

**METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**

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June 1, 2005CONTACT: Kelly Indrieri
202-289-2001**Washington Region Officials Team Up to Address the
Recent Spike in Pedestrian Deaths****EIGHT PEDESTRIANS KILLED IN THE LAST MONTH***'STREET SMART' LAUNCHES A MULTI-YEAR PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE SAFETY CAMPAIGN*

Silver Spring, MD – Regional leaders today launched a comprehensive public education and enforcement campaign to reduce pedestrian deaths and injuries throughout the Washington metropolitan area. The Washington region has seen eight pedestrian fatalities in just the last month. With the recent spike of pedestrian fatalities and injuries in many of the participating jurisdictions, leaders vowed to work together to heighten awareness of pedestrian safety and to crack down on traffic violations in areas with high numbers of pedestrian incidents.

Under the sponsorship of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, the “Street Smart” outreach campaign is aimed at drivers, walkers and cyclists. Campaign materials urge drivers to “Stop for Pedestrians;” “Watch for Cyclists;” and “Share the Road.” Materials also urge pedestrians to “Take the Time to Cross Safely.” When you don’t the result can be tragic. A strong focus of the campaign is reaching the Hispanic audience through Spanish-language brochures and advertising outreach.

“Creating a pedestrian-friendly community is a priority in Montgomery County and across the Washington region,” said Maryland Delegate Bill Bronrott (D-District 16, Bethesda), a COG Board member. “Crossing the street should not be a death-defying act. Our sidewalks and crosswalks should be safety zones, not danger zones. With public education campaigns like Street Smart, we are working to do just that.”

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The Federal Highway Administration estimates that a pedestrian is killed or injured every seven minutes on our nation's roadways. Nationally, pedestrians account for 11% of motor vehicle deaths with urban areas having higher fatality rates than rural areas. In the Washington region, pedestrians accounted for 22% of annual traffic fatalities between 1994 and 2003. Pedestrians and bicyclists account for nearly a quarter of those killed on the roads in the Washington regions, more than 2,600 are injured every year and nearly 90 are killed.

Young male motorists, a focus of this year's campaign, are disproportionately involved in collisions. In the District, 73% of pedestrian or bicycle collisions involved male drivers; that number rises to 83% in Maryland and drops slightly for Virginia where males contribute to 61% of fatal pedestrian or bicycle collisions.

The Street Smart pedestrian safety effort focuses on the "three Es": education; engineering; and enforcement. The **education** component of the campaign targets pedestrians, cyclists and drivers, and includes information about devices designed to enhance pedestrian safety, such as important points for the use of crosswalks, pedestrian warning signs, pedestrian signals and reflective materials for nighttime safety. A stepped-up, region-wide **enforcement** initiative complements the education/awareness blitz. **Engineering** initiatives include improved sightlines, signals and markings and the use of technology, such as the laser detector and the "runway" lighting for crosswalks demonstrated at today's event.

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About Street Smart

Street Smart is a public awareness program that was launched in October 2002 to change driver and pedestrian behavior in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. The program was based on the recognition that just in the Washington, D.C. metro area over 2,600 injuries and 85 fatalities involved pedestrians and bicyclists in 2001. For more information about the Street Smart campaign please go to, <http://www.mwcog.org/transportation/streetsmart>.

