



Institute for Transportation Research and Education  
North Carolina State University

## NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### International Walk to School Day a Success for Apex School

**Apex, N.C.** – Olive Chapel Elementary School children and their parents joined more than 30 other countries by happily trekking to school on Wednesday, October 8<sup>th</sup> for International Walk to School Day. Olive Chapel Elementary School has been the site of a project being conducted by UNC-Chapel Hill School of Public Health to increase active travel to school. Many of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students have been wearing activity monitors to measure their level of daily movement and International Walk to School Day was the perfect opportunity to put this study to the test. International Walk to School Day began in 1994 in Great Britain and has since spread to include over 3 million participants. The goals of Walk to School Day are to encourage physical fitness, raise awareness of the value of walkable communities, raise concern for the environment, reduce crime and take back neighborhoods, and reduce traffic congestion, pollution, and speed near schools.

This event was more than a mere walk to school for Jeff Tsai, Director of Pupil and School Transportation at The Institute for Transportation Research and Education (ITRE). He participated as a parent and a researcher. Tsai used a Transportation Information Management System (TIMS) to create “walking school bus” routes in order to establish staging locations and set times participants should start walking. TIMS is a computer program ITRE normally uses to map school bus routes, but could be used in the future to route “walking school buses”, a walk to school system popular in New Zealand and Europe, where an adult “driver” meets children at specific “bus stops” to safely walk to school together. School carpool traffic was also measured -- on a regular school day, there are over 200 vehicles maneuvering the carpool lanes; during Walk to School Day there were only around 70 cars. To learn more about TIMS software, visit [www.ncbussafety.org/routing.html](http://www.ncbussafety.org/routing.html) or to learn more about the research of Pupil and School Transportation, visit [www.itre.ncsu.edu/stg](http://www.itre.ncsu.edu/stg). Both Web sites are designed and maintained by ITRE.

Over 400 Olive Chapel students walked to school out of an enrollment population of 900. NC State House Representative Paul Stam joined the walkers as well as Don Nail, Director of NC Governor's Highway Safety Program, Department of Public Instruction Director of School Services, Dr. Ben Matthews, and Apex town manager Bruce Radford. Police officers were stationed at key points along the routes to direct walkers. In addition, Buster, a remote controlled talking school bus, greeted children as they entered campus.

The Institute for Transportation Research and Education (ITRE), administered by North Carolina State University, is a non-profit organization that conducts research, education, and technical assistance projects on a wide variety of surface transportation issues with the goals of solving problems and creating new products, better services, and smarter workers. ITRE is located at NCSU's Centennial Campus. For more information about ITRE, please visit our Web site at [www.itre.ncsu.edu](http://www.itre.ncsu.edu)

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