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CONTACT: Elizabeth Stampe, 415-431-9255, Walk San Francisco

**Celebrating SF's status as the first California city
to adopt safer school zones citywide,
state and city leaders walk with students kick off a healthy habit**

San Francisco - On International Walk to School Day, as dozens of Buena Vista Horace Mann elementary school students formed "walking buses" to wind their way through the Mission and reach school before the bell rang, they were also enjoying quieter, safer streets.

This year, San Francisco became the state's first city to create 15-mile-per-hour speed limits citywide, at 181 schools. At the event this morning, there were new 15-mph signs up around Buena Vista Horace Mann as the streets filled with children.

"We love walking into school," said parent Karina Bekemeier, who walked in with her son Mateo to Buena Vista Horace Mann. "It's our time together in the morning when we can look around, say hi to neighbors, and get a little exercise to start our day."

At Buena Vista Horace Mann, 23% of the students live within one mile of school and 19% walk, according to the San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH). Citywide, 42% of all students live within walking distance of school, but only 25% of students walk. SFDPH works with 15 elementary schools in its Safe Routes to School program to encourage walking and biking, as one important way to increase children's daily physical activity.

Today, a record 8,500 students walked in with their families in San Francisco at Walk to School Day events at 55 schools.

"I'm here to support Buena Vista Horace Mann in encouraging walking, today and all year long," said Supervisor David Campos. "Kids can get the physical activity they need in a fun way. Improving street safety is a priority for me to help more District 9 residents walk comfortably."

"It's critical to make the streets around our schools—and around our city—places where kids can walk safely, so that they can arrive at school alert and ready to learn," said School Board President Norman Yee.

"Lower traffic speeds make streets safer," said Elizabeth Stampe, executive director of Walk San Francisco, which led the campaign for the 15-mile-per-hour zones. "The new school zones are calming traffic to make the city more livable and walkable for everyone. We're encouraging cities throughout California to follow San Francisco's lead."

Speed matters: according to the SFDPH and the Centers for Disease Control, San Francisco pedestrian deaths could be cut in half by reducing traffic speeds citywide by five miles per hour.

“Our officers are out on the streets enforcing these new safer speed limits,” said Commander Mikail Ali of the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) Traffic Company. “Especially now that school’s back in session, we want to remind everyone to please drive slowly and carefully.”

The SF Municipal Transportation Agency installed new 15-mph signs at 181 schools—public and private, kindergarten through 12th grade—between August 2012 and April 2013, and the SFPD has been informing drivers about the new speed limits and enforcing the new zones systematically throughout the city.

“I’m so pleased to see San Francisco leading the way in implementing the state law supporting safer speeds around schools,” said Assemblymember Tom Ammiano, who walked in with his granddaughter. “I’m committed to supporting sustainable transportation—like walking—to help kids all over California enjoy a stable climate, clean air, and healthy, active lives.”

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Walk San Francisco (WalkSF.org) and its members are making San Francisco a more welcoming place for everyone to walk. Walk SF speaks up for the safety and priority of pedestrians, and works to reclaim streets as shared public space.

International Walk to School Day encourages the creation of safe routes to school, enhances kids’ health by encouraging physical activity, reduces traffic, and protects the environment.

The San Francisco Department of Public Health works with partner organizations and with 15 elementary schools as part of the federally funded **Safe Routes to School** program to encourage walking and biking, as one important way to increase children’s daily physical activity.