

Janet/Bobby Ball and Eric Boris v. City of Seattle

Injured when streetcar tracks caused bicycle crashes.

Securing Justice for Cyclists Injured by Hazardous Streetcar Tracks

Injured bicyclists Janet Ball (with spouse Bobby) and Eric Boris reached a settlement with the City of Seattle of \$5.75 million. The lawsuit alleged that the City negligently designed and maintained roads with streetcar tracks, which created dangerous conditions for cyclists, leading to catastrophic injuries or death when the tracks caused them to crash.

The Seattle Times

Seattle pays millions to settle lawsuit by two bicyclists who crashed along streetcar rails



(Kevin Clark / The Seattle Times)

Bike crashes involving streetcar rails have been a recurring problem since the city's South Lake Union streetcar opened in late 2007, and the First Hill line began serving passengers in 2016.

Key Facts

- In July 2019, Eric Boris was riding his bicycle on S. Jackson Street in Seattle when his front tire got caught in the streetcar track flangeway gap, throwing him from his bike. He suffered a fractured clavicle and still experiences limited shoulder strength and mobility.
- In September 2019, Janet Ball was riding her bicycle on S. Jackson Street in Seattle with four other women when her wheel got caught in the streetcar track flangeway gap, causing her to crash. She suffered head and pelvis injuries that required care from her husband.
- The lawsuit alleged that the City failed to properly design, construct, and maintain the streetcar tracks to ensure they were reasonably safe for cyclists.
- The City knew about previous bike crashes due to the streetcar tracks as it was a known recurring problem. At least 15 bike crashes were reported along the First Hill line in the 2010s.

Compelling Cases Lead to Record Settlement

In 2024, the City agreed to pay \$5.75 million to settle Janet/Bobby Ball's and Eric Boris' case. These victories for Mr. & Mrs. Ball and Mr. Boris sent a clear message that the City must prioritize the safety of all road users, including cyclists, when designing and maintaining infrastructure like streetcar tracks. The case also provide some measure of justice and support for the Fleming Law clients as they cope with the impacts of their injuries.