

OUTSIDE YOUR WINDOW

Long and winding road needs stop lights, say some

Though cautionary speed signs posted, those who live, work along Howard Avenue say drivers travel way too fast

By VIRGINIA N. SHERRY
STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

GRYMES HILL — Long before an unidentified hit-and-run driver claimed the life of 29-year-old Wagner College nursing student **Ronald Tillman** on Feb. 12, some residents recognized speeding along the winding, two-mile-long Howard Avenue as a serious problem.

"I've lived in the neighborhood since 2002, and have seen cars going 40 to 50 miles per hour," said **Alejandro Lojo**, who graduated from, and now works at, Wagner College. "There are no stop signs or traffic lights on Howard Avenue, all the way from Louis Street to the entrance to the college, and cars pick up speed over this long stretch."

Particularly dangerous is the intersection of Stratford and Howard avenues, he said. "I've noticed more car crashes there, including parked cars along the curb on Howard, especially when the road is wet and slick. One of my colleagues riding a bicycle got hit last year at Stratford and Howard, and it was a wake-up call."

Lojo has sent letters to the city Department of Transportation (DOT) about Howard Avenue "since 2009," he told the Advance last week. When he finally received a response, the agency "said engineers were sent, everything was normal, and the traffic flow was OK."

He found DOT's assessment surprising. "We lack adequate crosswalks, needed stop signs, and traffic-calming devices" along the stretch from Louis Street to Campus Road, he noted.

PLENTY OF SIGNS

Howard Avenue certainly does not lack for DOT traffic signs warning motorists of sharp curves. Some signs post 20 mph, such as the one at Arlo Road, and others specify 15 mph.

Across from the entrance to Wagner College is a 20 mph "Hill Blocks View" sign, and further down Howard Avenue, heading toward Clove Road, is a 15 mph "Slippery When Wet" sign.

Heavily traveled Howard Avenue includes entrances to three educational institutions: Wagner College, St. John's University, and Notre Dame Academy, with pre-K through 12th-graders.

"The winding nature and steep inclines of Howard Avenue present challenges to both pedestrians and drivers," **Gerard McEnerney**, assistant vice president and executive director of the Staten Island campus of St. John's University, told the Advance last Friday.

"The situation is compounded during adverse weather conditions, which can produce slippery roadways and reduced visibility," he added. "We welcome a review by appropriate city agencies,

such as the Department of Transportation, to examine ways to make the roadway safer, not only for our students but for the Grymes Hill community."

Wagner College supports the installation of traffic-calming measures along Howard Avenue.

"As concerned neighbors and members of the Grymes Hill community, we want to do all that we can to ensure that the avenues and streets that we use each day are safe for all who travel on them," said **Joseph Romano**, the college's chief of staff. "This is a responsibility that we all share, and we believe that traffic-calming measures can help raise the margin of safety on our neighborhood roads."

Lojo and three other neighborhood residents met with DOT Borough Commissioner **Tom CoCola** on Mar. 16, escorting him on a walking tour

along Howard Avenue, from Campus Road to Stratford Avenue, and stressing the need for additional safety measures. "He was very receptive to our concerns, and took a lot of notes," Lojo said hopefully.

Lojo helped organize the Howard Avenue Safety Committee, an informal group of Grymes Hill residents and Wagner College employees.

The group will meet on Mar. 28 at 6:30 p.m. in Room 2 at Spiro Hall on Wagner's campus. Public officials and the NYPD's 120th Precinct will be invited to attend, he said.

Virginia N. Sherry reports on the North and East shores of Staten Island for the Advance. You can contact her by phone at 718-816-3987 and email: sherry@siadvance.com.



STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE/VIRGINIA N. SHERRY

Along the two-mile stretch of Howard Avenue posted speed limits are routinely ignored.