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News Release

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Share! Durham accepts Safer People, Safer Streets challenge; <http://bit.ly/1GYJMOB>

Durham Accepts Safer People, Safer Streets Challenge

Year-Long Activities Aimed at Improving Road Safety for Pedestrians and Bicyclists

DURHAM, N.C. — Over the coming year, the City of Durham will be focusing its efforts on improving road safety, particularly for people walking and riding bicycles.

Mayor William V. “Bill” Bell has accepted the Mayors’ Challenge for Safer People, Safer Streets issued by U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx. The Mayors’ Challenge, delivered by Secretary Foxx in February 2015 as a way to promote safety for all road users, begins this month and involves a year of planned activities.

“The Mayor’s Challenge for Safer People, Safer Streets is an opportunity to focus on providing the livable community that our residents want and deserve,” said Mayor Bell. “The City of Durham is determined to be a leader in providing safe and healthy transportation options.”

As bicycling, walking and public transit have increased in popularity in recent years, pedestrian and bicyclist traffic deaths have steadily increased. In response, the United States Department of Transportation issued a [Policy Statement on Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation](#), upon which the Mayor’s Challenge is based. This statement outlines the federal government’s goals for improving road safety and emphasized the importance of involving local communities, such as the City of Durham.

The City’s Transportation Department plans to promote the Mayor’s Challenge as a “Call to Action” for local government leaders to issue a public statement about roadway safety, form a

local action team to advance safety goals, and address a series of Challenge activities. These Challenge activities are:

- Take a Complete Streets approach that focuses on making it safe and convenient for people of all ages and abilities to reach their destination, whether by car, transit, bike, or foot
- Identify and address barriers to make streets safe and convenient for all road users, including people of all ages and abilities and those using assistive-mobility devices
- Collect biking and walking data in order to track trends and prioritize investments
- Use designs appropriate to the context of the street and its uses
- Take advantage of opportunities to create and complete bicycle and pedestrian networks through maintenance
- Improve walking and biking safety laws and regulations
- Educate and enforce proper road use behaviors by all

According to Director Mark Ahrendsen with the City's Transportation Department, while the City has already done significant work on all seven activities, the Mayors' Challenge provides an opportunity to assess progress and focus on the Challenge areas which need the most attention to improve safety in Durham. "To help us focus on some key areas, a local action team will be formed for the City, which may include elected officials, senior management, transportation planners and traffic engineers, community and workforce development staff, transit and rail representatives, law enforcement leaders, educators, researchers, injury prevention specialists, pedestrian and bicycle advocates, legal specialists, and healthcare and Americans with Disabilities Act professionals," Ahrendsen said.

While cities, towns and counties are eligible to participate in the Mayor's Challenge, only the top elected official is qualified to accept on behalf of a community. So far, six communities in North Carolina have committed to the challenge. As part of the challenge, Mayor Bell asked City staff to attend the Mayors' Summit for Safer People, Safer Streets in Washington, D.C. on March 12.

"Officials, employees, and residents view the Mayor's Challenge as an exceptional opportunity to improve the safety and livability of Durham," Ahrendsen said. "Durham residents interested in participating in the Mayor's Challenge are encouraged to engage with the local action team once it's established and provide ideas and feedback aligned with the seven Challenge areas."

Comments and questions about the Mayors' Challenge may also be sent to Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator Dale McKeel with the City's Transportation Department by email at Dale.Mckeel@DurhamNC.gov. Key details about the Mayor's Challenge for Safer People, Safer Streets can also be found at <http://www.dot.gov/mayors-challenge>.

About the City of Durham Transportation Department

The City of Durham Transportation Department helps to strengthen the foundation, enhance the value, and improve the quality and sustainability of neighborhoods that are necessary for a strong and diverse community. The department is responsible for a broad range of transportation services, which include traffic signs and signals, transportation planning, parking operations, street lighting, the taxicab administration and bicycle and pedestrian planning. The City's Transportation Department also oversees the Durham Area Transit Authority (DATA) public transportation system as well as the DATA ACCESS service for persons with disabilities. The City of Durham also leads planning functions for the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization (DCHC MPO). For more information, visit <http://DurhamNC.gov/ich/op/dot>.

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