



## ***BikeWalk Virginia News***

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### **Walk or Bike for Fun, Fitness, and Future**

*Learn More as a BikeWalk Virginia Member or Join a Local Chapter*

Walking and bicycling are enjoyable ways to increase your activity level. They can also be practical ways to find time for fitness if you can walk or ride your bicycle to work and to the store or post office. By walking or bicycling for 30 minutes 2 to 3 days per week, you can expect to lose weight, increase energy, and reduce stress. So go ahead, feel the wind in your hair, listen to the birds, and smell the fresh-cut grass!

But there is a catch. Although most of us would agree that walking and bicycling are enjoyable forms of exercise, we're hesitant to get out on the road because it can also be dangerous. There is a crippling lack of sidewalks, paths and crosswalks to keep us safe from motorized traffic. The most convenient routes to schools, shopping and offices are usually filled with fast-moving cars. Most subdivisions are not connected to stores and neighbors in a pedestrian- or bicycle-friendly manner.

Fortunately, this is changing. Global climate change is provoking us to consider our options. The obesity crisis and rising fuel prices are helping us to see the link between burning gasoline in cars and calories in bodies.

The problem of unsafe walking and bicycling accelerated through

the twentieth century as car, highways, and suburban living meant that people could live farther away from stores, schools, and jobs. Unfortunately, as people walked and biked less, they gained weight. Between 1980 and 2000, federal researchers found that the percentage of the U. S. adult population classified as obese increased from 15 to 31 percent.

In 2000, BikeWalk Virginia was formed by bicycling enthusiasts who envisioned a more active, healthy, safe, and clean future for Virginians who enjoyed the benefits of bicycling and walking. Soon, hikers, canoeists and kayakers, and equestrians joined with them to promote the benefits of non-motorized transportation and a more active lifestyle. BikeWalk Virginia works with individuals, government agencies, and organizations to educate non-motorized transportation users in safe practices and to promote the importance to quality of life and the economy of active communities. BikeWalk Virginia has partnered with transportation and health agencies on programs that achieve these ends.

BikeWalk Virginia is a partner in the Safe Routes to School program, formed when Congressional leaders who were concerned about children's health approved \$612 million in funding for five years for the states to implement programs to increase kids' activity and fitness levels. When more children begin to walk or bike to school again, they will lose weight; build stronger bones, muscles and joints; increase overall wellness due to increases in self-control and autonomy; develop emotionally and intellectually from opportunities for social and environmental interaction; and be more alert and engaged when they arrive at school. BikeWalk Virginia encourages friends and neighbors to get involved by developing programs like a walking school bus, which follows a neighborhood route to school and picks up children along the way to walk with them in a supervised group.

BikeWalk Virginia communicates biking and walking programs for adults. For example, car-free and car-lite diets are catching on. In Arlington, Virginia, commuters are taking the diet challenge and business owners are putting their companies on a diet. Using the calculator at [carfreediet.com](http://carfreediet.com), dieters calculate carbon and calorie savings. The calculator at [nutrstrategy.com](http://nutrstrategy.com), which cites that walking or biking for an hour can burn about 300 calories (depending upon weight, speed, and other variable), helps Arlingtonians add up their diet savings. Trek Bicycle Corporation ([1world2wheels.org](http://1world2wheels.org)) is encouraging people to ride their bikes instead of driving their cars on trips of two miles or less.

Regular walking and biking provides many health benefits. A

stronger heart and a lighter body as well as more energy and a positive mental outlook are benefits that have a far-reaching impact on quality and length of life. A car-free or car-lite diet can reduce the risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, diabetes, high blood pressure, some forms of cancer and osteoporosis.

Get going! Burn more calories and less carbon! Spend quality time with children while walking or biking to school. Get your exercise while you walk or bike on errands. Give up a ride in the car and gain the 30 minutes of exercise you need to maintain a healthier and longer life. Finally, to follow national, state, and local legislation affecting multi-modal transportation and to work with BikeWalk Virginia to improve recreation and transportation options for Virginians and visitors to Virginia, visit [www.bikewalkvirginia.org](http://www.bikewalkvirginia.org) to sign up for e-news and become an individual or business member or sponsor.

*BikeWalk Virginia members and chapters keep in touch with local issues and provide local policymakers and planners with information on best practices from around the county. They are helping communities make changes to become more bicycle and pedestrian friendly. BikeWalk Virginia chapters have formed in the Alexandria, Roanoke, New River Valley, Fredericksburg, and Northern New areas. New chapters are forming in Norfolk, Central Shenandoah Valley, and Middle Peninsula.*

*BikeWalk Virginia is a 501 (c)(3) organization. Originating in 1988 as a bicycling event, BikeWalk Virginia continues to organize nationally recognized Bike Virginia rides to fund education and advocacy for non-motorized transportation safety and access. BikeWalk Virginia holds an annual conference as a forum for legislators, planners, educators and advocates on key issues critical to pedestrians and cyclists. In 2004, the Virginia Trails Association joined BikeWalk. The group's mission was broadened to include on and off road riders, hikers, kayakers, canoeists, and equestrians.*

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