



Step In to a Walking School Bus Program!



A walking school bus (WSB) is a safe and fun way for children to get physical activity with adult supervision as they travel to and from school. Each “bus” walks along a set route with adults leading it, picking children up at designated stops and walking them to school. The process is reversed in the afternoons on the way home. It is that easy!

Frequently Asked Questions About Starting a Walking School Bus

Who starts and runs a WSB? A WSB can be started and led by a group of parents, school staff, community volunteers, or anyone who is interested in helping students get to and from school in a safe and active way. WSBs often have a small group of stakeholders that helps plan and launch the program. Ideally each school has a WSB coordinator. This person may be a PTO/PTA member or family volunteer, school staff or teacher, or member of a youth-serving, faith-based, or other community organization. A WSB coordinator can be a paid or volunteer position. If you have a city, town, county, or school district Safe Routes to School program, your WSB coordinator will work with that person and might share responsibilities and resources.

Who can be WSB route leaders? Anyone with an interest in walking kids to and from school that meets school and school district requirements. Family members, school staff, community volunteers, local business employees, local college students, and seniors are great candidates for WSB route leaders. Your school, school district, and WSB planning team will determine local requirements for route leaders.

What students typically participate in a WSB? Students who currently walk to school, who are not bused, and who live within walking distance (one-half to one mile, depending on age) of the school are great candidates. Creating routes that reach high student population neighborhoods and mimic current walking routes will play a role in maximizing the number of students that participate.

How long does it take to set up a WSB program? A typical program takes a minimum of three months to start from scratch. If you have families already walking students to and from school, setup might take less time since you already have a pool of potential route leaders and participants. Consider kicking off your program with an event such as Walk to School Day or at the beginning of the school year and work backwards from that date.



How to Get Started: Follow These Steps to Plan a Great Walking School Bus!

Planning a WSB might seem complicated, but resources are available to get you started on the right foot. Our toolkit, [Step By Step: How to Start a Walking School Bus Program at Your School](#), will walk you through how to plan a WSB and provides resources that you can tailor for your school, community, and students. The Step By Step guide includes five steps:

1. **Step In: Getting Started.** This step walks you through making a few basic decisions about how your WSB program is structured, identifying your partners, and working with your team to answer some key questions.
2. **Step Up: Planning Your Route.** This step includes how to choose an appropriate route accessible to many students with help from neighborhood groups, law enforcement, parents and caregivers, and other community members.
3. **Step Out: Recruiting Students and Leaders and Promoting Your Program.** This section includes ideas and resources for recruiting student participants and route leaders. The section discusses options for student sign up, route leader requirements, and route leader training.
4. **Step Off: Starting and Running Your Program.** This section includes ideas for launching your WSB program on Walk to School Day or using another special event as well as tips to keep your program running smoothly.
5. **Step Back: Evaluating and Adjusting Your Program.** This step includes gathering information about how well your program is working and making adjustments as needed.



Why start a walking school bus program?

For schools, school districts, and communities:

- Solutions to transportation issues such as bus service and dangerous traffic congestion at pick up/drop off times.
- Students who are ready to learn, who are healthy, awake, and alert, which can improve academic performance.
- Increased family and community engagement.
- A cleaner environment and fewer student asthma attacks by reducing air pollution from car emissions.

For students and families:

- Children with better traffic safety habits and increased confidence and independence.
- Increased daily physical activity, forming healthy habits that can last a lifetime.
- Peace of mind for families whose children walk alone.
- Savings on gas and money by replacing car trips to school with walking.

For More Information

If you are interested in WSB training or engaging the Safe Routes to School National Partnership to develop your program, email us at info@saferoutespartnership.org.

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