

NEWS RELEASE

Street Smart: Officials unveil new “Slow Down, Life Ahead” safety campaign

Campaign increases traffic safety awareness and enforcement as days get shorter

Temple Hills, MD (Oct. 29, 2024) – October is National Pedestrian Safety Month and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments’ (COG) Street Smart campaign is educating drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists to keep everyone safe on the region’s roadways through increased traffic enforcement and a new messaging campaign sharing impactful roadway safety tips, “*Slow Down, Life Ahead*”.

The end of Daylight Saving Time ushers in shorter days and reduced visibility on streets and roads, often making it the most dangerous time of year for pedestrians and bicyclists. To tackle this important issue and save lives, COG’s Street Smart program is working with local police departments throughout the region to increase enforcement of traffic safety laws that protect people walking and biking. Meanwhile, the campaign’s street teams act as walking billboards at high priority areas to remind drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians of the laws they must follow and tips they can use to save lives.

In 2023, 117 pedestrians and bicyclists were killed in traffic crashes in the region, a 17 percent decrease from 2022. Despite this promising decline, these preventable traffic deaths rob families and communities of their loved ones. The Street Smart campaign aims to continue the life-saving progress the region has made by raising traffic safety awareness, educating drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians with safety tips, and partnering with local police to enforce traffic safety laws.

“It’s our responsibility as a community to look out for one another when on the road whether you’re driving, cycling, or walking,” said Chrissy Nizer, Maryland Department of Transportation’s Motor Vehicle Administrator and Governor Moore’s Highway Safety Representative. “Simple, everyday actions like following the speed limit, stopping for pedestrians in crosswalks, and looking both ways before you cross the street can save lives.”

Street Smart is a pedestrian and bicyclist safety program created by COG in 2002. The campaign works in conjunction with ongoing efforts across the region to better enforce traffic safety laws and upgrade infrastructure with lifesaving safety features. The campaign also educates drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists with traffic safety tips on transit ads, in media outreach, via digital engagement, and with on-the-ground outreach.

STREET SMART SAFETY TIPS

Safety advocates say it is important for everyone to be aware of their surroundings, avoid distractions, and follow the rules of the road.

If you’re driving ...

- Look out for pedestrians everywhere, at all times.
- Slow down and obey the speed limit.
- Stop for pedestrians at marked and unmarked crosswalks.
- Be careful when passing buses or stopped vehicles.

- When turning, yield to people walking and biking.
- Look for bicyclists before opening your car door.
- Allow at least 3 feet when passing people on bikes.
- Put away your cell phone and never text while driving.
- Be especially careful if you drive an SUV or pickup truck—crashes involving high profile vehicles are more likely to cause death or serious injury for people walking and biking.

If you're walking ...

- Always cross the street at the corner and use marked crosswalks when they're available.
- Use the pushbuttons to request a signal change.
- Wait for the walk signal to cross the street.
- Watch for turning vehicles.
- Before crossing, look left, right, and left again.
- Try to make eye contact with drivers so that you're sure they see you.
- 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.

If you're biking ...

- Be predictable. 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.
- Use bike lanes when available.
- On an off-street trail, obey all posted signs and approach intersections with caution.

MORE: Laws and regulations differ between jurisdictions. 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.