



NEWS RELEASE

Spike in Pedestrian Deaths Prompts More Action Across D.C. Region

Street Smart campaign focuses on bringing community together for long-term solutions

Fairfax County, VA (April 23, 2019) – With pedestrian deaths on the rise around the metropolitan Washington area, local and state officials are taking action to ensure everyone stays safe on the road. The launch of the [Street Smart](#) campaign today by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) combines public education with increased enforcement of traffic laws.

Even as most types of traffic fatalities declined in 2018, the number of pedestrians and cyclists killed in traffic incidents increased nearly 19 percent across the region, according to local departments of transportation. Preliminary data indicate that pedestrian and cyclist deaths account for more than 33 percent of all traffic fatalities in the region, mirroring national trends. According to the Governors Highway Safety Association, the biggest contributing factors are vehicle speed, distractions, time of day, and alcohol.

“Fairfax County has invested more than \$300 million in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure since 2002, and we know there’s much more work to be done,” said Sharon Bulova, chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. “Making travel safer requires all of us – government, law enforcement and the public – to increase our collective efforts. We are grateful for programs like *Street Smart* that remind the public to be alert, to be safe, and to watch out for each other on the roads.”

As more people take to the road this spring and summer, *Street Smart*, a pedestrian and bicyclist safety program created in 2002, will offer safety tips to drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists through a combination of transit ads, media outreach, digital engagement and grassroots outreach.

The campaign will run through May 13 concurrent with increased enforcement of traffic safety laws that protect people walking and biking in the District of Columbia, suburban Maryland and Northern Virginia. Law enforcement officials will be ticketing drivers who disobey the speed limit or fail to stop for pedestrians in crosswalks. Violations can cost up to \$500 and add points to a driver’s record.

The campaign works in conjunction with ongoing efforts across the region to improve infrastructure and keep everyone safe with upgraded safety features for intersections and roadways. The *Street Smart* campaign offers safety tips for drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists (see below). Learn more about *Street Smart* at BeStreetSmart.net and follow us on Twitter at [@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 transit buses or stopped vehicles.
- Do not pass school buses with flashing lights.
- 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.