



## Talking Points: Why Walk or Bicycle to School?

### International Walk to School Day

#### October 4, 2017

Communicating with the public about Walk to School Day? Below are a few important reasons communities nationwide support this event and background on the event.

#### Why walk or bike to school?

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- Walk to School Day connects with many issues that communities care about, like creating safer, more walkable routes to school; building a sense of community or school spirit; and inspiring families to use their feet for the school commute more often.
- Events are an easy way for students and families to try walking and bicycling to school with little commitment. They might be surprised at how little time it takes and how much everyone enjoys it.
- Walk to School Day events can help encourage communities to implement policy or engineering changes that make it safer to walk and bike to school. In 2016, more than 60% of event organizers indicated that their event led to planned or already completed policy or engineering changes.
- Half of Walk to School Day events are part of ongoing activities to promote student walking and bicycling throughout the school year.
- Walking to school has gotten more popular. Surveys from 700,000 parents collected from 2007-2014 shows that walking to school increased from 11.5 to 15.2 percent in the morning (a 32 percent increase), and from 14.6 to 18.1 percent in the afternoon (a 24 percent increase).
- Each year participation in Walk to School Day grows. More than 5,000 communities registered events on [walkbiketoschool.org](http://walkbiketoschool.org) in 2016.

#### About Walk to School Day

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- Since 2006, the National Center for Safe Routes to School of the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center (UNC HSRC) has been the coordinator for Walk to School events in the USA. The Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center, also part of UNC HSRC, has filled this role since the event began in 1997.
- The Partnership for a Walkable America founded Walk to School Day in the United States in 1997 and began with events in two cities: Chicago and Los Angeles. Canada and Great Britain already had Walk to School events in place.
- Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States joined together in 2000 to create International Walk to School Day. Over 2.5 million walkers were estimated to have participated.
- International Walk to School Day received the Stockholm Partnership for Sustainable Cities Award in June 2003 from the King of Sweden.
- While there has been no official count in recent years, in 2011 the National Center saw more than 40 countries participating in Walk to School Day.