

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Letter To The Editor: All I Want For Next Christmas Is Buried Power Lines And Sidewalks

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Dear Editor,

Before Christmas, I saw two middle-schools girls almost hit by a taxi on a curve at Bolongo. Two weeks before, a boy in uniform walking home from school on the narrow road by the bridge-to-nowhere, almost flattened by two dump trucks. On St. Croix, an old man struggling to get to the Kingshill post office forced into the mud to dodge traffic. The week before, a girl in a Eudora Kean uniform walking toward the National Guard almost hit by a taxi passing around two cars at once. And a month ago, another young boy walking from Smith Bay to Linquist was within inches of being swiped by a utility truck.

Why do we put those we love most - our children, our students, the future of the Virgin Islands, within inches of cars, dump trucks, utility vehicles and 18 wheelers? A child, age 5 to 18, has the highest chance of being killed by a motor vehicle. Cars and children don't mix.

Now, imagine a time when every child can walk home safely on a sidewalk. Imagine a time when every grandparent can walk down that sidewalk to meet their grandchildren. Imagine every mother able to push her baby stroller, every athlete out for a run, every tourist - all walking the Virgin Islands from the safety of a sidewalk.

Amazingly, post Irma and Maria, that future is possible. There is a silver lining. We all know we MUST bury our power lines. Whenever feasible, those power lines should be buried on the sides of the road and sidewalks placed on top. Further, even where the road is steeper, it is smart to build a sidewalk retaining wall area and place the lines in and under the side walk. Then repair and maintenance of the lines doesn't require destruction of the roads.

Imagine that future. Every child can walk to school safely. Think of the posts online from tourists. "We walked around the whole island! So beautiful and great exercise." With sidewalks, imagine a new yearly event: "The Port to Peak Run." A run from Havensight to Mountain Top. On St Croix the "The A to U Run". From the Ann Abramson pier to Point Udall. A run/walk all the way across the Big Island. The Cruise industry says we must reinvent ourselves. Let's first protect our children and get the added benefit of a great sidewalk system for us and our future. Oh, did I mention also never losing power after a major hurricane, with those power lines buried under the sidewalks!

Dear Senators, imagine a law that says any repaving a road requires that the power lines to be buried and a sidewalk constructed. Dear Governor and Delegate to Congress, imagine a 90 percent federal match for the USVI for burying the power lines over the next 20 years. Dear Voters, imagine making this a priority in the upcoming elections. Ask each candidate about it. Because if we don't follow through, all our children will have is what we have now - imaginary sidewalks.

Submitted on Wednesday by: *J. Russell B. Pate, Esq, of the Pate Law Firm*