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[www.walkbiketoschool.org](http://www.walkbiketoschool.org)

# National Bike to School Day 2012: United to Celebrate the Benefits of Biking

On May 9, 2012, the first-ever National Bike to School Day shifted straight into high gear with 950 events in 49 states across the country. From Alaska to Florida, kids, families, community leaders, educators and many others bicycled and walked to school to promote safer routes to school, cleaner air and healthier habits.

The national event was coordinated by the National Center for Safe Routes to School as a part of the League of American Bicyclists' National Bike Month. Many communities and schools had been holding spring walk and bicycle to school events for years, but National Bike to School Day provided the first opportunity for schools across the country to join together on one special day to celebrate the many reasons that biking to school is important:

## It's fun.

Walking and bicycling offer children joy and the opportunity for a little independence.

## It's healthy.

A daily trip to and from school is a great opportunity for children (and adults) to get the physical activity they need.

## It's environmentally friendly.

Replacing car trips to school with walking or bicycling can reduce congestion and air-polluting emissions.

## It can build community connections.

Families can form connections with neighbors and neighborhood businesses when they get out of the car and travel to school by foot or bicycle.

## It can improve safety.

The trip to school is a chance for parents and caregivers to teach and practice safety skills with their children. The desire to promote bicycling and walking can also help a community see firsthand a need for traffic calming measures or new or improved infrastructure and begin to take action.



“ Celebrating Bike to School Day will increase the excitement surrounding 2012 National Bike Month. Bike Month – including Bike to Work Week and Bike to Work Day – has grown year after year and we're pleased to add a school- and kid-focused event to the celebration this year. – Andy Clarke, President of the League of American Bicyclists ”



Developed by the National Center for Safe Routes to School of the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center and funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation

## Biking to School Across the Country

David Strickland, Administrator, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), joined students in Lincoln Park in Washington, D.C., to officially launch National Bike to School Day at an event organized by the National Center for Safe Routes to School, the Capitol Hill Public Schools Parent Organization, the District Department of Transportation and Safe Kids Worldwide. Strickland (photo at right) reminded the crowd of kids, parents, teachers and community leaders that the day's most important lesson was safety. He encouraged children to be a "roll model" for their peers and families.

"Helmets are the single most important piece of safety equipment for riders, and your helmet can prevent a crash from causing a serious injury," Strickland told students. "Learn the proper way to wear a helmet, and do so every time you ride. Safety also means staying focused when you ride; look out for traffic, pedestrians, and obstacles on the road. You can also help keep our ride safe by wearing bright colors so drivers can see you."

The National Center awarded students "National Bike to School Day Pioneer" medals, and representatives from Safe Kids Worldwide held an on-site helmet fitting station for students and parents. More than 200 students and many parents from 12 Capitol Hill area schools participated in the Bike to School Day event by traveling to their schools in bike trains. Across the country, schools celebrated the inaugural Bike to School Day in creative ways. Festivities included:

- Bicycle decorations
- Bike-powered smoothie machines
- Levying "car taxes" to charge parents for driving within a designated area near the school
- Police escorts
- Organized bike trains picking up student bicyclists along the route to school
- Bike parades and bike rodeos
- Lessons about the science of gyroscopes (which affects bike balance)
- A "free-dress day" vacation from the dress code for kids who biked to school
- A city-wide scavenger hunt, encouraging students and parents to explore their town by bike or on foot



“Over 240 of our 450 students participated in this inaugural event! Parents were even on bikes or pushing younger ones in strollers. What a beautiful day to celebrate children’s health and safety. Forest Park Elementary School was proud to be a part of this Inaugural event and looks forward to many more Bike to School Days ahead.  
– Event coordinator in Little Rock, Arkansas”

## New Website Offers New Bike-Themed Resources

The launch of Bike to School Day included the release of a redesigned website, [www.walkbiketoschool.org](http://www.walkbiketoschool.org). The new website provides year-round assistance and resources for planning biking and walking to school events. It includes the official dates for upcoming Bike to School Days each spring and Walk to School Days each fall, as well as event registration for schools participating in the events.

The website also offers a GIS-powered mapping tool. Map-a-Route allows users to create and share bicycling or walking routes to school via easy-to-use maps, available to share as PDFs or URLs.



## A Day That Can Last All Year

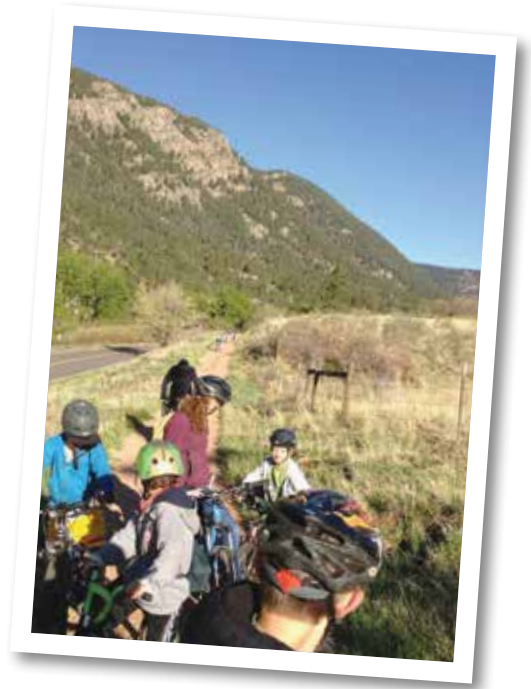
Fifty-six percent of event coordinators reported that their Bike to School Day events were part of an ongoing walking and/or biking program at a school. The same percentage said that their events were part of a Safe Routes to School program.

## Bike to School Day Brings New Bike Racks to 10 Schools

To encourage schools to register their events for the first-ever National Bike to School Day, the National Center for Safe Routes to School held a Bike Rack Giveaway in partnership with Saris Cycling Group. All registered events and resources were automatically entered to win a free-standing bike rack for a school.

The following schools won a Saris stadium rack:

- Roosevelt Middle School in Tijeras, N.M.
- Walnut Grove Elementary School in Council Bluffs, Iowa
- Siena Elementary School in Meridian, Idaho
- Walbridge Elementary School in St. Louis, Mo.
- Lutz Elementary School in Lutz, Fla.
- Sacramento Elementary School in Alamogordo, N.M.
- Sarah J. Anderson Elementary School in Vancouver, Wash.
- Swan School in Port Townsend, Wash.
- White Cloud Upper Elementary School in White Cloud, Mich.
- Hinkley-Big Rock Elementary School in Hinkley, Ill.



## Bike to School Day Buzz

People were talking. Newspapers, radio stations, and online media promoted and followed local Bike to School Day events and discussed the national celebration. Enthusiastic BTSD organizers shared details of their celebrations. Below are a few examples.

“ The National Center for Safe Routes to School, in partnership with the League of American Bicyclists, has coordinated the day. It takes off the increasingly popular Walk to School Day, held every October. Like Walk day, Bike day is intended to challenge the driving culture that has increasingly come to dominate school drop-off.

*Bike to School Day: How a few D.C. schools will celebrate*

Janice D’Arcy, Washington Post (On Parenting)  
May 8, 2012

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“ I biked with my kids to school today! When they got there, the buses were pulling up and all their friends were getting off the bus saying, “Michael! Nora! Did you ride your bikes to school today?!” That made it worth it.

— Parent in Columbus, Ohio

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“ Tomorrow, May 9, is the first annual Bike to School Day. It’s all part of National Bike Month, and an estimated 1,000 schools are expected to participate around the country—far more kids than those who ride on a regular basis. [...] Even if your child’s school isn’t hosting an official event for Bike to School Day on May 9, you can still get in on the action. Ride with little ones to school, or, if you live too far away, driving to a designated point closer to school and then riding from there counts too.

*It’s Bike To School Day—Tomorrow and Every Day*

Katie Arnold, Outside  
May 8, 2012

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