

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL FOR ALL CHILDREN

Adopted by Convention Delegates May 2008

- WHEREAS, The number of children walking and bicycling to schools in the U.S. has declined over the past 40 years partially due to the rise in the number of children being driven to school in private cars during the morning peak-hour traffic; and
- WHEREAS, Schools are not built to handle high volume traffic and people are often in a hurry, creating unsafe drop-off practices; and
- WHEREAS, The concentration of pollutants from cars and trucks has adverse effects on health, such as decreased lung development, susceptibility to allergies, and asthma of our children and youth; and
- WHEREAS, When new schools are built on the fringes of communities children need to be driven to school and cannot walk or bicycle to school; and
- WHEREAS, Bicycling and walking to school can have a positive mental and physical impact on the health of children and youth; and
- WHEREAS, The Federal Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program empowers communities to address the afore mentioned issues, to make walking and bicycling to school safe, and to improve routes to schools; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA and its units, councils and districts urge legislators and local government agencies to allocate funding for more adult crossing guards and the implementation of engineering improvements around schools, such as traffic calming measures, improved street crossings, sidewalks, bike lanes and walkways to create safer routes to school; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA and its units, councils and districts advocate for stronger enforcement of existing traffic laws (including speed limits, yielding to pedestrians, etc), and advocate for new laws to enhance the safety of children walking and bicycling to schools; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That California State PTA urge its units, councils and districts to partner with school district staff and community groups to implement Safe Routes to School activities including pedestrian and bicycle safety education and programs that encourage safe walking and bicycling to school; and be it further

Safe Routes to School for all Children - *continued*

RESOLVED, That California State PTA urge its units, councils and districts to encourage school districts to preserve established neighborhood schools wherever possible and locate new schools near where students live, as they often serve as community centers; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the California State PTA submit this resolution to the National PTA for consideration at the June 2009 National PTA Convention.

BACKGROUND SUMMARY

Most of us remember walking or riding our bikes to school when we were young. Today, however, the picture is far different. The number of children walking and bicycling to schools has declined sharply from about 50% in 1969 to approximately 15% today. In parts of California, up to 85% of all children arrive at school in a private automobile.

The concentration of cars around schools results in congestion, pollution, severe impacts on neighborhoods and safety risks to the children. As schools are not built to handle so much traffic and people are often in a hurry, unsafe drop-off practices are widespread.

Health professionals are alarmed at the steep increase in the number of overweight and obese children in this country. As a result, health problems like Type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure, once the domain of adults, are now seen increasingly in children. In part, this condition is due to a lack of physical activity. Children who, a generation ago, enjoyed regular daily exercise from getting around on their own feet or wheels, now are being driven everywhere by their parents. These unhealthful habits, set in childhood, are likely to carry over into adult life and result in lifelong health problems and well as increased traffic congestion and energy use.

The International Safe Routes to School Movement is gathering momentum to reverse this trend. It takes a multi-pronged approach that can be described under the four E's: Engineering, Enforcement, Education and Encouragement. State and national policy makers are providing funding for Safe Routes to School projects and programs. Increasing the number of children and youth walking and bicycling to school is one of the Healthy People 2010 objectives. It is time for PTA as the premier advocate for all children to become a leader in the effort of enabling our children to walk and bike to school safely.

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