

# The Walking School Bus



## What is a Walking School Bus?

A Walking School Bus (WSB) is a group of children who walk to and from school along a set safe route, accompanied by a minimum of two adult “drivers” (supervisors) per group.

One adult leads at the front while the other supervises at the rear. The walking school bus picks up passengers along the way at designated stops.

As with a regular school bus, the walking school bus runs rain or shine and maintains a regular schedule. It is recommended that every participant wear a reflective jacket or bright clothing. Along the way children can get exercise, chat with their friends, learn valuable road safety skills and gain some independence.

All walking buses are different and vary to suit the needs of the children and families who use them. Some schools have a number of walking buses and some have only one. Some walking buses operate only on certain days, while others operate only in the morning or afternoon.

A walking school bus is a perfect fit with the Utah Department of Health’s goal of reducing traffic congestion and providing safe walking routes. A WSB provides children with a safe, healthy, educational and environmentally sound way of getting to school every day.

## A Walking School Bus Makes Life Better

A walking school bus provides many benefits. For starters, it teaches children pedestrian safety skills and cuts down on traffic around schools and neighborhoods. It’s estimated that 20-25 percent of morning motor vehicle traffic can be attributed to parents driving their children to school.

A walking school bus is great exercise. It helps to build muscles, including the heart, as well as building bone density and improving overall health. In addition, research has shown that walking to school in the morning is great preparation for the day ahead. Kids arrive awake, alert, and ready to learn.

## Starting a Walking School Bus in Your Neighborhood

Step 1: Get the support of the school and the community (principal, PTA, parents, teachers, students, etc.) See if they like the idea of a walking school bus and would support starting one.

Step 2: Organize a meeting and invite everyone from the school and community to attend. During the meeting, talk about the benefits of a walking school bus and get more support.

Step 3: Survey the community to find out whether residents would actually use the walking school bus. Ask for potential volunteers and find out where the best routes will be. The typical walking school bus consists of 15-20 children and will need a pool of 6-10 parents to supervise.

Step 4: Get a map of the school boundary and a copy of the school’s Child Access Routing Plan. Map out potential routes.

Step 5: Based on survey results, establish a walking school bus route(s) and schedule(s). Each route and schedule should take into account the following:

- Number of children using the WSB.
- Number of adult volunteers to supervise.
- The schedule should meet the needs of the children and families who use it.

Step 6: Launch the walking school bus and continue to encourage participation and support.

**Additional resources:**

- <http://www.travelsmart.gov.au/schools/schools2.html#download>
- <http://www.walkingschoolbus.org/>
- <http://www.walkingbus.org/>
- <http://www.ccc.govt.nz/SafeRoutes/wsb.asp>
- <http://www.walkingbus.com/>