



The Health Issue: Obesity

Solution: Safe Routes to School

Quick Facts

Fact: One generation ago, most children walked to school. Today, only one in ten children walks to school regularly. Since the mid 1960s rates of childhood obesity have increased exponentially from 4% to 16%, while the number of walking and bicycling trips made by children has fallen by 65%. (source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Fact: Travel to school accounts for 25% of all morning traffic. (source: TransForm)

Fact: Studies from the American Heart Association and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that walking to school is associated with higher overall physical activity throughout the day. There are many potential benefits of physical activity for youth including: weight and blood pressure control, Bone, muscle, and joint health and maintenance

Key Messages

Message: “When children walk and cycle to school, they build lifelong healthy habits while also helping to reduce traffic congestion near schools.”

Message: “Streets should be designed to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in our communities. A sign of a quality city is one where children have safe access to sidewalks, crosswalks, and bike lanes.”

Policy Suggestions

- Partner with school districts to encourage safe routes to schools.
- Identify the physical barriers that prevent children from safely getting to and from school and prioritize these streets for safety upgrades.

Benefits of Safe Routes to Schools

- Increases the amount of time devoted to physical activity which helps reduce a child’s risk of obesity
- Improves concentration and increases alertness
- Enhances safety in the area around the school by reducing traffic
- Makes children more self-sufficient, an important part of developing social skills
- Empowers children to contribute positively to the environment, by traveling pollution-free
- Encourages children to learn about and get to know the neighborhood and community members
- Provides a great opportunity to develop healthy, lifelong habits of enjoying physical activity
- Is the perfect opportunity for family quality time