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Statement from CRTP Executive Director Colin Fiske on Vehicular Attacks on People Demonstrating for Racial Justice

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EUREKA, Calif.—Since the police killing of George Floyd in May, there has been a disturbing nationwide rise in the use of cars and trucks as weapons against people on foot demonstrating for racial justice. Many people have been injured in such attacks, and several people have been killed. Sadly, Humboldt County has not been immune to this trend, although fortunately no one has yet been killed. Citizens and local media have documented several cases of drivers striking people protesting for racial justice. In McKinleyville in June, a driver accelerated toward people on foot and on horseback at such a speed that had the people not jumped out of the way, and had the horses not remained calm, death or serious injury would likely have resulted. Yesterday, a driver rammed a truck into a person protesting in Eureka, causing what appears to be the most serious local injury from such an attack to date.

According to national experts researching this horrific phenomenon, some of the drivers who intentionally ram their vehicles into people advocating for racial justice are white supremacists acting out their violent and twisted ideology, while others are motivated purely by anger at having their way blocked by people protesting in the street. We do not know the motives of drivers in local incidents, because most of the incidents were not investigated by police. In the two local incidents which police have so far investigated, they have not released enough information to determine a motive.

Statement

“Let us be perfectly clear: neither ideology nor frustration over someone on foot or on a bicycle ‘blocking traffic’ is ever an excuse or justification for disregarding a human life. Vehicular attacks must be acknowledged for what they are, and no attack—no matter the motive—should ever be tolerated or excused by local law enforcement, elected officials, or the public at large,” said Colin Fiske, Executive Director of the Coalition for Responsible Transportation Priorities. “Justifying these attacks because people on foot ‘don’t belong’ in the street dehumanizes protestors and other road users and helps to fuel future incidents. It is simply unacceptable to blame the victims because they were using the street either for travel by a non-vehicular mode or for expression of their deeply held beliefs. At stake are not only lives, but the everyday right to use the road safely and the right of free expression.”