

Improve Safe Routes to School in Illinois

Support the Safe Routes for Healthy Kids Campaign



Safe Routes to School is an internationally-recognized program focused on making walking and biking routes to school safer through educational programming and infrastructure improvements.

Every kid deserves the chance to be happy and healthy, but many communities are unable to provide safe spaces for kids to be active and get exercise. With public resources scarce, we need to invest in proven strategies that address the costly long-term impacts of sedentary lifestyles like childhood obesity.

Quick Facts

- Illinois ranks 9th among the nation in obese adolescents ages 10 to 17.
- Nearly five children are hit by cars every day in Illinois while walking or biking within one block of a school.
- Since 2005, the Illinois Safe Routes to School program has awarded almost \$49.5 million to fund over 500 projects.
- For every million dollars spent on bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure development projects there are 9.6 to 11.4 new jobs produced.

The **Safe Routes to School** program encourages our children to walk or bike to school and enables communities to build safer streets and sidewalks. A combination of reduced federal funding and administrative challenges have meant Illinois' **Safe Routes to School** program is falling behind other states and not reaching communities that need it most.

By **increasing funding to the program and adopting national best practices**, we can create a happier and healthier future for our children. On behalf of the thousands of Illinois residents represented by our **Safe Routes for Healthy Kids Campaign**, we urge you to join us.



The Safe Routes to School program is a cost-effective way to improve health, boost academic performance, and create jobs

- A study demonstrated that for a \$10 million investment, New York City's Safe Routes to School program helped avert \$230 million in future costs to society.
- Schools participating in Safe Routes to School report rates of walking and biking to school that are 37 percent higher than schools that did not participate in the program.
- A study in New York City showed a 44% decrease in child pedestrian injuries in areas with Safe Routes to School improvements.
- Studies show a positive association between physical activity and child concentration, academic performance, and behavior in school
- For every million dollars spent on bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure projects, 9.6 to 11.4 new jobs are projects produced, compared to just 7.8 jobs for roadway.

Children are harmed by the lack of safe spaces for physical activity, with an unfair burden placed on the poor and people of color

To understand the role **Safe Routes to School** can play in promoting walking and biking, it is important to understand the barriers that exist to healthy transportation. Half of school children walked or biked to school in 1969, but only 13% reported doing so in 2009. This shift reflects the increasing number of obstacles preventing children from enjoying the benefits of walking and biking.

- From 2006-2012, over 18,400 children were involved in a crash while biking or walking within 1.5 miles of school in Illinois. 54% of all crashes involving youth victims occurred within one block of a school.
- Over the last thirty years, childhood obesity has tripled in the U.S. Obesity increases the risk of serious health problems including heart disease, diabetes, and certain types of cancer.
- Among African American children, 20.2% are obese, while 22.4 % of Latino children and 14.1% of White children fall into the same category
- Nationally, young people living in poor communities and communities of color are 50% less likely to have opportunities for recreation near home.

We need to give Illinois children the Safe Routes to School program they deserve by:

- Codifying the program into state law,
- Restoring a full-time Safe Routes to School Coordinator,
- Prioritizing pre-application outreach and technical assistance to highest-need communities,
- And increasing funding to the program.

Illinois Safe Routes for Healthy Kids Coalition Members

AAA

Active Transportation Alliance

Action for Healthy Kids

Alta Planning and Design

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Diabetes Association

American Heart Association

Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children (CLOCC)

Enlace

FORWARD

genHkids

Get Up and Go

Illinois Alliance to Prevent Obesity

Illinois State Alliance of YMCAs

Mission Readiness

Ride Illinois

Safe Kids Chicago

Slow Roll Chicago

YMCA of Rock River Valley

For a full list of citations, see www.activetrans.org/safe-routes-citations

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