Bike To School Day
Resource Guide
2012
If the question, “How did you get to school when you were a kid?” is posed to a roomful of adults, chances are that the great majority will respond that they walked or bicycled to school. Indeed, 30 years ago, the Center for Disease Control reports that 60 percent of all children walked or bike to school; but today less than 10 percent walk and only about 3 percent bike. This trend poses problems to education, transportation and public health. During the morning commute time, traffic congestion is increased by school traffic (20-30% of all morning traffic is due to school pick up and drop off trips), creating traffic chaos in front of schools that concern most parents with regard to their children’s safety. Unfortunately the response to these safety concerns almost always is to choose to drive the children to school, and that in turn creates the situation that parents want to avoid.

The resulting decrease in the activity of biking or walking to school has discouraged a lifestyle that engages children in daily regular physical activity (1 mile or less is “walkable” and “bikable” distance for children). This has public health officials concerned when the effects of physical inactivity and excess weight are considered (one fourth of children aged 6-17 are overweight). Furthermore, the lack of physical activity is a contributing factor to the emergence of childhood obesity and diabetes in children as a national health concern.

Fortunately, all over the nation there is effort to reverse this trend. Since 2002, the City of Salinas, Salinas Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, Transportation Agency for Monterey County and County Health Department have joined forces with schools, parent patrols and other community groups to promote walking and biking to school. During Bike Week in May of each year, children from Salinas and Monterey County schools are encouraged to use their bikes to school. Promotion of bicycling before and throughout bike week culminates in Bike to School Day where school children participating are rewarded with celebration, healthy snacks and prizes. In 2008, Bike to School Day attracted over 3,300 students in Monterey County riding their bikes to school.
Your support for increasing bicycling activity in Monterey County is much appreciated and your participation in this event helps highlight that bicycling is a convenient, safe and viable means of travel. Furthermore it helps reduce traffic congestion, helps improves traffic safety, fosters a healthier community, decreases dependence on oil, and promotes clean air. Increasing bicycling and walking activity is big WIN for our schools and the community.
INTRODUCTION

Bike to School Day is a wonderful opportunity to encourage physical activity, nutrition, safety and community building. In the United States thousands of children and adults will bike to school on this day in the middle of May. We are encouraging all County of Monterey students, parents, guardians, and school staff to join in the fun!

WHY BIKE TO SCHOOL?

For Health

- Bicycling is a HEALTHY way to get to school. Almost half of all young people do not get regular exercise!
- Biking to school helps kids burn calories and strengthen their bones muscles.
- Studies show that physically active students are better prepared for learning.

For Safety

- Bicycling is a SAFE way to get to school if you follow basic safety rules.
- When more students bike to school, the amount of traffic congestion at the school site decreases.

For The Environment

- For every mile you bike instead of drive, you spare one pound of Carbon Dioxide from being released into the atmosphere.

It’s Fun

- Bicycling to school is a FUN way to get to school! It is even more fun if you can bike to school with your parents or friends.
It's Smart

- Bicycling is a SMART way to get to school. Kids who bike learn how to get around their neighborhood on their own. They develop a better understanding of space, distance, and direction. They are also more likely to learn how to read or use maps.
SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR BIKE TO SCHOOL DAY

Initiate a Bike Train

Parents are often more willing to allow their children to participate in biking to school if they know there are other responsible adults accompanying their children, or if their child is part of a group. You can help parents find others in their neighborhood by:

- Finding parents willing to lead Bike Trains
- Finding neighborhood leaders who are willing to organize Bike Trains
- Setting up a staging area where children can meet and bike together to school

A Bike Train is a group of children led by adult volunteers who ride to school together. Often they wear retro-reflective vests or other items with high visibility and take positions at the front, end and middle of train.

Staging Areas

Staging areas are locations along the routes to school where bike train participants can meet. Church parking lots, parks, low traffic streets or cul de sacs within ¼ mile from school are all good places to stage. Each school may have more than one staging area within the school attendance area. Recruit parent volunteers to ride with the children. There should be two adults, one at the front of the group and one at the rear. The bicyclists follow the lead parent(s) in a single file…like a train. With a large number of children, more adults are needed because the kids can get spread out, there are more heads to keep track of. Older children who are more experienced at biking to school can be given responsibility to keep an eye on younger riders in front of them on the bike train. Provide information and maps to parents for the location of staging areas, routes and times of departures of the bike trains. (See appendix for sample announcements)

Participating children will learn:

- The Rules of the Road
- How to Ride Predictably
- How to Communicate with hand signals (left turn, right turn and stop)
- How to Ride Safely with Others
BIKE TO SCHOOL DAY PREPARATION

I. Build your Team

Survey all your faculty and select individuals who can contribute to the success of your event. You don’t have to have your whole team in place right away, but it is helpful to have a few key people on board before you get too far in your planning process. Here are some ideas:

School Community: Principals, Assistant Principals, Teachers (see appendix for sample letter to teachers), Support Staff, local Superintendent, School Police, After-school programs or students. What they can do: Generate enthusiasm; engage partners; encourage staff participation; distribute flyers (see appendix for sample flyers).

Elected Officials: City Council Members, your District Board Members, Assembly members, Senators, Congress Member, etc. What they can do: Promote your event with their peers and the community and encourage participation.

II. Organize Your Event

The success of your Bike to School Day will depend on how well your event is organized.

A. Begin with the Basics

- Make your Bike To School Day announcement(s) as soon as possible at various organizational meetings (i.e. Staff Meetings, PTA, Student Council, and service/community clubs) so people have plenty of time to volunteer and get excited about the event. Make sure you notify your local district and all appropriate staff and mark the date on your official school calendar.

Think about any additional events you might want at the starting and ending point of the event. Do you want to have a health fair at the school? Some exhibitors, speakers or dignitaries? Bike and Pedestrian rodeo or skill building event (i.e. speed demonstration)?

- Create a time-line for your event planning (you can get started with the timeline suggested in the introduction). List all the jobs that need to be done and a time. Leave some wiggle room, as your event will grow! Assign volunteers and distribute
that list to everyone, along with contact numbers/e-mail addresses. Set some meeting dates for your team and stick to them.

- Incentives may be available for participating schools. Contact Transportation Agency for Monterey County at 831-775-0903 and coordinate the pick-up of any incentives that may be available for you.

B. Get the Word Out!

- Include the event in the school newsletter; send home a separate Bike To School Day notice that announces the event to parents (see appendix for sample parent letter).
- Display posters, banners and signage in and around the school. Get the event listed in student body bulletins and local school papers.

III. The Day of Your Event

- Distribute complete agendas (see appendix for recommended time line) to all the teachers, team leaders and support people (cafeteria staff, school nurse, parent volunteers, contact people for the presenters, exhibitors, etc.) involved in the day. Include the times and location of events, exhibitor locations, and responsibilities of all involved. The more prepared your team is, the more everyone will be able to handle the last minute things that inevitably come up.
- Take lots of pictures. Document your event!
- Smile a lot, because you are doing something great for kids and your community!
- Count the number of bicycles. This information will help monitor the success of your program throughout the year.

IV. After the Event

- Debrief with team members to obtain useful suggestions and comments that might help towards future Bike To School Day Planning.
- Keep a list with names and phone numbers of volunteers. City Council members have a tendency of publicly thanking volunteers at council meetings.
Share your success! Publish results of the event in the school newsletter and in a note to parents. Write an article for your local newspaper and post it on your school's website. Forward quotes from participants or organizers, news clippings, artwork and photographs to BTS City representatives and local community.

Use the success of your event throughout the year to remind students, parents, and community members of the importance of nutrition, physical activity, and safety.

Then, get ready for next year! 😊
Sample Timeline
BIKE TO SCHOOL DAY SCHEDULE

The following is a tentative schedule for May 10th subject to your modification and approval. In the past, schools have found this schedule to be of help in keeping the event organized.

7:15am  Volunteers arrive and prepare to greet students in the main bicycle parking area.

7:45am  Kids arrive… volunteers hand out stickers to children riding a bike to school

8-8:30am  Classes start as normal

8:30-8:40am  Special Bike to School Assembly is called for students identified with a sticker (preferably in an open area or Multi-purpose room)—a table for prizes may be needed

1. Welcome by Principal / Vice Principal or School Official
2. Bike Safety Presentation (15-20 minutes) & additional comments by guest speakers

9:00am  Assembly will come to an end and students will return to class in an orderly fashion, directed by volunteer(s). Volunteer(s) or Parents will hand out prizes for Bike-To-School-Day!
TO: ALL PARENTS

BIKE TO SCHOOL DAY

May 7th-13th is Bike Week in Monterey County. We are asking all children to participate in Bike to School Day on Thursday, May 10th. Over 2,000 children participated in Bike to School Day last year; this year we would like more children to join the fun.

Prizes and treats will be presented to those students arriving on a bicycle. The Center for Disease Control greatly encourages integrating physical activity into a child’s daily routine. Regular cycling to school improves a child’s sense of self-image and fosters a healthy social and emotional development. In addition, preliminary data show that physical activity improves academic performance and alertness in youth.

Please encourage your child to safely ride their bike to school that day. Remember, helmets are required. We have included a listing of several other events going on throughout the community in celebration of Bike Week 2012. So, hop on your bike and join the festivities!
Sample Letter to Teachers
April 1, 2012

TO: ALL TEACHERS

RE: BIKE TO SCHOOL DAY 2012

Bike Week 2012 is May 7th – 13th. Our school is participating in Bike to School Day on May 10th. Last year, teachers, faculty and students along with City volunteers had a great time. Over 2,000 participated in Bike to School Day last year. We would like more students to join the fun.

The event is important because it encourages bicycling, which helps the community in several ways. Bicycling to work and school increases physical activity, which is encouraged by the Center for Disease Control to halt the increasing trend in obesity in our young people and adults. It also helps reduce traffic congestion. If fewer children are driven to school because more of them are walking or bicycling, then this will help reduce the traffic during peak hours. Bicycling to work or school also reduces our dependence on gasoline and promotes cleaner air for the community.

Adults can participate too. By cycling to work, we could also set an example and encourage students to ride their bike to school. We would appreciate your help in promoting this event with your students. Students arriving by bicycle on Bike to School Day will be rewarded with a short assembly. After this presentation, healthy snacks and prizes will be provided. We hope you will participate and share this information with your students.

Sincerely,

Your Principal
Sample Bike Train Letter to Parents
Dear Parent:

__________________ Elementary School invites you and your children to join in Bike to School Day on Thursday, May 10, 2012. On that day, adults will bike with children to promote the benefits of biking to school as a “bike train”.

This is part of our community effort to make biking to and from school a safe, active, and enjoyable part of a child’s day—and make biking an enjoyable part of everyone’s lives.

If you want your children to bike with adults to school, you can have them meet at any one of these staging areas:

- **Cross Street 1 and Cross Street 2**, 7:15 to 7:30 a.m.
- **Cross Street 3 and Cross Street 4**, 7:15 to 7:30 a.m.
- **Cross Street 5 and Cross Street 6**, 7:25 to 7:40 a.m.
- **Final Meeting Place**, 7:25 to 7:40 a.m.

Your child can also join the bike train as they pass your house. We’ve attached a map showing the routes the “trains” and will take.

After school, adults will ride with your children back to the staging area. If you want to travel back home with your children, please go the staging area by 2:30 p.m.

If you have questions please call me at __________.

Cordially,

[main Bike to School Day contact]

**Attachment: Map**
Insert surrounding school area map here
Sample School Flyer
Bike To School Day is Here!

Thursday, May 10, 2012

Hop on that bike and get ready for some excitement...

- Free Bike Safety Tips
- Prizes
- Lots of fun
- AND MUCH MORE!

Remember, riding your bike to school is a great way to EXERCISE and not to mention it helps reduce traffic congestion and air pollution in our City. 😊

HELMETS ARE REQUIRED!

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Sample
Announcements
Tomorrow is Bike to School Day. Stop by the tables located at _____________ to pick up snacks and prizes tomorrow morning. Remember always wear your helmet if you are biking. When you bike to school, you can stay healthy and help the environment. Try it tomorrow; you'll like it!

Bike to School Day is tomorrow! Start your day with fresh air and receive a free snack. When you bike to school, you are staying fit and helping to keep our air clean. Grab your helmet, hop on your bike and ride safely. Remember to never walk with a stranger. Pick up some food and a prize at _____________. Try out Walk and Roll to School Day, you'll like it!

______________ (enter day) is Bike to School Day. Biking to school is a fantastic way to instill healthy, fun habits in your child. It is a great excuse to gather with your neighbors and clear your mind before school and work. Teach your child safe crossing techniques and always use the crosswalks. Volunteers will be hosting welcome tables located at ____________ to give out food and other goodies. Give it a try and you will be hooked!! For more information about biking with neighbors, commute safety tips, or to volunteer, please call ____________ (provide name and phone number).

______________ (enter day) is Bike to School Day. For this event, students will be rewarded with a snack when they arrive at school and check in at the welcome table. Avoid the long traffic line and spend quality time with your child outdoors. Send your child off to school with a smile and a helmet if they are on a bicycle. For more information about a safe route to your school or to volunteer, please call ____________ (provide name and phone number).
Sample
Food & Donation Request Letter
Dear ___________ (Manager’s name):

This year, ____________________ (name of school) will be hosting a Bike to School Day on ____________________ (list every day of your school’s event). We are seeking donations of drinks, snacks, and small prizes for distribution to students who bike to school. We believe your business will benefit greatly by contributing to our regularly scheduled event, and would like to request a donation from you. We are seeking _______ (insert one of the descriptions below).

- a week of drinks and snacks (XX cans/bottles of _____ and XX of cookies/apples/etc.)
- a month of drinks and snacks (XX cans/bottles of _____ and XX of cookies/apples/etc.)
- a year-long supply of small prizes (XX pencils, stickers, pens, balls, etc.)

In exchange for your donation, your business will receive:

✓ Recognition throughout the community.
✓ Publicity on our event welcome table to our entire school population.
✓ Recognition in our school newsletter.
✓ A tax-deductible donation receipt.

By integrating health, fitness, traffic relief, environmental awareness and safety under one event, Bike to School Day has witnessed outstanding results: children participating in Bike to School Day has increased to a total of 3,300. Bike to School day is working with 13 schools in Monterey County.

Thank you in advance for supporting the health and happiness of your community. I will call you next week to answer any questions you have about this request. You may also contact me at ___________ (your phone number) or ____________ (your email address).

Sincerely,

___________________ (Your name)