

Our Transportation System is in Crisis – 200

One of my regular readers, KB, felt she had to get the following off her chest. *"I am writing this off the bat, as there are some issues that have been at the back of my mind for some time now. Recently these same issues came to the fore with the increase of traffic related offences.*

"I totally agree with the proposed implementation of the fine for use of mobile phones while driving, whether it be speaking or texting (or even looking for the instrument). I am of the opinion though that pedestrians also need to take due diligence when they too are on their mobiles, especially when crossing the road. Far too often it has been observed that their focus (and by extension antics) are on the conversation and not on getting to the other side as safely and quickly as possible. Thus they inadvertently contribute to bottlenecks / traffic congestion at busy intersections such as in San Juan. Can they also be fined???"

"Some time ago, I was passing the Cipriani Statue and observed a young Lady on her mobile. What really caught my attention was – her cradling the mobile between her neck and shoulder while holding a baby (with bags) and trying to cross the road to get into a PH vehicle. One would think it ends there. Well the PH which stopped for her, the driver was on his mobile as well. The young Lady got into the front passenger seat and did not put on her seat belt nor stop speaking on her mobile.

"The matter was brought to the attention of a Police Officer in the vicinity of KFC Independence Square, who thankfully pulled the vehicle to the side and asked the young Lady to get into the back seat of the vehicle.

Secondly (and I do hope that at least some of the cameras installed are working), it would be recalled that great efforts were expended to

re-fence the Savannah over the last year. It was noticed that a vehicle destroyed a portion of this fencing obliquely opposite Woodford Street maybe two weeks ago. If there was no police report filed with respect to this 'possible' accident, the authorities should be in a position to conduct the necessary investigation using the camera footage; identify the parties involved and on completion of the investigation (and on consultation with the relevant Ministry) charge accordingly for the replacement of the fence. Same should apply for traffic lights; fire-hydrants; dustbins, etc. The lawlessness needs to be stopped.

"We as a people say we want responsibility but are really not willing to so take. We have to start with ourselves – if you are at fault, the onus is on you to replace. The only person being affected in the long run is you. Unfortunately we do not see it that way and consider ourselves as getting away scot-free. But is it really so!"

She has raised some very important points. I have to repeat, what is the consequence of the irresponsibility and apparent recklessness by many road users, both within and outside of vehicles? About two weeks ago, I was about to turn right at an intersection in a residential area, when I observed that there was a vehicle standing in the lane that I had to enter (in other words it was not on the left hand side of the road, but the right hand side). So I did not turn, but waited. Upon further examination (as I could not move), I observed that the driver of the large SUV had a toddler on his lap, and so was finding some difficulty in manoeuvring the vehicle, and thus ended up on the wrong side. When he was able to correct himself, he gave a foolish smile (of embarrassment) and turned left.

It cannot be that this driver is unintelligent. He simply decided that there was likely to be no serious and impacting consequences for his actions, and so he proceeded as he desired.

He obviously did not remember or take seriously the crash on the Solomon Hochoy Highway along the Gasparillo Stretch on August 30 nearly one year ago, which tragically claimed the lives of a young 35-year mother and her baby daughter, who was to celebrate her first year's birthday the next day. It was reported that the baby was not in a safety seat but seated on her mother's lap in the front passenger seat and was thrown out the vehicle on impact.

The Law states that failure to wear a seatbelt would incur a \$4,000 fine (up from \$1,000) for a first offence, while the fine for a second offence is \$8,000 (up from a current \$2,000). The Law imposes a \$2,000 fine for driving a child under the age of five without use of a child safety seat. Public service vehicles, such as taxis, maxi taxis and buses are exempt for now. It might be interesting to know how many persons have ever been charged for such offences. My guess is that most offenders are given an 'ease up.'

The latest is that legislation is to be passed to make the use of hand-held mobile phones in vehicles on the roadways a statutory offence, and persons who breach this new law will be fined \$5,000 or sentenced to two months in jail with hard labour. The Transport Minister stated that citizens will be granted a three month moratorium *"to allow them to outfit their vehicles with gadgets that prevent them from having to use mobile phones... [and] head-sets and Blue Tooth devices would be allowed."*

This is fine, but how is it going to be rigorously and regularly

enforced, so that offenders would think twice?

e-mail: info@ccost.org