



METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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Speed Kills

Street Smart Demonstration Shows Life-and-Death Differences in Braking Distance

SILVER SPRING, MD – On a neighborhood street near the heart of Silver Spring, the region's *Street Smart* safety campaign got underway with a dramatic demonstration of the effects of speed on pedestrian and cyclist safety. On the heels of a rash of traffic crashes involving pedestrians in the metropolitan Washington region, the campaign's message of slowing down and being alert to all users of the roads could not be more timely.

Local elected officials and law enforcement highlighted efforts throughout the region to improve safety for walkers, bikers and drivers.

A demonstration on the amount of time and distance required for a vehicle to stop featured "Bobby", a wire frame model of a ten-year-old child crossing the street and encountering a vehicle traveling toward him at speeds of 25, 35 and 40 miles per hour. Placed at a fixed point in the street in front of a designated stopping point, Bobby was safe crossing in front of the vehicle traveling at 25 miles per hour, but was not so fortunate crossing when the vehicle was traveling at the higher speeds. He was struck hard at 35 miles per hour, his body hurled forward, sustaining severe injuries. At 40 miles per hour, Bobby was struck even more violently.

Fortunately, Bobby is a wire-frame dummy, not one of the 270 actual child pedestrians killed in traffic crashes nationally in 2008.

The highly realistic demonstration showing Bobby being brutally struck was meant to strike a chord with drivers that speed is a major killer.

In 2008, 5,094 pedestrians and bicyclists were killed in traffic crashes in the United States, accounting for 13.7 percent of all traffic fatalities. In the metropolitan Washington region, 84 pedestrians and cyclists were killed. Complete region-wide 2009 data on pedestrian fatalities is not yet available, but from 2008 to 2009, Montgomery County experienced a 22 percent decrease while Prince George's County witnessed a 41 percent decrease. Other jurisdictions across the region remained unchanged or experienced an increase in pedestrian deaths over the past year. This data reaffirms that leaders need to remain vigilant in order to continue to reduce the number of fatalities in the future.

"We need to cross the street like our life depends on it – because it does. We need to drive like our family and friends' lives depend on it – because they do," remarked Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett, whose jurisdiction is credited with lessening pedestrian fatalities last year as a result of safety improvements. "To speeding drivers, I ask: What is your hurry? Is your next appointment more important than the safety of pedestrians and cyclists? Slowing down is absolutely essential to saving lives and reducing injuries."

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About Street Smart

Sponsored by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) and the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB), the *Street Smart* public awareness and enforcement campaign is in its eighth year. Aimed at reducing the number of pedestrian and cyclist injuries and deaths in the Washington metropolitan area, the campaign uses creative radio and television advertising in English and Spanish to reach drivers, pedestrians and cyclists, while targeting them 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. For more information about *Street Smart*, please visit www.bestreetsmart.net and twitter.com/COGStreetSmart.

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.

Source: Virginia Highway Safety Office at the Department of Motor Vehicles

Source: District Department of Transportation and Metropolitan Police Department

Source: Maryland Highway Safety Office and Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) Data, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)

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