



NEWS RELEASE

D.C. region pedestrian, cyclist deaths increased 37 percent in 2022

Street Smart campaign urges drivers to pay attention to prevent crashes and save lives

Wheaton, MD (April 13, 2023) – Pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities in the metropolitan Washington region increased 37 percent in 2022 compared to the year prior, accounting for more than 36 percent of total traffic deaths. Local and state officials are asking everyone to take action to help reverse this distressing trend and ensure everyone reaches their destination safely.

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' (COG) spring [Street Smart](#) campaign, launched today in Montgomery County, Maryland by transportation officials from across the region, not only aims to call attention to the stories of people behind the numbers, but also combines public outreach with increased traffic law enforcement to enact change. Because more than one in three people who dies in traffic in our area is someone walking or biking, it's imperative that drivers look out for more vulnerable road users and that everyone takes steps to be safe.

“This dramatic spike in pedestrian and cyclist fatalities is deeply concerning,” said COG Board Chair and Montgomery County Councilmember Kate Stewart. “These are members of our community, and their deaths were preventable. Making our roads safer requires all of us—government, law enforcement, and the public—to increase our collective efforts.”

According to the Governors Highway Safety Association, the most common factors contributing to these crashes and fatalities are speed, distractions, and alcohol. The Street Smart safety program, created in 2002, encourages drivers to avoid these unsafe behaviors and offers safety tips to all commuters through a combination of transit ads, media outreach, digital engagement, and grassroots outreach.

The campaign will run April 13 through May 14 alongside 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.

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MORE: Learn more about Street Smart at BeStreetSmart.net and follow us on Twitter at @COGStreetSmart.

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.
- Be especially careful if you drive an SUV or pickup truck—crashes involving high profile vehicles more often result in the death or serious injury of people walking and biking.

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 more information.

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.