



Walking to school: Why it matters and making it better

East End District Rail
Taskforce Meeting
August 9, 2023

Nancy Pullen-Seufert,
National Center for Safe
Routes to School





Washington, DC
Source: www.walkbiketoschool.org

We believe...

Children deserve safe places to walk and bike, starting with the trip to school.

By starting with children and the trip to school, communities become safe places for everyone to walk and bike.

By creating safe places for everyone, communities take a major step towards meeting the national goal of ending traffic deaths on roads.

Bogotá, Colombia
Source: City of Bogotá



Our team

- Stephen Heiny
- Lauren Marchetti
- Caroline Mozingo
- Kelly March
- Seth LaJeunesse
- Nancy Pullen-Seufert

What percentage of students walk or bike to school in the US?

Walking to school “multisolves” for a variety of priorities...

- Need for physical activity
- Less motor vehicles on the road
- Building independence
- Readiness to learn
- Sense of connection

- What else?



Photo source: Mike Cynecki



Youth pedestrian travel looks different than adult travel

- Different destinations
- Different time of day
- Different behavior/ developmental abilities

In some places, walking is the only option and it's not safe. In other places, we'd like more students to be able to enjoy the benefits of walking to school.

What safety concerns do families in your community have?

Parent barriers to allowing their child to walk to school

- Distance
- Traffic volume
- Traffic speed
- Weather
- Crime
- School policy

Solutions for Moving Forward

How we think about road safety

THE SAFE SYSTEM APPROACH VS. TRADITIONAL ROAD SAFETY PRACTICES

Traditional

- Prevent crashes → Prevent deaths and serious injuries
- Improve human behavior → Design for human mistakes/limitations
- Control speeding → Reduce system kinetic energy
- Individuals are responsible → Share responsibility
- React based on crash history → Proactively identify and address risks

Safe System

Whereas traditional road safety strives to modify human behavior and prevent all crashes, the Safe System approach also refocuses transportation system design and operation on anticipating human mistakes and lessening impact forces to reduce crash severity and save lives.

Image: US Federal Highway Administration

Moving Forward

- Slow down motorists
20 mph recommended
- Separate motorists from people walking and biking
- Reduce crossing distances and angles



Moving Forward

- School Streets to reduce traffic near schools
- Remote Park and Walk
- Walking School Bus programs





Vision Zero for Youth

Creating safer streets starting where youth walk and bike

- Purpose: Encourage cities to prioritize safety improvements in places where kids want or need to walk or bike
- Rooted in Safe Routes to School
- Launched in 2016

www.visionzeroforyouth.org





Youth Advocacy



Engaging youth to advance safer streets for all

Recommendations for meaningful youth engagement

The following recommendations are meant to maximize successful partnerships with youth. They address challenges and barriers to this success based on the real-life experience of young people. A companion publication, *Engaging Youth to Advance Safer Streets for All: Guide and Inspiration for Partnership Between Youth and Adults*, provides the background for these recommendations.

◀ Set the stage for success ▶

Expect good intentions.

- Start with a positive outlook.
- Everyone wants the best for their communities.

Create a welcoming environment.

- Create a safe space where everyone feels welcome and comfortable.
- Be willing to listen or shift your mindset.
- Ask questions, especially to get clarification.
- Be patient. Understanding each other takes time and some stumbling around.

Respect each other's time.

- Everyone's time is important and needs to be valued. Communicate if you need to bow out of a commitment.
- Youth, if you are asked to present at an event and you don't show up, that adult may be hesitant to ask another youth in the future. Don't hurt opportunities for your peers.

Respect each other's knowledge.

- Often each person has a piece of knowledge or perspective that contributes to the solution.
- Youth, you have the lived experience and the direct connections to understand how youth in your community feel and what they would like to see changed. This is your superpower - use it.



Nashville students engaged in designing their community.
Source: Civic Design Center.

Partnership ideas

Youth groups are using the following activities in partnership with adults to change their communities.

- Helping the city develop transportation plans
- Collecting street and community assessment data
- Developing street designs
- Advocating for reduced transit fares for students

Milwaukee

- Students were engaged in mapping the area around their school and developing street design ideas.
- Over 300 participants in diverse neighborhoods gave input on the infrastructure projects.
- City/advocate coordination.




Wisconsin Bike Fed



Indianapolis, IN

Moving Forward

- Open access points to school
- Pop-up demonstrations
- Quick-build projects



Fremont, California
Source: Hans Larsen

About quick build projects

- Temporary or permanent street changes
- Communities get a chance to “try out” a change
- Days or weeks to install
- Lower cost than typical capital projects

Addressing an urgent safety need with curb extensions

- On crossing between after-school care and school located on high-crash corridor in Cincinnati
- Cost: \$15,000



Image: Christian Heuser

Tactical walk/bike lane to create separation and slow traffic speeds

- 35 mph street, marked 25 mph during school arrival/dismissal
- Serving a middle school in one of Atlanta's communities of concern
- Initial pop-up to get community input before installation
- Materials cost: \$8,500



Moving Forward

- Use events to encourage community engagement
- Encourage mayors and city officials to participate
- Talk with teachers, students and families to understand their concerns
- Point out safety needs



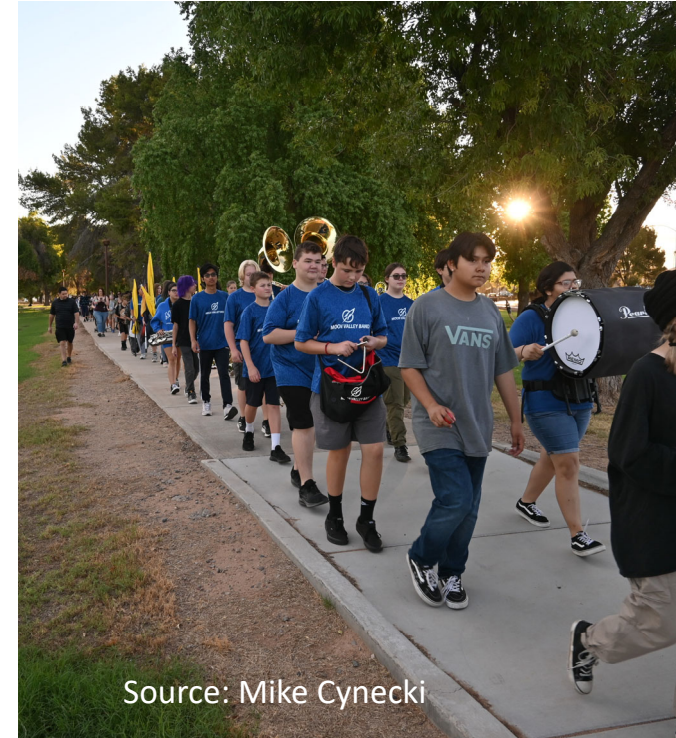
Mayor Bowser, Washington, DC



Source: Stephen Mullaney



Source: NC Dept of Transportation



Source: Mike Cynecki



October 4, 2023

www.walkbiketoschool.org

Tool for change

In 2021, over 50% of events said their school or community is taking action to mitigate traffic speeds and congestion.



Tool for change

In 2021, 65% of event organizers said their event led to a policy or built environment change.

Top 3 changes:

1. New signage that supports safe walking or biking to school (30%)
2. Changes to drop off and pick up procedures (28%)
3. New sidewalks, paths or crosswalks (20%).



Photo source: Nancy Pullen-Seufert.

Understanding current conditions

- School travel patterns
 - Safe Routes to School Data System:
 - Student travel tally
 - Parent survey
- Built environment
 - Star Ratings for Schools
- Risk
 - Traffic Conflict Technique





Just Start somewhere