

Brooklyn Daily Eagle

Cyclists hold memorial ride and die-in in honor of biker killed in Midwood

August 26, 2019 Jimin Kim



Eagle photo by Jimin Kim

Hundreds of cyclists rode from Prospect Park to Coney Island on Sunday in a commemorative bike ride for **Jose Alzorriz, who was killed in a car crash on Aug. 11** while waiting on his bike at a red light on Coney Island Avenue.

Friends, family members, local politicians and street-safety advocates met at Bartel-Pritchard Square at Prospect Park before the ride, chanting, “What do we want? Safe streets. When do we want it? Now.”



Eagle photo by Jimin Kim

Alzorriz, 52 at the time of his death, was killed when 18-year-old Mirza Baig, who was driving a Dodge sedan in the opposite direction, ran through a “steady red light,” according to cops. The Dodge smashed into a blue Honda traveling east on Avenue L, causing the Honda to collide with Alzorriz, as well as a pedestrian. Baig was **charged with criminally negligent homicide and manslaughter.**

Alzorriz was the latest in a string of vehicle-related **cyclist deaths in Brooklyn** this year — bringing the total number killed citywide in 2019 to 19, almost double the number killed citywide in all of 2018.



Eagle photo by Jimin Kim

Maureen Gaffney, membership coordinator of Five Borough Bicycle Club, ticked off common causes of cyclist deaths at the rally: speeding cars, cars in bike lanes and double parking among them. “We need to break the car culture in this city,” she said. “There’s way too many people in the city to have the congestion that we have.”

Following the rally, cyclists began the memorial ride. With a police escort, they rode until they reached the spot on Coney Island Avenue where Alzorriz was killed. There, attendees gave speeches to pay tribute and to address the larger issue of street safety in Brooklyn.



Eagle photo by Jimin Kim

“When you look at the number of individuals who have been killed due to traffic crashes, that number is only the tip of the iceberg,” said Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams. “How many have been injured? How many pedestrians have lost their lives? How many near misses have created traumatizing impacts on people? This is far larger of an issue, it is in fact, a crisis.”

Attendees staged a die-in, and called for protected bike paths, harsher legal sentences for drivers who crash into cyclists, stricter police monitoring of the roads and other strategies.



Eagle photo by Jimin Kim

In response to the spike in cyclist deaths, the city announced in July a new plan to **increase the speed of protected bike lane construction** by 50 percent as part of Vision Zero. The five year, \$58.4 million plan — dubbed “Green Wave” — will get rid of thousands of parking spots citywide to create a connected network of bike lanes. Two more cyclists have been killed in the month since the announcement.



Eagle photo by Jimin Kim

Members of street-safety advocacy group Transportation Alternatives brought along the bike Alzorriz was riding when he was killed, painted white in the tradition of the commemorative “ghost bikes” placed around the city at the sites of cyclist deaths. The bike was placed on the street corner where Alzorriz died, surrounded by flowers and photographs.

“This is grossly reckless behavior,” said Tom DeVito, the group’s senior director of advocacy, speaking about the conditions of Alzorriz’s death. “It is sociopathic behavior — and it is bound to lead to a tragedy.”
