

# Complete Streets Help Keep Kids Safe!



Complete Streets are designed and operated so they work for all users— pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. Communities that adopt complete streets policies are asking transportation planners and engineers to consistently design and alter the right-of-way with all users in mind. Contact the National Complete Streets Coalition ([www.completestreets.org](http://www.completestreets.org)) to learn about the diverse groups working together to enact complete streets policies across the country!

Outside Philadelphia, two students who attend Uwchlan Hills Elementary School ride the bus only 90 yards to cross a busy street. In Auburn, Maine, students living just down the street from their brand new elementary school are also taking the bus. These schools are missing the necessary sidewalks and crosswalks that allow kids to walk to school safely – their streets are incomplete.



Right: photo courtesy of Michael Rankin  
Left: photo courtesy of League of Illinois Bicyclists

These children clearly do not have a safe route to school. The incomplete streets pictured make their trip unappealing and unsafe.

## Incomplete streets a barrier for children

When streets are designed only for cars, they become barriers for children, who cannot safely walk or bicycle along or across them. Unfortunately these safety fears are well founded – pedestrian injury is a leading cause of unintentional, injury-related death among children, age 5 to 14.<sup>1</sup>

As a result, many children end up in the back seat of the car, missing out on opportunities for independence and physical activity. One recent survey found that, while 71% of adults walked or rode their bicycles to school as a child, a mere 17% of their own children currently do so.<sup>2</sup> While ‘stranger danger’ is often cited as a primary factor, a CDC survey found that traffic-related danger is a more common reason children did not walk to school.<sup>3</sup> Limited physical activity is a factor in the obesity epidemic among children. The number of overweight or obese American children nearly tripled between 1980 and 2004.<sup>4</sup>

The lack of complete streets is perhaps best illustrated by hazard busing for schoolchildren. In Illinois, 15% of students who ride the bus to school do so because it is considered too dangerous to walk from home, less than 1.5 miles away.

(over)

# The Benefits of Complete Streets I



## Complete Streets Steering Committee Organizations

AARP  
Alliance for Biking and Walking  
America Bikes  
America Walks  
American Council of the Blind  
American Planning Association  
American Public Transportation Association  
American Society of Landscape Architects  
Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals  
City of Boulder  
HNTB  
Institute of Transportation Engineers  
League of American Bicyclists  
McCann Consulting  
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging  
National Center for Bicycling and Walking  
Safe Routes to School National Partnership  
Smart Growth America  
SvR Design Company

## National Complete Streets Coalition

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## Complete Streets Help Keep Kids Safe!



Right: photo courtesy of Dan Burden  
Left: www.pedbikeinfo.org/Portland Bureau of Transportation

Complete streets provide children with a safe and pleasant environment to walk or bike.

## Complete Streets give children safety, mobility

Complete streets provide children with opportunities to walk, bike and play in a safe environment. More children are likely to walk or bike to school when sidewalks or footpaths are present, when there are safe street crossings, and when school zones enforce a reduced vehicle speed.<sup>5</sup> Streets that provide dedicated space for bicycling and walking help kids get physical activity and gain independence.

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs, which have become tremendously popular across the country, will benefit from complete streets policies that help turn all routes into safe routes. The California program, initiated through legislation in 2000, was an immediate success, with more kids walking to school, reduced traffic speeds near schools, and more drivers yielding to pedestrians.<sup>6</sup> While federal funding is now available in all fifty states for Safe Routes to School programs, it only serves a limited number of communities each year. Complete streets policies can augment these programs to help all communities create safe routes as a routine part of roadway improvement, design and construction.

A community with a complete streets policy considers the needs of children every time a transportation investment decision is made. Roads near schools and in residential neighborhoods are designed and altered to allow children, the most vulnerable users of our streets, to travel safely.

<sup>1</sup> Surface Transportation Policy Project (2004) Mean Streets

<sup>2</sup> Appleyard, B. (2005) Livable Streets for Schoolchildren. NCBW Forum.

<sup>3</sup> S Martin, S Carlson, Barriers to Children Walking to or From School—United States, 2004M MMWR. 2005; 54:949-952.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. (2004) Physical Activity and the Health of Young People.

<sup>5</sup> Ewing, R. Will Schroeder, William Greene. School location and student travel: Analysis of factors affecting mode choice. Transportation Research Record: Journal of the Transportation Research Board, No. 1895, TRB, National Research Council, Washington, D.C., 2004, pp. 55-63.

<sup>6</sup> Appleyard, B. (2005)