



NEWS RELEASE

115 pedestrians and cyclists were killed in the D.C. region in 2023

Street Smart campaign implores drivers to prevent crashes and save lives

Washington, D.C. (April 22, 2024) – After a significant and deadly surge in 2022, pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities in the metropolitan Washington region began to reverse the trend and decreased by 17% in 2023. Those fatalities represent more than 30% of total traffic deaths. Local and state officials are asking everyone to be alert and obey traffic safety laws to continue this decrease to make our streets safe for everyone.

To help spread this message, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) is launching its spring [Street Smart](#) campaign in partnership with transportation officials from across the region. The campaign shows drivers, cyclists and pedestrians the unacceptable human cost of traffic crashes, coupled with increased enforcement of traffic laws from local law enforcement, discouraging unsafe behavior. Drivers in particular are being asked to watch out for more people walking and bicycling as the weather warms so they can avoid what could be life-changing crashes.

The Street Smart safety program, created in 2002, encourages drivers to avoid common mistakes like speeding, distracted driving, and driving after drinking alcohol. The campaign also offers safety tips to all commuters through transit ads, media outreach, digital engagement, and grassroots outreach.

The campaign will run April 21 through May 19 in partnership with law enforcement officials in the District of Columbia, suburban Maryland, and northern Virginia. Those officials will step up enforcement of traffic safety laws to discourage unsafe behavior, including 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 regional efforts to improve infrastructure and upgrade 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 the program on X/Twitter at [@COGStreetSmart](#).

CONTACT:

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

Lindsey Martin: lmartin@mwkog.org, (202) 962-3209

MORE: Learn more about Street Smart at [BeStreetSmart.net](#) and follow the program on X/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.
- Put away your 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 . . .

- 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.
- On an off-street trail, obey all posted signage and approach intersections with caution.

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.
- 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.