

New Bedford Public Schools Students to Celebrate International Walk & Bike to School Day

Wednesday, October 5, 2016 dozens of New Bedford Public Schools students, parents and teachers will participate in International Walk and Bike to School Day. The featured event this year will take place at the **Hathaway Elementary School** on Court Street where Mayor Jon Mitchell, Superintendent Dr. Pia Durkin, Hathaway Principal Richard Leeman, students and parents will gather in front of the school building at 7:40AM to walk together in celebration of Walk and Bike to School Day.

The Hathaway School community will use the event to launch its brand new "Walking School Bus" which allows neighborhood students living along a determined route to walk together to school each morning in a safe, chaperoned group. Other participating schools in the District include Betsy B. Winslow Elementary and the Abraham Lincoln Elementary Schools.

Wellness activities have been increasing across New Bedford Public Schools with more physical education and recess time for elementary students in particular. The installation of bicycle racks at every school has also encouraged more students to bike to school.

In the United States, International Walk to School Day is expected to include more than 5,000 events across all 50 states. Walkers from the U.S. will join children and adults in 40 countries around the world.

Walk to School Day events work to create safer routes for walking and bicycling and emphasize the importance of issues

such as increasing physical activity among children, pedestrian safety, traffic congestion, concern for the environment and building connections between families, schools and the broader community.

Walk and Bike to School Day is a collaboration of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Mass in Motion Program and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation's Safe Routes to School Program, which is federally funded by the Federal Highway Division. The program is designed to create safer streets, promote physical activity, and build sustainable environments in over 170 communities throughout Massachusetts. Mass in Motion works with communities across the Commonwealth to promote healthy eating and active living for youth and adults.

The Safe Routes to School campaign works with cities and other organizations to build infrastructure such as bike paths and sidewalks, and to deliver education and awareness to drivers about driving without distractions, slowing down, and respecting pedestrians and cyclists.

For additional information, please visit these websites:

Mass in Motion – www.mass.gov/massinmotion

Massachusetts Safe Routes to School – www.mass.gov/massdot/saferoutes

Walk to School Day in the USA – www.walkbiketoschool.org

National Center for Safe Routes to School – www.saferoutesinfo.org

About Mass in Motion:

Mass in Motion is a statewide movement led by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health that helps local communities increase opportunities for residents to eat better and move more in the places they live, learn, work, and play. The Mass in Motion Municipal Wellness and Leadership Program is made up of 33 local programs representing 52 cities and

towns. These Mass in Motion communities receive technical assistance and grant funding to make changes that turn the healthy choice into the easy choice for community members.

About the Massachusetts Safe Routes to School Program:

The Massachusetts Safe Routes to School program is brought to you by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), with funds from the Federal Highway Division. Safe Routes to School models of inclusiveness emphasize a collaborative, community-focused approach that fosters mutual partnerships between advocacy groups, law enforcement, education leaders and public health departments which all work together to promote safer routes for children to get to school. The program serves over 600 elementary and middle schools in 170 communities throughout the Commonwealth. School Partners receive year-round pedestrian and bicycle safety education instruction as well as engagement initiatives tailored to meet each school's physical fitness, safety and environmental priorities. For more information, visit www.mass.gov/massdot/saferoutes

The Safe Routes to School program is a key component of the Healthy Transportation Compact, an initiative of the Patrick-Murray Administration's historic transportation reform law. The Healthy Transportation Compact is a ground-breaking collaboration between the departments of transportation, health and human services, and energy and environmental affairs that is designed to promote best practices, increase efficiency, and achieve positive health outcomes through the coordination of land use, transportation and public health policy.