



**FOR RELEASE: Thursday, August 18**

**CONTACT:** Elizabeth Stampe, Executive Director, Walk San Francisco  
415-431-9255 (office), 415-271-8663 (cell)

**Back to School on Safer Streets:**

**Walk San Francisco, Mayor Ed Lee, City Heads Announce  
New Safer Speed Zones for San Francisco Schools**

SAN FRANCISCO – A few minutes after parents and kids arrived for the fourth day of this school year at George Peabody Elementary School in the foggy Richmond District, Walk San Francisco, Mayor Ed Lee, and city department heads announced an initiative to help kids walk to school: **new 15-mile-per-hour speed zones going up around all city schools this fall.**

"These school zones will make it safer and more fun for kids to walk to school safely," said Elizabeth Stampe, executive director of Walk San Francisco. "These will make neighborhood streets better for everyone to walk on."

**"This is a big step forward for everyone who walks in San Francisco," said Stampe.**

For Walk San Francisco, this is a victory in a long campaign. Walk SF has kept up a drumbeat of attention on pedestrian safety over the last year, calling for school zones to encourage walking to school and to calm traffic citywide.

Ultimately, **over two hundred schools** will have these zones, which a 2008 state law allows on two-lane streets for 500 feet around a school. The 15-mph speed limit signs will start going up around public and private K-12 schools in mid-October, estimates the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency. The Police Department will be enforcing the zones, first warning drivers, then giving tickets as needed.

**San Francisco is the first large city in California** to establish these 15-mph school zones. Goleta led the way and Santa Barbara County and a few have adopted the zones so far. Arizona has 15-mph zones around all its schools; Phoenix created them first in 1950.

The new speed zones combine with other reasons to walk to school this year in San Francisco:

- **Public school reassignment** means more children are going to neighborhood schools, living close enough to walk.
- The school board's December 2010 decision to **significantly cut yellow school buses** means that more parents need to find alternate transportation for their kids.

On October 5, many schools will participate in Walk to School Day with "walking school buses" that parents can continue leading all year, like carpools on foot. The city's federally funded Safe Routes to School program offers additional education and support at 15 San Francisco schools, including George Peabody, to help kids and parents walk and bike.

**Taming speed is critical** to make streets safer, say Stampe and other advocates. The SF Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control reported that San Francisco **pedestrian deaths could be cut in half by reducing city traffic speeds by 5 miles per hour.**

Last December, Mayor Gavin Newsom issued an executive order setting a goal of cutting serious and fatal pedestrian injuries in half in by 2021 and by one-quarter by 2016, and established a task force to achieve this goal.

Walk San Francisco is working with the city and the task force to create a Pedestrian Action Plan for the city to reduce injuries and increase walking citywide.

###

**About Walk San Francisco ([walksf.org](http://walksf.org)):**

Walk San Francisco and its members are making San Francisco a more welcoming place for everyone to walk. Through education and policy advocacy, Walk SF works with residents, city agencies, and elected officials to reclaim city streets as shared public space.