

LET'S TALK

Biking and Walking to School

↓ 50%
↓ 13%

Between 1969 and 2009, the percentage of children walking or biking to school dropped from **50% to 13%**.

$\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$

Distance is the most commonly reported barrier, but **half of trips** to school made by personal vehicles are between $\frac{1}{4}$ - to $\frac{1}{2}$ -mile.

33%

Rates of obesity in children have soared over the past 40 years. Approximately **33% are overweight or obese**, or at risk of becoming obese.

23%

Children aren't getting enough physical activity: **23% get no free time for physical activity** at all.

THE ENDLESS BENEFITS OF WALKING AND BIKING TO SCHOOL



COMMUNITY

The common goal of improving conditions for walking and bicycling brings families, neighbors, school officials and community leaders together. The sense of community also builds as children and parents develop walking and bicycling buddies and chat with neighbors on the sidewalk or path.



EDUCATION

Studies show that physical activity can have a positive effect on academic achievement, including grade point average, rate of learning, classroom behavior and cognitive, social and motor skill development.



TRAFFIC CONGESTION

In California, one study showed that schools that received infrastructure improvements through the Safe Routes to School program saw walking and biking rates increase between **20%** and **200%**.



ENVIRONMENT

Children exposed to traffic pollution are more likely to have asthma, permanent lung damage and a higher risk of heart and lung problems in adulthood; and one-third of schools are in air pollution danger zones. Schools designed with walking and biking access have measurably better air quality.



ECONOMIC VALUE

Sidewalks, paths and other investments in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure benefit local businesses by increasing foot traffic. Home values can also increase when communities are more walkable and bikeable.



REAL STORIES OF MINNESOTANS PULLING TOGETHER

A recent study found that **7% of New Ulm children walk to school in the morning**, while **4% ride their bikes**. Of those who live within schools' two-mile no-busing zone, 45% of children are driven to school. The Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation implemented a weeklong demonstration to promote walking and biking to school through temporary bump-outs at key intersections, enhanced crosswalk markings and delineated arrival and departure zones. The effort will hopefully lead to more children walking and biking to school and help pave the way for design improvements to the school campus in New Ulm.

STEPS FOR ACTION

How can you implement walking and biking to school in your community? Where do you start?

Here are a few ideas for parents adapted from [Minnesota Safe Routes to School!](#)

✓ BECOME PART OF AN EXISTING GROUP

Your neighborhood association or neighborhood watch group could be a good place to connect with residents. Adding Safe Routes to School concerns on their agenda might help you find helpful allies who want to see similar changes. If there aren't existing groups in your neighborhood, start talking to others who might share your interest in developing safe routes for children – perhaps your combined skills, attitudes and talents will lead you to form a group of your own!

✓ REACH OUT TO OTHERS

If you're really passionate about your safe routes to school program, consider finding opportunities to educate others. Options include writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper; discussing a walking/biking incentive program with teachers; asking teachers to send letters about the program home with students to their parents; or sending teachers to the Minnesota Safe Routes to School website at www.dot.state.mn.us/saferoutes.

✓ GET YOUR SCHOOL ON BOARD

There are resources available to implement comprehensive safe routes to school programs, but this cannot happen if schools are not on board. Inform the principal, PTA or school board about Minnesota Safe Routes to School and its benefits.

Resources: <http://saferoutespartnership.org/resourcecenter/quick-facts>

<http://saferoutespartnership.org/resourcecenter/research/the-relationship-between-physical-activity-weight-and-academic-achievement>

<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/saferoutes/parents.html>

<http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/ready/why-walk-or-bike>