has changed is the demographic and amount of people - there are more and more people here, both residents and visitors coming onto the Island - which only increases the chances of an accident or serious injury on streets like Bayshore and Laguna. Bayshore/Laguna remains one of three main thoroughfares (along with Venice Avenue and Barcelona) to get to the beach and the jetties and this access unfortunately "funnels" from a much wider Harbor Drive onto Bayshore making this road extremely narrow and dangerous.

Please consider -

- Bayshore/Laguna has become a heavily traveled and congested route, currently there is a dangerous mix of cars, golf carts, trucks, service vehicles, construction vehicles, motorcycles, motorized scooters, pedestrians, pet walkers, strollers, wheelchairs, runners, bicyclists and bicycle groups all traveling the same narrow stretch.
- From Harbor Drive the road narrows and funnels down from approximately 100' to 20' onto Bayshore, this narrow roadway adds to the congestion, there are no sidewalks, no pedestrian or bicycle lanes.
- There are no shoulders on either side of the road, in fact, much of the route has open swales that drop off is very close to the road.
- To further add to the dangerous situation, there are numerous landscape, service, and construction vehicles parked on both sides of the road almost every day.
- The posted speed limit is 25 miles per hour, which given the heavy motor vehicle traffic and mix of pedestrians and bicycles is too fast. Furthermore, many motorists exceed the posted 25 mph speed limit.
- There are stop signs, but too many motorists either ignore them completely or simply roll through them.
- The current "share the road" effort is not working – it is time to separate pedestrians from motorists!

You are no doubt aware that this safety concern has been discussed since 2017 and prior. In spring 2023, Police Captain Andy Liesensring determined that a safety issue existed and Captain Liesensring recommended to the City's Engineering Department that a sidewalk would alleviate the problem. The Council then voted for an allocation in the City's fiscal 2024 budget (\$450,000) to design and build a sidewalk on Bayshore, that allocation was then deferred to the fiscal 2025 budget. As of December 11, 2024, we were informed by the City at an "update meeting" that the City's engineers and a consultant had determined that the west side of Bayshore would be the best side of the street for the sidewalk. At that December 11, 2024, meeting not one resident expressed opposition to the choice of the west side of Bayshore for the sidewalk or for the need of a sidewalk. Now the Venice Gondolier (February 5, 2025) reports that there is "unified opposition"?

The current state of Bayshore/Laguna is a dangerous situation that is made more dangerous with the addition of significant seasonal traffic and congestion. The City of Venice should not wait for someone to be seriously injured before it takes appropriate action to address this known hazard.

If Council does not believe the current situation is a safety issue, perhaps Council should ask the Venice police, the Fire Department, and Emergency Responders for their opinions.

This is our home, where we walk – before Council votes to defer this project again, maybe Council should walk down Bayshore/Laguna to Tarpon Center and see the safety concern for themselves (I suggest you wear a helmet and reflective clothing, or body armor).

Shame on us for thinking the safety of our friends, family, grandchildren, and neighbors is more important than removing some plants, shrubs, and trees.

This dangerous situation is a safety issue – it is time to put politics aside and focus on safety.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Cindy and Ed Eliopoulos