

Community Benefits of Students Walking and Biking to School

The whole community benefits from efforts to enable and encourage more children to walk or bicycle to school safely. Benefits include:

- **Less traffic congestion.** According to the 2011 National Center for Safe Routes to School report, personal vehicles taking students to school accounted for 10 to 14 percent of all personal vehicle trips made during the morning peak commute times (based on National Household Travel Survey Data, 2009). Reducing the number of private vehicles commuting to school can reduce morning traffic around the school. Less traffic congestion also improves conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists, creating a positive cycle—as the community sees more people walking and biking, more people feel comfortable walking and bicycling.
- **Stronger sense of 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.
- **Safer streets.** Communities with higher rates of walking and bicycling tend to have lower crash rates for all travel modes. One reason may be that motorists drive more cautiously when they expect to encounter walkers and bicyclists. More walkers and bicyclists can also improve personal security by providing more “eyes on the street.”
- **Lower costs.** Encouraging and enabling bicycle and pedestrian trips reduces costs for the family, community and school district. Families save on gas, communities spend less on building and maintaining roads and school districts spend less on busing. In fact, one school district calculated \$237,000 in annual savings.
- **Improved accessibility.** Enabling students of all abilities to walk and bicycle to school makes it easier for everyone in the community to get around, including parents with strollers, senior citizens, residents without cars and residents with temporary or permanent mobility impairments.
- **Economic gains.** Sidewalks, paths and other investments in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure can increase home values and direct additional traffic to local businesses.

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