



Key Messages

For Walk to School Day in October and Bike to School Day in May

Communicating with the media, community leaders or the general public about Walk or Bike to School Day? Below are a few important reasons communities nationwide support these events as well as a little background on how the events came to be.

Walk and Bike to School Days fuel change

- Walk and Bike to School Day events connect with many issues that communities care about, like creating safer and 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.
- Half of Walk to School Day events nationwide are part of ongoing activities to promote student walking and bicycling throughout the school year.
- Walk and Bike 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 2018, about 60% of Walk and Bike to School Day event organizers indicated that their event led to planned or already completed policy or engineering changes.
- Each year participation in both Walk and Bike to School Days grows. In 2018, more than 5,600 communities registered Walk to School Day events on walkbiketoschool.org and more than 3,200 communities registered Bike to School Day events; even more participated but didn't register online.

Improving safety for all walkers and bicyclists

- Walk and Bike to School Day events are great ways to promote a broader message of safety and support for safe, active travel in general.
- By starting with children and the trip to school, communities become safe places for everyone to walk and bike.
 - Walking and biking to school provides children practical experience with respect to road safety.
 - Communities rally around making safety improvements that benefit children.
 - Safety measures aimed at protecting youth – such as controlling speed, having ample crosswalks, and improving walking and biking facilities on school routes – have broader effects that benefit the entire community.
 - Experiencing these safety improvements around schools helps build public support for their use in other areas of the community.
- Strategies for youth – such as Walk to School Day and Bike to School Day – create opportunities to encourage behaviors and change mindsets that inspire long-lasting, community-wide change. Vision Zero for Youth (visionzeroforyouth.org) integrates the priority for children's walking and biking safety with the growing number of places committing to eliminating all traffic deaths.

Environmental Benefits of Walking and Biking to School

- Walking and biking to school encourages a healthy lifestyle that has the potential to aid in the battle against climate change.
 - Active travel modes, such as walking and biking, can replace many of the short car trips we make throughout the day – including those to school.
 - Adopting modes of active travel can simultaneously improve or maintain healthy weights while reducing oil consumption and carbon dioxide emissions which contribute to climate change.
- Even when considering rapid population growth in most American cities, bicycling has the potential to reduce carbon emissions more than any other alternate mode of travel.

About Walk to School Day and Bike to School Day

- 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. In 2000, Canada, the United Kingdom and the U.S. joined together to create International Walk to School Day. Over 2.5 million walkers were estimated to have participated.
- 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.
 - 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.
- The first-ever National Bike to School Day took place on May 9, 2012, in coordination with the League of American Bicyclists' National Bike Month. The event provides an opportunity for schools across the country to join together to celebrate and to build off of the energy of National Bike Month.