

Lace Up Your Shoes: A Guide to Get your Walking School Bus Moving



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Acknowledgments

This guide was created by WALKSacramento's Safe Routes to School team. WALKSacramento is a nonprofit planning and advocacy organization that improves quality of life and health equity through community-centered policy and systems change in land use, transportation, and community development. WALKSacramento is a leading organizer of Safe Routes to School programs throughout the 6-county Sacramento region.

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Introduction

About the Guide

"Lace Up Your Shoes: A Guide to Get Your Walking School Bus Moving" is a comprehensive manual with step-by-step instructions, case studies, and resources designed for K-12 school staff who are interested in establishing a Walking School Bus (WSB) at their school.¹ There is no "one" or "right" way to run a WSB program and thus, this guide is not meant to be prescriptive, and instead, seeks to offer support and suggestions for planning and implementation.

Companion Resources

Check out the companion resource "Hopping on the Bike Train: A Guide to Get Your Bike Train Rolling" to learn more about how to get a Bike Train started at your school. The difference between Walking School Buses and Bike Trains and what potential hybrid programs can look like are outlined in the FAQs section below.

A Note on COVID-19

Nearly every aspect of life as we know it, including learning, socializing, and staying active, has been impacted by COVID-19 and we may continue to see its effects for years to come. With many schools beginning to return to in-person learning or exploring hybrid models, this guide includes tips and guidelines for rolling out a WSB program smoothly and safely. As schools navigate transportation budget cuts, WSBs can help fill those gaps and offer safe alternatives for parents who are concerned about allowing their children to ride the bus.

Contact Info

Contact WALKSacramento with any questions, comments, or program support needs at contact@walksacramento.org or at (916) 446 – 9255.

¹ This guide has been adapted from the Safe Routes to School National Partnership's "Step by Step: How to Start a Walking School Bus at Your School." You can access the toolkit here: <https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/resources/toolkit/step-step>

Walking School Buses: FAQs and Benefits

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What are Walking School Buses?

A Walking School Bus is an organized group of children and adults who walk to or from school along established routes. WSBs provide students who live within walking distance from school a safe and fun way to get to school.

Can students bicycle or scooter along?

You may choose to make your WSB exclusive to walking or you may allow a few students to bicycle or scooter along with the group. If several students want to bicycle or scooter, you may consider establishing a separate Bike Train.

What ages are Walking School Buses appropriate for?

WSBs are typically catered towards elementary and middle schoolers (Kindergarten – 8th grade); however, it is more than possible to welcome older students—you might just need to adjust the level of support. For instance, high schoolers likely do not need adult supervision and can instead organize student-led walking groups. Older students can also get involved by volunteering to be WSB Leaders for younger children. Skip to “Engaging high school students” under Step 3 (p. 13) for more ideas.

What is the difference between Walking School Buses and Bike Trains?

A Bike Train is very similar to a WSB. Bike Trains are organized groups of children and adults who bicycle/scooter to or from school together along established routes. Like WSBs, Bike Trains can also vary from suggested routes to formal programs with designated stops and schedules. WSBs require slightly less planning, so you might choose to start with a WSB to test and establish the concept and then eventually roll out a Bike Train program.

Are Walking School Buses COVID-19 safe?

Given strict adherence to safety protocols and precautions during COVID-19, WSBs can be a safer alternative to traditional bussing due to increased ventilation and distance between children. Guidelines for how to keep students and volunteers safe and healthy are outlined in “COVID-19 Protocols and Safety Tips” under Step 3 (p. 10).

What are the benefits of Walking School Buses?

Walking School Buses offer many benefits for students, families, and the community alike.

Physical Activity

Walking can promote better heart health, cholesterol, and glucose metabolism.² WSBs also promote regular exercise, which can support immune health and improve respiratory function—critical benefits during COVID-19—and build long-term healthy habits.³ Children who regularly walk to school are at a decreased risk for chronic disease and obesity.⁴

² “[Benefits of Physical Activity](#)” (Center for Disease Control)

³ “[Boost your immune system with exercise](#)” (Community Medical Centers)

⁴ “[Commuting to school: Are children who walk more physically active?](#)” (American Journal of Preventative Medicine)

Safety

In addition to improved health outcomes, WSBs also build students' knowledge and confidence related to road safety, skills that are critical at younger ages when walking and biking *and* at older ages when many students begin driving.

Educational

Health benefits associated with regular walking, including improved focus and sleep quality, can lead to positive educational outcomes as well.⁵ When students walk to school, they arrive alert and ready to learn. In Patterson, New Jersey, WSBs were found to reduce chronic absenteeism and tardiness because students get excited about arriving on time to meet the WSB.⁶

Social and Emotional

COVID-19 has been extremely disruptive, isolating, and stressful for everyone, and children especially. WSBs promote regular exercise and provide a safe and fun way for students to interact with their peers, both of which have been shown to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression so that kids can focus on what's really important: learning and having fun.⁷

Environmental

Families can reduce carbon emissions—and save money—by opting for WSBs. WSBs reduce the amount of traffic and congestion around schools and neighborhoods, which can improve students' health and air quality for nearby neighbors. Air pollution can cause asthma and other respiratory issues, especially for young lungs, which has become one of the leading causes of school absenteeism.⁸

⁵ "[Exercise and Insomnia](#)"(Sleep Foundation); "[6 Benefits of Walking](#)" (UNC Health)

⁶ "[Walking School Buses Can Help with Reducing Chronic Absenteeism](#)" (New Jersey Safe Routes)

⁷ "[Exercise Benefits Children Physically and Mentally](#)" (Healthline)

⁸ "[Asthma](#)" (Center for Disease Control)

How to Get Started

Now that you are familiar with what Walking School Buses are and the benefits they can provide, it's time to dive into how you can get one started and, most importantly, how you can keep it going. We have broken down the process into five steps, complete with additional resources at the end of each section, to help you get going. Feel free to use the sample schedule below to help your planning team stay on track as you move through the process.

1. Team Building: Identifying Key Stakeholders and Generating Support
2. Route Preview: Determining Timing and Number of Routes
3. Lace Up: Recruitment, Training, and Planning Your Route
4. At the Starting Line: Kicking Off Your Walking School Bus and Expecting the Unexpected
5. Get in Stride: Sustaining the Momentum

Sample Timeline

| Task | Timeline | By Whom |
|--|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Begin WSB discussions | 2 months prior | Parents, School Staff |
| Identify a meeting location | 1 month prior | Parents, School Staff |
| Set a date and recurring schedule | 1 month prior | Parents, School Staff |
| Recruit volunteers | 2-3 weeks prior | Parents, School Staff |
| Create a flyer with route map, date, and time | 2 weeks prior | Parents, School Staff |
| Host a Walking School Bus event | Day of Event | Parents, School Staff |
| Thank volunteers. Assess what worked and what didn't to prepare for the next Walking School Bus event. | 1-3 days after | Parents, School Staff |

Step 1: Team Building

Identifying Key Stakeholders and Generating Support

Planning Ahead

Set your Walking School Bus up for success by beginning the planning process early. There is no exact science, but we recommend starting to plan roughly two months in advance of your ideal start date. Not sure when you might want to start your train? #WalkToSchoolDay in October is a great opportunity to roll your WSB into any existing walking-related activities happening at your school or in your community.

Identifying Key Stakeholders and Assembling Your WSB Team

Once you set your target date, it's time to identify and recruit key stakeholders who will be critical to ensuring your WSB program gets up and running smoothly. You will want to select a Team Captain to be the main point person for the program. The Team Captain should be someone who has direct ties to the school, such as a teacher or principal. Other key stakeholders to consider including in your WSB are Parent Teacher Associations/Organizations (PTAs and PTOs), neighborhood associations, walking groups or clubs, city and county staff, school district staff and board members, student groups (i.e. student council or safety patrol), and health and transportation departments. Use the sample worksheet below to help guide you as you think through who you want to recruit for your WSB Train Team.

My Walking School Bus Team

WALKSacramento SRTS Coordinator (Optional): _____

Team Captain: _____

School Staff Representative: _____

Parent Representative: _____

Student Representative: _____

Community/Enforcement Representative: _____

Walking Organization Representative: _____

Other: _____

RECRUITMENT RESOURCES

- [Walking School Bus Information Flyer](#) (Safe Routes Partnership; p. 8)

Step 2: Route Preview

Determining Timing and Number of Routes

Now that you have assembled your team, it's time to start hammering out the nuts and bolts of your Walking School Bus program. There are a few key questions you should consider as a group:

How formal will your Walking School Bus be?

Your WSB can be as casual or formal as you like. It could start more casual (i.e. suggesting a route and schedule that parents and students can follow on their own) and eventually become more formalized (i.e. student registration, a formalized route, schedule, etc.). The advantages and limitations of both approaches are summarized in the table below:

| Informal | | Formal | |
|---|--|---|--|
| Advantages | Limitations | Advantages | Limitations |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Less planning involved• Reduces barriers or “extra steps” to participation• More flexible | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• More difficult to track program participation and growth | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Easier to track program participation and growth• Increases accountability | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• More planning involved• Potentially discourages participation by formalizing registration process• Less flexible |

Figure 1: Advantages and Limitations of Informal and Formal Walking School Bus Programs

How often will your Walking School Bus operate?

The frequency of your program may depend on how formal or casual you want your WSB to be. In any case, you will want to assess the capacity of your WSB Team to determine the group's ability to run the program on a daily, weekly, biweekly, monthly, or annual basis.

What times will your Walking School Bus be available?

Your WSB could operate in the mornings, after school, or both. Factors you might want to consider include:

- ▶ ONLY MORNINGS: How will students get home?
- ▶ ONLY AFTERNOONS: How might after-school programs and parent availability impact students' and volunteer's availability?
- ▶ BOTH: Depending on the formality of your program, will you have the same volunteers operate the morning and afternoon shifts or will you have separate AM and PM teams?

How many routes will your Walking School Bus have?

The number of routes your WSB will have depends on your WSB Team's capacity and how formal your program is. You could have several suggested routes or you could have fewer established routes with set schedules, volunteers, and student participants. Either way, starting with one route can help your team test out the concept, work out any kinks, and gauge interest and support. The “Identifying and Planning Your Walking School Bus Route(s)” section under Step 3 (p. 12) will walk you through the steps to identify your route(s).

Will your Walking School Bus have an age restriction?

As mentioned above, WSBs are typically targeted at students between Kindergarten and 8th grade. You may want to begin your WSB with older students (4th – 8th) and then open it up to younger students once the program is more established.

Step 3: Lace Up

Recruitment, Training, and Planning Your Route

With your Team assembled and strategic questions answered, you are ready to start promoting your program! In this section, you will learn how to:

- ▶ Recruit and train volunteers
- ▶ Recruit students
- ▶ Identify and plan your route(s)

Keep in mind that the following steps may not follow a linear process, or in the order they appear below. You know your school community best and will be able to determine the order of operations that makes the most sense for you.

Recruiting and Training Volunteers

How many volunteers are needed?

According to guidelines set by the National Safe Routes Partnership and the Center for Disease Control, each WSB should have at least one adult leader, with a maximum of six students for every adult, or a Student-to-Leader ratio of 6:1.⁹ For younger grade levels (Kindergarten – 1st), a ratio of 2:3 is recommended. You will want to recruit as many volunteers as you can to prepare for inevitable absences and turnover. Check out the “Volunteer and Liability Resources” section below (p. 11) for some sample materials to help you with recruitment.

Who can be a Walking School Bus Leader?

WSB Leaders are adults in the community who volunteer to lead WSBs. Depending on the structure of your program, leaders can also help with implementation and promotion. Most programs begin with sourcing their volunteers from staff and parents at their school; however, community service organizations, local walking clubs, high school students, and retirees are also potential volunteer reserves.

Onboarding and Training Walking School Bus Leaders

It is up to you how you choose to vet your volunteers. Your school may already have protocols in place for bringing on volunteers, such as background checks, fingerprinting, etc. In any case, having a WSB Leader Agreement and Code of Conduct can help ensure accountability and clearly lay out expectations. A sample agreement is provided below in the “Volunteer and Liability Resources” section below (p. 11).

⁹ For more information on CDC guidelines: <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/the-walking-school-bus-a-downloadable-guide>

Once you have your volunteers confirmed, we recommend hosting a training (sometime during the month before your target start date) to review the plan and procedures for leading WSBs. If you are in the Sacramento region, contact WALKSacramento for assistance planning or facilitating your training, we're here to help! A basic training should cover the following elements:

- ▶ An introduction to WSBs and their benefits
- ▶ A program overview (i.e. dates, structure, etc.)
- ▶ Leader information (traffic safety information, expectations, protocols, logistics)
- ▶ Route and logistics planning
- ▶ Optional: walk along one of the potential routes

A sample training agenda has been provided in the "Volunteer and Liability Resources" section below (p. 11).

Inviting Parents/Caregivers and Younger Children to Join

A common question WSB Leaders receive before or on the day of an event from parents/caregivers is "Can I join the WSB with my student" or "Is it okay if my toddler joins with us?". Some parents/caregivers may join every time or after a while, feel comfortable enough to let their students join the WSB on their own. It is up to you if you want a more formal process, but it is encouraged you welcome parents/caregivers and their non-school aged children to join on the adventure. This will help gain continued momentum for the program. Some parents/caregivers may even express interest in becoming an official volunteer or just enjoy the company of other families walking to school together.

COVID-19 Protocols and Safety Tips

Your volunteer training should also include COVID-19 protocols and tips to ensure all volunteers and students stay safe and healthy. The following guidelines are based on CDC guidelines and best practices from SRTS programs across the country, however, your school may have its own procedures already in place.

- ▶ Leaders and students wear CDC-approved face masks.¹⁰
- ▶ Leaders and students will walk single file and stay six feet apart at all times. For younger students, you may use pool noodles or jump ropes so students can more easily remain distanced.
- ▶ Maintain small group sizes (refer to "How many volunteers are needed?" above).
- ▶ Leaders and students must stay home when they are sick and may return to the WSB after 72 hours with no symptoms or follow their local school district's health and safety protocols.
- ▶ No sharing of materials between students and leaders.
- ▶ Students and leaders use hand sanitizer before entering the WSB.

Gathering Materials

Walking school bus programs do not require a lot of gear to get started. However, here is a list of key materials you may want to consider:

- ▶ Orange or yellow safety vests for volunteers
- ▶ Stop or slow paddles

¹⁰ ["Your Guide to Masks"](#) (Center for Disease Control)

- ▶ Walking school bus poster or signs (these can be handmade!)

A Quick Note on Liability

Like with anything concerning the safety and wellbeing of children, you, or your volunteers, may have some apprehensions regarding liability. Fortunately, the risk of liability is small due to considerable protections under federal law for volunteers in most states. Liability risk can be minimized further by properly training Leaders and putting procedures in place to promote the safety of students, such as the steps and procedures outlined in this guide. More information on liability can be found in the resources section below.

VOLUNTEER AND LIABILITY RESOURCES

- ▶ [Walking School Bus Route Leader Recruitment Checklist](#) (Safe Routes Partnership)
- ▶ [Walking School Bus Route Leader Agreements and Code of Conduct](#) (Safe Routes Partnership; p. 10)
- ▶ [Walking School Bus Training Agenda](#) (Safe Routes Partnership)
- ▶ [Safe Routes to School: Minimizing Your Liability Risk in California](#) (ChangeLab Solutions)

Identifying and Planning Your Walking School Bus Route(s)

Where your routes are, how many you have, and their length depends on several factors outlined below. Discuss each question/consideration below with your team to help you draft some initial route ideas and get closer to creating your official WSB map. However, before you begin your discussion, it is important to re-assess the group's (including volunteers') capacity before deciding how many routes you would like to have and how structured you want your WSB program to be (review Figure 1 on p. 8).

Where do students live and how long should the route(s) be?

If you have access to student address data, you can use it to make rough estimates for where students are located (and how many) within walking distance in school. If you do not have access to address data, you can work with your school administration and WSB volunteers to identify locations and routes that might work well. When determining the distance routes should be, keep in mind older elementary school students and middle school students (4th – 8th) can walk about a half-mile to one mile at a standard pace and younger elementary students (Kindergarten – 3rd) can walk about a quarter-mile to a half-mile at a standard pace. Thus, your target age group will determine the length of your route.

Testing and Timing Your Route(s)

Team members and potential volunteers should test out the selected route(s) during school commute hours to get a better sense of traffic volume, availability of pedestrian infrastructure (i.e. sidewalks, crosswalks), and other conditions that could affect the comfort and safety of students. Inviting a small group of students and parents/caregivers on a test walk, especially students with special needs and students with disabilities is also a good idea so you can gauge their experience and perspective. As you test your route(s), you will want to pay close attention to timing so that you can create a schedule for your WSB. Be sure to factor in walking speeds relative to age and ability, as well as other factors, such as inclement weather, that could affect timing. Check out the "Planning Your Route Resources" below (p. 12) for more information on walk audits and involving students with disabilities.

Identifying Stops

Stops are optional. You may have a WSB that operates similar to a remote drop-off where there is one initial meeting point and a direct route to school. Or, you may have an initial meeting point with stops along the way, similar to how a school bus operates. If you have a more formal program, you may have WSB Leaders check registered students off at each stop as they join the train. Places like parks, churches, libraries, or apartment complexes where a lot of students live are great meeting locations. These types of locations can be easy to access for nearby students and for those who live too far from their home to walk but can participate on the WSB as a remote drop-off. If you are meeting at a local business, church, or library, it is always a good idea to discuss the meeting times/dates with the business owner and ensure it does not interfere with business traffic. The owners may even support the group by allowing you to put a *WSB Meets Here* sign on their property.

Creating a Map

Create a map with the route(s), stops (if applicable), and pick-up/drop-off times for each stop or meeting location. You can use the map to help promote the program as well by including a description of the WSB program and its benefits, student expectations, contact information, and any registration information (see sample materials in the Resources section below). You may also want to create translated versions of the map with any other primary languages that are spoken by students and parents at your school. Check with your school contact for translation requirements.

PLANNING YOUR ROUTE RESOURCES

- ▶ [Walk & Bicycle Audit Guide](#) (WALKSacramento)
- ▶ [How to Conduct a Walk Audit Webinar](#) (WALKSacramento)
- ▶ [Guide to Creating Walking Route Maps for Safe Routes to School](#) (Safe Routes Partnership)
- ▶ [Walking School Bus Stop Schedule](#) (Safe Routes Partnership)
- ▶ [Involving Students with Disabilities in SRTS](#) (Pedestrian & Bicycle Information Center)



Figure 2: The City of Roseville's Safe Routes to School program established "Drop & Walk" locations to encourage students to participate in the walking school bus, even if they live too far away to walk from their home. Source: City of Roseville, Safe Routes to School

Elder Creek Walking School Bus

Details:
Where: Across from Stalling Dr. and Logan St.
When: Meet at 7:20 am. Leave at 7:30 am.

Elder Creek is starting monthly walking group for parents and students to walk to school together!

| | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Dates: | Themes: |
| Friday, March 6th, 2020 | Wear Neon Day (March) |
| Friday, May 1st, 2020 | Earth Day (May) |
| Friday, June 5th, 2020 | School Pride Day (June) |

For more information please contact Isai Palma @
ipalma@walksacramento.org or 916.446.9255

Figure 3: Example of a Walking School Bus Route Map from Elder Creek Elementary

Recruiting Students

As mentioned in Step 2, how you structure student participation is up to you. Student participation could range from promoting your map among families to requiring students to register. No matter how you envision your WSB, the steps below will help guide you through the process of recruiting students.

Promotion Avenues and Strategies

When recruiting students, you will of course want to reach students directly, but getting parents on board is equally important.

- ▶ Tips for reaching students: morning announcements, in-class presentations, and other encouragement activities
- ▶ Tips for reaching parents: social media, newsletters, PTAs or PTOs, take-home packets, and emails

Registering Students

If you opt for a more formal program, you might consider creating a registration process. Registration can help promote accountability, track progress, and establish expectations. Even if you are taking a more informal approach to your WSB, you may still want to create a simple interest form to keep for future reference.

Registered students should be provided with a take-home packet that includes the final route map and pick-up/drop-off schedule and expectations for students and families (see “Student Recruitment Resources” below).

Engaging High School Students

High school students likely do not require the same level of supervision and support as elementary and middle school students. Thus, your team might tap into a sports or environmental club, student government, or other student groups to help them get a student-led walking group going. Kick off the program with a walk audit workshop where students get trained in conducting walk audits and help identify potential routes. High school students can also help volunteer to be WSB Leaders for community service hours or class credit. Find more information on walk audits in the “Planning Your Route Resources” section above (p. 12).

CASE STUDY: Nicholas Elementary School Walking School Bus (Sacramento, CA)

Nicholas Elementary School started a Walking School Bus with two key goals in mind:

1. Provide a safe and reliable way for students to get to school on time, and regularly.
2. Encourage higher participation in parent meetings.

Nicholas Elementary developed meeting locations that were convenient and nearby student homes and scheduled the Walking School Bus to occur on the same days as monthly parent meetings. Nicholas Elementary also offered incentives for both students and parents to join the walking school bus and for parents to join the parent meetings afterward. The school saw both its attendance for students and parents increase.



Figure 4: Students from Nicholas Elementary walk, bike, and roll with their Walking School Bus Leader.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT RESOURCES

- ▶ [Walking School Bus Student Consent and Registration Form](#) (Safe Routes Partnership)
- ▶ [Walking School Bus Student Expectations and Code of Conduct](#) (Safe Routes Partnership)
- ▶ [Walking School Bus Student List](#) (Safe Routes Partnership)
- ▶ [Walking School Bus Family Expectations](#) (Safe Routes Partnership)

Step 4: At the Starting Line

Kicking Off Your Walking School Bus and Expecting the Unexpected

Congratulations! You are officially ready to get walking. To build excitement for your program and start off with a bang, you will want to host a kickoff event, such as Walk to School Day, or a series of competitions and challenges. We recommend promoting the event at least two weeks in advance using a variety of promotional strategies (i.e. email blasts, Facebook events, flyers, etc.).

It's Up to Students to...

- Look both ways before crossing
- Walk on sidewalks
- Make sure drivers see you before you cross
- Obey pedestrian signals

It's Up to Parents to...

- Use extra caution when children are near roadways
- Be alert near school zones
- Not stop in or block visibility of crosswalks
- Not pass cars stopped for pedestrians

Depende de los estudiantes...

- Mirar a ambos lados antes de cruzar las calles
- Caminar sobre las banquetas o andenes
- Asegurarse de que los conductores los vean antes de cruzar las calles
- Obedecer las señales de peatones

Depende de los padres...

- Tener más precaución cuando hayan niños cerca de los caminos o calzadas
- Estar alerta cerca de las áreas escolares
- No detenerse dentro de los cruces de calles o bloquear la visibilidad en los cruces de calles
- No sobrepasar a los vehículos que se detienen para dejar pasar a los peatones

For More Information Contact:
Alicia Brown, abrown@walksacramento.org

**WILL C. WOOD MIDDLE
WALK & ROLL TO SCHOOL DAY IS MAY 3
DIA DE CAMINAR Y BICICLETA A ESCUELA 3 DE MAYO**

THE FIRST PERIOD CLASS WITH THE MOST STUDENTS WHO WALK, BIKE, SCOOT, SKATE, ETC TO SCHOOL WILL WIN A CLASS PRIZE!

Check in at the front of the school on Lemon Hill Ave or at the back of the school on Ortega St.
Revisar en el frente de la escuela en Lemon Hill Ave o en la parte de atrás de la escuela de Ortega St.

Bring Your Bike, Skateboard, Scooter, or Your Own Two Feet!

Where/Dónde: Capitol City Seventh-Day Adventist Church (6701 Lemon Hill Ave, Sacramento, CA 95824)

When/Cuándo: Meet at 7:40 am. Leave at 7:50 am.

Legend | Leyenda

- Group meeting location / Lugar de reunión
- Group route / Ruta
- Cross with caution / Cruzar con precaución
- Check in station / Estación de registrar

Figure 5: Example Walk to School Day flyer for Will C. Wood Middle School

Expecting the Unexpected

In the event of...

Leader Absences

Be sure to establish backup procedures, such as setting up a phone call chain or having substitute volunteers on call, to step in when needed.

Inclement Weather

Given Sacramento's temperate climate, inclement weather typically entails rain, heat, or smoke from wildfires. Use your best judgment to keep students and leaders safe during these periods, which may include temporarily suspending the WSB.

Student Injury or Equipment Malfunction

If a student has to stay back or slow down due to injury, create a plan ahead of time with your Leaders. This may entail having one Leader stay and the other Leader continuing with the rest of the group or it may entail a parent coming to pick the child up. Create a plan that works best for you and your Leaders.

Varying Ages and Abilities

If you have student participants with a range of ages and abilities, consider splitting the WSB into groups or creating routes with different lengths so that students can walk at similar speeds. The closer together the WSB is (with the exception of the COVID-19 guidelines outlined in Step 3), the easier it is for Leaders to supervise and keep everyone safe.

Other Potential Challenges

Consider discussing plans and procedures for addressing the following likely challenges:

- ▶ Not enough Leaders
- ▶ Students ignoring safety rules
- ▶ More (or unregistered) students show up to participate

Step 5: Get in Stride

Sustaining the Momentum

Now that you've got your Walking School Bus up and running, here are a few fun ideas to sustain the momentum:

Overhead Announcement

The overhead announcement should be delivered at the end of the day before your WSB start date. The announcement can be done by school staff, a parent volunteer, or students.

"Good afternoon students, our monthly Walk to School Day will be tomorrow morning! Join us **[insert walking school bus location]**. Bring a family member or a friend! Every student who walks with us will receive a prize."

Frequent Walk, Roll, and Bike Club Punch Cards

The template provided includes cards sized 3 inches by 4 inches. Here is how to use the punch card template:

1. Edit the template to suit your needs
2. Print the cards
3. Laminate the cards
4. Use a hole punch to punch a hole on the blue dot circle
5. Use a string or chain to make the card into a backpack key chain
6. Distribute to Students

Frequent Walk, Roll, and Bike Club Punch Card



Name: _____

Teacher: _____

Frequent Walk, Roll, and Bike Club Punch Card



Name: _____

Teacher: _____

Frequent Walk, Roll, and Bike Club Punch Card



Name: _____

Teacher: _____

Frequent Walk, Roll, and Bike Club Punch Card



Name: _____

Teacher: _____

Frequent Walk, Roll, and Bike Club Punch Card



Name: _____

Teacher: _____

Frequent Walk, Roll, and Bike Club Punch Card



Name: _____

Teacher: _____

Spirit Days and Group Pride

Spice up your rides by organizing Walking School Bus “spirit days” where students dress up given various themes (i.e. neon, school colors, etc.). If you have multiple WSBs, you can instill group pride by collaborating with Leaders and students to create a team name, mascot, etc. You could even hold competitions between WSBs!

Inviting Guest Leaders and Themed Walking Days

Inviting local community leaders or having a themed walking day is a fun way to keep the WSB program interesting and fun. Local community leaders can be hometown celebrities, elected officials, or emergency personnel, or whoever is relevant to your community and the students. Theme days can be hosted by guest leaders too. Consider hosting a career day walk where guest leaders can share their career or align themes with other school events like National Library Week in April or Fire Safety month in October.

Walking School Bus Leader Appreciation

WSB Leader Appreciation can work to both build connections between students and their Leaders and promote Leader retention by recognizing their time and efforts. Possible appreciation activities include:

- ▶ Thank-you cards
- ▶ Taking photos of students with their favorite Leaders and posting them on school social media and school websites
- ▶ Certificates of appreciation
- ▶ MVP awards
- ▶ Paper plate awards
- ▶ Paid stipends or gift cards

Leader and Student Evaluations/Comment Cards

Distribute surveys and comment forms to Leaders, students, and families to see how the WSB is going for them and if they have any ideas on how to improve it, especially if your WSB occurs on a more

CASE STUDY: Infusing Walking School Buses with Environmental Education and Group Spirit (El Monte, CA)

In Fall 2017, Alta Planning + Design, in partnership with Amigos de los Rios and the Safe Routes to School National Partnership, established a Walking School Bus pilot program at Durfee School in El Monte, CA. The Project Team instilled excitement and learning by infusing the program with environmental education, including naming each route after local wildlife and incorporating educational activities into the walk, such as plant identification and temperature measurements.

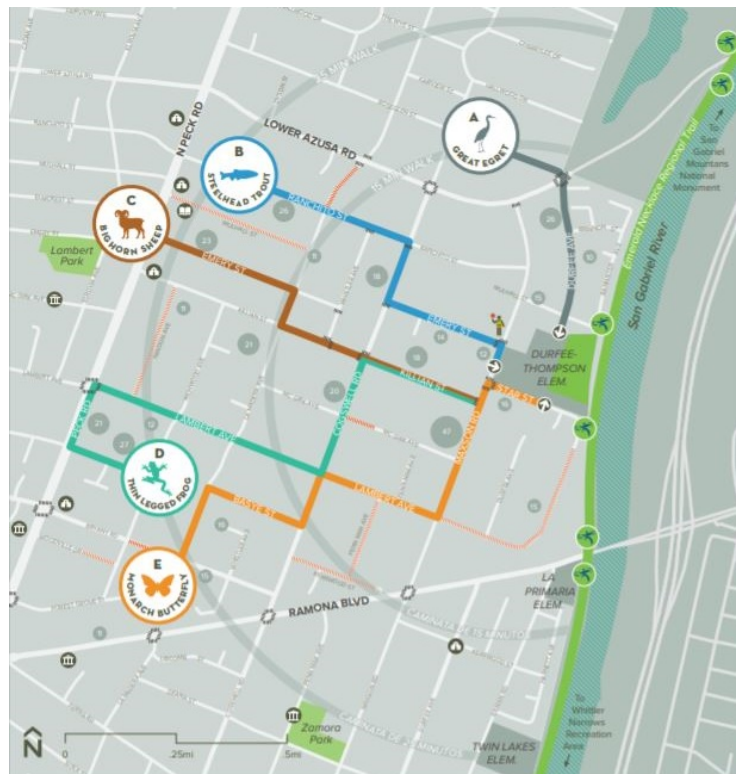


Figure 6: Durfee’s nature-inspired Walking School Bus groups.

Photo courtesy of: https://altago.com/wp-content/uploads/ElMonteWSB_Evaluation.pdf

regular basis (i.e. daily, weekly, monthly). Evaluation and adjustment is the key to any sustainable program.

- ▶ [Walking School Bus Leader Comment Form](#) (Safe Routes Partnership)
- ▶ [Walking School Bus Student and Family Survey](#) (Safe Routes Partnership)

October is National Walking Month Encouragement Activities

October is National Walking Month is a national celebration of walking and pedestrian awareness. There are plenty of ways to celebrate from home or in school. Check out these great resources to learn more:

- [Build Your Own Walk to School Day](#) (WALKSacramento)
- [Walkbiketoschool.org](#) (Everything you need to plan an event!)