



Getting Started with Walking School Buses and Bike Trains

Walking School Buses and Bike Trains are a free, organic, hyper-local and sustainable school transportation solution.

Their adaptability and flexibility makes them appealing to communities of all sizes and needs.

Now more than ever, Walking School Buses and Bike Trains are the transportation solution we need.

In the search for ways to make walking to school safer, more fun and more convenient, communities are finding that Walking School Buses and Bike Trains can really make a difference. To help you get started, Arlington Public Schools Safe Routes to School program has gathered and reviewed the most comprehensive national and local Walking School Bus and Bike Train resources to compile *Getting Started with Walking School Buses and Bike Trains* as a one-stop guide for APS families. This guide also incorporates COVID protocols and updates.

Contents include:

- Background and Definitions
- Step-by-Step Guide
- COVID Guidance
- Supplies and Templates
- Additional Resources

All Aboard!

BACKGROUND AND DEFINITIONS

What is a Walking School Bus?

A Walking School Bus is a safe and fun way for a group of students to walk to/from school with adult supervision. Walking School Bus organizers identify routes, meet or pick up students at designated spots and times and then walk to school together while safely navigating the way.

What is a Bike Train?

Bike Trains are a variation on the Walking School Bus, in which adults ride with and supervise students riding their bikes to/from school.

What are the benefits of organizing a Walking School Bus or Bike Train?

- Guaranteed physical exercise and movement each day, for students and adults
- Increased safety traveling as a group (“safety in numbers”) / reduced vehicle traffic around schools
- Convenience and predictability of defined pick-up times and route
- Enhanced neighborhood and community connections

Why now? Circumstances Unique to COVID

- **Physical and Social/Emotional Health**
 - Social distancing means students have fewer opportunities for physical exercise during the school day; walking or biking to/from school provides an opportunity to fit in more movement.
 - Even when socially distanced, student walkers and bicyclists will benefit from opportunities to interact with peers on way to/from school.
- **Flexibility**
 - Adults working from home may have more flexibility to lead Walking School Buses
 - Staggered school start times allow additional flexibility in arrival time
- **Control**
 - Leaders determine Walking School Bus and Bike Train schedule -- start and end time, stop locations and days of the week – allowing increased control over commute
 - With APS reopening still a few weeks away, there is time to determine preferred routes and practice with students before schools reopen
- **Time Commitment**
 - Depending on grade levels of participants and alignment of APS schedules, leading a Walking School Bus could be a 2-day or 4-day, rather than 5-day, commitment
- **Necessity**
 - Students in Expanded Walk Zones who used to ride school bus may need support walking to school
 - Families who choose to drive will need to park off campus and walk to school with students

How many adult leaders are needed?

The recommended ratio for ages 5-10 is one adult for every six students. If students are ages 4 to 6, one adult per three children is recommended, one at front and one at back. If students are age 10 or older, adults may not be needed.

LINK to ONLINE TOOL KIT: <https://www.apsva.us/safe-routes-to-school-overview/walking-school-buses/>