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GHOST BIKE TO BE INSTALLED SEPTEMBER 11 2008
Logan Square Community Plans Tribute to Mark One Year Anniversary of
Death of 19 Year-Old Blanca Ocasio

Chicago/ Logan Square: Family, friends and community members will unite to install a “ghost bike” to memorialize the death of Logan Square resident Blanca Ocasio on the one-year anniversary of her tragic September 2007 death. The installation is to take place at the intersection of Armitage Ave. and Kedzie Boulevard on Chicago’s northwest side.

Attendees will gather for a **7:30 P.M. rally on Thursday, September 11, 2008 at the west end of Palmer Square** (approx. 2201 N. Kedzie), which will culminate in a candlelight procession to the installation of the ghost bike two blocks to the south. All concerned citizens are encouraged to attend and participate.

The creation and installation of ghost bikes, riderless white bicycles set up as a public displays to mark the location of the death of a bicyclist by motor vehicle, has been a visible practice in Chicago for about 3 years. The practice originated in St. Louis and has spread to many cities worldwide. The ghost bikes serve as reminders to raise public awareness of the need for safer conditions for cyclists, increased motorist education and awareness, and the need for street and neighborhood design standards which provide a safe place for all residents to move about, rather than prioritizing motor vehicles. Originally, ghost bikes were installed primarily by cycling advocates, but increasingly friends and family of victims will initiate the creation and installation, as in the case of the death of 22-year-old cyclist Clint Miceli on June 9 2008. Clint’s coworkers met to create his monument, which stands in the 900 block of N. LaSalle, on the day following his death.

Blanca Ocasio, known to her friends as “Chi-chi”, was riding eastbound on Armitage Ave. approaching Kedzie Blvd. around 4 P.M. on September 11 2007 when a garbage truck swung around the corner, cutting her off and ultimately trapping her underneath. Blanca was a second year student at Northeastern Illinois University, preparing to become a pharmacist. Blanca’s mother Martha, interviewed by local television soon after the tragedy, lamented “there were five apples on my tree, and now there are only four.” The driver of the garbage truck was issued a ticket for improper right turn.

Members of the community group Logan Square Walks, including professional traffic planners who live in the community, met in advance of the September 11 event to study the intersection, and have drafted a proposal to improve the safety of the Armitage/Kedzie intersection for the many local residents who can be seen attempting to cross the intersection on foot and by bicycle throughout the day and night. The proposal was presented to Alderman Rey Colon on August 11, and the group intends to continue to work to see the desired changes come about as quickly as possible. The intersection will also be the focus of an ongoing effort of the Chicagoland Bicycle Federation to work with local stakeholders to improve selected streets and intersections, with a series of public meetings starting in October.

Contacts/Resources:

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Logan Square Walks: <http://logansquarewalks.org/>

Chicagoland Bicycle Federation: <http://www.biketraffic.org>