



## Key Messages for Walk/Bike & Roll to School Day Events

Communicating with the media, community leaders or the public about a Walk & Roll or Bike & Roll to School Day event? 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/Bike & Roll to School Days fuel change

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- Walk/Bike & Roll 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, bicycling, and rolling to school with little commitment. They might be surprised at how little time it takes and how much everyone enjoys it.
- Half of Walk/Bike & Roll to School Day events nationwide are part of ongoing activities to promote student walking, bicycling, and rolling throughout the school year.
- Walk/Bike & Roll 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 2021, 65% of Walk to School Day event organizers indicated that their event led to planned or already completed policy or engineering changes (the highest percentage reported since 2014). Nearly 40% of Walk & Roll to School Day organizers used their event to draw attention to road safety needs in their communities.

### Improving safety for all walkers and bicyclists

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- Walk/Bike & Roll to School Day events are great ways to promote a broader message of safety and support for safe, active travel in general.
- Children of color and low-income neighborhoods are disproportionately represented in child pedestrian deaths and are priorities for attention.
- Many travel environments need improvements to support people with disabilities. Youth with disabilities are significantly less likely to achieve the recommended amount of daily physical activity than their peers without disabilities.
- Creating a Walk/Bike & Roll to School Day event that is inclusive for children of all abilities ensures all students can receive the benefits of the program, enjoy each other's company, and learn safe and healthy habits together.
- To support walking, people need places separated from motorists; low motorist travel speeds and volumes; and the shortest possible crossing distances.
- Strategies for youth – such as Walk & Roll and Bike & Roll to School Day – create opportunities to encourage behaviors and change mindsets that inspire long-lasting, community-wide change. Vision Zero for Youth ([visionzeroforyouth.org](https://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, biking, and rolling to school**

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- Walking, biking, and rolling 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 build physical activity into daily life 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 & Roll and Bike & Roll to School Days**

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- 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, filled this role from 1997 – 2005.
  - 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.
- In 2022, we rebranded Walk to School Day as Walk & Roll to School Day, and Bike to School Day as Bike & Roll to School Day — names that better reflect our longstanding goal of promoting safe, accessible spaces for all active trips, starting with children and the trip to school.