

# Bishop Paiute Tribe Students Walk to School

## Summary

**Walk to School Day events raise awareness of the need to create safer routes for walking and bicycling around communities and bring attention to issues such as pedestrian safety, traffic congestion, and concern for the environment.**

**Toiyabe Indian Health Project, in partnership with local Tribal organizations and schools, hosted an annual walk to school event in Bishop, California, that grew into a walking school bus initiative. With the excitement and momentum supporting this initiative, each year more students are walking to school.**

## Challenge

How students travel to school has changed over time. In the last 40 years, more children are being driven to school when they used to walk or bike.

According to the National Center for Safe Routes to School, in 1969, 48 percent of K-8th grade students usually walked or bicycled to school. By 2009, the picture is completely opposite, with only 13 percent of K-8th grade students usually walking or bicycling to school. In 2009, 45% arrived in a personal vehicle.

This shift of habit is alarming at a time when according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), three out of four adolescents don't get the recommended 60 daily minutes of physical activity. CDC states that regular physical activity not only helps reduce the risk of developing obesity and chronic diseases, but it may also help improve academic performance and behavior.

*"Despite the cold weather, our event is always enjoyable for me as a collaboration team member and as a parent. The students look forward to walking to school. By making this a monthly event we hope to keep the enthusiasm of the students going."*

**- Jodi Poncho, Tribal TANF Prevention Coordinator and Parent**



## Solution

The effort to encourage students to walk to school began by forming a committee to identify a safe route to school for students to walk along. The path through the Bishop Paiute Tribe's Conservation Open Space Area was identified as it was easy to follow and ended at the school. Through the assistance of the Inyo County Superintendent of Schools, the committee worked with the school district to unlock the gate that connects the path to the school. The committee worked together to host walk to school events in October in 2015 and 2016. Partner organizations that serve youth, including the Bishop Indian Education Center and Tribal TANF Program, were key in making the effort successful.

## Success Stories

<http://nccd.cdc.gov/nccdsuccessstories/>

## Results

The two year walk to school initiative in 2015 and 2016 inspired county-wide awareness and excitement around walking to school. The annual event walking from the Bishop Paiute Tribal Reservation reached around 50 students and over 30 parents each year. Traffic congestion was lessened at the school, as 33 cars did not need to drive to the school.

Walk to School was a collaboration of efforts across the county, as schools also incorporated walk to school activities. Bishop Elementary school buses dropped their students three blocks away from school, allowing the students a short walk to school. Big Pine Elementary hosted an "at school" walking event in the afternoon on their field.

Most importantly, parents and students indicated they want to keep the momentum going. The community is ready to make walking to school a regular activity.

## Sustainable Success

Building on the excitement around the annual Walk to School event, the collaboration formed a goal to host a walking school bus every month for the upcoming 15-16 school year. A committee was formed to support and lead the walks.

Goals for this monthly walk include engaging high school youth to help lead the walks, inspiring parents to participate and take a leading role, and to continue coordinating with the school district to keep gate access available.

In addition, the committee's efforts in this one community is inspiring a larger effort around the county. Discussions have begun to identify routes in different neighborhoods, designating bus stops and setting a schedule of volunteers to lead walking school buses around the county.

## Your Involvement is Key

You can help by starting a walking school bus in your neighborhood! A walking school bus can be as informal as two families taking turns walking their children to school or as structured as a route with a timetable and schedule of trained volunteers. Starting small and simple allows the program to succeed and grow.

Walking to school allows children to incorporate regular physical activity into their day while also forming healthy habits that can last a lifetime. Let's walk to school!



### Contact

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