

News Release

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Warmer Weather Prompts Increased Outdoor Activity and Safety Enforcement *“Street Smart” Campaign Urges Drivers, Bicyclists and Pedestrians to Exercise Caution*

Prince William County, VA– After a long, cold winter, Washington-area residents are ready to get outside and enjoy spring weather. With more people walking and biking, transportation officials from the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia are urging drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists, to take extra care and watch for each other when traveling around the region. To make sure they do, law enforcement agencies will be on the lookout for anyone not following traffic safety laws and will ticket and fine violators – whether on foot, a bike, or behind the wheel.

These increased efforts are all part of the spring [Street Smart](#) public awareness and enforcement campaign. From April 14 through May 11, officers in the District of Columbia, suburban Maryland, and Northern Virginia will be stepping up enforcement, watching for drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists who violate traffic safety laws. Drivers who fail to yield for people in crosswalks, for example, and pedestrians who jaywalk will face tickets and fines ranging from \$40 to \$500. Additionally, law-breaking drivers are subject to getting points on their driver records.

“This has been a particularly harsh winter, so we expect that, as spring unfolds, more people will be out walking and biking. With so many of us sharing the roads, it is critical that we make safety a top priority,” said Prince William County Supervisor Frank Principi, who serves on the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. “It’s the duty of all drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians to work together, pay attention and follow traffic laws to make sure everyone arrives at their destinations safely.”

Street Smart officials launched the spring initiative Tuesday morning, April 15, at the Woodbridge, VA intersection where Sally Ann Okuly was killed last November. Okuly, a devoted wife and mother of two, was crossing with the light at the southeast corner of Opitz Boulevard at Montgomery Avenue when she was struck and killed by a car in the crosswalk. That morning was the first time she had taken a walk outside her home since surviving a motorcycle accident six months earlier.

In the wake of Okuly’s death, her friends, family and community leaders have successfully advocated for engineering improvements to the intersection, including plans for crosswalk striping and the recent implementation of a Leading Pedestrian Interval (LPI) signal – a timing technique that allows pedestrians a few seconds headstart to begin crossing the street before cars get a green light. *Street Smart* officials hope to see similar improvements made at other treacherous intersections in the Washington region.

Street Smart aims to prevent pedestrian and bicyclist deaths like Okuly’s – let alone the countless injuries that occur each year –by urging people to pay more attention when they’re on the road and offering practical, easy-to-follow safety tips (see below). Drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians need to follow traffic laws, be aware of their surroundings, and avoid distractions such as cell phones. *Street Smart* reminds drivers to be alert and yield

to anyone walking or biking at intersections, encourages those on foot to use crosswalks and wait for the walk signal, and urges people on bicycles to ride in the direction of traffic and stop at red lights.

While pedestrian fatalities in the DC metro area decreased from 2012 to 2013, bicyclist fatalities more than doubled, from three in 2012 to seven in 2013. In 2013, preliminary data indicate that 73 pedestrians and bicyclists were killed in crashes in the Washington metropolitan region. These deaths accounted for 27 percent of all traffic fatalities in the area.

Information on the *Street Smart* public education program may be found at www.bestreetsmart.net.

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About the Street Smart Campaign & the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB)

Sponsored by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC) and the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB), the Street Smart public awareness and enforcement campaign is in its twelfth year. Its goal is to reduce pedestrian and cyclist injuries and deaths in the Washington metropolitan area. For more information about Street Smart, please visit www.bestreetsmart.net and twitter.com/COGStreetSmart. 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.

Street Smart Safety Tips

(BeStreetSmart.net)

If you're driving...

- Slow down and obey the speed limit.
- Look twice for people in crosswalks and yield to pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Be careful when passing stopped vehicles.
- When you're turning, yield to pedestrians and cyclists at intersections.
- Allow three feet when passing bicyclists.
- Look for cyclists and cars before you open your door.
- Avoid using your cell phone and never text while driving.

If you're walking...

- Cross the street at the corner and use marked crosswalks when they're available.
- Wait for the "Walk" signal to cross the street.
- Watch for turning vehicles. Before crossing look left, right, and left again.
- Be seen! If you're walking after dark or in bad weather, make it easier for drivers to see you by wearing light-colored clothing or something reflective.
- Don't text while you're crossing the street.
- If you're on an off-street trail, obey all posted signage and approach intersections with caution.

If you're biking...

- Obey all traffic signs and traffic signals.
- Ride in the direction of traffic, at least a car-door width away from parked cars.
- Use hand signals so drivers, cyclists and pedestrians know what you're going to do.
- Always wear a helmet.
- Use lights if you're riding in the dark.
- If you're on an off-street trail, obey all posted signage and approach intersections with caution.
- Slow down and watch for pedestrians on sidewalks, trails and in crosswalks.

Laws and regulations differ between jurisdictions. Visit BeStreetSmart.net for information on specific guidelines and regulations.