

walk

Walk-to-school day is a hit with pupils and parents

It took ten months to secure the funding to build on a successful pilot study and launch WalkBoston's Safe Routes to Schools program, but when funding arrived, the program started with a bang.

The October 1999 pilot study in Arlington, MA, showed there was a high level of enthusiasm for a program that promotes kids walking to school, improves their fitness, and reduces auto trips to schools. But it wasn't until August of 2000 that project director Dorothea Hass learned that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration would fund the implementation of Safe Routes to Schools (SRS) through the National Park Service.

Right after Labor Day, Dorothea and SRS Arlington coordinator Don Eunson contacted Dallin School principal Bob Lynch, who knew the SRS program from the 1999 pilot study. Typically 60-70% of Dallin students are driven to school and Lynch is committed to getting more kids out of their parents' cars, and walking to school.

Coincidentally, October 4 this year was International Walk-to-School Day. So the WalkBoston team planned a high-profile kick-off event, rain-or-shine, with refreshments provided by an enthusiastic parent teacher organization; a contest to reward the class with the most walkers; and, as the centerpiece of the event, a demonstration of the "walking school bus." A walking school bus is where trained parent volunteers walk a scheduled route, gathering students along the way, just as a school bus would. However, instead of sitting in a bus or car, these kids are walking and getting daily exercise.



Walking Bus

The modest goal for October 4 was one or two "buses" of 12-18 students each. As the day approached, Rachael Stark, the walking bus coordinator, reported that more and more parents were volunteering and walking buses were spinning off spontaneously.

Walk-to-School Day was a picture-perfect, New England autumn day with bright sun and crisp air. Children and parents arrived from all directions on foot, both individually and as part of five or six walking buses. The Arlington Advocate reported that participants in one walking bus arrived chanting "Dallin School! Walkers Rule!" And when all the kids were surveyed, 90% reported that they walked that day!

The next phase of WalkBoston's comprehensive year-long SRS program is being funded by the Massachusetts Highway Department using Federal air quality funds. Additional Arlington elementary and middle schools will be included and WalkBoston will institute programs such as pedestrian and bike safety training, proposing traffic calming measures, and promoting sidewalk construction.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Walking in Cambridge is a fresh delight of wider sidewalks, planted neckdowns, new bike lanes, and "walk" lights showing how much time is left to cross. Brookline is making improvements to Beacon Street with "ped advance," on demand, and countdown signals. While these changes are wonderful, walking advocates should be reminded that there was a similar revolution in Boston two decades ago.

The City created the Downtown Crossing with the removal of traffic from Washington, Winter and Summer streets. The MBTA built the Southwest Corridor Park from Back Bay Station to Forest Hills. On Beacon Hill, the City reversed Charles Street and part of Joy Street to thwart heavy commuter traffic. In the Fenway, the City rerouted heavy traffic directly into Boylston Street and out of Fenway parkland.

South Boston streets were reversed to eliminate truck short cuts through neighborhoods. The sidewalk on Main Street in Charlestown took over a traffic lane. A South End neighborhood traffic calming effort narrowed Columbus Avenue and Tremont Street, reversed cross streets and Shawmut Avenue, built curb extensions, and built the city's only woonerf on Appleton Street. Successes were due to advocacy, citizen professionals, and progressive and imaginative transportation advisors to Boston Mayor Kevin White, himself a walker.

Today, active citizens in Boston are again demanding safer streets. Citizens are pushing for traffic calming solutions as part of city sponsored studies and separately, as in Hyde Park. What's important is getting out there and doing something. No need to be an expert. Just talk it up, follow up, and don't give up. Change takes time, but it is SATISFYING.

Ann Hershfang

Boston

A NON-PROFIT
PEDESTRIAN ADVOCACY
ORGANIZATION

SPRING 2001

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WALKBOSTON NEWSLETTER

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mission
 WalkBoston promotes walking for transportation and recreation. Our mission is to create and preserve walkable, livable communities through education and advocacy.

calendar

Peter Vanderwarker will speak at WalkBoston's 11th Annual Meeting. Tuesday, April 3, 5:30-8:00 PM at Hale and Dorr, 60 State Street. We will honor individuals, groups, firms, or municipalities with the Golden Shoe Awards for outstanding contributions to walking. Call 617/451-1570 with your recommendations.

Ben Hamilton-Baille, architect from England, will present on Traffic Calming at the April 4 Boston Society of Civil Engineers luncheon. Registration at 11:30am, luncheon at 12:00pm. At the 57 Restaurant, 200 Stuart Street. \$30 BSCE members, \$35 non-members, \$20 public sector employees and students. To register call James Downey of Fay, Spofford 781-221-1149.

achievements

Board member **Rebecca Barnes** was chosen chief planner for the Boston Redevelopment Authority. The Boston Globe cited the tough decisions before her—such as the South Boston and East Boston waterfronts.

Jon Seward has been appointed to the Independent Advisory Group representing South Boston in negotiations over a Fort Point Channel development.

Jim Purdy, Wallace, Floyd Associates, and Dorothea Hass, WalkBoston, presented at a session on pedestrian access to transit at the Annual Meeting of the Transportation Research Board in Washington DC.

Ann Hershfang was appointed to the Enhancements Committee for the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (which recommends enhancement projects to the state for the 101 metro cities and towns).

Betsy Johnson has succeeded Board Secretary Malcolm Davis as Chair of the Prudential Project Advisory Committee—it's still in good hands.

Jack Wofford managed the South Boston Transportation Summit and helped bring the parties together.

WalkBoston has hired a new Executive Director, **Lyn McLaughlin.**

The MBTA has a new system map. Designed by **Ken Dumas**, it is available free of charge at the State Transportation Building or by calling 222-5215.

member action

Too many news boxes on your sidewalks? In Boston, call James Cahill in Code Enforcement (635-4896). A new city ordinance restricting the number and location of newsboxes has removed lots of boxes from the Back Bay and Faneuil Hall areas.

ongoing projects

WalkBoston received a \$5000 grant from the Boston Society of Architects to support development of a walking tour of the original Shawmut Peninsula for 4th, 5th and 6th graders.

membership application

Complete this form & mail along with your check made payable to: WalkBoston, 156 Milk Street, Boston, MA 02109.
 T: (617)451-1570 F: (617)451-6475 walkbos@shore.net | www.walkboston.org

name(s) _____

address _____

phone:daytime _____ evening _____

e-mail _____ fax _____

- check one: STUDENT / SENIOR OVER 70 \$10 SUPPORTER \$50
 MEMBER \$25 FRIEND \$100
 DUAL / CONTRIBUTOR \$35 CORPORATE \$250 | \$500 | \$1000

- circle committees you are interested in. (to contact them directly - see front)
- membership advocacy education/pr/publications
 legislative fundraising programs

Your donation is tax deductible as a charitable contribution.

news items

Speed lanes for pedestrians. London is considering dividing chic shopping Oxford Street, into two pedestrian lanes, with a fast lane at a minimum of 3 mph speed. Marshals would patrol, empowered to fine slow walkers straying into the fast lane ten pounds (\$22). (Reuters 12/4/00)

Music lovers take over Mass Ave. On Valentine's Day, a fire alarm interrupted Bach's B Minor Mass at Symphony Hall, moving the audience into the street, blocking two travel lanes for a 1/2 hour.

"Boulevard" plans funded in Hyde Park, Brighton, Huntington Ave., Cambridge St., and the plaza in front of Copley Square Library. Construction is expected this year.

AmericaWalks

A 3-day National Congress of Pedestrian Advocates, will be held August 16-18, 2001 in Oakland CA. The Congress will provide training, advocacy techniques, and mentoring to existing and potential ped groups. Scholarships available. Info: ellenv@hevanet.com.

walktalk

"We can, upright people that we are, discover the foot; we can save a place to walk in, and an antelope, too."— *Obituary of David Brower, leader of the Sierra Club and Friends of the Earth.*