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Ocean Boulevard on LBI could be closed to traffic



Written by

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LONG BEACH TOWNSHIP — It's a scene that repeats itself every day in the township.

Joggers and bikers run and ride along Ocean Boulevard for their early morning workouts, while traffic flies by, motoring to the destination, creating a dangerous mix, township officials said.

Zach Kerzner, a local business owner who uses Ocean Boulevard to work out, said issues with Ocean Boulevard are nothing new.

"I have been complaining about this for the last five years," Kerzner said. "I brought this to the attention of the prior administration and they did nothing. Now people are starting to take it seriously."

Over the course of the last couple of years, the oceanside street parallel to Long Beach Boulevard, Long Beach Island's main artery, has become so congested that officials are considering a change to traffic patterns in

order to make it safer, said Mayor James Mancini.

"We are going to take a hard look at the idea of restricted traffic on the road from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m.," he said. "Right now, the cars have to stop at every block, so why not just shut the street down during that time."

The congestion on the road is now an issue for drivers and pedestrians, the mayor said.

"It's going to get to the point that you cannot drive on that road during those hours for safety reasons," Mancini said. "If you go down there on some days there are a 1,000 people on the street at one time."

Police Chief Michael Bradley said the road has been an issue for a while. But Bradley could not provide statistics to make his point about safety concerns on the road.

"The problems continue with Ocean Boulevard," Bradley said. "It's all about the

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volume on the street and that includes cars, pedestrians and bikers.”

In the past, the department has used grant money from the state to educate people on how to use the street safely, but that has not worked as well as the department had hoped, Bradley said, adding there have been minor incidents on the street over the last couple of years.

“At this point typical education is not working to satisfactory standards,” Bradley said. “We are going to have to start to use enforcement for those who are not following traffic rules and that does not mean just cars, it means bikers and pedestrians.”

The major issue with the road is the lack of space for the high volume of bikes, runners and walkers, Kerzner said.

“There is a three-foot area in each direction that people are fighting for,” he said. “If there are a bunch of people in that area, someone is going to get hurt. Then in some spots you have less space because the homeowners have allowed their landscaping to over run the area.”

On any summer morning, between 7:30 and 10 a.m., the road is backed up with people and cars.

“It’s insanity,” Kerzner said. “There are people all over the place. Then you have contractors using the road to get to work quicker and that adds to the danger.”

He said he would like to see some type of

restriction put on traffic on the road.

“I’m not a law expert, but maybe you can make it no traffic during the busiest part of the day,” Kerzner said. “At this point, any changes would be better than the current situation.”

TRAFFIC JAM

The congestion caused by bikes, cars and pedestrians on Ocean Boulevard has forced township officials to look at ways to solve the problem. Some of the solutions discussed include restricting cars on the road during certain hours, making it a one-way street and reducing speed limits.

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