

Governor signs bill that requires Illinois K-8 schools to teach safe biking and walking skills

Legislation boosts biking and walking safety for kids

Chicago, IL, August 28, 2018—Every day in Illinois, an average of five kids are hit by a driver of a motor vehicle within one block of a school, and more are hit beyond the school zones. A bill that helps address this tragic daily occurrence while encouraging more walking and biking was signed into law by Governor Rauner on Friday.

[The Bike Walk Education in Schools Act \(HB4799\)](#) requires K-8 schools to provide biking and walking safety education. Illinois' School Code requires automobile safety education, but currently there isn't a requirement for providing instruction on how to bike and walk safely.

“We must do more to ensure the safety of Illinois kids while they are biking and walking,” said Ron Burke, executive director of the Active Transportation Alliance. “This bill is an important step forward in making Illinois a better place for kids to bike and walk. And these are skills that kids can take with them into adulthood.”

Over the past thirty years, childhood obesity has tripled in the U.S. and Illinois ranks ninth in the nation in obese adolescents ages 10 to 17. Walking and biking safely helps kids get more physical activity, reducing the risk of obesity and promoting good overall health.

“Getting more kids biking and walking improves the health and sustainability of communities in the 6th district and across Illinois,” said State Rep. Sonya Harper, the bill's lead sponsor in the State House. “This law will help ensure more kids are traveling safely as they move about their neighborhoods.”

Biking and walking to school not only enhances children's health, these activities help them perform better in school on average. Traveling to school by foot or bike also gives parents more free time and cuts down on traffic congestion.

“Transportation is about more than driving cars and our schools could be doing more to promote safe biking and walking,” said State Sen. Mattie Hunter, the bill's lead sponsor in the State Senate. “This law will introduce more Illinois kids to the joys of traveling on foot and on bike.”

Burke said that hundreds of supporters contacted their legislators in support of the bill.

Surveys indicate that walking and biking to school has been steadily decreasing since the 1970s. Although most schools provide no meaningful biking and walking safety education, many others are trailblazers that have adopted a variety of free or low-cost encouragement and safety programs to help reverse the decline, usually as part of Health class or PE, as well as events like Walk and Bike to School Day. Their programs draw upon materials created by organizations with expertise in walking and biking, including on-line quizzes and videos to guide books with a check list of teaching points and lesson plans. More ambitious programs include on-bike education at the schools. Under HB 4799, K-8 school boards will have the flexibility to

choose their own approach.

Active Transportation Alliance staff and partners have decades of experience working with districts and schools looking to incorporate biking and walking safety education into their instruction. Active Trans has compiled a resource list of materials for teaching biking and walking safety to children that it will share with school districts across the state while also working with the Illinois Association of School Boards to develop a model policy in the coming weeks.

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About the Active Transportation Alliance

The Active Transportation Alliance is a non-profit, member-based advocacy organization that advocates for walking, bicycling, and public transit to create healthy, sustainable and equitable communities. The organization works to build a movement around active transportation, encourage physical activity, increase safety and build a world-class transportation network. The Active Transportation Alliance has more than 20,000 members and supporters in the Chicago region. For more information about the Active Transportation Alliance, visit www.activetrans.org or call 312.427.3325.