

2008 Report

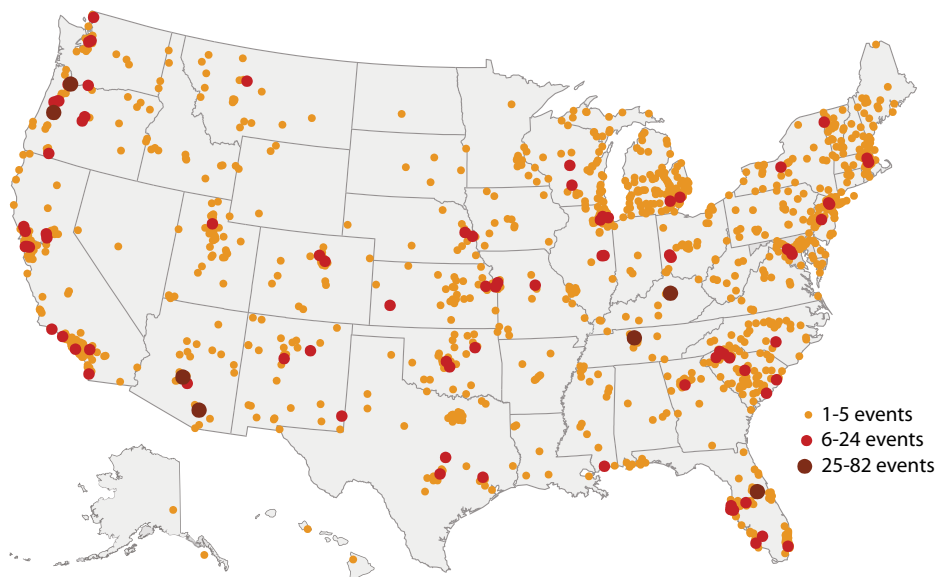


Walk to School 2008

Moving on down the road

Since 1997, communities around the country have been celebrating Walk to School Day. What began in one single city has grown in popularity every year. In its twelfth year, participation reached a record high with **more than 2,800 events** from all fifty states and the District of Columbia registered on the Walk to School Web site (www.walktoschool.org) in 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 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. More than one-half (55 percent) of events are part of ongoing efforts to promote walking and bicycling throughout the year. In fact, Safe Routes to School programs that work to enable and encourage more children to walk and bicycle to school on a regular basis are a natural extension for many events. This growth has been evident in survey responses from event organizers.



In 2008, participation reached a record high with more than 2,800 events registered on www.walktoschool.org from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Many more communities held events but did not register.



“ This was our best turn-out to date. Many families participate and the younger new families join right along...This event is clearly growing at our school.
—Walk to School organizer

“ There is overwhelming support in our school for this program!
—Walk to School organizer

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

These reasons have shifted just slightly in the past six years:

	Most common motivator	Second most common motivator
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



Catalyst for change

Seventy-five percent of events led to policy or engineering changes, according to Walk to School organizers. This rate has steadily grown since 2005.

Top three policy or engineering changes:

- 39 percent of events prompted the addition of promotion of walking/bicycling to existing school policies.
- 23 percent of events led to the addition of sidewalks, paths or crosswalks.
- 23 percent of events led to the addition of signage near school.

75%
in 2008

62%
in 2007

59%
in 2006

47%
in 2005

“ This event started when there was a neighborhood dispute about the need for sidewalks. We had the sidewalk by our second year of celebrating so now [our Walk to School event] focuses more as a community builder and encouragement for walking on a more regular basis.

–Walk to School organizer

The growth of Safe Routes to School

Awareness of Safe Routes to School has grown in the past three years. Since 2006, the proportion of Walk to School event organizers that have not heard of Safe Routes to School dropped from 17 to 7 percent.

This year, more than one-half (59 percent) of events indicated that support for a Safe Routes to School program was one of the reasons for their participation. This is a marked increase from 2007 when 47 percent indicated support for Safe Routes to School as a motivator.



“ This was our first Walk or Bike to School event for our school. This year we are starting to implement the Safe Routes to School Program at our school. My hope is that in the long term this program will lead to a permanent change in lifestyle in which getting around on foot or by bicycle will become a way of life for this community.

–Walk to School organizer

“ The event was a big success with 46 percent more walkers and bike riders over our baseline survey. Our partnership with school, parents, city, SafeKids, transit and school district will hopefully be a model that can be spread to other schools. We are learning from this demonstration project essential steps to building a sustainable program.

–Walk to School organizer

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Students take a step for safety in surveying their walks to school

Garfield Elementary fifth grade students from left, Lesley Mastonado, 10; Aneli Hernandez, 11; Daniela Marjarez, 11; Denise Barra, 10; and Sandra Viera, of Latino Health Access, make notes of low-hanging razor wire, graffiti and broken curbs along 6th Street, which is part of a walkability study for International Walk to School Week.

Garfield Elementary pupils note broken sidewalks, speeding motorists and other hazards in hopes that Santa Ana will correct them.

By Tony Barbock, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer
October 9, 2009

On the first day of class, Chris Marx asks his fifth-grade students how they get to school and what they encounter along the way.

Even though most students at Garfield Elementary in Santa Ana walk only a few blocks to class, they often juggle over broken sidewalks and through littered alleyways, rub up against graffiti-covered walls and step over rubble from construction sites. Some dodge roving dogs, homeless people or gang members.

Map
Photos: International Walk to School Day

Walk to School was featured in more than 800 news articles nationwide.

For additional information, please visit www.walktoschool.org



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

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)