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## Pedestrian rights in crosswalks

*Passed by 4 to 0 vote at the legally noticed, public meeting of ANC1D on June 5, 2007, with a quorum present.*

Resolved, that ANC1D advises the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) to implement a program for targeted enforcement of the law requiring drivers to stop for pedestrians in crosswalks; and advises the Mayor to issue instructions to the MPD to that effect.

**Why:** The Pedestrian Protection Right-of-Way at Crosswalks Amendment Act of 2004 requires drivers to "stop and give the right-of-way to a pedestrian crossing the roadway within any marked crosswalk or unmarked crosswalk at an intersection. In fact, drivers ignore this law, speeding past pedestrians in crosswalks, even despite the Department of Transportation (DDOT) pylons instructing drivers to stop for pedestrians in crosswalks. Automobile drivers know that this law is almost never enforced, and that they are free to defy it.

The DDOT Online Survey of pedestrian complaints determined that the most significant deterrent to walking in the District is "unsafe street crossings or intersections", and that the factor most frequently cited for making it difficult or unpleasant to walk in the District is "drivers not stopping for pedestrians in crosswalks". The Department of Transportation has done what it can about crosswalks, enhancing their visibility and erecting "stop for pedestrian" pylons. Those are clearly ineffectual, and firmer action will be necessary to change the prevailing attitude of DC drivers that pedestrian rights can be ignored.

The Metropolitan Police Department has the mandate to promote traffic safety, but they are reluctant to allocate MPD resources to support pedestrian rights, preferring to focus on criminal issues. But pedestrian safety is a clear and compelling issue affecting District residents, easily as important as problems of crime. Just this past January, a pedestrian was killed in Mount Pleasant, crossing a street in a crosswalk.

The current practice in the District of giving pedestrians legal rights in a crosswalk, but failing to penalize drivers who violate those rights, is a prescription for more pedestrian injuries and deaths. Furthermore, the failure to enforce the rights of pedestrians crossing streets in crosswalks severely degrades the comfort and safety of walking as a mode of

transportation in the District. The District's goal of a "walkable" community cannot be achieved without changing the culture of drivers in the District, and their attitude that pedestrians in crosswalks have no rights. This change can be brought about only by firm enforcement of the District law requiring drivers to stop for pedestrians in crosswalks.