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D.C. Region Evening Commute More Challenging After Clocks “Fall Back”

Street Smart Interactive Experience Teaches Drivers, Pedestrians, and Cyclists How to Stay Safe

WASHINGTON, D.C. – November is associated with an increase in the number of pedestrians injured or killed during the evening commute, when the end of Daylight Saving Time means it grows dark an hour earlier. In the metropolitan Washington region, pedestrian crashes peaked to 280 during the month of November in 2017, according to reports from D.C., Maryland, and Virginia.

Today, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia officials joined together to address this alarming trend at the fall kickoff event in Silver Spring, Maryland for the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) Street Smart campaign, which helps raise awareness about pedestrian and bicycle safety.

“Setting our clocks back shouldn’t mean we’re setting back safety on our roads,” said Kelly Melhem, Deputy Chief, MDOT Maryland Highway Safety Office, which hosted this year’s event. “Increasing awareness of what drivers can and cannot see in different settings helps us learn better ways to stay safe at any time of year.”

The event featured the launch of the new Street Smart Virtual Reality Challenge. This traveling educational exhibit is an interactive, virtual reality experience that lets participants encounter three different traffic scenarios frequently associated with crashes, injuries, and deaths of people walking and biking.

Participants sit behind the wheel of a Street Smart convertible and immerse themselves in a 360-degree virtual reality video of traffic scenarios, while the technology captures their ability to spot pedestrians and bicyclists – some showing up in unexpected places.

The Street Smart Virtual Reality Challenge will travel the region from November 5 through December 2. During that time, police departments across the region will also step up enforcement of traffic safety laws that protect pedestrians and cyclists.

Key safety tips for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists include:

If you’re driving...

- Slow down, obey the speed limit, and be alert for people walking and biking.
- Stop for people in crosswalks.
- Never pass a vehicle stopped at a crosswalk.
- Yield to pedestrians and bicyclists when turning.

If you’re walking...

- Wear something bright or reflective when it’s dark outside.
- Use the crosswalk and wait for the walk signal.
- Watch for turning cars at intersections.

If you’re biking...

- Be predictable and obey signs and signals.
- Never ride against traffic.
- Use lights at night.

Learn more about Street Smart at BeStreetSmart.net and follow us on Twitter [@COGStreetSmart](https://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.