

For Immediate Release

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New Report Assesses State Investments in Walking and Walkable Communities

The Y and the Safe Routes to School National Partnership team up to support Surgeon General's Call to Action to make walking a national priority

WASHINGTON, DC, MARCH 31 –The Safe Routes to School National Partnership and the Y released *Making Strides: 2016 State Report Cards on Support for Walking, Bicycling, and Active Kids and Communities*, to help state leaders and decision makers understand how states are investing transportation dollars, committing resources and establishing policies to support walkable communities.

The report cards were compiled by the Safe Routes to School National Partnership for YMCA of the USA (Y-USA), and funded by a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), to support the U.S. Surgeon General's recent call to action to make walkable communities a national priority to help address rising rates of chronic disease across the nation.

Physical activity has been shown to be one of the most important actions people can take to improve and maintain their health, yet according to the CDC, only 21 percent of adults get the physical activity they need to help reduce and prevent chronic disease. The Y is heeding the Surgeon General's call by activating its network of 50 state alliances to work with state and local partners to encourage state leaders to make investments and consider policies that support active transportation, such as walking and cycling, and physical activity.

"According to the CDC, of the 2.6 million deaths in the United States each year, over 280,000 can be prevented through sufficient physical activity and healthier eating," said Neal Denton, YMCA of the USA Senior Vice President/Chief Government Affairs Officer. "Making communities more walkable is an easy way to encourage physical activity, improve health, strengthen communities economically and reduce employee absenteeism. These report cards will help states see where they are doing well in this regard, and where they need improvement."

Each state was evaluated using 24 indicators across four strategic areas:

- Complete Streets and active transportation
- Safe routes to school and active transportation funding
- Active neighborhoods and schools
- State physical activity planning

Making Strides discusses the importance of these strategic areas and how each supports communities in becoming are more walkable.

“States have a crucial role in promoting physical activity through the decisions they make on funding investments, the enactment of policies and providing staff expertise,” said Cass Isidro, Executive Director of the Safe Routes to School National Partnership. “We are so pleased to have partnered with the Y to document how states across the country are taking steps to making walking, bicycling and physical activity more accessible to their residents—and areas in which states could do better in the future. We look forward to supporting Ys and other state and local leaders to advance walking and walkability throughout the nation.”

In addition to the state report cards, this report includes an overview of the research that supports walking, bicycling and physical activity as ways to improve health; the rationale for state-level report cards; a detailed explanation of how the states were graded; and reflections on the state of physical activity in different regions and our country as a whole. The full report and state report cards can be found here: <http://bit.ly/str1des>

The Y has experience working with state and community leaders to influence changes that make communities healthier. Through the Y’s Healthier Communities Initiatives, YMCAs in 250 communities and Y alliances in 20 states have advanced more than 39,000 changes that have increased opportunities for healthy living.

“While walking is a way to begin and maintain an active lifestyle, there are strategies we need to put in place to ensure safe spaces to walk and wheelchair roll are accessible to everyone,” said Denton. “The 50 YMCA state alliances look forward to working with partners and their state leaders to advance those strategies and help people across the nation be as healthy as they can be.”

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About the Safe Routes to School National Partnership

The Safe Routes to School National Partnership is a nonprofit organization that improves the quality of life for kids and communities by promoting active, healthy lifestyles and safe infrastructure that supports bicycling and walking. We advance policy change; catalyze support for safe, active, and healthy communities with a network of more than 750 partner organizations; and we share our deep expertise at national, state, and local levels with those who are helping propel our mission forward. Founded in 2005, the Safe Routes to School National Partnership’s mission is to advance safe walking and bicycling to and from

schools, and in daily life, to improve the health and well-being of America's children and to foster the creation of livable, sustainable communities. saferoutespartnership.org

About the Y

The Y is one of the nation's leading nonprofits strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Across the United States, 2,700 Ys engage 22 million men, women and children—regardless of age, income or background—to nurture the potential of children and teens, improve the nation's health and well-being, and provide opportunities to give back and support neighbors. Anchored in more than 10,000 communities, the Y has the long-standing relationships and physical presence to not just promise but deliver lasting personal and social change. ymca.net

