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OFFICIALS CALL ON AREA RESIDENTS TO OBEY TRAFFIC LAWS, LOOK OUT FOR ONE ANOTHER AS BIKE SAFETY MONTH APPROACHES
Street Smart Campaign Offers Tips For Driving, Walking and Biking

[LANGLEY PARK, MD] – With warmer weather upon us and summer around the corner, Washington-area officials are calling on people who travel around the region to be extra alert for one another on roadways. May is Bicycle Safety Month, and transportation officials from the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia gathered in Langley Park today to remind commuters in cars, on bikes and on foot to be cautious and follow all traffic laws.

The event kicked off the spring *Street Smart* public awareness and enforcement campaign. This campaign will target areas with high crash rates in an effort to focus the attention of travelers in especially dangerous locations. In addition, police departments throughout the D.C. area will support the campaign with increased enforcement of traffic safety laws in these “pedestrian alert zones.”

“Pedestrians and bicyclists are very vulnerable roadway users,” said Maryland Motor Vehicle Administrator and Governor Larry Hogan’s Highway Safety Representative Christine E. Nizer. “More people will be outside enjoying the warmer weather, and it’s critical to be aware of your surroundings, whether you’re driving, biking, or walking. Safety on our roads is our top priority, and we need everyone to look up and look out for one another.”

Through May 14, regional law enforcement will step up efforts to identify and ticket drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists who break safety laws, particularly in high-risk areas. Violations such as failing to stop for people in crosswalks, not signaling, or jaywalking can result in fines up to \$500, and drivers may receive points on their driver record.

According to preliminary data for 2016, 71 pedestrians and 10 bicyclists lost their lives, accounting for 29 percent of the 279 total traffic fatalities in the Washington region. This is an increase in the region overall, with some municipalities showing significant decreases and others with increased fatalities over 2015. The Governors’ Highway Safety Association (GHSA) estimates that the number of pedestrians killed nationally in 2016 increased by 11 percent compared with 2015.

“Officers throughout the area are committed to enforcing laws to protect pedestrians and bicyclists,” said Chief Hank Stawinski of Prince George’s County Police Department. “We write tickets to change behavior that we know results in injury and death. Stop for pedestrians in crosswalks and always give bicyclists at least three feet of clearance. When crossing the street, use the crosswalk, and wait for the walk signal. Together we can save lives.”

The spring *Street Smart* campaign launch took place at the Takoma Langley Crossroads Transit Center, a multi-modal transit hub for pedestrians, bicyclists, and bus riders. The Transit Center opened in December and provides service to 12,000 passengers daily, and is planned to provide a transfer point to the future Purple Line.

“Our roads and streets are shared by a diverse group of travelers,” said Prince George’s County Executive Rushern Baker. “Pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists are all moving quickly and focused on their destinations. We all have to be more aware and consider the safety of others as we move about our neighborhoods and communities.”

“We are proud to promote improving pedestrian and bicyclist safety—an issue that is near and dear to my heart—through the regional *Street Smart* campaign,” said Montgomery County Executive Isiah

Leggett. "While each of our jurisdictions has its own programs and initiatives, when we work together we can and will have a profound impact with lifesaving results."

Street Smart is a public awareness campaign for commuters in the Washington, D.C., suburban Maryland, and Northern Virginia area dedicated to preventing deaths and injuries of people walking and biking in those areas. The campaign offers safety tips for all travelers (see below) and joins media and law enforcement to encourage all drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians to stay alert and follow safety laws when they travel throughout the region.

To learn more about Street Smart, visit BeStreetSmart.net and follow us on 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

If you're driving . . .

- Look twice for people in crosswalks and yield to pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Be careful when passing stopped vehicles.
- Yield to pedestrians and cyclists at intersections when you're turning.
- Allow three feet when passing bicyclists.
- Look for cyclists and cars before you open your door.
- Slow down and obey the speed limit.
- Avoid using your cell phone 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.
- 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 clothing or something reflective.
- Avoid using your cell phone while crossing the street.
- On an off-street trail, obey all posted signage and approach intersections with caution.

If you're biking . . .

- Obey all traffic signs and traffic lights.
- 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.
- On an off-street trail, obey all posted signage and approach intersections with caution.

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