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CONTACT: Jeff Salzgeber: jeffs@sherrymatthews.com, (512) 743-2659

## SPEED A KEY FACTOR IN PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLIST FATALITIES

*Street Smart campaign focused on getting DC-area drivers to slow down*

WASHINGTON, DC – Speeding drivers continue to be a primary factor in deadly crashes with people walking and biking. According to a recent report from the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA), higher vehicle speeds are strongly associated with a greater likelihood of pedestrian crashes and increase the severity of injuries and possibility of death.

In 2017, preliminary data indicate that 79 pedestrians and 6 cyclists were killed in the Washington, DC region, indicating an overall increase from the previous year. The uptick in the number of fatalities concerns leaders across the region.

“These deaths and injuries are preventable,” said Jeff Marootian, Director of the District Department of Transportation. “Research tells us that if we can get people to slow down, we can save lives. Increased enforcement, engineering improvements, and raising public awareness are important steps that we are taking to reduce the number of deaths on our streets.”

*Street Smart*, a pedestrian and cyclist safety program created in 2002, offers safety tips to prevent pedestrian and bicyclist deaths and injuries in the DC metro area. Aimed at getting drivers to slow down, *Street Smart*'s spring campaign launches April 16 with new transit ads, grassroots outreach, and partnerships with law enforcement.

Combined, pedestrian and cyclist deaths account for more than 27 percent of all traffic fatalities in the region. Vehicle speed, time of day, distraction, and alcohol are contributing factors in pedestrian and cyclist deaths and injuries, according to GHSA.

During the *Street Smart* campaign, which runs through May 13, law enforcement officers in Maryland, the District of Columbia, and northern Virginia will be stepping up enforcement of traffic safety laws that protect people walking and biking.

“If the threat of injury or death isn’t enough to inspire people to slow down and obey traffic safety laws, our police officers will be giving out extra reminders in the form of a ticket,” said Assistant Chief Jeffery Carroll of the Metropolitan Police Department.

Law enforcement will ticket drivers who disobey the speed limit or fail to stop for pedestrians in crosswalks. The effort also encourages pedestrians to take the time to cross safely by using crosswalks and waiting for the walk signal. Violations can be costly—up to \$500—and drivers can have points added to their records.

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

## Street Smart Safety Tips

### ***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](http://BeStreetSmart.net) for information on specific trail guidelines and regulations.*