



Safe Routes to School: Taking Steps to Increase Physical Activity Levels and Create Healthy, Livable Communities

Walking and bicycling to school—no longer the norm

- Rates of walking and bicycling to school have dropped from 41 percent in 1969 to 13 percent in 2009.
- Even for short distances to school of under a half-mile, half of children are driven by their parents.

By and large, communities are no longer designed for safe bicycling and walking

- Many communities lack sidewalks, crosswalks, and bike paths that provide safe places for children to walk and bicycle, separate from traffic.
- Even roads around schools often have high volumes of cars moving at faster rates of speed.
- The result? One-third of traffic deaths for children ages 0-14 happen when children are walking and bicycling and are struck by cars.
- Risks of pedestrian injuries are even higher for children from low-income households.

Safe Routes to School aims to change this

- Congress created the federal Safe Routes to School program in 2005 through the federal transportation bill.
- Nearly \$800 million is available to state Departments of Transportation to help local schools and communities make it safer for more children to walk and bicycle.
- Communities are using these funds to construct new bike lanes, pathways and sidewalks and to launch Safe Routes to School education, promotion and enforcement campaigns in K-8 schools.
- The comprehensive “Five Es” nature of Safe Routes to School affects the built environment and the habits of parents and children.



“The Safe Routes to School program makes physical activity part of everyday life for many students, teaching them to engage in healthy behaviors that last a lifetime and reduce their risk of obesity and chronic diseases as adults.”

- Carrie Fielder, Ph.D.,
Mississippi State Department
of Public Health



“Safe Routes to School promotes a greater sense of community among our students, and I believe it has contributed to our school’s tremendous turnaround in both academics and behaviors.”

- Principal Peter Stiepleman,
West Boulevard Elementary,
Columbia, Missouri



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Safe Routes to School: having an impact

- Safe Routes to School is getting more children walking and bicycling—increases range from 20 to 200 percent.
- Comprehensive Safe Routes to School initiatives can decrease bicycle and pedestrian collision rates for children by 49 percent.
- Children who walk or bicycle to school are more physically active, have better cardiovascular fitness, and lower BMIs.

But, the impact could be greater with additional resources

- While more than 6,000 schools are currently participating, just 7 percent of schools nationwide are expected to benefit from the first five years of funding.
- With an average grant size of \$180,000, it would take over \$17 billion in funding to provide just one grant to each elementary and middle school across the country.

State and local policies are also a critical part of the equation

- Neighborhood schools produce a 13 percent increase in walking and bicycling and have measurably better air quality.
- State laws on school construction and financing can favor the construction of mega-schools on the outskirts of communities and discourage construction or renovation of neighborhood schools.
- Local policies that link land use and school siting, encourage active transportation networks, and Complete Streets help make Safe Routes to School standard practice.



“Walking to school is important to parents because for many of us this is our mode of transportation.”

- A letter from parents of Bennett Elementary, Detroit, Michigan



For additional information, please visit:
Safe Routes to School National Partnership
www.saferoutespartnership.org