Seattle Department of Transportation

2023 SCHOOL TRAVEL TALLY REPORT

Data collection by Seattle Public Schools with assistance from the Seattle Department of Transportation

Analysis and report by the Seattle Department of Transportation Safe Routes to School team

Updated September 6, 2023

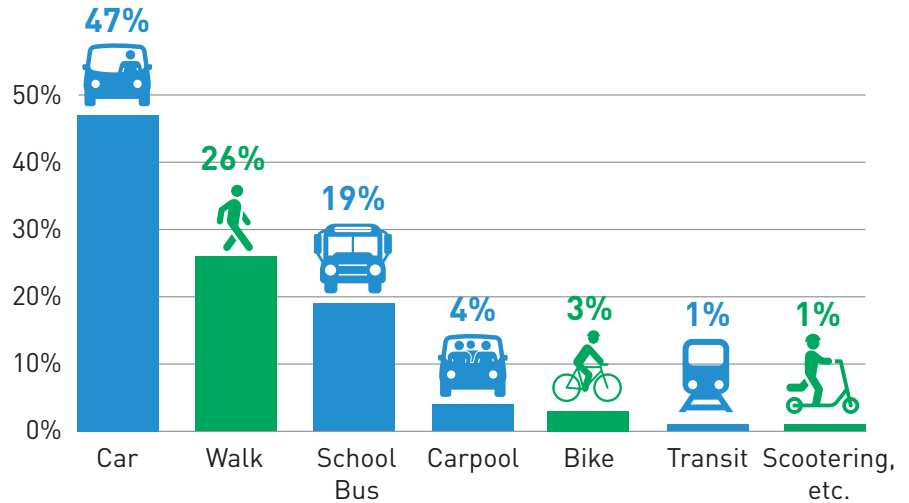**Seattle**
Department of
Transportation

Seattle Public Schools Travel Tally

Seattle Public Schools and the Seattle Department of Transportation collaborate to survey how K-5 students get to and from school.

In June of 2023, a record number of **54 schools** participated in this survey.

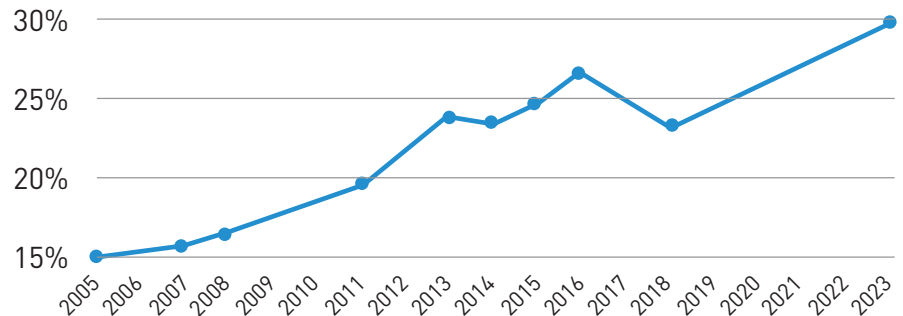### Want to get your school moving in the right direction?

For walk and bike support and supplies, visit www.seattle.gov/transportation/srts

- Car **47%**
- Walk **26%**
- School Bus **19%**
- Carpool **4%**
- Bike **3%**
- Transit **1%**
- Scootering, etc. **1%**

30%
of students walked, biked, or scootered to school

Walking, biking, and scootering to school has doubled since 2005!

2005 · 2006 · 2007 · 2008 · 2009 · 2010 · 2011 · 2012 · 2013 · 2014 · 2015 · 2016 · 2017 · 2018 · 2019 · 2020 · 2021 · 2022 · 2023

Walking, Biking, and Scootering Across the District

School	
Kimball*	
West Seattle*	
McDonald Int'l	
Northgate	
Sanislo	
Pathfinder K-8	
Rainier View	
McGilvra	
Licton Springs K-8	
TOPS K-8	
Lowell	
Olympic Hills	
Green Lake	
Maple	
South Shore PK-8	
Sacajawea	
Decatur	
Hazel Wolf K-8	
Graham Hill	
Dearborn Park	
Beacon Hill	
Fairmount Park	
MLK Jr	
Hawthorne	
John Rogers	
John Stanford Int'l	
Concord Int'l	
Laurelhurst	
Orca K-8	
Cedar Park	
Daniel Bagley	
Arbor Heights	
Lawton	
Hay	
B.F. Day	
Madrona	
North Beach	
View Ridge	
Wing Luke	
Leschi	
Gatewood	
Olympic View	
John Muir	
Dunlap	
Wedgwood	
Coe	
Adams	
West Woodland	
Bryant	
Loyal Heights	
Magnolia	
Stevens	
Whittier	
Greenwood	

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%

*Kimball and West Seattle were both at interim sites outside of their regular walk zone.

INTRODUCTION

To better support students in walking and biking to school and track annual progress, Seattle Public Schools (SPS) and the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) work together to conduct an annual travel tally in all elementary and K-8 schools during the first week of June. This collaboration has been ongoing on and off since 2005.

In June 2023, we had a record number of schools participate with 54 elementary schools surveying students on how they get to and from school.

On average, elementary schools across the city recorded an active transportation rate of 30%. This was 3% higher than the active transportation rate in 2015 and double the rate when the tally was first conducted in 2005. This report will highlight some schools with high rates of walking and biking as well as schools with large improvements since past tallies. We also analyzed some comparisons across high school clusters (i.e., elementary schools feeding into the same high school) and by SPS equity tiers.

METHODOLOGY

In conducting the survey, during Physical Education class, teachers asked students to raise their hands in response to questions about how they arrived to and plan to travel home from school that day. This is a change from previous years in which students were asked in their regular classroom. Students did not have to answer a single mode for both travelling to and from school. Teachers counted each response and then submitted results to the SDOT Safe Routes to School team for analysis. The modes of transportation included in the survey were walking, biking, school bus, car, carpool, transportation, and "other" (skateboard, scooter, etc.). Because skateboarding and scootering are an active form of transportation, we added that category to biking and walking for the total "active transportation" rate.

Physical Education teachers conducted the tally on a single day at the end of the year, either on June 6th or June 8th. Conducting the tally at the end of the school year is a best practice to learn how families have become accustomed

to traveling throughout the school year. The methodology is based on the National Safe Routes to School model.

PARTICIPATION

SDOT received reports from 54 schools out of 71 elementary and K-8 schools across the SPS district, a record since the tally was first conducted in 2005. A total of 5,896 students and 11,793 trips were recorded in the survey. Response rates within schools ranged from 4% to 95%, with an average of 33% across the district. However, because of working only with Physical Education teachers, even though 11 more schools participated compared to 2015, the number of participating students dropped from 13,020 students in 2015 to 5,896 in 2023.
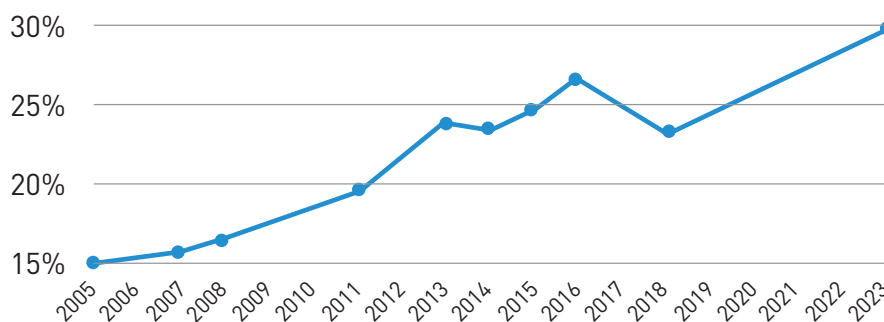
MODE SHARE
Overall Findings
Walk, bike, and scootering/skateboard/etc. together accounted for 30% of trips which is an increase from previous years. This indicates that walking and biking infrastructure improvements near schools in addition to programming that encourages walking and biking is working – and it demonstrates a need for more.

The top 3 modes were, family vehicle (car) – 47%, walking – 26%, and school bus – 19%.

2023 Travel Tally Results by Mode
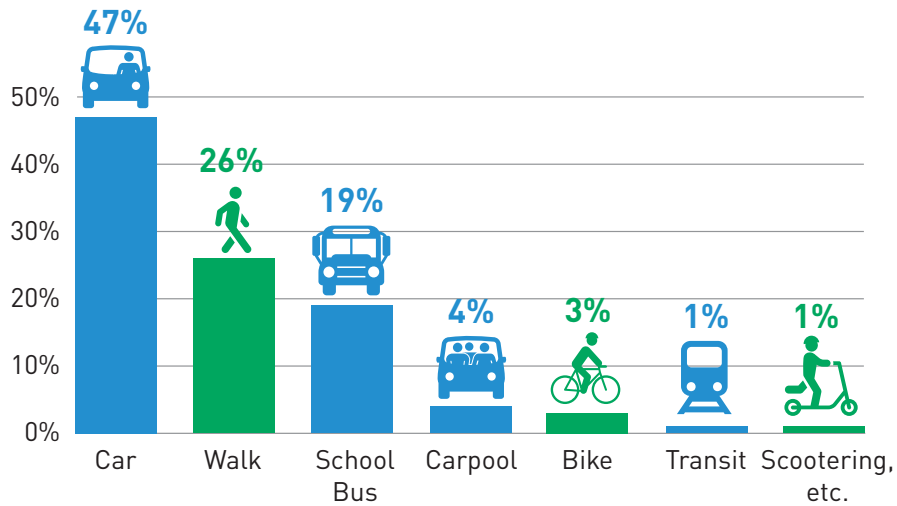
**Active Transportation over Time**

Mode Share by Grade

We found that mode share shifted depending on the grade of the students. The older the student, the more likely they were to walk/bike/scooter to and from school. Walking rates were 27% for kindergarteners and 34% for fifth graders. Note: In receiving survey responses from schools, some schools reported several grades in one response sheet, this data is not included in this grade analysis.

2023 Active Transportation Rate by Grade

Mode Share by Grade

Walk · Bike · School bus · Car · Carpool · Transit · Other
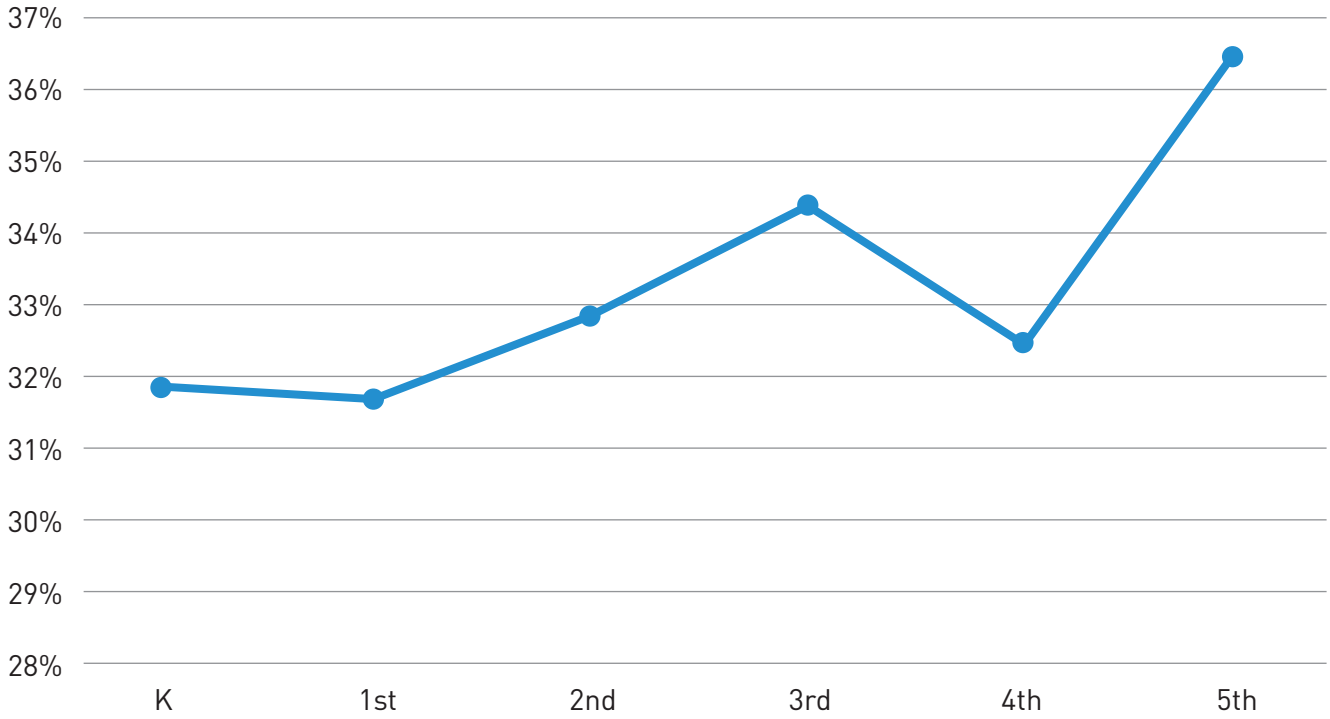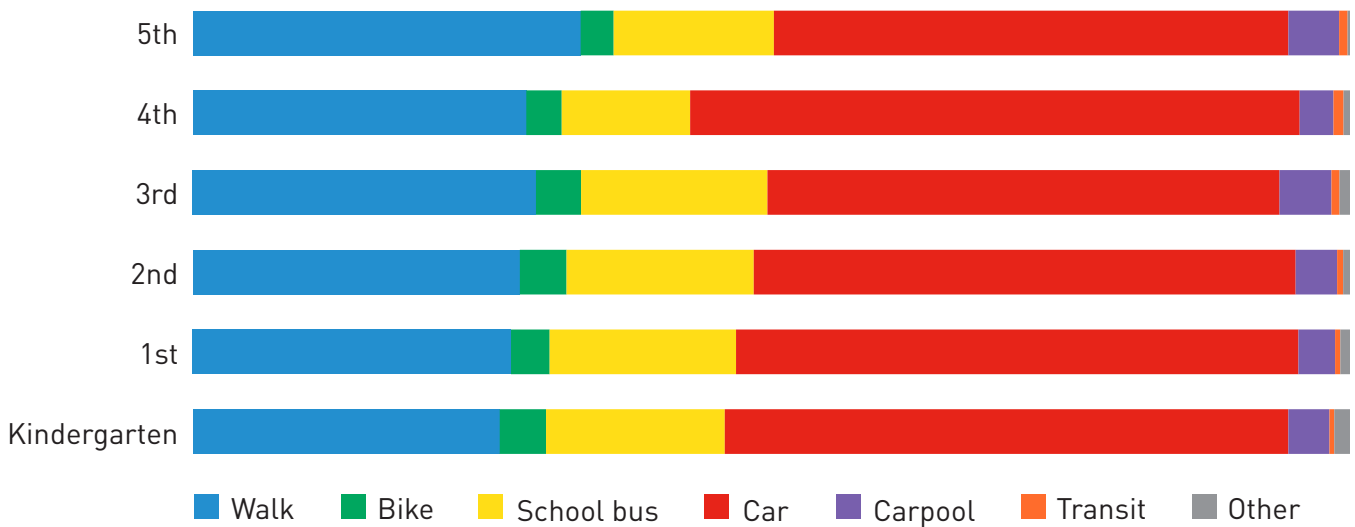
Mode Share over Time

When comparing mode share between when the survey began in 2005 and 2023, we see a few interesting changes. The walk rate increased from 14% to 26% from 2005 and the bike rate increased from 1% to 3%. The car rate only decreased by 2% while school bus rate substantially decreased from 32% to 18%. (We're not reporting on shifts in the "other" category because in 2005 both transit and carpool were included in the "other" transportation rate. It wasn't until 2007 that public transit was included and 2013 when carpooling was included as a separate figure in the survey. For the purpose of comparison, we did not show "0%" data points for transit and carpool in previous years.)

When evaluating year to year change, it is important to note the travel tally response rate for each school (see Appendix A) and number of schools participating to paint a representative picture of the number analyzed from the tally. Further, the travel tally was not conducted in 2006, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2017, 2019, 2020, 2021, or 2022.

Mode Share over Time
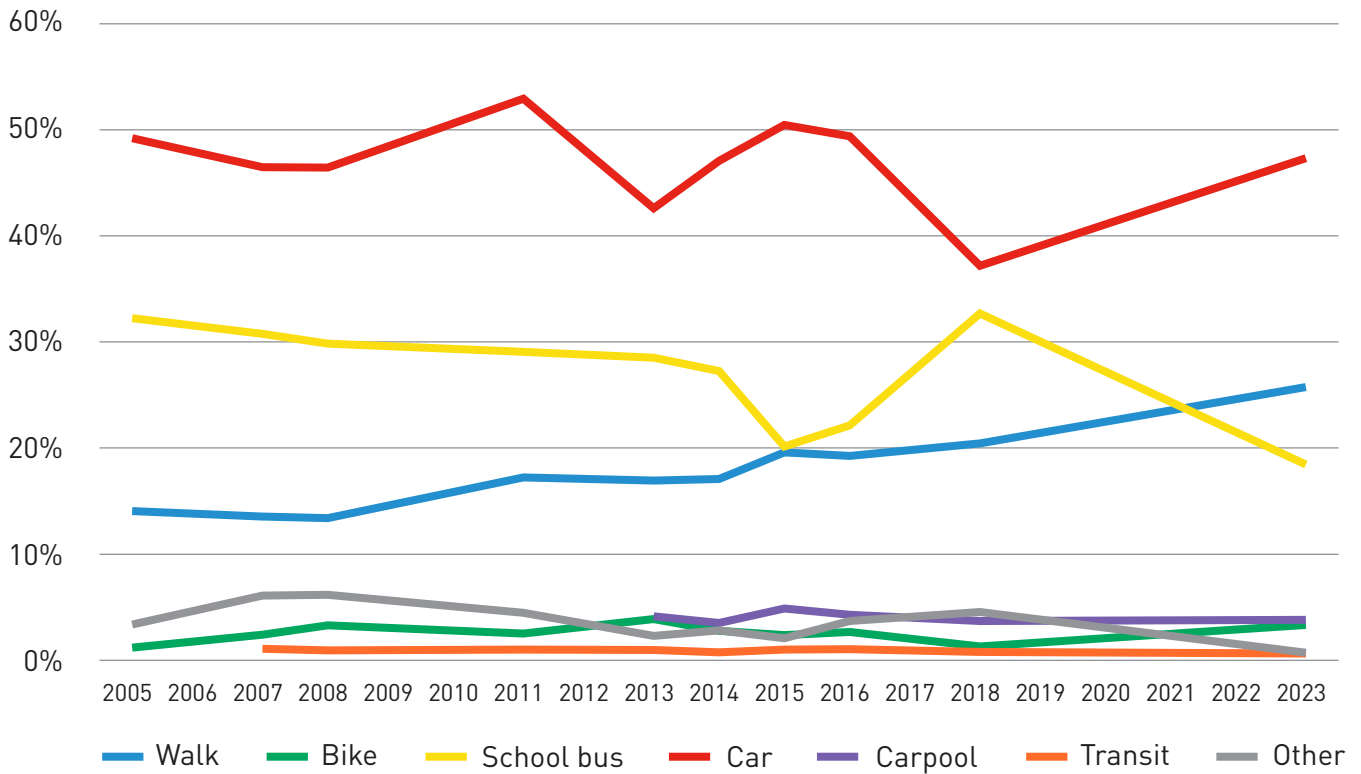
Mode Share by School

We have summary sheets for every school who participated in the tally showing how they responded. The active transportation rates ranged from 0% to 59%. (Only schools who were at interim sites outside of their walk zone reported a 0% active transportation rate.) **Out of the 54 participating schools, the top 5 most active elementary schools are Greenwood, Whittier, Stevens, Magnolia, and Loyal Heights.** Of the top 5 most active schools, 4 of them are located within the Ballard High School cluster (i.e., they're schools that feed into Ballard High School).

There were some schools that had very impressive results. **Greenwood Elementary** had an active transportation rate of 59%, a 19% improvement from their last tally (with a response rate of 94%!). Greenwood Elementary has a Healthy Street that leads directly to the school which likely contributes to their high numbers of walkers and bikers. **Whittier Elementary** (with an active transportation rate of 58%) has a "School Street" on 2 blocks outside their school which limits through traffic and makes walking and biking feel more welcoming. **Stevens Elementary** had a bike rate of 20%, which was the highest biking rate in the district. Stevens Elementary has a Physical Education teacher who leads walking and biking campaigns at the school (thank you Susan Goubert)! **Dunlap Elementary** had a biking rate of 9%, which was the 6th highest in the district and a big increase from their last travel tally in 2013 (1%).

Each Wednesday students walk and ride in groups together to Dunlap Elementary and South Shore PK-8 in Rainier Beach

Most Active Schools	
Greenwood	59%
Whittier	58%
Stevens	57%
Magnolia	55%
Loyal Heights	54%

Most Improved Elementary Schools	
Olympic View	31% improvement
Stevens	29% improvement
Wedgwood	25% improvement
Greenwood	19% improvement
North Beach	17% improvement

Most Active High School Clusters	
Ballard	46%
Garfield	30%
Nathan Hale	30%
Roosevelt	30%
Rainier Beach	26%

This improvement in biking rates at Dunlap could be attributed to SPS, SDOT, Peace Peloton, Cascade Bicycle Club, and Bike Works partnering to get kids bikes who need them and leading a "bike bus" to school where students all bike together in a group each Wednesday (the travel tally was not conducted on a Wednesday). We also recently completed a new sidewalk connection to the school on S Rose St and a Healthy Street connection to the school. Dunlap's Physical Education teacher, Molly Blair, has been there 31 years and has taught countless numbers of her students how to ride a bike through SDOT's Let's Go program.

To analyze active transportation rates at a larger scope, we ranked the top 5 high school clusters. In order, the top 5 most active high school clusters are Ballard, Garfield, Nathan Hale, Roosevelt, and Rainier Beach.

In order, the 5 schools with the most improved active transportation rate were: Olympic View, Stevens, Wedgwood, Greenwood, and North Beach elementary schools. In comparison to the top 5 most active schools where 4 out of 5 were from 1 high school cluster, the most improved schools represent 4 different high school clusters.
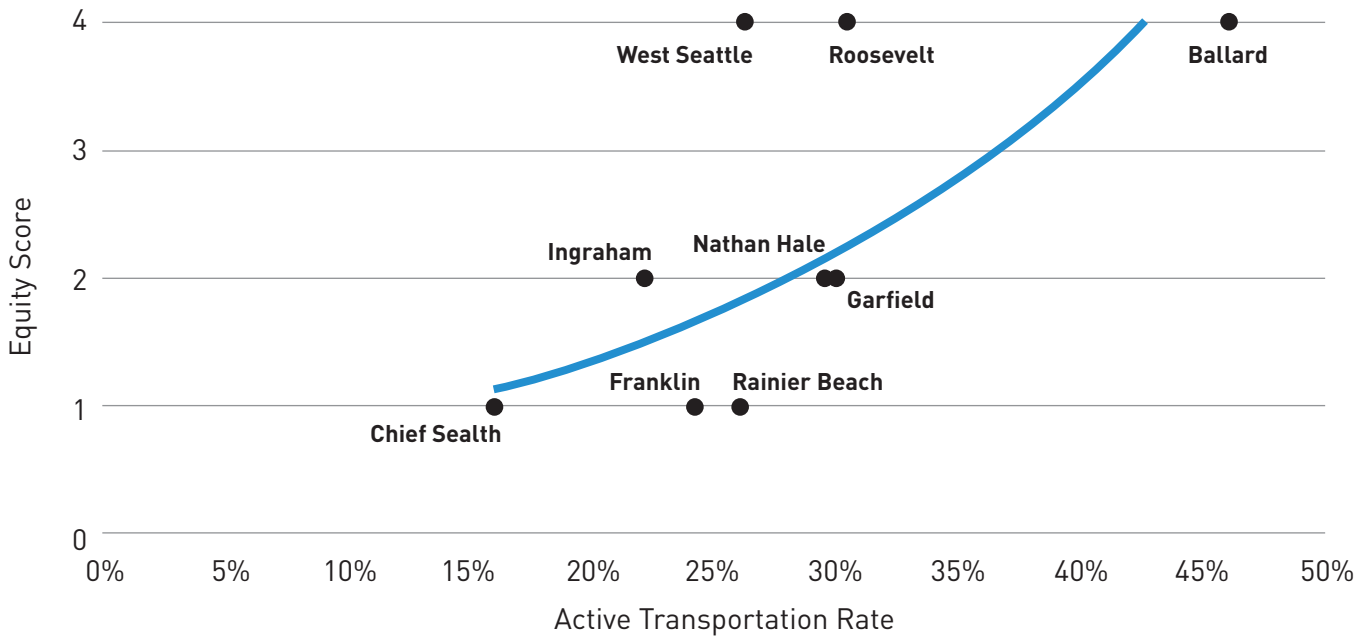
Equity
In analyzing the travel tally results, an important measure to note is the equity rankings of each elementary school and high school cluster. SPS compiles a ranking for each school in the district based on equity-need. The rankings range from Tier 1 to Tier 4 and are based on a wide range of precise factors, for example number of African American male students, number of students born outside of the United States, number of students who qualify for free/reduced meal program, number of students experiencing homelessness, and the number of students who are Multilingual learners. Tier 1 ranked schools need the most support to account for the effects of race, poverty, language, and culture on historical opportunity gaps.

To assess how equity rankings related to walking and biking to school, we compared high school cluster active transportation rates to the equity ranking of those high schools. We also compared high school equity rankings to the most improved active transportation rates from 2015 to 2023.

We found that the lower the equity-need, the more students get to school in an active way. For example, Ballard High School area has the highest rates of students walking, biking, and scootering to school while also having the lowest equity-need ranking. Meanwhile, the school cluster with the lowest active transportation rate (16%) was Chief Sealth High School is a Tier 1 equity-need school. However, 3 out of 5 of the most active high school clusters are in the top 2 tiers for SPS equity-need. This is different from 2015 where all 3 high school areas with the lowest equity need were all in the top 5 most active school clusters.

High School Cluster Active Transportation Rate & Equity Tier

Of the top 5 high school areas with the most *improved* active rate of transportation, 4 out of 5 were in the top 2 equity-need tiers (Nathan Hale, Garfield, Rainier Beach, and Ingraham). The schools with the lower equity-need still tend to be the most active, but this indicates the gap between these schools may be closing.

While we're seeing progress, there is still more work to do to better support students at high equity-need schools.

2023 Active Rate and Equity		
High School Cluster	**Activity Rate**	**SPS Equity-need Tier**
Ballard	46%	4
Roosevelt	30%	4
Nathan Hale	30%	2
Garfield	30%	2
Rainier Beach	26%	1
West Seattle	26%	4
Franklin	24%	1
Ingraham	22%	2
Chief Sealth	16%	1

2015-2023 Most Improved		
High School Cluster	**Increase**	**SPS Equity-need Tier**
Nathan Hale	16%	2
Ballard	13%	4
Garfield	13%	2
Rainier Beach	9%	1
Ingraham	7%	2

DATA LIMITATIONS

There are a few notable data limitations.

First, 7 out of the 54 participating schools only reported one grade for their entire travel tally report. This likely skewed data for these schools based on which grade was reported. As shown in the grade-by-grade breakdown, the higher the grade level, the higher the active transportation rates were.

Eleven out of the 54 schools reported more than one grade in one survey response sheet which reduced the amount of data we could include in the grade-by-grade breakdown.

The two schools that reported a 0% and 1% active transportation rate were interim locations outside of the school's typical walk zone. These schools were still included in the overall average.

This is the first time the travel tally has been conducted since 2018, but the 2018 tally had a low number of schools participating in the survey (14). Due to this low participation rate, we compared mode share rates with 2015 where 43 out of 70 elementary schools reported travel tally results.

This was a record year for the number of schools participating in the travel tally (11 more than 2015), but the per school response rates were lower. 2015 had double the total student participation than this year. This year's report may paint a larger picture of what the entire districts travel patterns look like, but the per school data may not be as representative as 2015.

HOW IS THE CITY SUPPORTING SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL?

The City prioritizes infrastructure projects around schools through our Sidewalks Program, Neighborhood Greenways, Healthy Streets, Home Zones, Safe Routes to School program, and more. Between 2016 and 2023, we've completed over 175 different infrastructure projects like new sidewalks, crosswalks, and speed humps at schools across the district.

Mayor Harrell signed the One Seattle Transportation and Climate Justice Executive Order that directs us to ensure every school is served by an all ages and abilities bicycle connection. This will support us in expanding infrastructure that we know works to help students feel safe and supported in walking and biking.

We also support programming at schools that enables staff and families to take the lead. We awarded 17 mini grants in the 2022-23 school year and created Walking and Biking Packages that remove cost as a barrier for schools to participate in walking and biking activities. We also fund the Let's Go Walking and Biking Safety
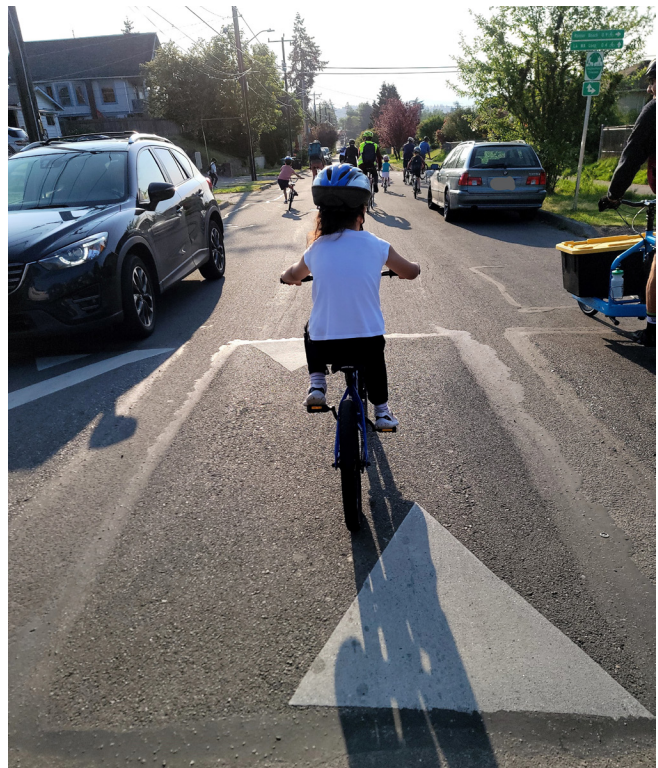
We install speed humps and speed cushions (like the one pictured) near schools to slow people driving down make walking and biking to school more comfortable [Photo credit: Anna Zivarts]

Education program which gets our SPS 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th graders on bikes during Physical Education class.

Our program is built around the seven E's: Equity, Environment, Education, Empowerment, Encouragement, Engineering, and Evaluation. From developing safer infrastructure, supporting students to learn how to ride a bike, providing resources to schools, and much more, we are committed to improving the safety and lives of students. Learn more at www.seattle.gov/transportation/srts.

THANK YOU!

We appreciate Lori Dunn and SPS Physical Education teachers for helping us achieve record travel tally participation this year! And your work teaching students how to bike through SDOT's Let's Go program is what gives so many of our city's students the skills they need to walk and bike to school with confidence. Thank you.

APPENDIX A: ALL SCHOOLS

School	Active Rate (i.e. rate of students walking, biking, or scootering, etc.)	Travel Tally Participation Rate
Greenwood	59%	92%
Whittier	58%	30%
Stevens	57%	94%
Magnolia	55%	24%
Loyal Heights	54%	25%
Bryant	52%	28%
West Woodland	50%	71%
Adams	50%	38%
Coe	49%	29%
Wedgwood	48%	28%
Dunlap	48%	48%
John Muir	44%	85%
Olympic View	43%	37%
Gatewood	43%	29%
Leschi	39%	26%
Wing Luke	38%	6%
View Ridge	36%	50%
North Beach	35%	33%
Madrona	33%	44%
B.F. Day	32%	27%
Hay	32%	22%
Lawton	31%	62%
Arbor Heights	30%	4%
Daniel Bagley	30%	8%
Cedar Park	30%	47%
Orca K-8	28%	43%
Laurelhurst	28%	35%
Concord	26%	33%
John Stanford Intl'	26%	27%
John Rogers	26%	39%
Hawthorne	25%	33%
MLK Jr	25%	27%
Fairmount Park	24%	5%
Beacon Hill Intl'	24%	11%
Dearborn Park Intl'	24%	36%
Graham Hill	24%	38%

School	Active Rate (i.e. rate of students walking, biking, or scootering, etc.)	Travel Tally Participation Rate
Hazel Wolf K-8	23%	56%
Decatur	22%	89%
Sacajawea	22%	68%
South Shore PK-8	21%	17%
Maple	21%	34%
Green Lake	20%	46%
Olympic Hills	19%	27%
Lowell	19%	26%
TOPS K-8	18%	15%
Licton Springs K-8	18%	74%
McGilvra	17%	92%
Rainier View	16%	27%
Pathfinder PK-8	14%	4%
Sanislo	14%	39%
Northgate	14%	39%
McDonald Int'l	13%	5%
West Seattle (at interim location)	1%	25%
Kimball (at interim location)	0%	4%
Alki	-	0%
Broadview Thompson K-8	-	0%
Cascadia	-	0%
Catharine Blaine K-8	-	0%
Emerson	-	0%
Bailey Gatzert	-	0%
Highland Park	-	0%
Lafayette	-	0%
Thurgood Marshall	-	0%
Montlake	-	0%
Queen Anne	-	0%
Rising Star	-	0%
Salmon Bay	-	0%
STEM K-8	-	0%
Roxhill	-	0%
Sand Point	-	0%
Genesee Hill	-	0%
Thornton Creek	-	0%
Viewlands (at interim location)	-	0%