



### WHAT'S SAFE ROUTES ALL ABOUT?

At Safe Routes Nebraska, we're committed to helping build safe routes to school, so kids can walk and bike more . . . getting the exercise they need for happy, healthy lives. Here's how we do it:

- Funding projects to make communities more walker/biker-friendly
- Educating teachers, students, parents, and communities on safe walking and biking
- Encouraging kids to walk or bike to and from school—after all, it's fun!

Visit [www.SafeRoutesNE.com](http://www.SafeRoutesNE.com) to find out more about helping build healthier communities with Safe Routes Nebraska.

### Program Purpose

To enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school; to make walking and bicycling to school safe and more appealing; and to facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools.

### National Funding

- Through the 2005 passage of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), Congress designated a total of \$612 million toward developing the National Safe Routes to School Program. These funds continue to be distributed to state departments of roads to fund education, planning, and implementation of Safe Routes to School plans and programs.

### National Statistics

- Nationally, childhood obesity has reached epidemic proportions with 4.7 million youth aged 6–17 now overweight or obese. That means 22 percent of American children are now considered obese, and that number is doubling every 10 years.
- Over the past three decades in the United States, the childhood obesity rate has more than doubled for preschool children aged 2–5 years and adolescents aged 12–19 years, and it has more than tripled for children aged 6–11 years. The lack of physical activity contributes to obesity and health problems.
- Less than 1 percent of children aged 7–15 now ride bicycles to school, a decrease of more than 60 percent since the 1970s.
- Seventy percent of children watch at least one hour of TV each day; 35 percent watch five or more hours.



## INACTIVITY'S COST

- Type 2 diabetes is becoming more common in children . . . it used to only occur in adults
- Obese children frequently develop orthopedic problems, liver disease, and asthma
- Many obese children have cholesterol and blood pressure levels high enough to put them at risk for heart disease
- Obese children are at risk for sleep apnea, which can affect their learning and memory
- Overweight teens have a 70 percent chance of becoming overweight adults

## QUESTIONS?

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- Nearly half of young people aged 12–21 years do not engage in vigorous physical activity on a regular basis. Participation in physical activity declines strikingly as children get older.
- Children who are overweight often feel stigmatized, have lower self-esteem, and are less likely to engage in physical activity in order to avoid ridicule from classmates.

## Nebraska Information

- To encourage and better enable Nebraska children to walk and bike safely to school, the Nebraska Department of Roads recently launched its Safe Routes Nebraska program.
- In Nebraska, 1 in 6 students in grades K–12 is overweight while an additional 17.1 percent are at risk for being overweight. This means that 1 in 3—or approximately 106,000 students statewide—is either at risk or is overweight. (Data obtained from Nebraska Health and Human Services Department report titled “Overweight Among Nebraska Youth”)
- Safe Routes Nebraska is 100 percent funded by the federal government and requires no matching funds by local entities.
- The state of Nebraska receives approximately \$1 million in funds to build safer routes to school and promote walking and biking in our communities. Schools and communities across the state are eligible for a portion of these funds.
- During the program’s first year of making funds available, more than 160 groups in Nebraska requested over \$16 million toward encouraging walking and biking safety.

## INTRODUCING



Safe Routes Nebraska developed Zack & Wendell to get kids interested in the health benefits of walking and biking to school safely. These playful digital mascots teach kids about the importance of staying both safe and active through games, cartoons, and kid-focused text. Be sure to check out what Zack & Wendell have to say . . . visit the Kids section at [www.SafeRoutesNE.com](http://www.SafeRoutesNE.com).