For Immediate Release: July 21, 2003

PEDESTRIANS ARMED WITH NEW CROSSWALK LAW

New Legislation Revives Partnership in Pedestrian Safety to Raise Awareness; Baltimore County Police to Provide Enforcement

(July 21, 2003) – The Maryland Department of Transportation today joined with State and Local officials along Harford Road in Baltimore County to celebrate the passing of House Bill 738 sponsored by Delegate Joseph C. Boteler III. Signed into law by Governor Robert L. Ehrlich on May 13, 2003, the new legislation will provide new armor to Maryland pedestrians in crosswalks by clarifying the pedestrian crosswalk law and removing ambiguous language. Passing of the new law breathes new life into pedestrian safety awareness efforts, and today’s press conference provided an opportunity for State and Local officials and community organizations to join together in a united front to raise pedestrian safety awareness, change behavior and save lives.

"The Ehrlich Administration is committed to safety," said Transportation Secretary Robert L. Flanagan. "With more than 100 pedestrians dying in Maryland each year, the State is making every effort to raise awareness about pedestrian safety. Delegate Boteler's bill makes the rules of the road clearer for both motorists and pedestrians and provides police with a good enforcement tool."

Additionally, Secretary Flanagan announced that the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) will install a new traffic signal just north of the event site along Harford Road and Emerald Road/Woodside Avenue.

Among those who joined Secretary Flanagan and Delegate Boteler at today’s press conference were State Delegate John Cluster; SHA Administrator Neil J. Pedersen; Maryland Insurance Commissioner Alfred W. Redmer, Jr; County Councilman Joseph Bartenfelder; John Markem, President of the Parkville Carney Business and Professional Association; Ruth Baisden, President of the Greater Parkville Community Council and Baltimore County Police Captain and Commander of Precinct 8 - Parkville, Ron Schwartz.

"This law is an important safety measure that the community has needed for a long time. This law will eliminate the confusion for both pedestrians and motorists in regard to their individual responsibility when someone is in the crosswalk," said Delegate Boteler. "I believe this new law will aid police with enforcement and enable the education of both motorists and pedestrians to reduce needless injuries and death."

House Bill 738 clarifies the Maryland crosswalk law, requiring the driver of a vehicle to stop when a pedestrian crossing in a crosswalk is approaching from an adjacent lane on the opposite half of the roadway. It removes the ambiguous language "so close as to be in danger" in the existing law and replaces it with "adjacent lane." The new law will go into effect October 1, 2003. Passing of the new law provided an opportunity to remind motorists...
that pedestrians have the right of way in crosswalks and all intersections.

Between 1997 and 2001, 13,800 people were injured in Maryland and a total of 523 people were killed. Nearly three-fourths of all pedestrian fatalities occurred in five major jurisdictions: Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Montgomery and Prince Georges counties and Baltimore City.

“The safety of every citizen who uses our transportation network is of the utmost importance to the Maryland Department of Transportation,” said State Highway Administrator Neil J. Pedersen. “Because following the rules of the road can save lives, everyone needs to help spread the word that safety starts by driving and walking smart.”

At the conclusion of the press conference, officials unveiled a speed trailer to thwart speeding along Harford Road. To help aid in enforcement efforts, the Baltimore County Police Department provided a team of officers to enforce pedestrian-related traffic laws at Harford and Garnet roads. Police officers distributed tickets, warnings and educational information. Also along Harford Road, SHA placed variable message signs reminding motorists that Maryland State Law requires motorists to stop for pedestrians in crosswalks.

Officials expressed optimism that today’s efforts will spark educational discussions about pedestrian safety and urge everyone to review the rules of the road. Adults can work with children under their protection by literally walking them through the rules that will keep them safe as they go to school, to the bus stop or to the neighborhood candy store. To help remind citizens to “walk smart” and “drive smart,” SHA’s “Smart Moves” campaign includes television and radio public service announcements, as well as billboards and other educational materials to help citizens obtain life-saving safety tips.

Some of those safety rules include crossing at crosswalks and looking left, right, then left again before entering the street. If the road is clear, then begin crossing, continuing to look both ways. Bright clothing and with reflective materials is helpful for ensuring pedestrian visibility. Pedestrians should never dart out from between parked cars and follow pedestrian signals where available. Motorists must watch the roadway at all times, driving defensively and with caution. Motorists must drive the speed limit. Exceeding the speed limit only makes it harder to react to unexpected situations that arise. Motorists must stop for pedestrians, even when making a right-turn on-red. Drivers should also remember that they become pedestrians as soon as they get out of the car and begin to walk.

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