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School Transportation: Start Early – Change Established Patterns and Build Lifelong Healthy Habits

By Catherine Mirick, Wellesley School Committee

This the fourth in a series of guest columns for “May is Mobility Month” about transportation actions in Wellesley that will support the town Sustainable Mobility Plan and Climate Action Plan. Previous columns have addressed the MBTA commuter rail and T services, MWRTA “Catch Connect” micro transit service, and bus services – fixed routes, shuttle service, and flag down options – that are available in the Wellesley area.

“Traffic in Wellesley is bad.” It’s a common complaint that’s even more apparent during school drop off or pick up times. We’ve all been stuck in the lines of cars on Linden Street, Kingsbury Street, Weston Road and other locations on weekday mornings and afternoons. Recent studies show that 30% of traffic in Wellesley is school-related transportation! We’re not “in” traffic – we “are” traffic.

How do we take ourselves out of that equation? By changing the way students get to school. Studies have shown that there are many benefits to students who walk, bike or roll to school including improved physical health, improved social/emotional health & improved academic performance.

It’s time to start new traditions and build a community around sustainable transportation. In doing so, families might just build lifelong healthy habits too. What are the options in Wellesley?

- Walking. Wellesley is known for its neighborhood schools. Get together with friends and walk to school. Live too far away? Check out other options, or drive part way, park and walk the rest of the way to school.
- Biking. Ride bikes or scooters with family members or friends. Have a bike-pool where grown-ups take turns riding to school with a group of kids.
- Carpooling. Find a group of families and take turns driving - every car off the road makes a difference!
- Busing. Create a community at your bus stop. Check out the Wellesley Public Schools bus options and consider signing up! Contact [Deane McGoldrick](#). There is a fee for the bus for families who live less than two miles from school.

GET MOMENTUM! Help Wellesley build a robust community that walks, bikes, and rolls to school by establishing and investing in the Massachusetts [Safe Routes to School program](#). This state program uses a collaborative, community focused approach to bridge the gap between health and transportation. Town and school leaders are

already working to educate and engage our community in the program. You can lend a hand by serving as a parent rep from your school!

To learn more about Safe Routes to School contact:

Wellesley School Committee Chair Catherine Mirick at mirickc@wellesleyps.org

Wellesley Select Board member Colette Aufranc at caufranc@wellesleyma.gov

A few weeks ago on May 4, many families took part in Massachusetts Walk, Bike & Roll to School Day. Let's all keep this school transportation action in place throughout the school year and make every day walk to school day. It's a relatively easy ask with big rewards – better health for our planet and for ourselves, and a lot less traffic!

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