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## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

### **New Bedford Public Schools to Celebrate International Walk & Bike to School Day**

**New Bedford, Massachusetts**— On Wednesday, October 8, 2014, students at elementary schools throughout New Bedford including the Ellen R. Hathaway, Horatio Kempton, John A. Parker, Renaissance Community School for the Arts, Betsy B. Winslow Elementary Schools and Roosevelt Middle School among others, will celebrate annual “International Walk/Bike to School Day (I-Walk).” The celebration is aimed at encouraging students across Massachusetts to walk or bike to school as well as to raise public awareness about the importance of safe roads and environments that allow students to travel to and from school safely.

Students at several New Bedford Elementary Schools will walk and bike to school along with parents, teachers and community leaders. The spotlight school for the 2014 Annual I-Walk will be the Ellen R. Hathaway Elementary School, located on Court Street, across from Harrington Park.

Beginning at 7:45 A.M. on Wednesday, October 8, 2014 kids, parents and community leaders including Mayor Jon Mitchell will gather at Harrington Park to perform a series of exercises before walking and biking together to Hathaway School.

“Walk and Bike to School Day events like the one held today raise awareness of the need to support safer routes for walking and bicycling in our community,” said Mayor Mitchell. “Walk and Bike to School Day also emphasize the importance of issues such as increasing physical activity among children, pedestrian safety, traffic congestion and concern for the environment. These events help build connections between families, schools and the broader community,” he continued.

I-Walk is a collaboration of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health’s Mass in Motion Program and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation’s Safe Routes to School Program, which is federally funded by the Federal Highway Division. The program is designed to create safer streets, promote physical activity, and build sustainable environments in over 170 communities throughout Massachusetts. Mass in

Motion works with communities across the Commonwealth to promote healthy eating and active living for youth and adults.

“Events such as these highlight the importance of daily physical activity and how children will actually perform better and be more engaged in learning. But it’s more than just these bi-annual events, it’s also about schools finding ways to incorporate exercise, such as walking schools buses, a means for children to get moving in the morning in a safe and supervised way, throughout the school year,” said Mass in Motion New Bedford’s Coordinator, Kim Ferreira.

“When children walk or bike to school they get a great form of exercise first thing in the morning, so they arrive energetic and ready to learn. It’s best if kids can get at least an hour of physical activity a day, so walking to school starts them out on the right foot,” she continued.

“Even if you’re not participating in the event today, if you drive by any school on your way to work in the morning, it’s important to remember to slow down and be vigilant. The other half of the equation is promoting safe driving, as well,” says Ferreira.

The Safe Routes to School campaign works with cities and other organizations to build infrastructure such as bike paths and sidewalks, and to deliver education and awareness to drivers about driving without distractions, slowing down, and respecting pedestrians and cyclists.

For additional local information, please contact Kim Ferreira at (508) 789-4969.

**For additional information, please visit these websites:**

Mass in Motion	<a href="http://www.mass.gov/massinmotion">www.mass.gov/massinmotion</a>
Massachusetts Safe Routes to School	<a href="http://www.mass.gov/massdot/saferoutes">www.mass.gov/massdot/saferoutes</a>
Walk to School Day in the USA	<a href="http://www.walkbiketoschool.org">www.walkbiketoschool.org</a>
National Center for Safe Routes to School	<a href="http://www.saferoutesinfo.org">www.saferoutesinfo.org</a>

**About Mass in Motion:**

Mass in Motion is a statewide movement led by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health that helps local communities increase opportunities for residents to eat better and move more in the places they live, learn, work, and play. The Mass in Motion Municipal Wellness and Leadership Program represents 22 cities and towns. These Mass in Motion communities receive technical assistance and grant funding to make changes that turn the healthy choice into the easy choice for community members.

**About the Massachusetts Safe Routes to School Program:**

The Massachusetts Safe Routes to School program is brought to you by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), with funds from the Federal Highway Division. Safe Routes to School models of inclusiveness emphasize a collaborative, community-focused approach that fosters mutual partnerships between advocacy groups, law enforcement, education leaders and public health departments which all work together to promote safer routes for children to get to school. The

program serves over 600 elementary and middle schools in 170 communities throughout the Commonwealth. School Partners receive year-round pedestrian and bicycle safety education instruction as well as engagement initiatives tailored to meet each school's physical fitness, safety and environmental priorities. For more information, visit [www.mass.gov/massdot/saferoutes](http://www.mass.gov/massdot/saferoutes)

The Safe Routes to School program is a key component of the Healthy Transportation Compact, an initiative of the Patrick-Murray Administration's historic transportation reform law. The Healthy Transportation Compact is a ground-breaking collaboration between the departments of transportation, health and human services, and energy and environmental affairs that is designed to promote best practices, increase efficiency, and achieve positive health outcomes through the coordination of land use, transportation and public health policy.

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