



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Press Release

For Immediate Release:

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Thousands Across Georgia Celebrate Walk To School Day

ATLANTA – Thousands of Georgia elementary and middle school students from nearly 100 schools marked the 13th annual International Walk To School Day with various activities this morning aimed at promoting healthy and safe walking and bicycling to and from school.

Georgia Department of Transportation Commissioner Vance C. Smith, Jr., joined students, parents, faculty and staff of Atlanta's Mary Lin Elementary School in arrival festivities. "This is a wonderful event and it serves a great purpose," Smith said. "So many children will enjoy walking or biking to school if we'll just continue to make it convenient and safe for them to do so. They'll be healthier and roads and streets around schools will be that less crowded."

International Walk to School Day was established in the United States in 1997 by Partnership for a Walkable America, a national alliance of public and private organizations committed to making walking safer, easier, and more enjoyable. The event is now marked in 40 countries and at more than 2,400 schools in the United States. The program shares the goal of the federal Safe Routes to School Program, which is to enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to safely walk and bicycle to school.

Less than 15 percent of all school trips are made by walking or biking. Instead, one-quarter are made on a school bus and over half of all children arrive at school in private vehicles, according to Georgia DOT's Safe Routes To School Coordinator Emmanuella Myrthil. While walking to school was commonplace just a generation ago, traffic jams around schools are now the norm. The decline in walking and biking has had an adverse effect on traffic congestion and air quality around schools. Up to 25 percent of traffic congestion is caused by parents dropping children off at school.

The Georgia Department of Transportation is committed to providing a safe, seamless and sustainable transportation system that supports Georgia's economy and is sensitive to both its citizens and its environment. Georgia is the 3rd fastest-growing state in the nation, yet 49th in per capita spending on transportation. Additional transportation revenues are imperative to grow and sustain Georgia's economic vitality and quality of life through the 21st Century. For general information on the Georgia DOT, please visit our Web site (www.dot.ga.gov).

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