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The Official Blog of Ray LaHood, the U.S. Secretary of Transportation

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October 05, 2011

Walk to School Day celebrates walkable communities and active kids

Congratulations to all of the kids who got out today to celebrate [Walk To School Day](#). And a big thanks to all of the parents and other community members who joined their local schools for the big day.

Federal Highway Administrator Victor Mendez and I walked a group of kids to [Anne Beers Elementary School](#), not too far from our DOT headquarters here in Washington, DC. To be honest, the kids really walked us because they already knew the way from experience.



And that's good news. After all, kids who walk to school are safer and get more exercise than their peers who are driven to school. That's right--apart from riding the familiar yellow school bus, walking to school is the safest way to get there.

There are health benefits from [walking to school](#), too. Studies show that walking or biking to school helps young people wake up their brains for a day of schoolwork, and more activity leads to better health. Plus, when more students walk or bike to school, that means fewer cars stuck in traffic or idling their engines while waiting in the drop-off line. And that means cleaner air for our kids to breathe.

You can see that the benefits of getting to school under their own power are significant for America's children. That's why DOT takes [Walk to School Day](#) seriously.



That's also why our Federal Highway Administration supports the [National Center for Safe Routes to School](#). The Safe Routes to School program works to create safe settings where children can walk or bicycle to school. More than 11,300 schools have already been part of funded programs in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. What have we achieved? More kids walking and bicycling to school, reduced automobile speeds within school zones, and lower transportation costs for many public schools across the country.



As the National Center for Safe Routes to School's director, Lauren Marchetti, said, "The Safe Routes program is a great example of communities using federal funds to improve safety for child pedestrians and bicyclists and to help children build healthy and green habits by walking and bicycling to and from schools."



The terrific thing about [Walk to School Day](#) is that it gets a lot of kids and parents out walking to school who might otherwise be driving. Once they see how easy it is, how safe it is, and how much fun it is, that one day could turn into a year-round habit.

And, as more and more kids start saying "Hike it, bike it; I like it!" we'll see more and more communities taking steps to make walking and bicycling to school *every* day even easier.

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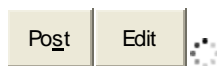
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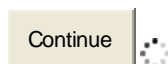
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