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METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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Street Smart Campaign Targets Pedestrian Fatalities

Local Leaders and Law Enforcement Focus on Regional Pedestrian Safety through Engineering, Education, Enforcement and Encouragement

Bethesda, MD – With pedestrian fatalities on the rise in recent years, leaders from the District, Maryland and Virginia reinforced their commitment to increasing pedestrian safety in the region by announcing the fall *Street Smart* campaign. The campaign's focus is on raising awareness of pedestrian safety due to the recent daylight savings time shift and highlighting efforts to protect school children across the region through programs such as Safe Routes to Schools. Owing to their near-complete vulnerability when struck by vehicles, pedestrians account for approximately 20 percent of individuals killed on the roads in the Washington region.

Speaking at the event, Isiah "Ike" Leggett, County Executive for Montgomery County, said, "Virtually every pedestrian death and injury can be prevented if both sides of the crash equation – drivers and pedestrians – do a better job of looking out for each other. We are all here today to help keep our children, our friends and our neighbors safe on the roadways and to prevent tragedies by improving our engineering, education and enforcement throughout the region."

Across the region, police departments will be conducting waves of increased pedestrian safety enforcement in coming weeks as pedestrians and motorists adjust to the daylight savings shift. The regionwide effort combines increased law enforcement targeted to areas with high numbers of pedestrian-related incidents and public awareness efforts to promote safer behavior behind the wheel and at the curb. Galvanized by heightened concern about pedestrian safety, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) continues to work with jurisdictions across the region to coordinate efforts to increase enforcement, education and engineering through the *Street Smart* campaign.

"We not only will be cracking down on people not following the laws that protect our pedestrians, but also educating drivers and pedestrians on how they can help make our streets safer for everyone. Ensuring pedestrian safety is every person's responsibility," said J. Thomas Manger, Chief of Police in Montgomery County, which has had 18 pedestrian fatalities thus far in 2008.

Additionally, many jurisdictions have developed and begun to implement master pedestrian safety plans. And, across the region new technology and engineering also is being implemented to boost safety. Montgomery County will utilize \$4.8 million from the County's speed cameras to fully fund the County's

Pedestrian Safety Initiative. In addition, Maryland has designated nearly two million dollars in Safe Routes to School grants in Montgomery County covering seventeen schools and nearly nine thousand students. Throughout the state there are 48 Safe Routes to School initiatives covering 41 jurisdictions, with total funding of more than eight million dollars. At Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School, pedestrian engineering has included fencing to channel students to narrower sections of East-West Highway, which have been equipped with signage and cross-walks.

In the District of Columbia, the final draft of the Pedestrian Master Plan was completed in May of 2008. The plan includes policy recommendations, ped-friendly design guidelines and a detailed analysis of eight important pedestrian corridors in DC. It also initiated planning in August for 13 pilot schools on comprehensive strategies to improve school pedestrian and bicycle traffic safety as part of DC's Safe Routes to School Program. District Department of Transportation Safe Routes to School enforcement funds were used to conduct school area enforcement wave targeting drivers in crosswalks and school zones during the fall of 2008 and are planned again for 2009. New technology that detects human movement, and verbally provides instructions to pedestrians and uses high-intensity flashing lights to let drivers know pedestrians are crossing, have been installed at locations where a high number of pedestrian incidents occur.

The Northern Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) continues to aggressively implement the 2004 Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation Policy by ensuring all projects (from planning to design and construction to maintenance) include safe pedestrian and bicycling components, including a stringent exception process. Virginia's Safe Routes to School program promotes a comprehensive approach to enabling and encouraging students (K-8) to walk and bike to school safely. A total of 32 projects statewide have been funded thus far with programs/ infrastructure projects in Northern Virginia including the City of Alexandria and Vienna. In addition, significant pedestrian access projects continue including the Route 50 pedestrian bridge at Seven Corners, the I-495 Hot Lanes project and countdown signals that are high visibility LED and display the walk interval are being installed region wide to enhance pedestrian crossing safety (Fairfax County has been completed).

Sponsored by COG and the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board, the *Street Smart* public awareness and enforcement campaign is aimed at reducing the number of pedestrian injuries and deaths in the Washington metropolitan area. The campaign uses creative radio advertising in English and Spanish to reach drivers, while targeting pedestrians through outdoor and transit advertising on bus shelters and bus sides. In addition, law enforcement and local, county and state agencies will be distributing handouts and tip cards to further spread awareness and educate drivers and pedestrians.

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About Street Smart

Street Smart is a public awareness campaign launched in October 2002 in order to change driver and pedestrian behavior in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. For more information about *Street Smart*, please visit <http://streetsmart.mwcog.org>.

About the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB)

The TPB is the regional transportation planning organization for the Washington region. It includes local governments, state transportation agencies, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) and members of the Maryland and Virginia General Assemblies