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METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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## ***Pedestrians Account for One-Quarter of Region's Highway Deaths Street Smart 'Pay Attention' Campaign Confronts Pedestrian Dangers Region Unites Behind 'Street Smart' Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Campaign***

Alexandria, Va. – New research shows the responsibility for pedestrian incidents appears shared, almost equally, between drivers and pedestrians. This is prompting regional leaders to launch a new effort to ensure drivers and pedestrians pay attention to one another. The September 2005 study, commissioned by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC) and conducted by the Inova Regional Trauma Center (IRTC), found that the failure to pay proper attention and the use of improper crossing areas threaten the safety of walkers more than any other factors.

Pedestrians and bicyclists account for nearly a quarter of those killed on the roads in the Washington region. Already, the Washington, D.C. area has seen at least seven pedestrian fatalities since December. With approximately 89 pedestrians killed and 2,600 injured each year in the region\*, leaders vowed to continue to work together to heighten awareness of pedestrian safety issues and to intensify enforcement on traffic violations in areas with high numbers of pedestrian incidents. While the personal cost of pedestrian crashes defies measurement, average hospital charges per patient range from \$17,000 to \$30,000.\*

Under the sponsorship of MWCOC, 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, metro, bus, and outdoor transit seeks to capture the attention of drivers, cyclists and walkers to ensure that they pay due attention to each other on area roads. Campaign materials urge drivers to "Stop for Pedestrians" and "Watch for Bicyclists at Intersections." Materials also caution pedestrians to "Use the Crosswalks;" "Pay Attention Around Large Vehicles;" and "Look Before You Cross." A strong focus of the campaign is reaching the Hispanic audience through Spanish-language brochures and advertising outreach.

"As area roads become more congested and aggressive driving behaviors increase, the consequences are tragically obvious," said Michael Knapp, Chairman of MWCOC. "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."

The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that a pedestrian is killed almost every 2 hours and injured every 8 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.\*\* Most injuries and deaths can be prevented by changing road design, vehicle design and/or the behavior of pedestrians and drivers.

The *Street Smart* pedestrian safety effort focuses on the "four E's:" education, enforcement, engineering, and evaluation. The **education** component of the campaign 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. A stepped-up, region-wide **enforcement** initiative complements the education/awareness blitz. **Engineering**

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initiatives include improved sidewalks, sightlines, signals and markings, traffic calming and the use of technology, such as laser detectors and the "runway" lighting for crosswalks. The **evaluation** portion 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.

"We must not forget that pedestrian safety is everyone's responsibility," said Ludwig Gaines, Councilman, City of Alexandria. "This campaign is an opportunity for jurisdictional leaders to band together to show their commitment to the welfare of their communities."

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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 89 fatalities involved pedestrians and bicyclists in 2001. For more information about *Street Smart*, please go to <http://www.mwcog.org/transportation/streetsmart>.

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