

# What Happened to Walking to School?

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As we celebrate National Bike or Walk to School Day today, it is important to recognize how our culture has changed transportation behaviors. In 1969, riding your bike or walking to school was commonplace, and nearly 50 percent of kids chose that mode of transportation. By 2009, that number dropped to just 13 percent. What is causing kids and their families to opt for a four-wheeled ride rather than a walkable route? How can we help reverse this pattern to protect our environment and promote healthy behaviors?

Today, a fear for safety is a major concern for would-be bicyclists. Many communities are designed around major highways and busy intersections, making it hard to safely navigate on a bike. Not to mention the great distances traveled to schools everyday as suburbs in America continue to sprawl. How can we fight the rising trend to rely on motor vehicles for safe travel? One of the most important things you can do is tackle the problem at the source by encouraging your town or city to create bike lanes, improve public transportation options, and make the health and well-being of your community a priority in new development plans or infrastructure projects. A resource from the [National Center for Safe Routes to School](#) outlines how transportation professionals can tackle the issue of making schools more pedestrian friendly.

In the shorter term, it's important for students, parents, and community members to understand how their transportation habits affect their environment and society. It's often through engaging education that meaningful action and long-lasting behavior changes are born. As part of your [Green Apple Day of Service](#), why not get a group together to learn about sustainable transportation or map out a walkable route for students? Green Education Foundation's free I Ride Green program offers [10 ready-to-use lessons](#) on topics from hybrid engines, to the biomimic design of trains, to the benefits of bike riding. Check them out and find out why change is so critical!

With that knowledge, get involved and become a champion for walkability in your community. Organizations like the [National Center for Safe Routes to School](#) offer great resources to the public such as safety tips, strategies to involve the greater community, and the benefits of exercise before school. You should also get involved in today's Bike or Walk to School Day! Your event could be as simple as organizing a local meeting point for a group walk before school. Visit [www.walkbiketoschool.org](http://www.walkbiketoschool.org) to find a mapping tool to help plan your routes, learn about pedestrian and bike safety, and be entered to win a free bike rack for your school! Let's work together to change recent trends and remind people to rely on their own two legs whenever possible.

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