

February 26 , 2008

Contact:

Dave Sotero/Marc Littman

Metro Media Relations

213.922.3007/922.4609

www.metro.net/pressroom

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

L.A. Metro, LADOT, Auto Club Urge Increased Motorist and Pedestrian Safety at Intersections

Los Angeles County pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists are urged to exercise more caution at traffic intersections to avoid being involved in needless crashes that can cause serious injury or death.

That's the message that the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro), Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) and the Automobile Club of Southern California (Auto Club) want to convey to combat the high number of pedestrian and automobile traffic collisions that occur every year on area roadways.

According to the California Office of Traffic Safety, there were 4,195 deaths and 277,373 injuries in traffic collisions statewide in 2006. Pedestrian fatalities for that year alone totaled 735. Many of these crashes occur at intersections as motorists turn unsafely or run red lights, and pedestrians enter crosswalks when it is unsafe to do so. These collisions can trump a plethora of intersection safety measures and involve public transit vehicles that endanger multiple passengers in a single incident.

After peaking in 1979 at 5,500 deaths, the number of crash fatalities in California dropped to 3,459 in 1998, but that number has risen 21 percent since that time, said Steven Bloch, Ph.D., the Auto Club's traffic safety researcher.

"Nearly half of the rise in California traffic fatalities is due to crashes caused by improper turns, which mainly occur at intersections," Bloch said. "Crash deaths caused by improper turns increased by 89 percent from 1998 through 2005, and injuries rose by 42 percent. It appears that crash danger is particularly increasing at intersections. Motorists and pedestrians need to be aware of this and make intersection safety a priority by eliminating distractions and exercising caution when entering any intersection."

Within Los Angeles County, Metro operates a fleet of more than 2,500 buses which together log 300,000 road miles per day. As a result, the agency has a substantial daily exposure to road risks along with all motorists. To raise awareness for safe roadway behaviors, Metro, LADOT and the Auto Club have participated in Operation Traffic, a coalition of organizations that founded the "Watch the Road" public awareness campaign, available online at www.watchtheroad.org. The campaign seeks to improve safety for motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians through coordinated education and enforcement efforts.

Metro also participates in the national "Stop on Red" campaign to help reduce the incidence of vehicles running red lights. The agency spearheads its own "Safety Begins With Me" campaign focused on promoting simple safety precautions around the region's public transit system.

"Metro's safety outreach is augmented by intensive bus operator training in defensive driving," said Roger Snoble, Metro CEO. "While bus drivers are safety trained on an ongoing basis, the public is not. That's why we must all work together to ensure the safe interaction of vehicles, pedestrians and public transit."

LADOT has implemented a host of roadway safety provisions that are aimed at reducing traffic collisions. By 2011, for example, the agency will have synchronized all 4,400 of the city's signalized intersections to better modulate traffic flows. The agency has a program to significantly increase the installation of left-hand turn arrows to reduce left turn delays and collisions. LADOT is also replacing all city pedestrian signals with timed countdown features to make it easier for pedestrians to gauge the time needed to safely cross intersections.

"Intersection engineering improvements are a key pillar of LADOT's safety efforts," said Rita L. Robinson, LADOT General Manager. "Together with traffic enforcement and public education, we can make our streets safer for everyone."

The public is encouraged to follow these important motorist and pedestrian safety tips to keep local roadways safe:

- Stay alert around traffic and street crossings.
- If your driving route includes a busy intersection with an unprotected left turn, try rerouting and making three right turns instead. It will probably be safer and may even save time.
- When waiting to cross, stay well back and away from the curb.
Look in all directions before stepping into the street – left, right, behind and in front. Make sure that drivers – no matter where they're coming from – have seen you and are yielding the right-of-way to you.
- Cross only on the "Walk" signal – and make sure no vehicles are approaching.
Never insist on having the right-of-way by stepping out into traffic. If a vehicle has started to turn before you step off the curb, let it complete its turn, even if you see the "walk" signal.
- Don't block out sounds and sights by using earphones, cell phones, hoods or umbrellas.

For additional Metro information and online transit trip planning, visit WWW.METRO.NET. For transit trip planning assistance over the phone, call 1-800-COMMUTE.

Metro-028

[Copyright © 2008, LACMTA](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)