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METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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Top Regional Leaders and Law Enforcement Band Together to Tackle Pedestrian Safety Concerns ***Street Smart 'Steel vs. Flesh –It's No Contest' Campaign Confronts Pedestrian Dangers***

Washington, D.C. – With approximately 90 pedestrian deaths and 3,000 pedestrian injuries each year in the region, community leaders vowed to redouble the regional effort to heighten awareness of pedestrian safety matters and to intensify enforcement of traffic violations in areas with high numbers of pedestrian incidents. Research shows the responsibility for pedestrian incidents is shared between drivers and pedestrians. This has prompted regional leaders to launch a renewed effort to ensure drivers and pedestrians pay attention to one another. Already in 2007, Washington, D.C. alone has seen nine pedestrian fatalities, compared to 17 fatalities in all of 2006 and 16 in 2005.

A regional study of pedestrian-related incidents, conducted by the INOVA Regional Trauma Center for the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC), found that the failure of both drivers and pedestrians to pay proper attention and pedestrians' use of improper crossing areas threatens the safety of walkers more than any other factor. Approximately 92 percent of pedestrians involved in crashes with motor vehicles in the Washington, D.C. metro region sustained one or more injuries. While the personal cost of pedestrian crashes defy measurement, average hospital charges per patient range from \$17,000 to \$30,000. Underscoring the often-violent outcome when people are struck by vehicles, pedestrian injuries require the second longest average hospital stay of all injury categories.

"Steel wins and flesh loses when a vehicle and a pedestrian collide," said Adrian M. Fenty, mayor of the District of Columbia, noting that pedestrians account for approximately one-quarter of the region's highway deaths and 40 percent in the District itself. "Pedestrian deaths and injuries often stem from our hurry-up lifestyles, contributing to lifetimes of loss. Everywhere in our region, but especially in our congested areas, both drivers and pedestrians must open their eyes to this ever-present danger and must do a better job of monitoring their surroundings. Heightened awareness coupled with increased law enforcement are the keys to protecting pedestrians."

Under the sponsorship of MWCOC and the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB), the *Street Smart* outreach and enforcement campaign is designed to reduce pedestrian deaths and injuries throughout the Washington metropolitan area. Creative advertising strategically placed on the radio, Metrobus, Metrorail, bus and transit shelters, and the internet seeks to capture the attention of drivers, cyclists and walkers to ensure they pay due attention to each other on area roads. Campaign materials urge drivers to "Slow down. Pay attention to pedestrians and cyclists." Materials also caution pedestrians to "Use the Crosswalks," and "Cross streets safely." A strong focus of the campaign is to reach the area's Hispanic residents through Spanish-language brochures and advertising outreach.

"This campaign focuses on raising awareness of dangerous behaviors and educating drivers, pedestrians and cyclists on how to be safer on the roads in the Washington metropolitan area," said Michael Knapp, vice chairman of MWCOC. "We must not forget that pedestrian safety is everyone's responsibility. While more officers are trained each year on effective methods for enforcing pedestrian safety laws, everyone using the road whether by foot or by vehicle must pay attention."

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The *Street Smart* pedestrian safety effort focuses on the "three E's:" education, enforcement and evaluation.

- **Education** targets pedestrians, cyclists and drivers, and includes information about devices designed to enhance pedestrian safety, such as the use of crosswalks, pedestrian warning signs, pedestrian signals and reflective materials for nighttime safety.
- **Enforcement** will ensure residents are aware of the stepped-up, region-wide initiative.
- **Evaluation** is vital to understand the awareness level for the message and the future direction of the campaign, as demonstrated through such research as the INOVA report.

The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that a pedestrian is injured every eight minutes and killed almost every two hours on our nation's roadways. Nationally, pedestrians account for 11 percent of motor vehicle deaths with urban areas having higher fatality rates than rural areas.*** Most injuries and deaths can be prevented by changing road design, vehicle design and/or the behavior of pedestrians and drivers.

"The Street Smart Campaign is a key part of our fundamental strategy to provide drivers, pedestrians and cyclists with the tools they need to make the safest and best choices on the road," said Maryland State Highway Administrator and Governor's Highway Safety Representative Neil J. Pedersen.

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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. For more information about *Street Smart*, please go to <http://streetmart.mwco.org> or <http://www.mwco.org/transportation/streetsmart>.

*Regional data and statistics gathered from 2005 MWCOC regional report as prepared by the Northern Virginia Injury Prevention Center and INOVA Regional Trauma Center in Falls Church, Va.

**Specific pedestrian fatality data provided by the District Department of Transportation, Maryland Highway Safety Administration and Virginia DMV, respectively.

*** Data pulled from 2003 NHTSA Pedestrian Safety Facts disseminated through the Federal Highway Administration.