![Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments logo] **PRESS RELEASE**

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DARKER MONTHS LEAD TO SPIKE IN
TRAFFIC CRASHES INVOLVING PEDESTRIANS
Safety Officials Launch New Campaign to Urge Attention, Reduce Injuries and Deaths

CITY OF FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA – Transportation officials in the Washington region warn drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians to be more alert as daylight savings time ends this weekend, bringing darker commuting hours and increased risk for traffic crashes.

Shorter daylight hours in fall and winter typically lead to a spike in crashes involving pedestrians, and safety officials are asking commuters to take exercise caution, watch out for each other, and obey traffic laws. In the last thirty days, crashes in the region have resulted in four pedestrian deaths, emphasizing the need for heightened attention.

In the wake of these tragedies, representatives from the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia launched a new *Street Smart* safety awareness campaign at Old Town Square in the City of Fairfax, Virginia.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reported that in 2015, 74 percent of pedestrian fatalities nationwide occurred during the dark, dusk-till-dawn hours, with one in four occurring between the hours of 6 and 9 pm.

"The time change this weekend means that reduced visibility during the evening rush hour is a real safety concern," said Chuck Bean, Executive Director of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. "On foot, bike or behind the wheel, we must all take responsibility for being alert and following traffic laws, for our own safety and for that of others."

To support the effort, now through December 3, police departments in the region also will be stepping up their efforts to enforce the laws protecting pedestrians and bicyclists. "Our goal is to save lives," said Col. Carl Pardiny, Chief of Police, City of Fairfax Police Department. "If a ticket is the reminder you need to follow traffic safety laws, we'll make sure you get the message."

Violations can be costly. Fines for violations such as failing to stop for pedestrians in crosswalks and jaywalking can be as much as $500, and drivers can have points added to their driver records.

The *Street Smart* campaign offers common sense safety tips for all travelers (see below). Learn more about *Street Smart* at BeStreetSmart.net and follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/COGStreetSmart.

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The Council of Governments is an independent, nonprofit association where area leaders address regional issues affecting the District of Columbia, suburban Maryland, and Northern Virginia.

Street Smart Safety Tips
(BeStreetSmart.net)

If you're driving…

- Slow down and obey the speed limit.
- Stop for pedestrians at crosswalks.
- Be careful when passing buses or stopped vehicles.
- When turning, yield to people walking and biking.
- Look for bicyclists before opening your door.
- Allow at least 3 feet when passing bikes.
- 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.
- Use the pushbuttons.
- Wait for the walk signal to cross the street.
- Watch for turning vehicles.
- Before crossing, look left, right, and left again.
- Be visible. Wear something light or reflective after dark.
- Watch out for blind spots around trucks and buses.
- Avoid using your cell phone while you're crossing the street.
- On an off-street trail, obey all posted signage and approach intersections with caution.

If you're biking…

- Obey signs and signals.
- Never ride against traffic.
- Ride in a straight line at least 3 feet from parked cars.
- Use hand signals to tell drivers what you intend to do.
- Wear a helmet.
- Use lights at night and when visibility is poor.
- On an off-street trail, obey all posted signs and approach intersections with caution.

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