

## Friends mourn Brookline librarian killed in bike crash, call for greater cyclist protections



BOSTON, MA – February 15, 2019: Massachusetts State Police investigate the scene on Park Drive where a cyclist was reportedly struck by a cement truck on Friday, February 15, 2019 in Boston, Massachusetts. (Staff photo By Nicolaus Czarnecki/MediaNews Group/Boston Herald)

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A beloved Brookline children's librarian killed on her bike Friday was identified Saturday, and friends and cycling enthusiasts renewed calls for greater safety measures to protect riders.

Paula Sharaga, 69, of Cambridge was identified as the woman killed on her bike Friday in the Fenway area after a collision with a cement truck.

Sharaga's death sparked calls for safer streets for cyclists and pedestrians in Boston. It comes after the death in November of a 24-year-old Boston University student who was struck by a dump truck near the Museum of Science.

A LivableStreets Alliance official said the group has repeatedly called for improvements in the area.

"I feel horribly for this family," said Stacy Thompson, executive director of LivableStreets. "I also feel deeply frustrated. This is an area of the city that the city and activists have known for a while is unsafe and needs improvements. It's not moving fast enough."

Cambridge City Councilor Alanna Mallon agreed, stating in a tweet, "We need safer streets and stronger regulations for truck safety equipment in the Greater Boston area to keep residents safe."

Sharaga was riding her bike by the intersection of Brookline Avenue and Park Drive on Friday at 1:45 p.m. when she came into contact with the front end of a cement truck.

Massachusetts State Trooper Keith Deshler, who was working a road detail nearby, was the first to respond to the crash, according to state police. When Deshler reached Sharaga, he found two civilians performing CPR on her and requested an ambulance. A third man, who identified himself as a trauma physician, asked Deshler for a ventilation bag, which the trooper got from his medical kit, and used it to also give aid. Sharaga was transported to Brigham and Women's Hospital by Boston EMS where she was pronounced dead.

The operator of the cement truck, a 67-year-old Salem man, was transported to Beth Israel Hospital, authorities said.

The sequence of events leading up to the collision remain under investigation, authorities said. The preliminary investigation indicates the cement truck was stopped at a traffic light on Brookline Avenue and when the light turned green, the truck started to move forward. Sharaga was riding in the intersection and came into contact with the front end of the truck, police said.

The tragic death devastated a wide swath of people, as Sharaga had friends from her time as a librarian, avid cyclist and peace activist. Her husband of 25 years, Eric Zinman, is a Boston-area musician.

The Boston Cyclists Union held a moment of silence for Sharaga before its morning ride Saturday.

Flowers and gifts began to pile up at the front doors of the Coolidge Corner branch of the Public Library of Brookline Saturday as news of her death spread. The library was closed Saturday and Sunday to mourn her passing.

In a note posted on the Coolidge Corner library's door Saturday, library staff and trustees say "Paula was a wonderful asset to the Coolidge Corner community, which she served for almost two decades. Paula was a fun, caring, thoughtful, and empathetic staff member, and a kind and good friend."

"An avid bicyclist, dedicated environmentalist, and vigorous political advocate, Paula was loved by all who knew her and will be missed terribly by the staff of the library, and by her friends in the community and around the world," the note continues. "Our hearts go out to Paula's husband and the rest of her family at this terrible time."

Massachusetts Peace Action, a group dedicated to a more peaceful U.S. foreign policy and an end to war, said Sharaga had just left its office two hours before she was killed.

"We are devastated and infuriated by the news that our active member Paula Sharaga was killed in a bicycle-truck accident yesterday afternoon in Boston," the group tweeted. "She was co-chair of our Boston Downwinders working group and cycled everywhere. Paula left our office less than two hours before she was killed. She had been working on the mailing list for Boston Downwinders that morning."

Cambridge State Rep. Mike Connolly tweeted his condolences. "I am heartbroken by the loss of Paula Sharaga, a dear friend who was deeply committed to climate

justice, peace, and many other important causes in our community and around the world. My thoughts are with her husband Eric and their family at this time.”

“I’m very sad to hear that Paula Sharaga was killed while cycling through the Fenway area yesterday afternoon. My condolences to her family,” Cambridge Mayor Marc McGovern said.

The crash remains under investigation by state police. No charges had been filed as of Saturday. The investigation will determine whether charges are warranted, state police said.