

**Factors Affecting School Walking Decisions in an Urban Environment:
Implications for Public Policy and Public Health**

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Thirty years ago, almost half of the children in the United States walked or rode their bikes to school. Today, less than 15% of children actively commute to school. Given the growing obesity epidemic in our country, encouraging children to walk or bike to school has become a national priority. To provide a safe environment for children to walk and bicycle to school, in 2005, legislation established the national Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program. This paper reports the results of a parent survey in an urban neighborhood where an SRTS grant had been awarded to the neighborhood school, but construction had not yet been implemented. Results of the study reveal that parents from a low income, urban neighborhood cite crime and animals as the key barriers in allowing their children to actively commute to school. These findings differ from national statistics that indicate distance as the most significant barrier to walking to school. Implications of these findings are discussed.

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