

One cyclist hurt, one killed — hit by cars on Fahy Bridge

The Bethlehem Gadfly Pedestrian bridge November 16, 2020

 Latest in a series of posts on the pedestrian bridge 

video of the accident

Gadfly encourages you to back the feasibility study for a pedestrian/biking bridge before Council tomorrow night by emailing Council members now (Clerks@bethlehem-pa.gov) and/or by calling in to the meeting during public comment (instructions will be posted here this afternoon).

Selections from Tracy Jordan, “Driver cited under new bicycle law after striking cyclist on Fahy Bridge.” Morning Call, April 4, 2012.

One of the Lehigh Valley’s leading bicycling safety advocates became the region’s first victim under a new law meant to protect cyclists from passing vehicles when a car hit him from behind Monday on the Fahy Bridge in Bethlehem.

The law allows motorists to drive over double yellow lines when passing cyclists, but it requires drivers to give four-foot clearance. The law went into effect at 12:01 a.m. Monday. About 15 hours later, a car operated by a 17-year-old Bethlehem driver drove into Frank Pavlick as he was pedaling north on the Fahy Bridge on S. New Street.

On Dec. 4 in a similar accident on the bridge, 53-year-old Patrick Ytsma, who was well-known locally for his bicycle safety advocacy, was hit by a southbound car and died a few days later

The driver in the fatal accident, a 79-year-old Center Valley woman, pleaded guilty last month to careless driving and agreed to pay a \$500 fine and forfeit her license for six months.

The offense is a summary traffic violation, but the driver is also being charged with a more serious misdemeanor for allegedly attempting to flee the accident after hitting Pavlick.

A bus driver for the Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority maneuvered across the two northbound lanes of the bridge to block the car from exiting the bridge, and the driver of another car pulled up to prevent him from backing up.

“The proper place for me to be was in the middle of the right lane, and from what I get from the police that’s captured very carefully on video,” Pavlick said. “This guy who hit me is going to get educated. But he also needs to be made into an example. Other people need to know.”

Schmitt said in both accidents the bicycle riders were riding in the traffic lane as the law allows, but the motorists apparently did not see them or were driving too fast to stop.

“This is the second Lehigh Valley expert cyclist hit from behind,” Schmitt said. “What we need to do is keep motorists from pretending that bridge is a NASCAR raceway.”

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