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City of Roanoke Pedestrian Safety Initiative Shifts Focus to School Zones

ROANOKE, Va. (April XX, 2022) – The City of Roanoke saw a concerning trend in recent years, with more pedestrians injured in car crashes near schools. According to crash data, crashes in school zones increased 85% in the last five years and may continue to rise as more people return to driving more often. That’s why the City of Roanoke is launching the *No Need to Speed® – Keep Students Safe* campaign, which aims to reduce speeding and improve pedestrian safety near school zones. The City is appealing to Roanoke residents to join the effort to keep kids safe in school zones.

In 2021, Roanoke City recorded 50 crashes in school zones. These incidents pose significant risk to pedestrians, particularly the smallest walkers. Children’s small size makes them less likely to be seen by a driver and when they are involved in a crash as a pedestrian, they are at higher risk of injury or death than adults.

“We all have a responsibility to make our streets, sidewalks, and crosswalks safe for pedestrians, especially our youngest neighbors,” says Dwayne D’Ardenne, Transportation Division Manager at the City of Roanoke. “Since 2020, the City of Roanoke has invested in annual media campaigns to raise driver awareness of actions they can take to make our streets safer, increasing driver awareness that speeding is a problem in Roanoke by 4.5%”

Roanoke City has 24 public schools. In 2019, the Roanoke City Council adopted an ordinance to decrease the speed limit on neighborhood streets in school zones to 15 mph. However, some drivers are not yet abiding by the speed limit. At the beginning of the current school year the Roanoke Police Department ticketed a driver for speeding 52 mph in a school zone (37 mph above the posted speed limit), and increased traffic enforcement around schools during the first few weeks of the semester.

“What we are doing is working, but we still have room for improvement,” adds Dwayne D’Ardenne. “The goal is always zero crashes, zero injuries, zero fatalities, and zero tickets. With everyone’s help, and by simply adhering to the rules of the road, we can get there.”

As part of this year’s focus, Roanoke City is also taking its message specifically to new and future drivers by implementing programs during the summer months to educate youth on the importance of traffic safety by creating a “traffic garden” where children can practice the rules of the road in a playground context.

The *No Need to Speed®* campaign, funded by a grant from the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles, encourages all drivers to eliminate pedestrian-involved crashes, deaths, and injuries by obeying the speed limit and the rules of the road.

A campaign website has been created at www.planroanoke.org/pedestriansafety where the public can learn more about how to improve pedestrian safety and get involved in the campaign.

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The campaign will run through May 27, 2022 and will feature community yard signs, collaborations with Roanoke Schools, as well as media advertising. To test the public's knowledge of road safety, the City has developed an online quiz available at www.planroanoke.org/quiz. Get your safety score and share with others to help curb unsafe driving practices and keep pedestrians, especially children, safe.

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