

Organize a Park and Walk Event

Schools across Oregon are participating in Safe Routes to School programs and hosting events that get students walking and rolling, including Walk+Roll to School Days, but they find that their students live too far away to meaningfully participate. An inclusive option is a Park and Walk events, in which families park a specified distance from the school, generally two to four blocks away, and families or just students walk the rest of the way or vice versa. By making it an event, you can encourage more families to walk those last blocks together because of the opportunity to build community and have fun while walking.



Anyone can organize a Park and Walk event with permission from their school. Follow these steps to organize one at your school:



1. ASK YOUR PRINCIPAL FOR PERMISSION.

Then, select a date (or multiple!). These events often align with Walk+Roll to School Day events

but can be any day. Late start days are often popular event days. Discuss if the event should include adult supervision provided by the school or other volunteers at the drop-off locations or if families will be expected to walk their students to campus on their own. Confirm your District's requirements for volunteers.



2. FIND A PLACE WHERE FAMILIES CAN PARK AND WALK SAFELY.

Try out the route to confirm that it's safe, comfortable, and ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) accessible. Avoid routes that require crossing major roadways to maximize safety! Locations like libraries, parks, places of worship, businesses, and quiet neighborhood streets that are about two to four blocks away from school can be great meeting places. If meeting at a parking lot, connect with the people who run the lot to let them know about the event and confirm that parking will be available for families during the event time.



3. PUBLICIZE YOUR EVENT.

If aligning it with a Walk+Roll to School Day event, The Oregon Department of Transportation

Safe Routes to School (ODOT SRTS) program creates prepared social media posts for schools. Share out information on social media, in the school's newsletter, or on flyers sent home with students. Include the date(s), the location, and route, and the "why" that's most relevant to your school community—increasing safety, mental and physical health, reducing emissions around schools, academic performance, or something else. You can also post signs in the designated parking area and along the route to guide families.



4. CELEBRATE!

While optional, creating a celebration as students arrive to school will help students to feel excited about having walked. If your event is aligned with a Walk+Roll event, distribute free incentives. If possible, you may be able to also purchase snacks or look for donations from local businesses.

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Photo credit: Megan Ramey

What Comes Next?

1. SET A SCHEDULE FOR YOUR EVENT.

Will it be monthly? Weekly? Or even daily? Pick what works best for your community and then publicize that information to families. You may want to ask the District to enter a Memorandum of Understanding with the parking lot owner for long-term event use.

2. ADD WALK+ROLL TO SCHOOL DAY CELEBRATIONS TO YOUR EVENTS.

The ODOT SRTS program offers materials and resource for Walk+Roll events throughout the school year.

3. TALK WITH YOUR DISTRICT TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT TO SEE IF SCHOOL BUS RIDERS CAN PARTICIPATE.

Some districts have school buses drop students off or pick up a few blocks away as well so that they can participate in park and walk events. Read more about the Bus Stop and Walk in Minneapolis here: cws.mpls.k12.mn.us/bus_stop_walk

4. CONSIDER A SCHOOL STREET TO ENHANCE SAFETY AND COMMUNITY

This may also include closing the street during and after school as well. Use this space to provide structured educational opportunities like bike rodeos or just provide a safe area for play.

5. EQUIP TEACHERS, STAFF, OR COMMUNITY MEMBERS WITH RESOURCES.

Consider offering walking or biking safety lessons to students at school through the Jump Start train-the-trainer program.

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