

Greenwich Village Block Associations

20 Bank Street, New York, NY 10014

Bedford, Barrow & Commerce
Bedford Downing
Bleecker Area Merchants & Residents
Carmine Street
Central Village
(Cornelia, Barrow, Jones)
Charlton Street
Christopher Street Block & Merchants
Christopher Street East
East 10th Street
East 11th Street
East 12th/13th Street
Far West Bank Street
Far West 10th Street
Grove Street
Horatio Street
Jane Street
MacDougal Alley Assoc.
MacDougal Street North
Minetta
Morton Street
Mulry Angle/W. 11th Street
Perry Street
St. Luke's
Upper West 13th Street
Washington Place
Washington Sq/
Lower 5th Ave
Waverly
Waverly-Bank 11 Neighbors
West Houston Street
West 8th Street
West 9th Street
West 10th Street
West 13th Street - 100 Block

January 26, 2007
Hon. Raymond Kelly
Commissioner
New York Police Department
One Police Plaza
New York, NY 10038
Dear Commissioner Kelly,

The Greenwich Village Block Associations is a community wide coalition of neighborhood organizations dedicated to preserving and improving the quality of life for residents of our historic neighborhood. For some time the GVBA has been discussing the growing number of bicycles ridden and stored on our streets and the complications and presumptions that ensue from this increase.

We have published several articles in our newsletter, *the GVBA News*, expressing various viewpoints about the impact of bicycles on pedestrians and upon the streetscape; our concern was echoed in *Holy Rollers* in *The New Yorker* (Nov. 13, 2006). We hoped this media attention would encourage the NYPD to consistently enforce traffic regulations on cyclists. Ironically, one of our writers, Tom Bernardin, sadly proved our point. He was run down and knocked unconscious on January 10, 2007 by a sidewalk cyclist, who left the scene without ascertaining Mr. Bernardin's condition. I include a photo taken after the accident.

Residents voicing concern about this threat to public safety at 6th Precinct Council meetings are told it is not a police priority. We think it should become one. While the GVBA does not expect the NYPD to send out teams of armed officers expressly to hunt down cyclists who ignore traffic rules, residents are appalled when we see police officers ignore cyclists riding dangerously on city sidewalks, through intersections against the light and/or the wrong way on a street. Indeed, in the lead paragraph of *Congestion Pricing Prophet: Biking Is the New Golf* in the *New York Observer* (February 5, 2007), Paul Steely White, the executive director of Transportation Alternatives, brags about running red lights as he requests more amenities for cyclists. Residents even witness a growing number of cyclists nattering obliviously on cell phones as they ride.

At our last meeting, members decided to urge the NYPD to reassess its priorities and to place a higher preference on enforcing traffic regulations on cyclists. They seem to be increasingly arrogant and self-righteous as they carelessly jeopardize themselves and pedestrians, particularly the elderly, who cannot move quickly and are more likely to suffer life-threatening injuries when hit by a bike. The ramifications of such an accident may not become evident until well after the event.

We trust that most cyclists are not hardened criminals. Thus, we believe that regular enforcement of traffic regulations would initiate a speedy decrease in the number of cyclists who ride carelessly and illegally. This is a problem that

can be solved. Anecdotal information supports our contention that a hefty fine and/or vehicle seizure discourages a rider from disregarding traffic rules in the future.

Bicycles are threatening vehicles when ridden incautiously; this risk to public safety must not be fostered. While agencies of the city government consider ways to encourage more bicycles on our city streets by providing bike lanes, instituting traffic congestion fees etc., better safety for pedestrians must be the first priority. Licensing may be part of the overall solution. As a reasonable start, the GVBA urges the NYPD to reassess its policies toward cyclists. Its officers should rigorously enforce traffic regulations and be alert to bicyclists who do not obey the rules. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Dorato
Secretary & Presiding Officer

CC: Hon. Michael Bloomberg
Hon. Scott Stringer
Hon. Christine Quinn
Hon. Alan Gerson
Hon. Rosie Mendez
Hon. Deborah Glick
Hon. Thomas K. Duane
Hon. Jerrold Nadler
D.I. Theresa Shortell, 6th Precinct
Community Board 2
Paul Steely White
Ben McGrath. *The New Yorker*
Matthew Schuerman, *The New York Observer*
Lincoln Anderson, *The Villager*
Tom Bernardin
Members GVBA
Published on our web site at www.gvba.org