

The Boston Globe

Rally in Boston remembers victims of road crashes



KEITH BEDFORD/GLOBE STAFF

Cyclist Matthew J. Donovan placed flowers on the steps of the State House.

By Astead W. Herndon GLOBE STAFF NOVEMBER 15, 2015

Activists estimate about 200 people have been killed on Massachusetts roads this year, which is about 200 more than the Massachusetts Vision Zero Coalition can stomach.

The newly formed advocacy group held a rally Sunday at the Massachusetts State House, after biking one mile across the city in an effort to draw attention to their ultimate goal: zero deaths by traffic collisions in Massachusetts.

A first step toward that outcome is to stop referring to crashes as if they are all inevitable “accidents,” said Jeff Larson, a leader of the coalition and a former traffic reporter in Boston.

“We should not use the word ‘accident’ if we do not know the circumstances,” Larson said. “Saying ‘accidents’ creates a feeling that accidents happen — and we want to foster greater accountability.”

Fifty bikers traveled from Copley Square to the State House in anticipation of Sunday’s rally. Those gathered said the rally was part of the annual World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims, held on the third Sunday of November every year.

Although many of the gathered members of the Vision Zero coalition were bikers, they broadened their message to include all users of New England’s roads. Safety is a communal responsibility, the group said — shared among motorists, bikers, and pedestrians.

Supporters wore yellow caution tape on their arms and held flowers for victims of crashes. Participants placed the flowers on the State House steps to conclude the ceremony.

“It’s not just about bikes. It’s about all of us. And all of us coming together,” Larson said.

Activists estimate that 30,000 people die every year on American roads. In 2015, Massachusetts has been the site of several high-profile fatalities.



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Fifty bikers rode a mile across the city to the Massachusetts State House on Sunday to rally for actions to reduce road crashes and to honor the victims of them.

During the summer months, a doctor was killed on her bicycle by a truck near Massachusetts Avenue and Beacon Street, for example, and an 8-year-old girl named Yadielys Deleon Camacho was killed in a hit-and-run crash in Mattapan.

During the rally, the Rev. Laura Everett of Massachusetts Council of Churches called out the names of victims and asked the audience to share their stories.

“We can peacefully coexist on these Massachusetts roads,” Everett said.

The clergywoman also offered condolences to families suffering from recent losses. “You do not grieve alone. You do not remember alone,” Everett said.

Three members of the crowd shared their stories of loss and devastation with the group.

Joel A. Feingold told the crowd about Stanley Sabin, a 74-year-old doctor who was struck by a car in 2011 while biking in Millis. Feingold called on lawmakers to enact more stringent legislation regarding distracted driving.

“He was just wiped out from behind,” Feingold said. “We’ve had so many losses in Boston. We need to be thinking about what we can do to change the laws.”

Howard Stein was killed in Acton in 2011, after a distracted teenage driver struck the 61-year-old and pinned him against his truck. Stein's daughter, Emily Stein, spoke at Sunday's rally about the heartbreak of suddenly losing her father.

"Nearly all of these road deaths are preventable," Stein said. "My daughter was robbed of having her grandpa. . . . And my dad was robbed of loving her."

Stein was six months pregnant with her daughter, Evie O'Shea, at the time of the crash.

In March, Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh adopted "Vision Zero" as a city-wide initiative, and convened a task force to help eliminate traffic fatalities and injuries in Boston.

The task force, which included representatives from Boston transportation, police, public works, and public health departments, focused on using data and electronics to aid the city in combating traffic incidents.

Such government actions encourage the families of the victims of road crashes, but many said they'd like to see more done.

Through tears, Maria Blumstein spoke on Sunday about how her family felt slighted following her 24-year-old daughter's death in Brooklyn. Blumstein, who resides in Brookline, said the driver who hit her daughter walked away with a \$50 fine.

Blumstein's daughter was named Emma.

"Emma was beautiful. Our loss is indescribable," Blumstein said.



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Participants at the rally on Sunday held flowers in remembrance of those killed in car crashes.

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