

NEWS • NEWS • NEWS



NEWS • NEWS • NEWS

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300 Washington, D.C. 20002-4239

Telephone (202) 962-3200 TDD (202) 962-3213 Fax (202) 962-3201 Internet: www.mwcog.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 5, 2004

CONTACT: Mike Farrell
202-962-3249

**REGION DEBUTS ‘STREET SMART’ PEDESTRIAN SAFETY CAMPAIGN
AS WARMER WEATHER, DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME RETURN**
More “Street Life” Means More Street Deaths and Injuries, Statistics Show

Arlington, Va. – Regional leaders joined by the Virginia secretary of transportation today launched a comprehensive public education and outreach campaign to reduce pedestrian deaths and injuries throughout the Washington metropolitan area. With pedestrian fatalities outnumbering homicides in many of the participating jurisdictions, leaders vowed to work together to heighten awareness about and change behavior toward pedestrian safety.

Under the auspices of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, the “Street Smart” campaign is aimed at young drivers who are involved in a majority of pedestrian collisions. The campaign materials urge drivers to “Imagine the Impact” on the lives and families of both pedestrians and drivers resulting from a traffic incident. The ads feature real people telling their stories and stress the rules for driver and pedestrian behavior at crosswalks. Creative and resonant advertisements will promote awareness during the [one-month?] [\$400,000??] blitz of local media outlets and transit services.

“All of us are pedestrians, so pedestrian safety is universally important,” said Chris Zimmerman, chairman of the Metropolitan Washington Transportation Planning Board. “But it is particularly relevant at this time of year. With the return to Daylight Savings Time this month, warmer weather, schools in full swing and the start of the tourist season, more pedestrians will be on the streets and sidewalks.”

The Federal Highway Administration estimates that a pedestrian is killed or injured every seven minutes on our nation’s roadways. Nationally, pedestrian fatalities have risen the past two years after nearly a decade of steady decline. In the Metropolitan Washington-area, approximately 30 pedestrians die each year and more than one thousand are injured. Most pedestrian fatalities in the region occur in normal weather conditions (89 percent) and at night (65 percent).

In January, a 58-year-old Silver Spring pedestrian was struck and killed in crossing New Hampshire Avenue at Eldrid Drive. Significantly, the victim was in a crosswalk and it was daylight (6:30 a.m.). She was running to catch a bus and the driver turned into the crosswalk against a red light.

Education, engineering and enforcement are the “three E’s” of pedestrian safety.

The **education** component of the campaign targets both pedestrians and drivers, and includes information about devices designed to enhance pedestrian safety, such as important points for the use of crosswalks, pedestrian warning signs, pedestrian signals and reflective materials for nighttime safety. Reaching Latino audiences is a key emphasis of the awareness program, with radio ads and print ads and pamphlets in Spanish.

Nighttime visibility is one of the most important pedestrian safety issues – national statistics show that almost 50 percent of pedestrian fatalities occur between the hours of 6 p.m. and midnight. The campaign encourages schoolchildren and the public to carry a flashlight and wear reflective materials when walking at night or early in the morning when it is dark.

Engineering includes improved sightlines, signals and markings and the use of technology, such as the laser detector and the “runway” lighting for crosswalks demonstrated at today’s event. Other innovations, such as pedestrian “countdown” signals are becoming increasingly prevalent across the region.

Locally, Montgomery County, Prince George’s County and the City of Takoma Park, Maryland recently launched a major **enforcement** effort – committing more than sixty law enforcement officials to cite violations that police feel could lead to accidents.

Complementing the regional effort, local jurisdictions are implementing their own pedestrian safety initiatives. All programs focus on public awareness/education and physical improvements at crosswalks to include improved striping, lighting and signage.

###