Walk to School Day Report

On many fronts, 2003 Walk to School Day was a great success. Thousands of schools from all 50 states participated. Four governors and dozens of mayors took part. Ribbons were cut for new sidewalks. Police officers taught about pedestrian safety and ticketed speeders near schools. Traffic was reduced for the day. Sixteen million people were exposed to the event in newspapers, plus countless more through local television coverage. And, most importantly, hundreds of thousands of children walked to school safely.

President Bush Sends Letter of Support

“I commend the Partnership for a Walkable America and all organizations involved in today’s events for your dedication to helping improve the health and safety of our Nation’s young people. Your efforts contribute to a stronger America.”

— George W. Bush, President of the United States of America

HIGHLIGHTS

• Four governors and dozens of mayors participate.
• EPA releases study showing that school siting can affect traffic congestion, air pollution, and children’s health and obesity.
• An estimated 3,000 schools participate in Walk to School Day in the U.S.
• At least 167 newspapers, with a combined circulation of 16 million people publish articles and/or photos about Walk to School Day.
• 42 percent of news articles and photos appear on Section Front pages.
• The first International Walk to School Award is created to recognize outstanding programs across the globe.
• Partnership for a Walkable America works with President’s Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children to move the program forward.
• Top officials from the U.S. EPA and the Federal Highway Administration take part in Walk to School Day.
• Walk to School Day is signature event for Child Health Month.
• Several states initiated state-level coordination of Walk to School programs.
• Safe Routes to School Programs continue to grow.
Walk to School Day brings together critical community coalitions that work toward safety improvements for pedestrians and increased physical activity. Here are some highlights of good things that are happening across the country.

Physical Activity & Nutrition
Organizers use Walk-to-School Day as kick-off event of a school program “committed to developing habits that promote optimal health, better food and lifestyle choices for children and preventing obesity.”

Marston School
Hampton, NH

Walk to School Day is part of a year-round program to improve fitness and nutrition. Others components include a health fair, after-school healthy-snack cooking class, and ongoing walking fitness activities.

Towanda School District Towanda, Pennsylvania

Developed a walking school bus for students, linking younger children with older students and adults.

O’Neill Elementary
O’Neill, Nebraska

Walk to School Day was the kick-off for a fit-for-life program that purchased pedometers for students.

West View Elementary
Spartanburg, S.C.

Started a Walk Around the World Club for students during recess and in the morning.

Lone Oak Elementary
Spartanburg, S.C.

Encourage at least 30 minutes of physical activity each day, with the ultimate goal for the school being to accumulate “One Million Minutes of Motion.”

AC Moore Elementary
Columbia, S.C.

Since the majority of students cannot walk to school, we use Walk to School Day to kick-off a year-round walking-at-recess program.

Orchard Hollow Elementary
Mentor, Ohio

Parents’ walkability checklist to be used to advocate for traffic signal improvements, including a photo-enforced light in front of school.

La Colina Elementary
Whittier, California

Modernized crosswalk signals and repainted crosswalk.

Rozelle Elementary
Cleveland, Ohio

New student drop off area marked with a white curb and orange cones, and a repainted crosswalk at one intersection.

Washington Elementary
Santa Ana, California

Parents successfully lobbied for a sidewalk to school.

Clemson Elementary
Clemson, S.C.

City held ribbon-cutting on Walk to School Day to celebrate the completion of a new sidewalk connecting the elementary school with adjacent neighborhoods, part of the city’s new sidewalk program to provide connectivity and safe walking routes to schools.

Root Elementary
Fayetteville, Arkansas

City has asked state to reduce speed limit in front of school as a result of parents bringing issue to attention.

Markham Elementary
Portland, Oregon

Because of participation in Walk to School Day in 2002, the school received a Safe Communities grant, which was used for pedestrian traffic signals.

Tice Elementary
Lee County, Florida

County Recreation and Parks department resurfaced and widened one of the walking paths used by children walking to the school.

Centennial Lane Elementary
Elliott City, Maryland

School administration and parent group is working with civil engineering firm to make the parking lot safer.

Sherman Oaks Charter School
San Jose, California

Sixth graders made recommendations to the City Council which have since resulted in pedestrian improvements near the school.

Topa Topa Elementary
Ojai, California

Policy Changes
Colorado health department announced several new initiatives to increase physical activity in schools, of which Walk to School Colorado is a cornerstone.

State of Colorado

Schools participating in Alabama School Walk have received $8 million in school zone safety funds since 1999. Expenditures are based, in part, on parents walkability checklists that are forwarded to local traffic engineers and law enforcement.

State of Alabama

On Walk to School day, the New Jersey governor announced $13 million in grants to improve street safety around schools and to build bike paths. Of this, $6 million is designated to protect children on their way to and from school.

State of New Jersey

City requires new neighborhoods to be designed for pedestrians and is retrofitting old streets and sidewalks.

Garfield Elementary
Olympia, Washington

Lastly, improvements include:

- Budget has tripled to fund safety improvements for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Traffic signals at school zones.
- New student drop off area for parents, including a marked crosswalk.
- New sidewalks throughout the school district.
- Bike paths and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure.
- Parents’ walkability checklist to be used to advocate for traffic signal improvements, including a photo-enforced light in front of school.
- Modernized crosswalk signals and repainted crosswalk.
- New student drop off area marked with a white curb and orange cones, and a repainted crosswalk at one intersection.
- Parents successfully lobbied for a sidewalk to school.
- Developed an “Outdoor Walk and Learn Trail.”
- Start a Walk Around the World Club for students during recess and in the morning.
- Developed a walking school bus for students, linking younger children with older students and adults.
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**Media Summary**

Media coverage of Walk to School Day was outstanding, with newspapers and local television stations demonstrating a willingness to commit staff and news space/time to Walk to School Day, both in promoting the event before it happens and covering the events of the day. Media coverage of events is important because it brings pedestrian safety and access issues to the attention of a broader community, which can create broader support for pedestrian-friendly planning policies and sidewalk and roadway improvements.

Newspapers alone reached a total circulation of at least 16 million, according to a review of newspapers in Lexis-Nexis Database. A search of all the general interest daily newspapers in the database showed 167 articles in 80 newspapers. Of those items, 31 percent were placed on newspaper section front pages, and after eliminating briefs and opinion pieces, which rarely are placed on section fronts, the percentage of front-page articles (including stand-alone photos) increases to an amazing 47 percent. It is worth noting that only one of the section front stories did not include a photo.

Television coverage of the event is much more difficult to determine with accuracy. National networks tracked through Lexis Nexis did not reveal any articles in their transcripts, but a Google internet search of news sources shows that dozens of local television stations did report on the event.

**Newspapers with 100,000+ circulation that carried items**

Los Angeles Times
The Boston Globe
Rocky Mountain News
Chicago Tribune
The Houston Chronicle
Detroit Free Press
The Dallas Morning News
The Atlanta Journal and Constitution
The Arizona Republic
The Star Tribune (Minneapolis)
The San Diego Union-Tribune
Plain Dealer (Cleveland)
St. Petersburg Times
The Oregonian
The Miami Herald
Orange County Register
St. Louis Post-Dispatch
Sacramento Bee
San Jose Mercury News
Orlando Sentinel
Indianapolis Star
Fort Worth Star Telegram
Columbus Dispatch
Charlotte Observer
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
The Seattle Times
The Tennessean (Nashville)
The Cincinnati Enquirer
Daily Oklahoman (Oklahoma City)
Hartford Courant
Las Vegas Review-Journal
Richmond Times Dispatch
Omaha World Herald
Austin American-Statesman
The News & Observer (Raleigh)
Press Enterprise (Riverside)
The Record (Bergen County, N.J.)
Florida Times-Union (Jacksonville)
Palm Beach Post
Providence Journal-Bulletin
Fresno Bee
Des Moines Register
Chicago Daily Herald
Seattle Post-Intelligencer
The News Tribune (Tacoma)
The Post-Standard (Syracuse)
The Record (Bergen County, N.J.)
Albuquerque Journal
Ventura County Star
Contra Costa Times
The International Walk to School Committee has established an International Walk to School Award to recognize outstanding Walk to School programs around the globe. The purpose of the award is to recognize innovative and successful programs that have the potential to be replicated in other places.

More information about the award and the application process can be found at: www.iwalktoschool.org/award/award_intro.htm This award is open to individuals, schools, local and national groups and agencies. It is not limited to participants in International Walk to School Week, so anyone involved in encouraging children to walk to school and create healthier, more sustainable communities is encouraged to apply.

Applications are due no later than January 31, 2004 and the finalists will be announced on World Health Day, April 7, 2004. The winner will receive the award at the WALK 21 Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, June 9-11, 2004.

International Walk to School Day gives children, parents, school teachers and community leaders an opportunity to be part of a global event as they celebrate the many benefits of walking. In 2003, more than 3 million walkers from 29 countries walked to school together for various reasons – all hoping to create communities that are safe places to walk.

Prime Minister Pledges Support for UK Walkers

“The UK Government is committed to making the journey to and from school safer and healthier for all children. We welcome initiatives such as the National & International Walk To School Weeks. Mr. Blair sends all involved his very best wishes.” — TONY BLAIR, UNITED KINGDOM PRIME MINISTER

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