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Students Head Back to School SFPD Ups Vision Zero Commitment to Safer, Slower Streets

San Francisco – Monday August 18th marks the day when kids all over the city get back into their normal routine of walking, bicycling, busing and getting driven to school. However, this year, Walk San Francisco expects that morning routine to become safer due to increased enforcement around 15-mph school zones and the city’s adoption of Vision Zero, the goal to eliminate all traffic fatalities in 10 years.

Two years ago, San Francisco became the first city in California to install 15-mph school zones citywide, and with the launch of Vision Zero in early 2014, the San Francisco Police Department committed to increase traffic enforcement, and focusing enforcement on the five most dangerous traffic behaviors, including speeding.

“At SFPD we know that enforcement is a key component to achieving Vision Zero,” said San Francisco Police Chief Greg Suhr. “As kids head back to school, the Police Department will be doing our part to make sure they get to and from school safely.”

SFPD will be conducting extra enforcement around schools during the week of August 18th, in addition to ongoing enforcement throughout the school year. According to the San Francisco Safe Routes to Schools Partnership, 42% of all elementary school students live within walking distance of school, but only 26% of students walk.

“The top three concerns among parents who choose not to walk or bike with their children to school are related to traffic safety,” says Nicole Schneider, executive director of Walk San Francisco. “The City plays a central role in encouraging families to walk and bike to school by making our streets safer in the first place, which is why the City adopted Vision Zero.”

Walking to school is a cherished time for families, and the SF Safe Routes to Schools program works to support and encourage walking and biking to school.

A parent, Nikolai Kaestner notes, “Walking to school allows us to share a quiet moment with our son during an otherwise hectic day. After his morning exercise, he arrives at school ready to focus and learn.”

SFPD is a member of the SF Safe Routes to Schools Partnership, and was one of the first City agencies to commit to Vision Zero. Through their commitment to safety they’ve written 61% more traffic citations in the first half of 2014 as compared to the first half of 2013.

With speed being the number one cause of traffic deaths, the message this week will be to slow down or pay up.

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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.

The San Francisco Safe Routes to School Partnership (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.

Vision Zero – Zero traffic fatalities in 10 years. No loss of life on city roadways is acceptable, when serious and fatal traffic collisions can be prevented. By engineering inherently safer streets, enforcing traffic laws more effectively, and targeting traffic-safety education, cities that adopt Vision Zero policies can eliminate ALL serious and fatal traffic-related injuries, including motorist, bicyclist, and pedestrian collisions.