

Bike to School Day Celebrates Five Years with Biggest Turnout Yet!

This year marked five years of National Bike to School Day! Communities shifted into high gear to mark the big day, celebrating with the biggest turnout to date. More kids, families and community leaders participated in the event this year with 2,678 registered events - nearly tripling the number of registered events since the inaugural event in 2012.

Across the country communities bicycled and walked to school to promote safer routes to school, healthier habits, and plain old fun. Schools nationwide organized bike rodeos, helmet fittings and bike safety instruction to help children gain skills that will last a lifetime while celebrating the fun of biking to school.

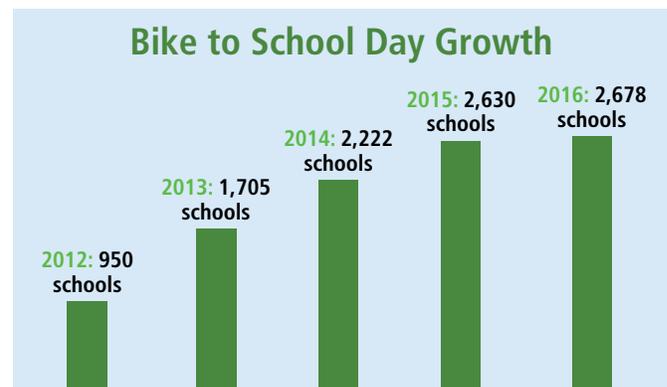


National Support

National and local level government officials from across the nation came out to celebrate biking to school in 2016.

The National Bike to School Day roll-out event in Washington D.C. had over 100 students from a dozen schools and included several special guests. U.S. Deputy Secretary of Transportation Victor Mendez, Federal Highway Administration's Safe Routes to School Program Manager Wesley Blount, the Capitol Hill Public School Parent Organization (CHPSPO), and the National Center for Safe Routes to School were joined by the FIA Foundation, the National Organizations for Youth Safety (NOYS), Safe Kids Worldwide, the National Transportation Safety Board, and others to help send off students as they departed from the park in organized bike trains.

This May was also Global Youth Traffic Safety Month, a global campaign focused on the need to reduce the number of children pedestrians and bicyclists injured around the world, and the Bike to School Day event in Capitol Hill recognized both.



“The decrease of traffic and amount of cars was unbelievable... The Northeast mascot was giving high fives while there was music playing outside when students were arriving. The potential Northeast Elementary has to develop a strong and successful Safe Routes to School Program is exciting!!!
– Event Organizer at Northeast Elementary, Kearney, NE

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“ Students were greeted by the Mayor and the University of Toledo mascot “Rocky.” In preparation for the event, our local SRTS Coordinator hosted a Bicycle Fix It and Safety Program at our school. We will continue our monthly walk to school day event for the school year, along with an afterschool mileage club and participation in National Walk to School and Bike to School Days.
 – Event Organizer in Toledo, OH ”



“The excitement and joy from the children offered a wonderful example of the need for more safe environments for our children to walk and bike to school,” explained U.S. Transportation Deputy Secretary Victor Mendez on the USDOT’s Fast Lane Blog. “At DOT, we’re proud to support National Bike to School Day and to bring further awareness to an inclusive and accessible transportation system that prioritizes pedestrian and bicyclist safety.”

Mayors in 17 towns and cities, from Anchorage, Alaska to Apopka, Florida, helped raise awareness for safe bicycling to school by participating in local events. Mayor John J. Sherman of Schuylerville, New York helped students cross the street safely during Schuylerville Elementary School’s celebration. In Falcon Heights, Minnesota, Lt. Governor Tina Smith attended the Falcon Heights Elementary event as a way to raise awareness for her transportation plan which strives to improve pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure for kids and families in Minnesota.

Three Tips from Seasoned Bike to School Day Organizers

If your community is considering planning its first event, fellow Bike to School Day event organizers can lend some great ideas. We asked organizers, “What’s one piece of advice you would give someone planning their first event?” The most common answers circle around these three main strategies:

1) Plan Early and Promote Big!

Starting your Bike to School Day planning and promotions early can help build momentum and support. Try getting the word out through social media, flyers, banners and an all-school call reminder prior to the celebration.

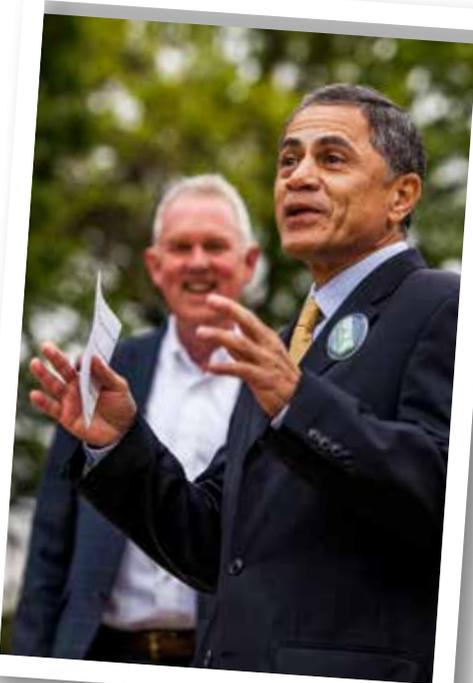
“Our regular children cyclists went from classroom to classroom to talk about bicycle and pedestrian safety” – Event Organizer from Charlotte, NC

“Promote the event in many different ways. Newsletters, school announcements, social media, flyers, registration, posters, signage and banners, text alerts or all school call reminders the night before. Have fun! And repeatedly praise the students for being healthy and active!” – Event Organizer from Toledo, OH

“Word of mouth is extremely important – our events continue to grow each year. We also use social media to promote our event, not only for our students and families, but also the entire community!” – Event Organizer from Evansville, IN

2) Engage the community

Parents, the school principal, law enforcement officers and local businesses can contribute in many ways in all stages of the event. Engage community stakeholders by providing





information, resources and connections to help plan and hold a fun and strategic celebration.

"If you have access to multiple bike shops, ask if they will sponsor a school event for you or have their mechanic to help with a safety rodeo. Contact close-to-school businesses to see if they will agree to be a park and ride location for younger students who can only ride a short distance." – Event Organizer from Sandpoint, ID

"Get your principal on board and create a long term plan that also includes Walk to School Day so that it can become part of your school's culture." – Event Organizer from Centennial, CO

"By allowing your community to take part in the event itself, it will take on a whole new life." – Event Organizer from Tarpon Springs, FL

3) Remember to have fun!

Bike to School Day is a great way to bring awareness to important issues, but it is also an opportunity to have some good old fun. Get creative with your celebration by including music, a school mascot, a local marching band or even a dance into your event!

"If you play music and give a high-five to those that walk or roll to school at the front door, they'll get excited and be encouraged to get to school actively." – Event Organizer from Milwaukie, OR

"Having a sign-in table and a large poster that all the students sign and is hung on the wall after the event really helps reward and motivate."

– Event Organizer from Reston, VA

Inspiring Change

Bike to School events can help encourage communities to implement policy or engineering changes that make it safer to walk and bike to school. This year, many local officials nationwide came out to support walking and biking to school, bringing awareness to the need for safer routes to school.

In 2016, sixty-seven percent of event organizers indicated that their event had an impact on making a policy or engineering change.

Top Policy or Engineering Changes

28% of events led to the addition of bicycling/walking promotion to existing school policies (such as a school wellness policy)

24% of events led to the addition of bike racks

22% of events led to the addition of required safety education





Bike to School Day Giveaways

For the third year in a row, the National Center for Safe Routes to School teamed up with Schwinn in celebration of Bike to School Day. This year, the two organizations hosted the Bike to School Day SmartStart Bike Share Giveaway. Ten schools each were awarded 10 bikes and 20 helmets in weekly drawings during Bike Month in May.

Congratulations to our winning schools:

- Cherryvale Elementary School in Sumter, SC
- Roslyn Road Elementary School in Barrington, IL
- Council Rock Primary in Rochester, NY
- Randle Highlands Elementary in Washington DC
- Wrightsville Beach Elementary School in Wrightsville Beach, NC
- Riverview Elementary School in Carson City, NV
- Central Elementary School in Seagoville, TX
- Mountain Valley Christian Academy in Kremmling, CO
- Long Trail School in Dorset, VT
- Lambertville Public School in Lambertville, NJ

See you next year!

Mark your calendars for Bike to School Day on May 10, 2017 and Walk to School Day on October 5, 2016.

“ We call it W.O.W Day!! (Walk or Wheel). We even had our transit busses involved by dropping off students at a remote site so they could also participate by walking. Many teachers, staff, and the principal took walking routes and joined the kids as a “walking school bus” ... After this day, many more continue to walk/bike to school now.”

– Event Organizer in Cloquet, MN ”

