

## **Bike/Walk Midland and Safe Routes to School**

For children who live within a mile of school, the share of children walking or bicycling to school dropped from close to 90 percent in 1969 to 31 percent in 1999, and is even lower today. If the number of kids who walk and bike to school in the US was at 1969 levels, it would eliminate 3.2B vehicle miles, 1.5M tons of CO<sub>2</sub>, and 89,000 tons of other air pollution. It would be the equivalent of 250,000 cars taken off the road. Combine this with the need to significantly increase the amount of physical activity in children's daily routine, and you have the perfect incentive to get more kids out of the car on their way to school.

There is a national and state level program called Safe Routes to School (SR2S) that is aimed at making it safe, convenient and fun for children to bicycle and walk to school. When routes are safe, walking or biking to and from school is an easy way to get the regular physical activity children need for good health. Safe Routes to School initiatives also help ease school traffic, unite neighborhoods and contribute to students' readiness to learn in school. ([www.saferoutesinfo.org](http://www.saferoutesinfo.org), [www.saferoutesmichigan.org](http://www.saferoutesmichigan.org)). Midland has an excellent network of sidewalks and low traffic streets that allow most children a relatively direct SR2S.

The Midland NMT Committee is working with local schools to identify opportunities to implement SR2S programs, and so move us closer to the vision (and history) where a lot more kids walk and ride bikes to school. Two Midland elementary schools have already begun pilot "Walking School Bus" programs this spring, and others have expressed support for various SR2S activities. The SR2S national and state level programs are at: [www.saferoutesinfo.org](http://www.saferoutesinfo.org) and [www.saferoutesmichigan.org](http://www.saferoutesmichigan.org). See also: [www.michiganfitness.org](http://www.michiganfitness.org)

For more information: [www.midland-mi.org/government/departments/planning/Planning/planninghome.htm](http://www.midland-mi.org/government/departments/planning/Planning/planninghome.htm)