

iwalk
International *in the*
Walk to School USA
2009 Report

Walk to School 2009

Moving down the road together

Since 1997, communities around the country have been celebrating Walk to School Day, and the event continues to grow each year. Participation in Walk to School Day 2009 reached a record high with 3,369 events registered through the Walk to School Day Web site (www.walktoschool.org). That's up 481 events (or 17 percent) from 2008! Many more communities held events but did not register. Around the globe, International Walk to School Month brought together more than 40 countries in recognition of the common interest in walking and bicycling to school.

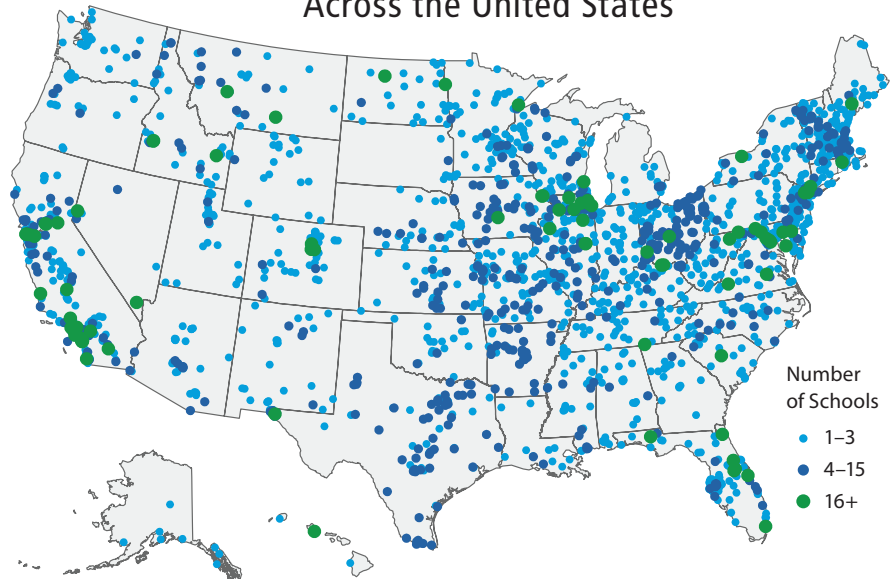


Walk to School events are a way for schools and communities to build enthusiasm for walking to school, promote the benefits of walking and bicycling, and bring visibility to any safety concerns. These events can also be a great starting point for beginning ongoing Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs, which work to enable and encourage more children to walk and bicycle to school on a regular basis.

“Inspired by International Walk to School Day, we started a monthly Walk n’ Roll Wednesdays a year ago. We formed a new PTA committee to promote safe biking and walking to school. We’ve increased our daily bike rider participation by 50%. We’ve been supported by our 2 cities’ public works and police departments, FDOT SRTS, a local health foundation, and county sheriff’s department.”

–Walk to School organizer

Safe Routes to School
 Across the United States



Locations above represent more than 6,489 schools for which SRTS funds have been announced, according to information reported to the National Center for Safe Routes to School as of December 31, 2009. To see details on SRTS projects, please go to www.saferoutesinfo.org/project_list.

Why walk?

Top three reasons that communities participate in Walk to School Day:

- #1 Physical activity/obesity prevention
- #2 Support for a Safe Routes to School program
- #3 Pedestrian safety

Physical activity/obesity prevention and support for a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program were the two primary motivating factors for holding a Walk to School Day event in 2009.

	Most common motivator	Second most common motivator
2009	Physical activity/obesity prevention	Support a SRTS program
2008	Physical activity/obesity prevention	Support a SRTS program
2007	Physical activity/obesity prevention	Pedestrian safety
2006	Physical activity/obesity prevention	Pedestrian safety
2005	Physical activity/obesity prevention	Pedestrian safety
2004	Physical activity/obesity prevention	Pedestrian safety
2002	Pedestrian safety	Physical activity/obesity prevention



Columbus, Mississippi



New Albany, Ohio

We had a great event with awesome participation. At 7:50, there is usually a huge amount of cars in the parking lot. [At Walk to School Day this year] there were maybe three at the most.

–Walk to School organizer

Catalyst for change

Seventy percent of 2009 Walk to School Day events led to policy or engineering changes, according to Walk to School organizers.

Top three policy or engineering changes:

35 percent of events prompted the addition of promotion of walking and bicycling to existing school policies.

33 percent of events led to the addition of sidewalks, paths, crosswalks or crossing guards.

25 percent of events led to the addition of signage near school.

Powerful Local Efforts

Local, regional and national officials also joined in local Walk to School Day celebrations nationwide and helped create even more interest and excitement surrounding scheduled events. In fact, more than 850 stories were written about Walk to School Day 2009.

“All involved gave up their traditional wheeled forms of transportation to stretch their legs and get some fresh air, while many of the George Mason students wore bright green to symbolize the benefit to the environment and the benefit to their health.

—Excerpt from “Schools’ Walking Commutes Well Underway” in the *Alexandria Times*.

Joseph S. Toole, Associate Administrator, Office of Safety, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), walked to school with a group of George Mason Elementary students in Alexandria, Virginia.



The Growth of Safe Routes to School

Awareness of the Safe Routes to School program continues to grow annually. Since 2006, the proportion of Walk to School event organizers that have not heard of Safe Routes to School has dropped from 17 to 7 percent.

Walk to School Day events are also increasingly part of larger SRTS programs. In 2009, 42 percent of survey respondents indicated that their schools are currently implementing a Safe Routes to School program, up from 35 percent in 2008.

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The big thrill of walking to school

Posted: Saturday, Oct. 10, 2009

Most of the kids were thrilled. “This is my first time ever to walk to school,” Zachary Strasser, 6, told his mother, Amy, that morning. Another girl reportedly bounded out of bed proclaiming, “It’s Walk-To-School Day!”

Wednesday, in a gray dawn that threatened rain, I joined more than two dozen kids and parents at Rea Road and Candlewyck Lane who did something unusual in Charlotte and much of America. They walked to school.

COLUMNISTS >
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Walk to School was featured in more than 850 news articles nationwide.

For additional information, please visit www.walktoschool.org



Prepared by the National Center for Safe Routes to School with support from the Federal Highway Administration. Sources for this report:
Walk to School event registration (www.walktoschool.org/register)
Walk to School organizer surveys
Walk to School organizer photos (www.iwalktoschool.org/photos)