

**METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**

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## **Don't Be a Zombie: Walk, Ride and Drive Alive!**

### ***Regional Street Smart Campaign Urges Drivers, Bicyclists and Pedestrians to Look Out for Each Other***

WASHINGTON, DC – This weekend, as daylight savings – time ends and people take to the streets to celebrate Halloween, the region's *Street Smart* safety campaign is urging drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists across the greater Washington area to pay extra attention to each other.

Kicking off in Georgetown, ground-zero for adult Halloween revelry, the effort launched with a lurch: A group of “zombies” lumbered across the busy intersection of K Street and Wisconsin Avenue and proceeded into the heart of Georgetown to distribute hand-outs about safety. The zombies focused on their cell phones and Blackberries to illustrate the dangers of failing to pay attention.

More seriously, the kick off also featured two of the region's leading pedestrian safety experts, Assistant Chief Patrick Burke of the Metropolitan Police Department and George Branyan of the DC Department of Transportation, who detailed why pedestrian safety is no laughing matter and what the region is doing to keep the public safe through the *Street Smart* campaign and other efforts. The region's year-round pedestrian safety campaign emphasizes public awareness in the spring and fall.

From 2004 to 2008, an average of 89 pedestrians and bicyclists died each year, meaning that a walker or bicyclist was killed every four days, according to data compiled by the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board. Nearly one-quarter of the region's traffic fatalities are pedestrians and bicyclists, the Board's data shows. In urban areas, most pedestrians are hit at intersections, while in suburban areas, most pedestrians are struck at other locations. Research shows the responsibility is shared by both drivers and pedestrians/bicyclists who fail to look out for each other.

National statistics released this week by the Safe Kids USA campaign underscore the particular danger posed to children: more than 540 kids under the age of 14 are killed in pedestrian accidents each year. From 2002 to 2006, an average of 2.2 children were killed annually in pedestrian accidents on Halloween, compared with one child every other evening throughout the year.

On busy streets across the Washington, DC region, the increased use of cell phones and other mobile devices heightens the risks. The danger of failing to pay attention is compounded during the winter months, as shorter days mean more people are commuting in the dark. Most pedestrian injuries occur around the afternoon rush hour on weekdays.

“Halloween is a time for trick-or-treating and fun frights, but the real scare comes when drivers, pedestrians and cyclists don't watch out for each other,” remarked Assistant Chief Burke. “For everyone's safety, don't be a zombie: walk, ride and drive alive.”

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*About Street Smart*

Sponsored by 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 seventh year. 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 and cyclists 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 <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