WALKING SCHOOL BUS GUIDE

Program Guide
For Teachers & Parents
Planning a Walking School Bus at their School
Grades: K-8

Use With: Walking Safety Tips Sheet

Let’s Go NC! - A Program of Healthy Active Kids
Saferoutes to School North Carolina
Winston-Salem Department of Transportation
Safe Kids Northwest Piedmont
What is a Walking School Bus?

A Walking School Bus (WSB) is an organized group of students who walk to and from school with adults. The WSB has a designated route and stops where students gather or get dropped off near their homes or local community hubs, such as parks or places of worship.

Who?

Volunteers and Route Leaders can be family members, teachers, or other interested community members. After completing the training, participants will know how to:

- Lead students safely along their route
- Encourage families to get involved by explaining the benefits of the WSB
- Know what to do when different situations arise

Why?

Many families would like to walk to school but are concerned about traffic, have personal safety concerns, or may lack the time to walk with their children to school. Sharing the trip with other families:

- Provides adult supervision for groups of students
- Reassures parents that their children can get to school safely and on time
- Builds community in the neighborhood

WSBs are a great way for students to get daily physical activity and travel to school, while having fun with their classmates. Students will:

- Learn how to be “Safe Walkers”
- Gain confidence exploring their communities
- Protect the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions

USE THIS GUIDE AND TEMPLATE TO GET A WALKING SCHOOL BUS STARTED AT YOUR SCHOOL!
Defining Roles & Responsibilities

A Walking School Bus can be a structured program with a regular schedule of trained volunteers, or it can be more informal, with parents or caregivers taking turns escorting children to school. For a WSB to be successful and fun, all participants have to agree to shared expectations and responsibilities.

Each WSB should have two or more volunteer adults each scheduled day, with one adult in the back and one in the front of the group. Having an additional volunteer scheduled provides back up if one volunteer is sick or cannot make it.

Route Leaders can be expected to:

- Establish the route and times based on interested families. **Tip:** Consult with city/National Cycling Center staff for walking route suggestions or concerns

- Create and coordinate the volunteer schedule to include when and who will volunteer to lead the WSB. (See Route Leader Toolkit forms)

- Create and manage a communication plan with and amongst volunteers for scheduling purposes and in case of incidents or emergencies along the route. **Tip:** Facebook group, email listserv and/or text group, phone or text chain. All participating students, volunteers, and Route Leaders should provide phone numbers so that they can be reached when routes or Route Leaders change, when the weather is bad, or in the event of other news that would change the routine of the bus. For updates that need to be communicated under short notice, phone calls are always best.

- Coordinate volunteer training and provide guidance about walking formations, timing, and safety. (See Team Training)

- Complete necessary paperwork as designated route leaders, provide necessary paperwork and contact information to volunteers, and respond to incidents as they arise. (See Route Leader Toolkit forms)

- Track participation and submit participant numbers as often as possible to the form on the City website at: https://www.cityofws.org/3160/Safe-Routes-to-School-Non-Infrastructure

In addition to the Route Leader roles and expectations, please refer to the Volunteer Roles for other applicable expectations of leading and volunteering with a WSB.

Consider any school district, PTA, and/or school-affiliated volunteer requirements, such as background checks.
Volunteer Roles

Those interested in volunteering with, but not coordinating, a WSB route should complete the appropriate sign up forms (See Volunteer Agreement Form). Having volunteers establish a commitment to a predetermined number of trips and schedule each week is suggested.

Volunteers are expected to:

- Supervise students walking the route until the group arrives at school.
- Teach and model safe walking behavior for students.
- Be aware of and abide by school policies regarding personal conduct.
- Arrive at least 10 minutes before scheduled departure from first stop.
- Let the route leader and/or fellow volunteers know if you are unable to attend, the earlier the better.
- Wear a safety vest or sash with a name tag or other identifier with your role and the route identity.
- Contact emergency response when necessary and provide basic first aid to the best of one’s ability in event of injury.
- Help create a fun, welcoming atmosphere for all students! Tip: Volunteers can use creative directions or assign student jobs, such as assistant line leader or tree/wildlife spotter, to reorient students who are misbehaving.

Student Participation Policy

For everyone’s safety, participating students must be well-behaved and comply with the Route Leader and volunteers’ instructions. Students and parents should read and sign the Family/Parental Agreement Form and Student Agreement Form. Establishing a participation policy for students can help to provide clear expectations and guide students to follow rules such as:

- Walk according to the rules, with one route leader walking in front of the participants and one behind.
- Stop and wait for instructions before crossing the street.
- Follow directions and “look left, look right, look left” when crossing the street.
- Always walk and never run at any time.
- Stay within the crosswalk (marked or unmarked) when crossing the street.
- Listen to Route Leaders and volunteers, who will remind participants to be aware of car traffic at driveways, intersections, and other thoroughfares.
- Be respectful of all other students, the Route Leaders, volunteers, the neighborhood, and neighbors.
- Focus on walking, and avoid playing with toys or using electronic devices during the walk.

CONSIDER ANY ADDITIONAL WSFCS, PTA, AND/OR SCHOOL-AFFILIATED VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS, SUCH AS BACKGROUND CHECKS AND BASIC FIRST AID TRAINING.
Team Training

The Route Leader and the volunteers could benefit from a team training to cover the materials presented in this guide and establish communication and emergency plans. Suggested training components include:

- Traffic safety information, including pedestrian rules of the road and considerations for younger walkers (see Walking Safety Tip Sheet).

- Expectations and roles for organizers, volunteers, families, and students, including talking through how to handle potential scenarios (see Defining Roles & Responsibilities above, Preparing for the Unexpected below, and the forms in the Route Leader Toolkit).

- Logistics including the specific route and stops, any challenging areas along the route, scheduled times for stops, schedules, participants, contact information, and supplies (see Route Leader Toolkit).

SHARE YOUR WALKING SCHOOL BUS EFFORTS AND STORIES!

Safe Kids NW Piedmont:
- @SafeKidsNWNC
- @safekidsnwpiedmont

NCC:
- @USNCCWS

Submit on the City’s SRTS Website:
https://www.cityofws.org/3160/Safe-Routes-to-School-Non-Infrastructure
Preparing for the Unexpected

What if there is an emergency?
Route leaders and volunteers should carry emergency contact information for each student participating in the Walking School Bus, as well as a charged cell phone.

What if a student is late?
A policy for late arrivals should be established for each departure time. Generally, the family is responsible for getting the student to or from school if they are late.

What if unexpected students show up?
Students must have a signed parental consent form with them to participate in the Walking School Bus.

What if it’s raining or snowing?
Encourage students to wear weather-appropriate clothing and shoes.

Route leaders and volunteers should be aware of school resources, such as Clothes Closets, if students regularly do not have the right attire. Consider organizing a carpool for days with very bad weather. Additionally, have a phone chain or communication plan for school closures or delayed start times due to snow.

What if a route leader or volunteer is sick?
Establish a procedure for communicating if the leader or volunteer needs to cancel. Identify an alternate route leader or a single point of contact who can alert families.

What if a participating child misbehaves?
If a student behaves in an unsafe manner in traffic, or does not listen to the directions of the adults, they should be given a warning and their family informed. If the student acts in a way that creates a persistent danger to themselves or other students, the student should not be allowed to continue participating in the WSB.
Route Leader Toolkit

Preparation

The appendix includes the following templates to use and tailor to promote and implement your WSB!

- Walking Safety Tips (on City website)
- WSB Promotional Poster
- WSB Stop Sign
- WSB Sign-In Sheet
- Family/Parental Agreement Form
- Student Agreement Form
- Volunteer Agreement Form
- Scheduling Form

On the Go

Every route leader or lead volunteer for that day should carry a toolkit that includes:

- Contact information for parents/guardians of children participating in the Walking School
- Bus, including cell phone numbers and email addresses.
- First aid kit
- Route maps
- Family/Parental Agreement Forms
- Student Agreement Forms
- Optional: safety vests/sashes, name tag(s), WSB stickers, umbrella(s) or ponchos.

Other Resources

Here are some additional guides and materials to help you learn more about Walking School Buses and dive deeper into organizing a WSB for your school.

- National Center for Safe Routes to School Training Modules: apps.saferoutesinfo.org/training/walking_school_bus/modules.cfm
- Safe Routes to School National Partnership Walkability Assessment Checklist: saferoutespartnership.org/resources/fact-sheet/walkability-checklist-0
- Safe Routes to School National Partnership Liability 201: saferoutespartnership.org/resources/webinar/liability-201
- Implementing Safe Routes to School in Low-Income Schools and Communities: saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/pdf/LowIncomeGuide.pdf

Point of Contact:

City of Winston-Salem Pedestrian & Bicycle Coordinator
mattbk@cityofws.org
How to Start a Walking School Bus at Your School

PLAN YOUR ROUTE

- **Identify Starting Point** (a corner near your house, or in front of an apartment building)

  **STARTING POINT:**

- Plan the safest, easiest route possible:
  - Plan a route with sidewalks, if possible.
  - Avoid crossing big, busy streets, if possible.
  - If you have to cross a big, busy street, choose the intersection with:
    - A crossing guard
    - A traffic light with a Walk/Don’t Walk signal

- **Walk the route with your student(s) one morning and consider some more questions:**
  - How long would it take with other students? Identify the best starting time.

  **STARTING TIME:**

  - Are there any areas that route leaders will need to particularly focus on student safety?
  - Are there loose dogs or other hazards you may not have noticed before?
  - Is there enough shade to keep students from overheating?

GET OTHERS INVOLVED

- **Check in with your Principal.** Ask if they know anyone who has expressed interest in a Walking School Bus.

- **Consider attending a PTA meeting** or other parent meeting to share your idea of a Walking School Bus.

- **Ask other parents who live near you if they want to join you.** Consider posting the Promotion Poster (on the following page) to see if anyone is interested.

- **Call Michael Hosey at 828-384-8051** at the National Cycling Center to see if they have materials such as vests, clipboards, stickers, first aid kits, and more for you to use.

- If you’re ready to start your Walking School Bus, **post your Bus Stop Sign and show up on-time!**

THE NIGHT BEFORE YOUR FIRST WALKING SCHOOL BUS

- Review your route.


- Bring materials such as vests, clipboards, first aid kits, etc. (if available).

- **Print Sign-In List** to keep track of parent names, where students live, and the number of students participating.

AFTER YOUR FIRST WEEK

- Ask students and other parents if the schedule works for them.

- **Ask others to volunteer! You can’t do this alone!**

- Ask your Principal if they want to support your route or promote it to the larger school if you’re ready to expand.

- Submit participation information at: [https://www.cityofws.org/3160/Safe-Routes-to-School-Non-Infrastructure](https://www.cityofws.org/3160/Safe-Routes-to-School-Non-Infrastructure)
Join other families and students walking to school.

A Walking School Bus is a group of students walking to and from school with friends and trusted adults.

- Is your child interested in participating in the Walking School Bus? Contact the parent coordinator at the phone number listed on this form!

- Are you interested in being a leader? Check out the City’s website to download a copy of the Walking School Bus Program Guide: [https://www.cityofws.org/3160/Safe-Routes-to-School-Non-Infrastructure](https://www.cityofws.org/3160/Safe-Routes-to-School-Non-Infrastructure)
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### Sign-in Sheet

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BEFORE YOUR STUDENT JOINS US ON A WALKING SCHOOL BUS, PLEASE REVIEW THE FOLLOWING RULES AND EXPECTATIONS AND TALK TO YOUR STUDENT ABOUT THEM. WALKING SCHOOL BUSES CAN BE A FUN AND SAFE WAY FOR YOUR STUDENT TO GET TO SCHOOL IF YOU FOLLOW THESE SIMPLE RULES.

I AGREE TO THE FOLLOWING EXPECTATIONS:

- **BE ON TIME.** I will help my child be on time to the Walking School Bus stops.

- **LISTEN.** I will make sure my child knows to listen to the Walking School Bus Route Leader and volunteers.

- **BE SAFE.** I will talk to my child about pedestrian safety and the importance of obeying all traffic laws and practicing safe behaviors.

- **COMMUNICATE.** I will notify the route leader if my child is not going to walk with the group for any reason, including leaving school by himself or herself, with friends or anyone else.

OUR PLAN FOR THE AFTERNOON WSB (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY):

- I will make sure that someone is home to meet my child after school.

- I agree that my child can be dropped off at home with a house key.

I have read and understood the expectations of a parent in the WSFCS Walking School Bus Program and agree to follow these rules. Please return to the Walking School Bus Route Leader.

Parent Signature: _____________________________     Date: ___________

CONTACT INFORMATION

Student Name: ______________________________________

School: __________________________________________

Parent/Guardian Name: ____________________________

Phone number: ____________________________________

Secondary Contact Name & Phone Number: _________________________________

Secondary Contact Relationship: ______________________________________

Any relevant medical information? _______________________________________
CONGRATULATIONS! BY SIGNING UP TO VOLUNTEER FOR THE WSFCS WALKING SCHOOL BUS PROGRAM, YOU ARE HELPING GET THE NEXT GENERATION WALKING FOR HEALTH, TO HELP THE PLANET, BUILD COMMUNITY, AND SAVE TIME AND MONEY. YOUR ROLE WILL BE TO ASSIST STUDENTS WALKING TO AND FROM SCHOOL.

I AGREE TO THE FOLLOWING EXPECTATIONS:

➤ TRAINING. Attend a Walking School Bus volunteer training led by your Route Leader.

➤ BE ON TIME. Be on time to join my assigned Walking School Bus.

➤ ASSIST THE ROUTE LEADER. Help the Walking School Bus Route Leader manage the students along the route.

➤ MODEL SAFE WALKING BEHAVIOR. Model appropriate walking behavior, following the rules of the road and guidelines such as “look left, look right, and look left again,” before crossing the street.

➤ COMMUNICATE. Inform my Walking School Bus Route Leader if I am unable to attend my designated Walking School Bus or if I am running late.

I have read and understood the expectations of a volunteer in the WSFCS Walking School Bus Program and agree to follow these rules. Please return to the Walking School Bus Route Leader.

Parent Signature: _____________________________     Date: ________________
Walking School Bus

STUDENT AGREEMENT

BEFORE YOU JOIN US ON A WALKING SCHOOL BUS, PLEASE REVIEW THE FOLLOWING RULES AND EXPECTATIONS AND TALK TO YOUR STUDENT ABOUT THEM. WALKING SCHOOL BUSES CAN BE A FUN AND SAFE WAY FOR YOUR STUDENT TO GET TO SCHOOL IF YOU FOLLOW THESE SIMPLE RULES! YOUR ROUTE LEADER WILL GIVE YOU A WARNING IF YOU FORGET ANY OF THESE RULES. IF THE BEHAVIOR PERSISTS, THE ROUTE LEADER WILL ALERT THE SCHOOL AND YOUR FAMILY.

I AGREE TO THE FOLLOWING EXPECTATIONS:

➔ **BE ON TIME.** Arrive on time to meet your Walking School Bus at the designated stop and after school.

➔ **STAY WITH THE GROUP.** Walk behind the Route Leader in the front and in front of the Leader in the back.

➔ **STOP AND WAIT AT CORNERS.** At street corners, wait for the group and then look left, look right, and look left again before crossing.

➔ **FOLLOW DIRECTIONS.** Always listen to your Route Leaders and don’t run at any time.

➔ **BE AWARE.** Pay attention to car traffic at driveways and intersections; don’t play with toys or electronic devices while you walk.

➔ **BE RESPECTFUL.** Be considerate of other students, the neighborhood, and neighbors.

I have read and understood the expectations of a participant in the WSFCS Walking School Bus Program and agree to follow these rules. **Please return to the Walking School Bus Route Leader.**

Student Signature: ____________________________

Parent Signature: ____________________________ Date: ____________
Walking School Bus

School/Route Name: ___________________________________________________________
Route Leader: ________________________________________________________________
Route Leader Contact: _________________________________________________________

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Total Number of Students: _______________________________________________________

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