For Immediate Release

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US Surgeon General Launches Call to Action to Make Walking a National Priority

Walk SF calls on schools and families to Step It Up by participating in Walk and Roll to School Day on October 7, 2015

San Francisco, CA – September 9, 2015. This morning, the Surgeon General released *Step It Up! The Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities*, highlighting the health benefits of walking while bringing attention to the unacceptable fact that many communities lack safe and convenient places for individuals to walk or wheelchair roll.

Walk San Francisco fully supports this goal, “Walk SF’s programs work to make our City safe for walking in order to achieve a healthier community,” said Nicole Ferrara, Executive Director. “We improve safety for people walking and wheelchair rolling by shaping and supporting the City’s Vision Zero goal to end all traffic deaths by 2024. In addition, Walk SF encourages children and families to integrate walking in their daily commute to school through SF’s Safe Routes to School program.”

“Everyone deserves to have a safe place to walk or wheelchair roll. But in too many of our communities, that is not the reality,” said Dr. Vivek H. Murthy, the 19th U.S. Surgeon General. “We know that an active lifestyle is critical to achieving good overall health. And walking is a simple, effective and affordable way to build physical activity into our lives. That is why we need to step it up as a country, ensuring everyone can choose to walk in their own communities.”

The Surgeon General called on community planners and local leaders to create more areas for walking and wheelchair rolling and to prioritize the development of safe routes for children to get to and from schools. The call to action suggests that these designs include sidewalks, curb cuts, crosswalks, safe crossings for the visually impaired, and more green spaces. The Surgeon General further urged mayors, law enforcement, public utilities, and community and public health leaders to address safety concerns by better maintaining public spaces, working with residents to promote a shared sense of community ownership, ensuring proper street lighting, and fostering neighborhood watch programs.

Fewer than half of all U.S. adults get enough physical activity to reduce their risk of chronic disease, and only a quarter of high school students get the recommended amount. Physical inactivity contributes to heart and lung disease, diabetes and cancer, which account for 86% of America’s health care costs. Building walking into daily life reduces risk for chronic disease and saves money.
“We know that an average of 22 minutes a day of physical activity – such as brisk walking – can significantly reduce the risk of heart disease and diabetes,” added Dr. Murthy. “The key is to get started, because even a small first effort can make a big difference in improving the personal health of an individual and the public health of the nation.”

Today, Walk SF is calling on parents and schools to **Step it Up** by registering their schools for Walk and Roll to School Day on October 7, 2015, a global event that gives children, parents, school staff, and community members an opportunity to walk and wheelchair roll together to make their communities safer and more pleasant for walking. **The deadline to register is September 18, 2015**; parents and schools can learn more and register for the event at [http://bit.ly/W2SD2015Resources](http://bit.ly/W2SD2015Resources).

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Read the Surgeon General’s Call to Action and learn how to promote walking and walkable communities, please visit [www.surgeongeneral.gov](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov)

**Walk San Francisco** ([WalkSF.org](http://WalkSF.org)) and its members are making San Francisco a more livable, walkable city, by reclaiming streets as safe, shared public space for everyone to enjoy.

**The San Francisco Safe Routes to School Partnership** ([www.sfsaferoutes.org](http://www.sfsaferoutes.org)) works to implement the federally funded Safe Routes to School program to encourage more families to walk, bike, take transit and carpool to and from school. The San Francisco Department of Public Health is the lead agency, and the Partnership includes public and private partners.