

March 14, 2019
Mayor London N. Breed
Board of Supervisors
City Hall
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102

Re: Tess Rothstein's Loved Ones Demand Comprehensive Plan to Ensure Bicyclist Safety

Dear Mayor Breed, Supervisors Brown, Fewer, Haney, Mandelman, Mar, Peskin, Ronen, Safai, Stefani, Walton, and Yee, and SFMTA Directors:

We write to you as members of Tess Rothstein's beloved community, seeking to share a bit about our dear friend and imploring you to prioritize investments and policies that ensure an end to senseless and tragic bicyclist deaths in the City of San Francisco. Tess was killed while riding her bicycle to work at Airbnb on the sunny morning of March 8, 2019. She was 30 years old.

Since Tess's death, we have gathered every evening to grieve and celebrate Tess's life, sitting Shiva in the Jewish tradition of mourning with the abundant and loving community Tess cultivated. Sitting in Tess's home each night, it is devastating and surreal to try to process that she is no longer with us.

Tess built community wherever she went — often quite literally, by starting multiple cooperative homes and by weaving together communities through dinner parties, board games, and short story book clubs. With her friends, her colleagues, and even casual acquaintances, Tess was generous, curious, empathetic, and loving. Tess went out of her way to make people feel welcome, and she knew just when to give someone a hug or a note of gratitude. Tess delighted in cooking and sharing food with others. She baked bread, granola, and perhaps hundreds of pizzas for friends. Tess was present, warm, calm, and attentive. She was someone to just sit with on a Sunday afternoon, without having to posture or perform. Tess had so much presence in her body. She wore colorful scarves and wrap skirts, smiled with her mouth closed and her eyes shining, and moved through the world with her hips. She wore sun hats and was just starting to develop crinkly bits around her eyes from lots of smiles. Tess was adventurous, comfortable setting out alone on international bicycling trips and equally delighted to savor short sunset walks in the Bay. She lived her life fully, starting many mornings with movement and spending time with loved ones throughout the day.

Her colleagues at Airbnb knew her as a smart, selfless design researcher who brought the same curiosity and empathy she shared with friends to her day-to-day work. Tess asked the kind of

open questions that lead to real and useful insights, which helped grow her personal relationships, but also drastically improved the user experience of the products she helped build. Tess was clear and strong in bringing underrepresented voices into experience research, aware that only through actively seeking out diverse opinions would her research lead to products and experiences that truly serve everyone. She was known to push her coworkers to not forget the more uncomfortable truths. She was so respected in her field both for her practice and her thought leadership that even people who never got to meet her in person have come to the evenings of Shiva to honor her.

Tess grew up in New York, traveled and lived in many places around the world, graduated from Stanford University, and found her home in the Bay Area. Through her long-term partner, Tess learned the Dutch language and culture and developed a second family and community in the Netherlands. The wide range of people that have come to mourn in Tess's home this week reflects this expansive network of places and people she touched.

Tess loved wholeheartedly. She was creative, compassionate, and whimsical. She was a partner, daughter, sister, and friend. A researcher, dancer, baker, traveler, and builder. She was insightful, brilliant, and bold. Her life was cut too short.

Tess would still be here — asking questions, sharing stories, listening attentively, and living fully — if the City had addressed its urgent safety needs before her tragic accident last Friday. We implore you to implement a comprehensive plan to address bicycle safety in our community. We appreciate your rapid response to the unsafe conditions on a small portion of Howard Street; however, our community cannot wait for another beloved person to die before a comprehensive plan is put in place to ensure bicyclists' safety.

The San Francisco Bicycle Coalition has three concrete demands which are within your purview as elected City leaders, and we reiterate those demands for:

1. Protected bike lanes for the full length on Howard and Folsom streets;
2. Fast-tracked progress on our bicycling high-injury corridors citywide within 2019; and
3. A streamlined approvals process for protected bike lanes.

Further, Tess's death demands training programs that prevent dooring accidents. Traffic collisions caused by sudden car door openings can be deadly, as we tragically saw once again last Friday. We urge you to contact state officials and do everything within your purview to teach drivers and passengers about the need to open doors safely. The "Dutch Reach," wherein individuals always open car doors with the far hand, thus forcing them to look over their shoulder, is a simple door opening technique and the long-taught norm in the Netherlands. If

taught and practiced here in the US, the Dutch Reach would have saved Tess's life. As City officials, we encourage you to leverage your position to request that the California Department of Motor Vehicles add training about the Dutch Reach to driver's education programs, and add more bicycle-related information to the Driver Handbook.

As we mourn Tess's death, our hearts go out to the communities of people who loved and still grieve for Russell Franklin, Gregory Blackman, Kevin Manning, Gashaw Clark, Kate Slattery, Heather Miller, Mark Heryer, Donald Pinkerton-DeVito and so many others who have died while riding their bikes in San Francisco. Your decisions have contributed to these deaths. And your decisions can make San Francisco a leader once again in ensuring safe streets for all.

It's so hard to believe Tess is gone. In honor and memory of Tess Rothstein, please act with urgency to enact a comprehensive plan ensuring bicyclists' safety. Please make sure we do not lose another person in a tragic, preventable accident on our streets.

Sincerely,
Tess's Beloved Community