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METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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Regional Leaders Announce Pedestrian Safety Campaign
Multi-Year Effort to Reduce Pedestrian Deaths and Injuries
Launches October Pedestrian Safety Awareness Month

Regional leaders, all whom represent member jurisdictions of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG), today launched a public education and outreach campaign to reduce pedestrian deaths and injuries throughout the Washington metropolitan area. With pedestrian fatalities outnumbering homicides in many of the participating jurisdictions, leaders vowed to work together on a multi-year effort to heighten awareness about and change behavior toward pedestrian safety.

The campaign, titled “Street Smart,” is aimed at young drivers who are involved in a majority of pedestrian collisions, and features Metrorail and Metrobus ads, radio ads, television public service announcements, and posters. The campaign materials urge drivers to “Imagine the Impact” on the lives and families of both pedestrians and drivers resulting from a traffic incident. The ads feature real people telling their stories and stress the rules for driver and pedestrian behavior at crosswalks.

“Every year, 50 people in Maryland die walking across the street -- if 50 people were dying each year from gunfire, the community would be in an uproar,” said Montgomery County Executive Douglas M. Duncan. “We want the same level of anger and concern directed at pedestrian safety issues to prevent other families from experiencing more pedestrian tragedies.”

Two years ago, Duncan noted that pedestrian fatalities in Montgomery County had exceeded the number of homicides and vowed to make pedestrian safety a priority to reduce deaths and make the

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community safer. Montgomery County provided the seed money, together with the State of Maryland, and coordinated the efforts to design the regional education campaign.

The regional leaders also designated October as Pedestrian Safety Month. Each jurisdiction will be conducting pedestrian safety activities and events during the month.

“Fairfax County is aggressively working on pedestrian and traffic safety, a regional issue that demands our attention in order to reduce pedestrian and bike injuries and deaths in the Washington metropolitan area,” said Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chair Katherine (Kate) Hanley. “This issue is so important that we have designated a pedestrian program manager position, approved installation of new “yield to pedestrian in crosswalk” signs, changed the County code to provide for higher penalties for certain crosswalk violations where drivers fail to yield the right-of-way to pedestrians, and funded a bus stop location pedestrian safety study.”

The District of Columbia and Virginia contributed \$100,000 each to the campaign, Fairfax County contributed \$50,000, Maryland gave \$114,800, and Montgomery County put in \$50,000. COG will administer the contributions for the campaign. DesignHouse developed and produced the campaign materials. Montgomery County produced the television public service announcements.

For more information, contact Mike Farrell at COG, 202-962-3760.

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