

Safe Routes to School

Pledging Safe Communities for Our Children

Can kids just be kids?

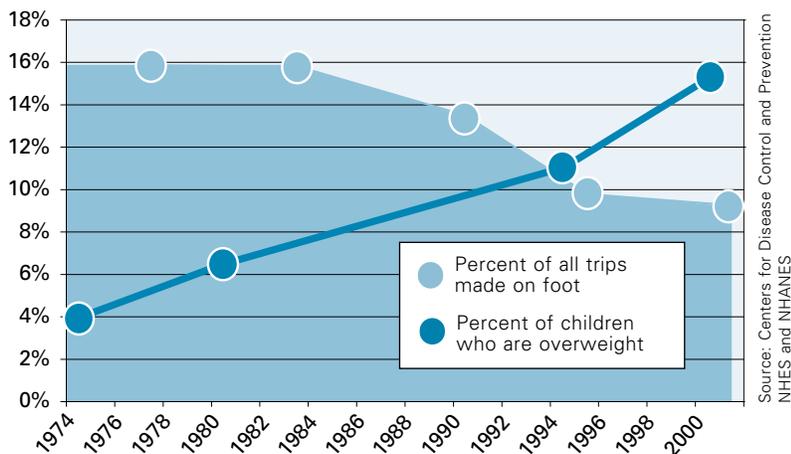
In the last 30 years, our children have lost a lot of the freedom and independence they once had to explore our neighborhoods. As we have designed our communities around automobiles, activities like walking or bicycling to school have declined dramatically.

In one generation:

- The number of kids walking or bicycling to school has dropped from 71% to 18%.¹
- The number of total walking and bicycling trips made by children has fallen by 65%.^{2,3}

Today, more than two-thirds of all trips by 5-15 year olds are made as car passengers.³

The consequences of this decline are profound.



Reduced childhood activity has contributed to health and transportation problems:

- There are more than three times as many overweight kids today as there were 25 years ago.⁴
- More than 1 in 3 young people in grades 9–12 do not regularly engage in vigorous physical activity.⁴
- As much as 20% of morning rush hour traffic can be parents driving kids to school.⁵
- School bus transportation is frequently the second largest budget item for school districts after salaries.⁶

It seems like kids can't just be kids anymore.



Photo Credit: Elena Modicamore

The Problem

We drive our kids to and from school and other activities because the roads are too busy...with people driving their kids to school. We don't let our children past the end of the street or out of the neighborhood because of traffic and fear of strangers...and we wonder why they are overweight, inactive, and don't know anyone in the community. We have made all the parks, shops and other places they want to go inaccessible by foot or bicycle.

So What's the Solution?

Imagine discovering a way to:

- Reduce traffic accidents involving child pedestrians by 80%.
- Take one out of every five cars off the road during the morning rush hour.
- Reduce school transportation costs.
- Increase childhood physical activity to help reduce incidences of diabetes and obesity.
- Give children the same freedom and independence enjoyed by Baby Boomers when they were kids.

That's the promise and proven results of Safe Routes to School programs.

The Pledge

We believe it's time for a change. We pledge that by the time the kindergarten class of 2003 graduates high school, the majority of school trips will once again be made by foot or bicycle.

To our children, we pledge to make your health and safety our number one priority, including to:

- Make the streets safe, convenient and attractive enough to let you walk or bicycle to schools.
- Ensure the streets around your schools have frequent, safe places to cross.
- Drive slowly through school zones.
- Enforce traffic laws in school zones and neighborhoods to slow down motor vehicle traffic.
- Locate schools within walking and bicycling distance of as many pupils as possible.
- Reduce the amount of traffic around your schools.
- Provide secure bicycle parking at your schools.
- Teach traffic safety skills routinely throughout your school career: first as a pedestrian, next as a bicyclist, and then as a motorist.
- Encourage staff and students at your schools to walk and bicycle more often.



Photo Credit: Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center

¹ Surface Transportation Policy Project

² 1995 National Personal Transportation Survey

³ 2001 National Household Travel Survey

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

⁵ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

⁶ National Center for Education Statistics

Active Living Network
America Bikes
Bikes Belong
California Department of Health Services
Coalition for Community Schools
League of American Bicyclists
Marin County Bicycle Coalition
Metro Atlanta Safe Routes to School Coalition
National Center for Bicycling and Walking
National Park Service – Rivers and Trails Program
National SAFE KIDS Campaign
Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
Thunderhead Alliance



Take the Pledge

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Signed,

Name/Organization

Address

City, State and Zip

Email address