

Malibu continues to fight for PCH safety

Abby Wilt
Executive Editor

After the deaths of four Pepperdine seniors on PCH in October, Deslyn Williams, Niamh Rolston, Asha Weir and Peyton Stewart, Malibu community members are continuing to fight for safety on Pacific Coast Highway, prompting the City of Malibu to address the issue as quickly as possible.

Since 2010, 58 people have lost their lives on PCH due to reckless driving, according to Fix PCH, a website by a group of community members working to address and communicate the dangers of PCH to the community.

“Change on PCH is so important,” said Bridget Thompson, roommate of Niamh, Asha and Peyton, at the Jan. 8 City Council meeting. “But not change in the matter of months or years. Change now.”

The City Council already declared Malibu was in a local state of emergency at the Nov. 13 City Council meeting, stating safety on PCH should be their main priority.

“Our communities have seen too much tragedy,” Councilmember Bruce Silverstein said. “Enough is enough. We have to take action now.”

PCH Safety Taskforce

The City developed the PCH Safety Taskforce immediately after the accident to brainstorm ways to make the road safer. The taskforce includes law enforcement officers, traffic engineers, members of Caltrans and local and state officials. They met for the first time Nov. 14, according to the City Council website.

L.A. County Supervisor Lindsey Horvath attended the meeting and said she is working on permanent enhanced traffic safety enforcement, according to the meeting.

“Sometimes, thresholds for action require devastating things to happen,” Horvath said. “We can’t allow for that

“
If the loss of
so many lives
isn’t enough,
then what is?
We cannot wait
for it to be your
daughters, your
sisters and your
best friends.

Bridget Thompson
Senior



Mary Elisabeth | Photo Editor

58 “ghost tires” act as a memorial for the 58 people who have been killed on Pacific Coast Highway since 2010. Set up on the 23600 block of Pacific Coast Highway, the four tires at the front of the memorial were placed to honor Niamh, Petyon, Deslyn and Asha.

anymore. Our communities have seen too much tragedy.”

Ben Allen, a senator from California, and State Assembly member Jacqui Irwin also attended and said they will be co-authoring a bill to allow the City to install speed cameras on PCH.

“We all deserve a safer way to live every day here in Malibu,” Horvath said.

PCH Signal Synchronization Project

The City is also working through a “Strategic Priority Project List,” according to the City Council website. On that list, there is a PCH signal synchronization project — which would install communication signals on PCH to report back to the Caltrans Traffic Management Center so Caltrans could operate the signals on PCH remotely.

Caltrans controls PCH, but the City of Malibu is committed to working closely with Caltrans to make the road safer, according to a City of Malibu press release.

Streetwork for this project started between Topanga Canyon and Big Rock Drive on Dec. 4, according to the press release.

City of Malibu Plans for Safety

On Jan. 8, Mayor Steve Uhring and Silverstein drafted a plan to address PCH safety to the City Council.

The plan Uhring and Silverstein presented is designed to “implement traffic calming measures,” according to the City Council Agenda Report.

“We cannot fail again,” Uhring said. “This is our chance to make it right, and we

are going to do that.”

Within Uhring and Silverstein’s plan, they want the City to impose a curfew with only some exceptions, place electronic warning signs on PCH to slow down and bring in more “decoy” law enforcement vehicles. In addition, they want to add temporary stop lights, pedestrian crosswalks and speed bumps, look into using self-driving cars to slow down traffic and eliminate parking on the road in certain areas of PCH.

Additionally, they would like to lower the speed limit to 35 or 40 mph for open stretches of PCH and 25 mph for stretches of PCH with homes or businesses.

Barry Stewart, Peyton’s father, wrote a letter to the City Council on Dec. 26, also advocating for these changes.

“I believe these measures balance the legitimate need of law-abiding drivers to proceed efficiently with the need to minimize traffic injuries and deaths,” Stewart wrote.

Stewart also came up with his own list of safety changes after talking with a number of traffic safety experts, L.A. County Sheriff’s Department members and Malibu residents, Stewart wrote.

On his list, Stewart included using speed cameras to slow down traffic, raising the fines for speeding and lowering the speed limit to 35 mph.

“A 4 mile drive at 35 mph takes only 90 seconds longer than a 4 mile drive at 45 mph,” Stewart wrote.

The City Council listened to public comment and heard the issue at the Jan. 8 meeting. They said they plan to address the report at their next meeting Jan. 22.

Several community mem-

bers spoke in public comment, including Pepperdine students.

“Our shared connection with PCH has been marred by unimaginable tragedy, tragedies that have shaken the very foundations of our tight-knit community,” Student Government Association President Michael Sugimoto said to the Council.

Sugimoto spoke on behalf of all Pepperdine students but also as someone who was deeply affected by the tragedies, he said.

“We will consistently pursue these changes until concrete advancements are realized, securing the safety and welfare of our community on Pacific Coast Highway,” Sugimoto said.

Thompson also spoke at the meeting, saying she is there to speak for her best friends who died because she knew, if this happened to her, they would be at City Council advocating for her.

“If the loss of so many lives isn’t enough, then what is?” Thompson said. “We cannot wait. We cannot wait for it to be your daughters, your sisters and your best friends.”

abby.wilt@pepperdine.edu



Photo Courtesy of Bridget Thompson

(From L to R) Deslyn Williams, Niamh Rolston, Asha Weir and Peyton Stewart smile and pose with friends. Deslyn, Peyton, Asha and Niamh were killed in a crash on PCH on Oct. 7.