



Walk to School Day Celebrates Importance of Community Connectedness, Priority for Safe, Active Transportation for All

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. (October 6, 2021) — Walk to School Day may look a little different today, but one of the greatest powers of this inspiring 25-year-old event is its ability to remain relevant no matter the issues of the day. As many students are back to learning in person this fall for the first time in 18 months, schools and parents are delicately balancing countless priorities - social distancing to stop the spread of COVID-19, school bus driver shortages, budget shortfalls, community disconnectedness - to keep their children safe throughout the day including on the way to school. Communities and families across the country are adjusting Walk to School Day plans and messages to fit their individual needs.

“This year, perhaps more than ever, Walk to School Day is an opportunity to speak to the many different needs of communities across America,” said Nancy Pullen-Seufert, director of the National Center for Safe Routes to School. “For communities that have infrastructure issues near schools, this is an opportunity to highlight those needs. For those who are participating in Walk to School Day 2021 to help bring their communities back together after more than a year of remote learning, it is an opportunity to embrace the power of safe, active trips to school – together. For those looking for a way to slow down vehicles in a school zone, Walk to School Day is a great opportunity to raise the awareness of child pedestrians and remind everyone that safer school zones are safer communities for everyone.”

Families, neighborhoods and schools registered participation this year. To date, over 2,200 Walk to School Day events in 44 states and Washington, D.C. have been registered on walkbiketoschool.org. The total number of events is expected to grow as celebrations continue throughout October, Walk to School Month.

“FHWA is excited to recognize the hundreds of schools participating in Walk to School Day 2021,” said Acting Federal Highway Administrator Stephanie Pollack. “We’re proud to work with the National Center for Safe Routes to School to help young people safely get to and from one of their most important destinations.”

The National Center for Safe Routes to School worked with partner organizations to create several new resources to share tips and ideas about making positive changes to the walk to school, including:

- New resources developed by the Committee on Safe & Healthy Journeys to School During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond help support safe travel for students between home and school for in-person school in the fall. [The Getting Back to School Together webpages](#) provide a central location for key strategies for school travel, all school travel-related guidance; and ideas and examples of twelve school and community strategies implemented during the 2020-2021 school year that might work anywhere.
- Cities and schools working together can support safe walking and biking for students along with other benefits by closing or limiting motor vehicle access on a street adjacent to a



school. In [Re-envisioning School Streets: Creating More Space for Children and Families](#), five case examples demonstrate how schools and cities have made temporary and permanent changes to support active travel.

The success of Walk to School Day serves as an example of how events can be used to inspire change. More than 60% of surveyed past Walk and Bike to School Day organizers say their events led to policy or environmental changes in their communities—the kinds of changes that can make walking and bicycling to school possible on a regular basis, not just for a few special days.

To learn more about the events and locations of registered U.S. schools participating in Walk to School Day 2021, visit walkbiketoschool.org.

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About the National Center for Safe Routes to School

Established in May 2006, the National Center for Safe Routes to School, part of the University of North Carolina (UNC) Highway Safety Research Center, helps support communities in changing their culture to support safe and active travel. The National Center's work uses research-based evidence to highlight what works and why, and translates this research into education, professional development tools and training to provide communities the technical support they need to make community-enhancing decisions.

As the coordinating organization for Walk to School Day held every October and Bike to School Day held each May and the Vision Zero for Youth initiative, the National Center provides technical support; coordinates online registration, develops resources, and facilitates worldwide promotion and participation. The UNC Highway Safety Research Center has served as the coordinator of Walk to School Day since the event's U.S. inception in 1997. For more information, visit walkbiketoschool.org.

About the Committee on Safe & Healthy Journeys to School During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond

The Committee on Safe & Healthy Journeys to School During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond was formed in spring of 2021 to support safe travel for students between home and school for full-time, in-person school re-opening in the fall. To fulfill its commitment to safety, the committee recognized the need to [highlight key strategies for school travel](#); create one location for [school travel-related guidance](#); and to share ideas and [examples of good practices](#) learned through school and community strategies implemented during the 2020-2021 school year. The committee was convened by the National Center for Safe Routes to School, Johns Hopkins Center for Injury Research and Policy, and FIA Foundation. To learn more visit: www.visionzeroforyouth.org/back-to-school-together.