



Step

by

Step



How to Start a Walking School Bus at Your School



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How to Start a Walking School Bus at Your School • • •

Communities across the nation are implementing Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs. SRTS programs improve safety conditions and increase the number of students walking to and from school. A walking school bus program can help reduce air pollution, increase the number of students walking and bicycling, and give children and adults an opportunity to get some exercise and socialize, all while getting to school on time!

The purpose of this guide is to provide a clear description of how to plan and organize a walking school bus using adult volunteers as leaders. This step-by-step guide outlines how to plan and implement a walking school bus for your school, and includes proven tools, tips and resources for a fast and easy start. Whether or not you are familiar with SRTS, this guide will get you started on the right foot.



What is a Walking School Bus?

A walking school bus (WSB) is a safe and fun way for children to get physical activity as they travel to and from school with adult supervision. Each “bus” walks along a set route with one or more adults leading it, picking children up at designated stops along a predetermined route and walking them to school. The process is reversed in the afternoons on the way home from school. It is that easy. You may find that families are already doing this with their children and would be delighted to help more students get to school in this healthy, safe, and fun way!

Why Walk? The Benefits are Just a Step Away!

- **Improved traffic safety habits and increased confidence** for students through opportunities to learn about and practice road safety, inspiring confidence and independence.^{1, 2}
- **Increased daily physical activity**, forming healthy habits that can last a lifetime, helping children build strong bones, muscles and joints, and decreasing the risk of chronic disease and obesity.^{3, 4, 5}
- **Students who are ready to learn**, who are healthy, awake and alert, with better focus and concentration, which can improve academic performance.⁶
- **Solutions to transportation issues** such as reduced or no bus service, dangerous traffic congestion at pick up/drop off times, and student absences and tardiness due to transportation challenges.⁷
- **Increased family and community engagement**, providing positive social opportunities for students, families, school staff, and community stakeholders, boosting a sense of community and improving neighborhood connections.⁸
- **A cleaner environment** and fewer student asthma attacks by reducing air pollution from car emissions.^{9, 10}
- **Peace of mind for families** whose children walk alone, especially young students or students with special needs.¹¹
- **Savings on gas and money** by replacing car trips to school with walking.^{12, 13}
- **It's fun!** Walking brings a sense of joy and independence.

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

Planning a WSB can seem complicated. The trick is to make sure you know all the steps. This guide will walk you through how to plan a WSB and provide resources and ideas to tailor your program to your school, community, and students.

- 1. Step In:** Getting Started
- 2. Step Up:** Planning Your Route
- 3. Step Out:** Recruiting Students and Leaders and Promoting Your Program
- 4. Step Off:** Starting and Running Your Program
- 5. Step Back:** Evaluating and Adjusting Your Program

You may or may not choose to perform these steps in order, depending on your program. Just keep in mind that your goal is to develop and implement a consistent and fun WSB program that will help children and their families get to and from school, safely and on time.

As you work through the steps, the **Walking School Bus (WSB) Planning Worksheet (Appendix A)** and **Walking School Bus (WSB) Planning Timeline (Appendix B)** will help you organize your program. Each section of the worksheet identifies the **resources** that you will need and helps you document program implementation and progress: who is responsible for each task, when things need to start, and the deadlines for completion. These planning documents will help you organize ideas, people, and time commitments in order to implement your WSB as easily as possible. For more resources and assistance, see links at the end of this guide.



Getting Started

Start Today!

The first step starts with 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.

Begin slowly. As you get started, you will need to decide how to set up your program. Each program is different, based on the walking environment, student interest, school and family involvement, and the WSB team's capacity to plan, implement, and evaluate the program. You may find your program changes over time.

Start out with a program your team can manage. Be careful not to overextend your resources and volunteers. Success with a once-a-week WSB can lead to more volunteer support and student interest. Also, a little experience running the program will give you confidence and ability to expand the program as needed.

Who will help?

To be successful, your team should have people on it who are decision makers, or represent decision makers, so they can generate support from the school community, create awareness and connections for your WSB program, and lend the necessary decision making power to get your WSB rolling.

You will need school support to launch a formal WSB program. The school principal can be a valuable advocate with district administration. Principals can also introduce and advocate for the program to your school's Parent-Teacher Organization

(PTO)/Parent Teacher Association (PTA), key staff that assist with the program, and students and families. Principals can help communicate with these audiences and as a school leader, can gain their support and build enthusiasm for the program. A supportive principal can provide leverage and open doors for program implementation and can build volunteer, staff, student, and family support.

Reach out to other key stakeholders as well: your school's PTO/PTA, which represents families and teachers, and student groups such as the student council or safety patrol. You may also want to reach out to other people or organizations interested in helping children walk safely, stay healthy, and be active, such as after-school programs, youth organizations, and community neighborhood groups. School districts and school boards can often be great partners to help promote, recognize, help, evaluate, grow, and sustain WSB efforts. City and county law enforcement and transportation or traffic departments may also be good partners, especially if they have existing safety programs and resources.

My Team:

School staff representative: _____

PTO/PTA representative: _____

Student representative: _____

Other: _____

As you plan your WSB program with your team, you may identify additional people who can help with specific parts of the program – that is great! This will lighten the load for everyone and get more people involved.



As a team, the first questions you need to answer are:

- **What kind of WSB program do you envision?**

Will the program be a more formal or informal program? How frequent will WSBs likely be and how much effort can your team put into them as you start your program? Do any parent-led walking groups or WSBs already exist? Will you start with a pilot program for a week or month, or commit to a year-long program? Are there resources available for stipends or payments for WSB leaders? What are the trades-offs from using those resources for your WSB program?

- **How formal will your WSB be?** Your WSB can be as simple as planning a route and promoting it to the student body and family members with times and locations (more of a group walk with adult supervision), or include student registration, student lists for WSB leaders to take attendance, and/or formalizing the route with stop times for pick-up and drop-off by WSB.

- **When will your WSB start? When will it end?** The start date is the date you will work back from on your timeline to get everything needed done by the big day. If you know when your WSB will end, that date can be publicized to adult leaders, students, and families when promoting the program.

- **How often will it operate?** Will your WSB operate once a month, once a week, multiple times a week, or every day? Deciding how often your WSB will operate will help determine how many adult leaders are needed, the amount of supplies, and level of coordination to run a successful program.
- **When will your WSB be available?** Will it operate before school, after school, or both?
- **How many routes do you anticipate?** Knowing the number of routes you want to start with will help to identify student participants and to determine the number of leaders and the amount of supplies and equipment you will need. Starting small and establishing success, then expanding the program, is a great way to introduce the WSB concept, gain attention and support, and work out kinks in a manageable way. In step 2, Step Up, you will define the initial route or routes.

Resources:

- [Walking School Bus Toolkit Resources Packet](#)
- Walking School Bus (WSB) Planning Worksheet – Appendix A
- Walking School Bus (WSB) Planning Timeline – Appendix B

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Step Up

Planning Your Route

Start at least three months before your start date

Planning your route is important for safety and accessibility. Choose a route that is well-lit, has good sidewalks or pathways, few major intersections, and is accessible to many students. Planning your route should be done with the help of neighborhood groups, law enforcement, parents and caregivers, and other community members.



1. Where do students live? You may need to make a rough guess about where students live based on information from the principal, teachers, or families. Even better, if you can get it, is a **proximity map**: a visual representation of where students live in relation to the school. Student addresses are uploaded into a mapping tool, such as ArcGIS or Google Maps, and dots are created on the map for each student address. Identifying where the most students live within walking distance of the school (usually one mile) is a great place to start planning where you want to offer a WSB. Students living within one mile of the school are typically more likely to walk to school than those living farther away. Ask the principal of your school if a proximity map is available to you as a WSB coordinator. You can also consider existing school boundary maps when you begin your route planning, which are usually available from the school or school district.

2. Conduct a walkability assessment of your potential routes. The [Walkability Checklist](#) from the National Center for Safe Routes to School is a good tool to allow you to assess potential routes, rate them, and choose the best route for a WSB to take. A walk audit is a more formal version of an assessment, and will look at things like the sidewalk infrastructure, lighting, traffic and speed, and perceived or real safety issues. Engage parents and youth in your assessment, share any noted safety concerns with the appropriate authority (e.g. your city's public works or transportation department), and make safety a priority for your route selection.

3. Identify “stops” if you will have them. Stops must be planned so that your WSB moves at a reasonable rate and students get to school on time. Stops are similar to bus stops – students gather at a designated area and wait for WSB arrival. WSB leaders may have a student checklist and check the students off as they “get on” the WSB. Another WSB model uses a pre-determined route to school with no stops, where students join the WSB at the beginning or as it passes by.

4. Time your route so you know your WSB will make it to school in a reasonable amount of time. Build time in for students to prepare for class or eat breakfast, and include a little extra time in the event that inclement weather causes a slow walk day. During WSB Leader Training (covered in the next step) your leaders will be assigned a WSB route and will be expected to keep pace with the timing of the route, in similar fashion to a traditional yellow school bus.

5. Create a map that shows the route, the stop locations, and the pick-up/drop-off times for each stop. This map can also include the **Walking School Bus Student Expectations and Code of Conduct**, contact information, and a brief description of your WSB program for promotional and informational purposes. Post the map on the school website and distribute a copy to each participating student and adult leader.

Tip: Some WSBs use chalk or temporary paint to mark the route at the beginning of the year so it is recognized and remembered. Some even use permanent paint, school colors, or mascot prints to identify the route. Ask your local city planner or engineer if this is possible.

Who Can Help with Mapping Routes?

City, school, or regional transportation professionals often have access to mapping tools, and are familiar with conducting walkability assessments and walk audits, which assess infrastructure, environment, safety, and other issues along walking corridors. Contact a transportation professional, such as your local city planner or engineer, to assist with your walkability assessment and choosing the right route for your school.

Resources:

- Student Proximity Map (if available)
- [Walkability Checklist](#) from the National Center for Safe Routes To School
- [Walking School Bus Stop Schedule](#)
- [Sample Walking School Bus Route Map](#)
- [Walking School Bus Student Expectations and Code of Conduct](#)
- [Walking School Bus Parent Expectations](#)
- Resources for creating your own map: [Creating a Google Map to show a “Walking School Bus” route](#)

3 Step Out

Recruiting Students and Leaders & Promoting Your Program • • • •

Start at least two months before your start date

It is important to identify and recruit interested staff, volunteers, business partners, PTA/PTO members, and students as soon as possible to help ensure the success of your program. These people play a vital role in implementation and promotion of the program, continued student and volunteer recruitment, and program evaluation.

Leader and student recruitment is like “which came first, the chicken or the egg?” You will want to know how many students will be in each WSB, as this will determine the number of leaders you need; conversely, the number of leaders available may dictate the number of children on a route or the number of routes you offer. We will start with student recruitment since a strong student turnout can help recruit adult leaders, particularly parents and other family members, and elevate the perceived need for the program. But it is also fine to start with leader recruitment and base the number of routes you offer on the number of adults available, limiting student numbers accordingly.



Should You Require Student Registration?

The decision whether to only allow students to participate in the WSBs if they register ahead of time can be a tricky one. Requiring registration allows for a more formal, organized system, but also limits your ability to flexibly add students. In addition, if you are going to require registration, you have to make sure everyone adheres to this requirement – having rules that people don't follow increases liability risk. The benefits of requiring registration include more clarity about how many students are participating, the ability to get contact information from families, being able to provide families and students with information, and perhaps get liability waivers ahead of time. But logistically, it may be harder to manage, and turning away eager students who try to join a WSB on its route may be undesirable. Your school administration may have a strong feeling about whether you should require registration and what it should include.

Attracting Students

Recruiting students to participate in your WSB can be as simple as promoting times and locations of WSB stops to students and families. If you are requiring students to register, you will need to set up and promote a more formal student registration process.

The Student Recruitment Checklist will help you check off steps to reach students and their families with the WSB opportunity, get them signed up (if needed), and share Code of Conduct and other information.

- **Where to find students:** If you have a proximity map (described earlier in this guide under, Step Up), start here to find students who live near or feed into the designated route. Also, work with your principal or counselors to discuss how the WSB program can support students who may have attendance or tardiness problems – targeted outreach can ensure that the WSB is helping address these important issues.
- **How to reach students:** School communications such as morning announcements, flyers to families, emails, calls from principals, and in-class presentations can reach students and their families. Consider using social media channels as well. Visit a PTO/PTA meeting and ask to have information included in their newsletters. You can also promote the need for WSB leaders at the same time. Conducting classroom presentations within a week of starting your WSB is a perfect way to present the program, review the **Walking School Bus Student Expectations and Code of Conduct**, and attract additional students interested in walking. Make sure you have plenty of student registration forms for them to take home!
- **Register students using the Walking School Bus Student Registration Form**, if you have decided to use one. If you will not have a formal registration process, you may still want to collect lists of interested students for planning purposes. Traditional school buses do not have a check-off list, but they do have an initial registration sign up, so take the same approach with your WSB. An online registration process may be valuable to streamline this process, if accessible to families.
- **Confirm your WSB routes with students:** Confirm routes with students by distributing a packet to students' families that registered. Include the final route map, **Walking School Bus Student Expectations and Code of Conduct**, **Walking School Bus Parent Expectations**, **Walking School Bus Student Safety Card**, and **Walking School Bus Introductory/Confirmation Letter**.
- **Be inclusive:** Consider the needs of students with physical, developmental, and mental health disabilities and how best they can be accommodated in your WSB program. Read [Involving Students with Disabilities in SRTS](#) from the National Center for Safe Routes to School.

Resource Highlight:

FHWA's [Pedestrian Safer Journey: Skills for Safe Walking for Ages 5-18](#) includes educational videos that provide tips and lessons for children and youth.

Recruiting Route Leaders

The **Walking School Bus Route Leader Recruitment Checklist** will help you identify steps to reach your WSB route leader recruitment goals. Route leaders are typically adults who volunteer to walk with students to and from school on a regularly scheduled time and route.

- **How many leaders are needed?** You will need a minimum number of route leaders per WSB (see student/adult ratio box). Many WSB programs are organized so that at least two adults are always with a group of kids. This approach is prudent in terms of ensuring that there are not problems with, or accusations of, inappropriate behavior with the children. This also allows, if a child gets hurt or sick, for one adult to care for the child while the other continues the route with the other children. Anticipate that leaders will periodically drop out of the program, and will also have sick days. It is wise to have a reserve list of adult volunteers.
- **Where to find route leaders:** Start by contacting families, community service organizations, neighborhood watch, senior residents, teachers, and others who have an interest in student safety, improving student health, walking, and community service. Reach out via social media channels as needed. Existing walking programs such as Walk with the Doc or other local walking clubs can be a great resource too! Some programs work with high school students, which can be a great approach, but requires additional management and other considerations.
- **How to reach route leaders:** Reach out to individuals and organizations via email, flyers, and during PTO/PTA meetings, parent teacher conferences, school registration, open houses, school events, sports events, and social media. Distribute/collect the **Walking School Bus Route Leader Information Flyer** or set up a volunteer registration site (Survey Monkey, Eventbrite, or other web sign-up) to gather information from potential leaders.
- **Promote volunteer opportunities regularly.** Additional volunteers will be needed if any route leaders leave, if the program is expanded, and as “subs” to fill in temporarily when there are illnesses or scheduling conflicts. It is great to have a roster to rotate through so volunteers do not feel overwhelmed. If you are planning a year-long program, recruit route leaders throughout the school year.
- **Conduct a WSB Route Leader Training:** When recruiting, have the date(s) for WSB Route Leader Training ready, so you can register adults as soon as possible. WSB Route Leader Training is addressed later in this guide.
- **Recognize volunteers!**
This will help with volunteer retention by motivating them to stay committed.

Student/Adult Ratios

How many students should be in the WSB for each adult? Common sense should dictate this, based on age, abilities, distance and walking environment, and may change depending on the popularity of the program. Check with your school about student/adult ratios for field trips – this might be an appropriate guide for a WSB.

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ratios: 1:6 for most
- Los Angeles County Public Health Department suggested ratios: 1:10

What About Liability?

Liability issues can be complicated, and sometimes can be enough to scare people away from good programs. The good news is that in a well-run WSB program, the risk of liability is small. Federal law provides considerable protection for volunteers in almost every state. Although there is some risk of liability in everything we do, if you anticipate potential dangers and hazards in your WSB program and put reasonable precautions in place to avoid them, you will minimize your risk. Your school's administration or risk management department may have recommendations as well. The resources listed below provide additional information and suggestions.

Additional Resources:

Change Lab Solutions: Safe Routes to School:
[Minimizing Your Liability Risk](#)

Change Lab Solutions: Volunteers and Liability:
[Volunteers and Liability](#)

What About Volunteer Screening?

It is important to have a process in place to screen volunteers, both for students' safety and as a liability protection. If your WSB program is considered a school program, you will need to follow school policy. You should check with your school or organization's administration regarding existing processes and policies for background checks and volunteer clearance. A common approach to volunteer screening is to conduct a screening interview and a review of online sexual offender databases.



Tip:

Cross-promote student and adult recruitment using the registration/interest forms to create awareness of the opportunities and to make it easier to sign up both!

Resources:

- [Walking School Bus Student Recruitment Checklist](#)
- [Walking School Bus Student Registration Form](#)
- [Walking School Bus Route Leader Recruitment Checklist](#)
- [Walking School Bus Information Flyer/Request for Walking School Bus Route Leaders](#)
- WSB Confirmation packet to Families, including:
 - Final Route Map
 - [Walking School Bus Student Expectations and Code of Conduct](#)
 - [Walking School Bus Parent Expectations](#)
 - [Walking School Bus Student Safety Card](#)
 - [Walking School Bus Introductory/Confirmation Letter](#)

Walking School Bus Leader Training

WSB route leader training should be held within the month before the start of the WSB program so that WSB leaders feel comfortable and are ready for their responsibilities. The timing also helps ensure that you have supplies and equipment available in a timely manner. Questions may also arise during training that may take some time to address. The WSB training should highlight safety for walking students and leaders.

Ensure training content is available to route leaders who join midway through the year or who cannot make the initial training. Will you videotape the training? What written materials can be shared? Will you provide additional, shorter, one-on-one trainings?

A **Walking School Bus Training Checklist** is included in the resources section to help you remember the basics of what each WSB Leader should know to feel comfortable in their role as leader. The **Walking School Bus Training Agenda** template will help you plan your training. Additional web-based resources are included in the box to help you plan as well.

Planning Your WSB Leader Training: Figure out when, where, the length, and who will lead your training. Inviting local law enforcement, city traffic professionals, school administration, and/or organizations interested in walking can help with parts of your training. The length of your training will depend on the material you will cover, if you will walk the routes as part of the training, and how many people will be attending. One hour may be enough for basic instruction, but you may need more time if you walk the routes. It is highly recommended to include a route-walking component in your training.

What to Include in Your WSB Leader Training

- **Safety Information:** Review traffic safety as it relates to pedestrians, walking rules, and protocol so leaders are knowledgeable enough to educate students as well. Resources include: **Walking School Bus Student Safety Card, Walking School Bus Route Leader Instruction Card, From a Child's Perspective: Principals Behind Child Pedestrian Injury, and Basic Walking Safety: Tips to Teach Road Safety to Kids.**
- **Protocol and Expectations:** Route leaders need to know what is expected of them and about student behavior expectations as well. Review how a typical day will go, what to do if a leader cannot walk on a particular day, what to do in case of emergency and other special circumstances, how to use the leader comment form, how to use the sign in/sign out sheet, and what to wear. Resources to use include **Walking School Bus Student Expectations and Code of Conduct, Walking School Bus Route Leader Sign in/Sign Out Sheet, Walking School Bus Route Leader Checklist, Walking School Bus Route Leader Emergency Contact List, Walking School Bus Student List (if needed), the Game Time idea list, Walking School Bus Route Leader Comment Form,** and any final route maps you have prepared.
- **Logistics:** Review each route with your leaders, what equipment and supplies they should have, the timing for each stop, and other significant reference points or areas of interest. Emphasize areas needing special safety attention, such as intersections or train tracks. If you can, walk the route to gain familiarity and identify any issues not already addressed. Resources to use include route maps, **Walking School Bus Equipment/Supplies List,** and **Walking School Bus Student List.**

Address Leader Absences

Set up a system to address WSB leader illness or unavoidable absences. This could include contacting the WSB Coordinator, contacting the school, or setting up a phone call chain (this includes email list, text chain, Facebook page and messages) with substitute WSB leaders to call at least one half hour before the WSB is to start.

You do not want a WSB to be understaffed, so impress upon leaders that their attendance is critical, their role is important, and to contact someone immediately if they know they cannot lead their WSB on a particular day. It is also important to stress they cannot send a replacement leader that has not been vetted by the school and WSB program.

Web-based WSB Leader Training Resources:

- National Center for Safe Routes to School
[Module 2: What it Takes to Establish a Sustainable Walking School Bus Program](#)
- [Toledo Walking School Bus Toolkit](#)
- Sonoma County Bicycle Coalition
[Walking School Bus Volunteer Leader Training](#)
- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
[Let's Walk to School Together!](#)

WSB Training Resources:

- [Walking School Bus Training Checklist](#)
- [Walking School Bus Training Agenda](#)
- [Walking School Bus Route Maps](#)
- [Walking School Bus Stop Schedule](#)
- [Walking School Bus Student Expectations and Code of Conduct](#)
- [Walking School Bus Route Leader Sign-In/Sign-Out Sheet](#)
- [Walking School Bus Route Leader Checklist](#)
- [Walking School Bus Emergency Contact List](#)
- [Walking School Bus Student List \(if needed\)](#)
- [Walking School Bus Route Leader Comment Form](#)
- [Walking School Bus Equipment/Supplies List](#)
- [Walking School Bus Route Leader Instruction Card](#)
- [From a Child's Perspective: Principles of Child Pedestrian Injury](#)
- [Basic Walking Safety: Tips to Teach Road Safety to Kids](#)
- [Game Time idea sheet](#)

Promoting Your Program

Promoting your WSB starts before it begins and should continue throughout the year. As word of the program spreads, you may find more students and families are interested.

- **New families moving in to your school's service area** should be made aware of the program. Find out if you can provide WSB information in new student registration information. It is best to have information about WSBs shared by school administration in the same way that information about school busing and other transportation information is shared, so work with your school to encourage that approach.
- **Promote your events and success to the community!** Contact your local media about kick-off and special events, present your success at city council and school board meetings, ask your principal to highlight success in the newsletter, report regularly to your PTO/PTA and civic groups interested in the program, and promote your program on social media channels.
- **Utilize the promotion ideas from the resources below to attract students and leaders to the program.** Keep your program in front of students, families and staff, so they are aware of your success, and know how to participate.

Resources:

- [Walking School Bus Information Flyer/Request for Walking School Bus Route Leaders](#)
- [Walking School Bus Press Release](#)
- [Walking School Bus Social Media/Facebook language](#)
- [Walking School Bus Student Recruitment Checklist](#)
- [Walking School Bus Route Leader Recruitment Checklist](#)

4 Step Off

Starting and Running Your Program

The first day of your WSB is the culmination of all your planning, promotion, and training efforts! By this point, adult leaders are trained and understand their responsibilities; students and families are aware of the WSB protocol, rules, and student and family responsibilities; and school administration is aware of the program, how it is implemented, and who they should contact if there are school changes or emergencies that affect students attending school.



Host a WSB or Walk to School Day event to start the program

- Kick off your WSB on Walk to School Day in October, if possible. For Walk to School Day ideas and support, register your event on the [Walk To School Day website](#).
- Promote the day and your program using school communication methods (school district website, flyers, email, Facebook, etc.) See **Walk to School Day Flyer, Walking School Bus Press Release and Social Media/ Facebook language**.
- Create an informational flyer or brochure (print or electronic) introducing the WSB program and distribute it on and after Walk to School Day to educate and recruit leader volunteers and students.
- Distribute **Walking School Bus Student Registration Forms, Walking School Bus Route Leader Interest/ Sign up Forms** and/or route maps to interested families and students.

Your Kickoff Day: Some Ways to Make Your First Day Special

- Create a school celebration and offer prizes or special recognition to students that walk that day.
- Take pictures and use them to promote the WSB program throughout the year. Make sure all students have photo release forms on file at the school or include the photo release statement on your Student Registration Form and Adult Leader Interest Form.
- Contact your local media and see if they will cover your event.
- Send press releases or articles to the local paper and school paper. Promote the event on social media.

Running Your Program

Once your program is up and running, there may be changes to the students and leaders participating in WSBs, as well as the amount of interest in the program at the school, district, and community levels, which will result in the need to make adjustments to the routes or program logistics.

Tips to consider:

- Attract and retain students through fun and safe activities along the route. Provide small giveaways or prizes for students who participate regularly, such as recognition from the school or principal in announcements. Invite “guest walkers” such as the mayor, police chief, or other civic leaders. Host special theme days, such as Grandparents Day, Bring a Buddy Day (adult or another child), Earth Day, etc., and have special activities, information, or prizes for that day.
- Keep in touch with adult leaders through regular meetings, emails, texts, newsletters, or phone calls. Figure out what works for staying in touch. Try different methods if your first approach is not getting good responses. Keep adults engaged – ask for their advice, if they know of others that can help, and examples of good things that have happened on their WSB. Sharing stories at PTO/PTA meetings, in parent newsletters, or school district emails can help attract more students and families to the program.
- Address issues as needed to maintain and improve the program. Respond quickly to safety concerns, student and leader behavior issues, and questions from administration and the community. Document and adjust the program as needed.
- Keep communication open with your students, families, administration, and WSB leaders. Remind leaders and students they are doing a good job and thank everyone for their participation.
- Plan regular leader training to add new leaders, keep leaders informed of changes, and provide a time for all WSB leaders to network.
- Promote the program to the community and highlight your success. Report on a regular basis to school administration, PTO/PTA, the school board, and other interested groups, including the local media.
- Continue recruiting students, leaders, and team members in case individuals move or cannot meet their responsibilities.
- Keep it fresh! Reward good behavior, provide encouragement through school announcements, recognize leaders, and even invite local dignitaries to walk on occasion!

Resources:

- [Walk to School Day Flyer](#)
- [Walking School Bus Student Registration forms](#)
- [Walking School Bus Route Leader Interest Form/Signup Form](#)
- [Sample Walking School Route Map](#)
- [Walking School Bus Press Release](#) and [Social Media/Facebook language](#)

5

Step Back

Evaluating and Adjusting Your Program • • • • • • • •

How well is your WSB program working? What can be adjusted to make it more accessible, safe, and fun? Evaluating your program periodically is key to keeping it fresh, focused, and safe. It is important to evaluate a new program at a mid-point during the first year of operations, as well as at the end of each year to make adjustments for the following year.

Steps to keep your WSB program moving in the right direction:

- Review **Walking School Bus Leader Comment Forms** regularly. These provide the success stories to promote the program, but also can identify issues that need to be addressed.
- Survey students on their experiences with the WSB program and ask them what can make it safer, fun, and more accessible. If you have a student representative on your team, ask their advice on how to reach more students. Other options include take-home or online surveys, or even interviews during WSB walks. Use the **Walking School Bus Student Survey** to get started.
- Survey families on their experience with the WSB and ask them what can make it safer, fun, and more accessible. This can be done through take-home or online surveys, at PTO/PTA meetings, or at a WSB family meeting. Use the **Walking School Bus Family Survey** to get started.
- Adjust your program as needed to make it safer, accessible, and fun. Check out some of the websites in the Resources section below for more ideas on WSB programs, promotion, and implementation.
- Set the WSB schedule for next year and get started with Step In planning!
- Recruit and confirm leaders for the next school year and schedule the next WSB Training for new and returning leaders.

As your WSB program grows, you may find increasing interest from the community in improving walking for students and other residents. The momentum from your work may provide an opportunity to partner with other stakeholders and organizations to seek additional ways to promote walking, biking, and safety. Strengthening your relationships with your public health department, public works department, or transportation department may benefit students at your school, especially if these departments have an existing active transportation or Safe Routes to School program or if they are seeking funding for such work. Consider reaching out to these potential partners to expand the movement at your school; they would likely welcome your interest as well as your experience in facilitating a WSB program in your community. As relationships and commitments mature, what began as a WSB can lead to healthier, safer, and more active neighborhoods throughout your community.

Resources:

- [Walking School Bus Leader Comment Form](#)
- [Walking School Bus Student Survey](#)
- [Walking School Bus Family Survey](#)

Additional Resources

For more ideas on walking school bus kickoff, promotion and implementation, check out these websites:

- Ohio Department of Transportation, Safe Routes to School:
<http://www.dot.state.oh.us/Divisions/Planning/ProgramManagement/HighwaySafety/ActiveTransportation/Pages/Education.aspx>
- Walking School Bus Tool-kit, Live Well Greater Toledo/Toledo Public Schools Safe Routes to School Program:
<http://www.livewelltoledo.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Took-Kit-Combined-with-all.pdf>
- Let's Walk Together! Walking School Bus Training Manual Resources, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health:
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/place/docs/Let's%20Walk%20Together%20Final%2032015.pdf>
- National Center for Safe Routes to School:
 - Walking School Bus Guide: http://guide.saferoutesinfo.org/walking_school_bus/index.cfm
 - The Walking School Bus Program: A Primer and First Steps: http://apps.saferoutesinfo.org/training/walking_school_bus/
- Starting a Walking School Bus: <http://www.walkingschoolbus.org/>
- The Walking School Bus: <http://www.ezride.org/documents/How-to-Organize-a-WSB.pdf>
- Maine Walking School Bus Program: <http://walkingschoolbus.me/resources/>
- Walking School Bus Toolkit Resources Packet (all resources in one file):
http://saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/pdf/wsb_all_resources.docx

Citations

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- ⁷ Attendance Works. "Springfield: Walking School Bus - Attendance Works." Accessed August 22, 2016. <http://www.attendanceworks.org/what-works/springfield-walking-school-bus/>.
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- ⁹ Brandt SJ, Perez L, Künzli N, et al. "Costs of Childhood Asthma Due to Traffic-Related Pollution in Two California Communities." *European Respiratory Journal*, 40(2): 363-370, 2012.
- ¹⁰ Pedroso, Margo, et al. "Safe Routes to School: Steps to a Greener Future." Safe Routes to School National Partnership (2008).
- ¹¹ Zhou, Huaguo, Jiguang Zhao, Peter Hsu, and Jeanette Rouse. "Identify Factors Affecting Number of Students Walking or Biking to School." *Logistics*, 2009. doi:10.1061/40996(330)253.
- ¹² Active Living Research. "Impact of Safe Routes to School programs on walking and biking." Accessed 8/22/2016 at http://activelivingresearch.org/sites/default/files/ALR_Review_SRTS_May2015_0.pdf
- ¹³ America Walks. "Learning Center." Accessed August 22, 2016. <http://americawalks.org/learning-center/benefits-of-walking-2/economy/>.

Website Links

- Page 6 & 7 - Walkability Checklist: <http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/sites/default/files/walkabilitychecklist.pdf>
- Page 7 - Creating a Google Map to show a "Walking School Bus" route: <http://www.sddot.com/services/school/docs/CreatingGoogleWalkingMap.pdf>
- Page 9 - Involving Students with Disabilities in SRTS: <http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/program-tools/involving-students-disabilities-srts>
- Page 9 - Pedestrian Safer Journey: Skills for Safe Walking for Ages 5-18: <http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/pedsaferjourney/>
- Page 11 - Minimizing Your Liability Risk: <http://www.changelabsolutions.org/publications/SRTS-resources>
- Page 11 - Volunteers and Liability: <http://www.changelabsolutions.org/publications/SRTS-resources>
- Page 13 - Module 2: What it Takes to Establish a Sustainable Walking School Bus Program: http://apps.saferoutesinfo.org/training/walking_school_bus/module2.cfm
- Page 13 - Toledo Walking School Bus Toolkit: <http://www.livewelltoledo.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Took-Kit-Combined-with-all.pdf>
- Page 13 - Walking School Bus Volunteer Leader Training: http://sonomasaferroutes.org/sites/default/files/wsbparentvolunteer_training_0912.pdf
- Page 13 - Let's Walk to School Together!: <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/place/docs/Let's%20Walk%20Together%20Final%2032015.pdf>
- Page 14 - Walk To School Day website: www.walkbiketoschool.org



Step In: Getting Started

Who will help plan and implement WSB?

My team:

- School staff representative: _____
- PTO/PTA/Parent representative: _____
- Student representative: _____
- Other: _____

When will your WSB start? _____ (date)

How often will it operate?

- Once a week: Day _____
- Twice a week: Days _____
- Every school Day ○ Other: _____

WSBs will be available:

- Before school only ○ After school only ○ Before and after school

How many routes will there be? _____

When will the WSB program end? _____ (date)

Step Up: Planning Your Route

Action	Resource needed	By Whom?	Start	Deadline
Map your route(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Proximity Map (if available) • Walkability Checklist from the National Center for Safe Routes To School: http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/sites/default/files/walkabilitychecklist.pdf 			
Identify stops (if needed) and time route	Walking School Bus Stop Schedule			
Make a map	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample Walking School Bus Route Map • Walking School Bus Student Expectation and Code of Conduct 			

Step Out: Recruiting Students and Leaders and Promoting Your Program

Action	Resource needed	By Whom?	Start	Deadline
Recruit students for each route	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking School Bus Student Recruitment Checklist Walking School Bus Student Registration Form 			
Determine how many adults are needed	# ___ routes X # ___ adults/route = # ___ adults needed (# per route, based on student interest)			
Recruit adults as WSB leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking School Bus Route Leader Recruitment Checklist Walking School Bus Information Flyer/Request for Walking School Bus Route Leaders 			
Confirm routes with students	WSB Confirmation Packet to Families <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sample Walking School Bus Route Map Walking School Bus Student Expectation and Code of Conduct Walking School Bus Parent Expectations Walking School Bus Student Safety Card Walking School Bus Introductory/Confirmation Letter 			
Conduct WSB leader training	WSB Training Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking School Bus Training Checklist Walking School Bus Training Agenda Sample Walking School Bus Route Map Walking School Bus Stop Schedule Walking School Bus Student Expectations and Code of Conduct Walking School Bus Parent Expectations Walking School Bus Route Leader Sign-in/Sign-Out Sheet Walking School Bus Route Leader Checklist Walking School Bus Emergency Contact List Walking School Bus Student List (if needed) Walking School Bus Route Leader Comment Form Walking School Bus Equipment/Supplies List Walking School Bus Route Leader Instruction Card From a Child's Perspective: Principles of Child Pedestrian Injury Basic Walking Safety: Tips to Teach Road Safety to Children Game Time Idea Sheet 			(continued)

Step Out: Step Off: Starting and Running Your Program *(continued)*

Action	Resource needed	By Whom?	Start	Deadline
Promote your program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking School Bus Student Recruitment Checklist Walking School Bus Route Leader Recruitment Checklist Walking School Bus Information Flyer Walking School Bus Press Release Walking School Bus Social Media/Facebook Language 			

Step Off: Starting and Running Your Program

Action	Resource needed	By Whom?	Start	Deadline
WSB or Walk to School Day Event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walk to School Day Flyer Walking School Bus Student Registration forms Walking School Bus Information Flyer/Request for Walking School Bus Leaders Sample Walking School Bus Route Maps 			

Step Back: Evaluating and Adjusting Your Program

Action	Resource needed	By Whom?	Start	Deadline
Review leader comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking School Bus Route Leader Comment Form 			
Survey students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking School Bus Student Survey 			
Survey parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking School Bus Parent Survey 			
Make adjustments				
Set WSB schedule for next year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update Steps In Steps 			
Recruit/confirm leaders for next year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update Step Up Steps 			



Walking School Bus (WSB) Planning Timeline

Working back from your start date put all your dates in order from the worksheet, either on a calendar or on the spreadsheet below.

Action	Month:				Month:				Month:			
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4

Example:

Action	Month: August				Month: September				Month: October			
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Start WSB												
Recruit team												
Map your route												
Promote WSB												
Recruit Leaders												
Recruit Students												
Train Leaders												



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