

# Creating Safe and Active School Commutes: A Guide for Parents and Communities

**Why we need this:** The benefits of a community where children can safely walk or bike to school are myriad. School districts save money on bussing, parents save time on driving their kids to school and waiting in lengthy drop-off lines, children develop greater independence and get some physical activity, we all benefit from fewer cars causing crashes and spewing exhaust, and the list goes on.

## Improve traffic safety around schools.



**Take low-cost, temporary and immediate action:** Paint bike lanes on key routes. Put up cones, planters or hay bales around important intersections to make crossing safer. Get volunteers to help facilitate crossings near schools.



**Map the best paths to school for people on foot and bike:** Think about the safest entry points and streets for kids to travel to school on foot or bike, and then literally draw a map. Share the map with your school and other parents.



**Designate car-free streets adjacent to schools:** This will take some collaboration with elected officials and city staff. Fully closing the streets directly around your local school (either permanently or during key arrival and departure times) can be a serious step toward greater safety for everyone. It's been done in other communities across the country — and saved lives in the process.

## Reestablish a culture of walking and biking to school.



**Set up safe walking routes:** Plan the safest routes for your children and other children in the neighborhood to get to school. Teach kids tips for safely crossing the street. Encourage kids to walk together and use the buddy system.



**Create a bike bus or walking bus:** There is strength in numbers! This will take some planning and collaboration, but it is making a huge difference in communities around the world. Parents in your neighborhood can rotate being the “bus driver” for a group of kids walking or biking to school together. Use the same route each time to pick up the kids in your “bus.” This helps children become familiar with the path (and ensures you don’t forget anyone).



**Host a bicycle rodeo:** This is a community event where kids learn about road safety and bike handling, as well as get their helmets and bikes checked out. Work with a local bike shop to organize an event like this.



**Host a walk audit:** Gather your neighbors and go for a walk at a designated time. Ideally, spread the word about your event through local businesses, schools and social media. Walk together and ask people to note places where safety could be improved, new features could be added to enhance the space, or new homes and businesses could be invested in. Debrief and share your findings with local leaders.