



October Walk to School Month

Organizing Walking School Buses and Bike Trains

Many parents are reluctant to let their children walk or bike to or from school alone or with friends due to safety concerns. One way to overcome these concerns is to organize a Walking School Bus or Bike Train.

A Walking School Bus or Bike Train is a group of children led by adult escorts who walk or bike to school together. Starting with the children living farthest from the school, the group will pick up children along the route as it moves. After school, one or more parents will be at the school to lead the group home.

Because of the equipment involved and the potential need to ride on a road, planning and conducting a bicycle train is more involved than having a walking school bus. Most schools start with a Walking School Bus, and build up to organizing a Bike Train. See the suggested steps for organizing a Walking School Bus or Bike Train.

Form a Working Group

Invite parents, students, the school principal, teachers, and local businesses to explore options such as routes, coordinators, resources, and sponsors.

Recruit Escorts

Ask trusted neighbors and parents or grandparents of students to take turns escorting children to and from school. Some schools also recruit employees from local businesses to be escorts. One or two adults per group are needed. Schools may choose to do background checks on volunteer escorts and have them participate in a brief training session (e.g., on first aid, CPR for children, and pedestrian or biking safety rules). In addition, some schools require volunteer escorts to wear vests and carry first aid kits while walking or biking.

Organize the Escorts

Work out a regular schedule among the escorts. Determine who can walk or bike with the students and when. Create back-up plans with substitute escorts.

Designate Routes

Many parents already know how best to get around their neighborhood on foot or bike, but in some instances routes may need to be mapped out. Work with the school and the police department to determine the safest routes for walking and biking. Use the Walkability Checklist to assess the walkability of potential routes.

Designate Staging Areas

Staging areas are gathering areas where students and escorts can meet. Students who live too far to walk or bike safely to school can be dropped off at the staging area. Church parking lots or shopping centers that are about $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from school make great staging areas.

Promote it

Once the escorts, routes and staging areas are set, let everyone in the neighborhood know about the Walking School Bus or Bike Train. Publicize the staging area, time of departure and estimated times of times for each stop on the route. Post information in school newsletters, on flyers posted around the school, or using list-serves, emails, and phone trees. Consider making banners, posters, and signs with students for Walk and Bike to School events.

Celebrate Walking and Biking Achievements

Adult escorts can choose to track the total number of miles walked or biked over a period of time and announce it at an assembly. Students and adults participating in the Walking School Bus or Bike Train may get a special T-shirt or a certificate of achievement.



For more information:

www.walkingschoolbus.org/

www.saferoutesinfo.org/program-tools/what-bicycle-train



www.cawalktoschool.com

