

Walk + Bike 'School Bus' Guidebook

Your guide to
walking and biking
to school with
your friends and
neighbors



WALK + BIKE SCHOOL BUS Guidebook



Written by: Amy Gilroy, Katherine Wilson, and Robert Ping
Designed by Robert Ping, Annette Sabo Design and Nike for NikeGO
Contact: Robert Ping, walknbike@bta4bikes.org, 1.866.452.8300
© Copyright 2006 Bicycle Transportation Alliance/Willamette Pedestrian Coalition

Table of Contents

Welcome to the Walk + Bike School Bus!	3
Why do We Need It?	4
7 Steps to Organizing a Walk + Bike School Bus	5
1. Promote the Idea	6
2. Find Kids and Adults	7
3. Get Organized	8
4. Guidelines and Rules	10
5. Safety Tips	11
6. Weather	13
7. Keep It Running	14
Toolkit	16
Start Up Checklist	17
Parent/Guardian Consent Form	18
Parent Survey	19
Child Participation Form	20
Frequently Asked Questions	21
Rider Roster	23
Sample Route Map	24

The Concept

The Walking School Bus concept was invented in Australia, and it was first popularized in England in 1995. It has proven to be a success in getting children to school in a safe, healthy, and enjoyable way. It also has the benefit of reducing traffic congestion and saving time for parents. Today the walking school bus and biking school bus (sometimes called a bike train) is a major component of Safe Routes to School programs all over the world.



DID YOU KNOW?

Children in cars are exposed to up to three times higher levels of exhaust fumes than children walking or biking.

- Institute for European Environmental Policy

Welcome to the Walk + Bike School Bus!

Congratulations! You have taken the first step towards improving the health and safety of children at your school and in your community. This guidebook is designed for anyone who wishes to start organizing a Walk+Bike School Bus program at a school, to involve parents and volunteers, and to develop momentum to keep it running!

What is a Walk + Bike School Bus?

A Walk + Bike School Bus is a group of students supervised by adult parents/volunteers who walk, bike, scooter, skateboard, rollerblade, wheelchair or even unicycle to and from school. The W+B Bus travels along a predetermined route, picking up participants along the way. The W+B Bus can operate as many days a week as there are parents/volunteers who are willing to lead it. The W+B Bus is free and everyone is encouraged to use it as a safe means to travel to and from school.

How does it work?

A Walk+Bike School Bus works like a yellow school bus, but without the bus! It is an alternative transportation option for getting children to and from school in a safe and physically active manner. The goal of the W+B Bus is to promote physical activity, reduce congestion and pollution, improve traffic safety and strengthen community.

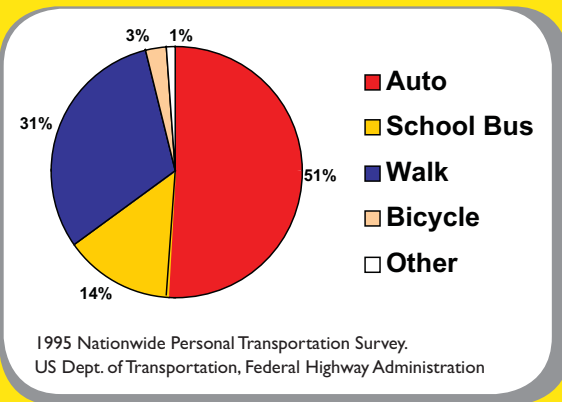
A parent or other adult volunteer walks or bikes with a group of kids to and from school. The W+B Bus travels along a predetermined safe route picking up or dropping off children along the way at designated 'bus stops.' The Bus stops are predetermined by you and your W+B Bus Team and are tailored to each neighborhood situation. A Bus stop can be a central location where parents and children meet, such as homes, businesses, public buildings, or identified intersections or parks along the safe route. The children walk in pairs and wear a safety vest for visibility. Ideally there is a 'driver' who leads the W+B Bus and a 'conductor' at the rear. The larger the Bus, the more volunteers are needed. A common ratio is 4-8 kids per adult. The W+B Bus is free for everyone and kids may walk or bike with the Bus even if their parents aren't able to participate.

Safe Routes to School

Safe Routes to School (SR2S) is a growing movement to remove the physical and social barriers to walking and biking to school. This comprehensive program also encourages parents and kids to organize and join Walk + Bike School Buses. Safe Routes to School programs increase the numbers of children and parents walking and biking to school safely by improving streets, trails, sidewalks and intersections, increasing enforcement of speed laws, educating children to make them knowledgeable and predictable, and encouraging and inspiring children and parents to join in the fun! For more on this exciting program, go to www.walknbike.org.

The Problem

In 1970, nine out of ten kids walked or biked to school 1 mile or less, but today only one out of three walk or bike, and that number is dropping:



- Only about one-half of U.S. young people regularly participate in vigorous physical activity. One-fourth reported no vigorous physical activity. ¹
- Prevalence of overweight/obese children has quadrupled in the past 25 years to almost 25%. ²
- Type 2 diabetes (formally called “adult onset” diabetes), high blood pressure, and high cholesterol are now diagnosed in children and teens. ³
- Asthma rates have increased 160% in the past 15 years in children. ⁴
- Motor vehicle use is the source of more air pollution than any other activity. ⁵

- ¹ Physical Activity and Health; Surgeon General report
- ² National Health /Nutrition Examination Surveys; CDC
- ³ Diabetes Program; CDC
- ⁴ National Asthma Control Program; CDC
- ⁵ National Safety Council; EPA

Why Do We Need a Walk + Bike School Bus?

The W + B School Bus is an excellent way for students to travel to school safely. It also has other benefits like increasing physical activity among kids and volunteers, improving pedestrian and bicycling skills, and decreasing traffic congestion around schools. Walk+Bike Buses reduce auto trips to and from school making the streets safer for kids who walk and bike to school. Decreased auto trips to and from school reduce air pollution and contribute to a cleaner environment for kids!

Some parents argue that they don't have time in the morning to walk or bike, but time spent with kids while walking is of a higher quality than driving, and is much safer - studies suggest that half of all car crashes in school zones is parents driving into other parents (*Washington State Dept. of Transportation*).

Current trends indicate that children don't get the recommended amount of physical activity per day. Not only are children less active, childhood obesity is on the rise.

Communities are more likely to be safer, cleaner, and friendlier for all who live, work, and play there when neighbors are regularly out on the street. The following are some of the reasons why getting children to walk and bike to school is important:

- Regular physical activity improves academic performance and reduces depression and anxiety
- Increased independence and social bonding for kids
- Quality time spent with parents and caring neighbors and friends
- Extra time for yourself when your kids walk or bike with other 'drivers'
- Experience being part of a team
- Improved pedestrian and bicycle skills among youth
- Building community cohesion and getting to know your neighbors
- More eyes and ears on the street helps to reduce criminal activity
- Reduces traffic congestion and air pollution around schools
- Most importantly...ITS FUN!

SEVEN STEPS to Organizing a Walk + Bike School Bus



1. Promote the Idea
2. Find Kids and Adults
3. Get Organized
4. Guidelines and Rules
5. Safety Tips
6. Weather
7. Keep It Running

**WALK
+BIKE**
OREGON WALK + BIKE TO SCHOOL



Seven Steps to Organizing A Walk + Bike Bus



Promote the Idea

- Find Kids and Adults
- Get Organized
- Guidelines and Rules
- Safety Tips
- Weather
- Keep It Running

I. Promote the Idea

Approach the principal and staff – The principal is your initial point of contact to initiate the Walk + Bike School Bus program. Principals are often aware of their school’s transportation issues. They may be able to assist in connecting with parents or volunteers to help in the planning of a W+B Bus. Ask teachers and other staff, especially the PE and health teacher and school nurse, if they would be interested in helping with a W+B Bus. They might promote it, help to organize it, or find it convenient to participate, plus it will give them a chance to integrate physical activity into their day!

Involve the PTA and other parent and school groups— Arrange to attend meetings to pitch the idea and gather support. Parents will provide crucial information about their concerns and needs for the safety of their children in getting to and from school. They will be able to help with making community connections and recruiting volunteers. Parents can also provide insight into problems specific to their school neighborhood. Other school groups to contact include the Site Council, Wellness Committee, and/or Local School Advisory Committee (LSAC).

Include Community Leaders - Present the W+B Bus concept at neighborhood associations, volunteer organizations and church groups, and recruit volunteers. Approach city/county officials, such as the department of transportation, city planners and engineers, student transportation department, and school district. Also approach bike and outdoor shops, walking and biking clubs, health organizations and other non-profits to solicit various form of support (see list in 7, *Keep it Running*, page 15).

Organize a Walk + Bike to School Day event – join millions of kids and adults who walk and bike together on the first Wednesday of October each year. Promote the Walk + Bike School Bus and take advantage of the public attention, media and resources available for this fun and popular event. For more information, and to download or order the *Oregon Walk + Bike to School Day Playbook*, go to www.walknbike.org, email us at walknbike@bta4bikes.org, or call 1.866.452.8300.

Consider starting a SchoolPool - a school-based carpool program. Is there a Carpool or SchoolPool program in your community already? Contact the organizers and ask to add walking and biking School Buses to their carpool registration system. Many of these programs are now web-based, and can easily add a ‘Walking School Bus’ or ‘Biking School Bus’ button to their registration page. This way parents can organize walking and biking School Buses through an existing mechanism.

Use existing tools to find parents - If your school principal will allow it, turn the school directory into a neighborhood directory by using GIS software (Geographic Information Systems). Many city agencies, school districts and universities now have this software and trained experts available. Parents can then find out who lives nearby.

The school could add a check box to the information card filled out by parents when the school year begins. By checking, parents agree to give their address to Walk + Bike School Bus organizers so that they can receive information about the Bus program, and organizers can plan routes on a map.



At Gilbert Park elementary school in Portland, OR, the local Boy Scout troop provides adult leaders and passengers, as well as a sense of community and cohesion.

Seven Steps to Organizing A Walk + Bike Bus

2

Promote the Idea Find Kids and Adults

- Get Organized
- Guidelines and Rules
- Safety Tips
- Weather
- Keep It Running

2. Find Kids and Adults

Many parents and kids already want to walk or bike to school, but just need inspiration or support to get started. There are several ways to set up the Walk + Bike School Bus program for your school. You may consider setting up just one bus at a time, or you may attempt to start several at once. You can also set up one or more Buses just one day per week - Walking Wednesdays, for example. Then as the program gains momentum and volunteers, add days of the week.

Start one Bus

Approach a parent who may be interested. There may be someone who already walks or bikes their child to school. Work with them to find interested neighbors. Once a Bus is running, other parents will notice and may want to join or start their own. Kids will certainly notice, and may convince their parents to join. Let the school know about your Bus and get them to feature it in the school newsletter or email list.

Start more than one Bus

You can hold a meeting to describe the Walk + Bike School Bus. Collect contact information from parents who attend and get them organized. Don't be discouraged if not many attend this first meeting. It may take time for the concept to take off; many people may be interested, but are nervous about it. They may need to see it in action first. Some parents are just too busy to attend a meeting, but may be very interested.

You can also send out a parent survey to the entire school community to gauge interest and recruit champions to lead Buses in their neighborhoods. This way

you may be able to reach parents who cannot attend a meeting. Ask for phone numbers and then follow up.

Planning Meeting

Once you have created interest in the idea, organize a planning meeting with interested parents and others to discuss the concept in greater detail. This meeting will help you identify what resources you will have to get the Walk + Bike School Bus program up and running at your school.

At the first meeting(s):

Set some goals and outline the W+B bus program and timeline. If the W+B bus program is something new to the community you may want to keep it simple and start small; you can always organize more buses as momentum builds.

- Clarify the goals of the W+B Bus
- Outline the W+B Bus program and timeline and then determine goals during the meeting.
- Make a list of potential drivers and passengers. *(see sample Rider Roster; Toolkit, f., page 23)*
- Start working on potential routes. *(See sample Bus Route Map; Toolkit, g., page 24)*
- Strategize how to recruit passengers and leaders for the W+B Bus.
- Sign up volunteers for specific roles.
- Create a list of problems and potential solutions
- Determine the best lines of communication for your leaders

Seven Steps to Organizing A Walk + Bike Bus

3

Promote the Idea
Find Kids and Adults
Get Organized
Guidelines and Rules
Safety Tips
Weather
Keep It Running

“ Now I don’t have to worry about getting myself and the kids ready for school all at once. All I have to do is get them ready and out the door. Then I enjoy a little free time before I go to work. I don’t work on Fridays, though, so I’ve signed up to be a conductor. The best part is that my kids love to ride bikes, so now they get to ride with their friends every morning!”

- Parent testimonial

3. Get Organized

Survey children and parents

Surveys are a good way to gather information on travel behaviors and to discover who is interested in joining the Walk + Bike School Bus. It is most beneficial to conduct surveys very early in the planning stages.

Information gathered will tell you the strengths and weaknesses of your program. The school newsletter is an excellent vehicle for sharing the results.

Parent Survey Letter – ask the parents about their travel behaviors and choices.

Send home an Introduction Letter - a letter announcing the W+B Bus program - and a Parent Survey (See sample Parent Survey Letter/Form ; Toolkit, c , page 19)

The survey letter should:

- Provide the parents with background information about the W+B Bus program and concepts
- Survey their travel behaviors
- Ask parents to get involved and provide contact information
- Include a map of the school area and ask parents to recommend preferred ‘bus stop’ locations and routes
- Announce a training date where parents will be able to view the routes, register their children, sign up to volunteer, and ask additional questions

Student Survey – ask children how they regularly travel to school

- In the classroom, ask children to respond to a few questions by a show of hands

- Survey children one-on-one with a series of questions about their age, weather, environment, etc.

Ask children:

Who walks to school?

Who bikes to school?

Who takes transit?

Who rides the yellow school bus?

Who is driven in a car or van?

Are there other kids in the vehicle who are not family?

Who would walk or bike if they could?

If they cannot or will not, why not?

(Answers often include: books/instruments too heavy or bulky, parents think it is too dangerous, after school activities are too far away, weather, distance from home, no sidewalks)

If it is too far, then how far away do they live?

(Sometimes a child or a parent may think that a even handful of blocks is too great a distance to walk or bike)

Observational Survey – observe during the drop-off and pick-up times at the school

- Record how many students travel by car, foot, bike and bus. Look at crossings near the school, and note conditions for walkers or bikers
- Keep the results of your survey for evaluation purposes
- Prepare a summary of survey results to share with parents, school staff, and the community



Bike School Bus at Abernethy Elementary School, Portland, OR

Seven Steps to Organizing A Walk + Bike Bus

3

Promote the Idea
Find Kids and Adults
Get Organized
Guidelines and Rules
Safety Tips
Weather
Keep It Running

3. Get Organized

Map it!

Design the route for each Walk + Bike School Bus. Get started by downloading or purchasing a map of your school area. (See *sample Bus Route Map; Toolkit, g, page 24*)

All of the routes you design for walking and/or biking should attempt to meet these basic requirements:

- ➔ Offer safe access for pedestrians and bicyclists
- ➔ Routes for walking should have adequate sidewalks, pedestrian crosswalks, signage, low traffic speeds, and street lighting
- ➔ Routes for biking should have low traffic speeds and volume, little cross-traffic, and bike lanes when available. However, a street with a bike lane may not be the best choice for kids to ride, since it may be on high-volume and/or high-speed roadway.
- ➔ Safe street crossings
- ➔ Avoid crossing busy or high-speed roads
- ➔ Be less than or equal to 30 minutes to walk/bike (typically up to one mile for walking and two miles for biking)

Organize a Walkabout

A physical assessment of potential routes will help you to identify challenges and opportunities.

Walk or bike the 'School Bus' routes. Don't drive, since the walking or biking experience will be difficult to determine from inside a car. Find streets with very little and/or slow-moving traffic, and consider trails, paths, parks, cut-throughs and other non-street routes, since they can be safer and more fun for kids, and more pleasant for adults. Take kids along with you! They may know of routes that adults don't know about.

Kids often travel to explore, whereas most adults try to get to where they are going as quickly as possible.

Examine the crosswalks and intersections. Are they accessible to the Bus participants and visible to the drivers? Is there enough time for young children in a group to cross the street? It may be necessary to discuss time constraints with city traffic officials, planners and police.

Host a Workshop

A meeting held prior to the kick-off of your W+B Bus(es).

Parents, children, and volunteers can:

Ask specific questions about the program, view the maps and routes, and sign-up as 'drivers', 'conductors', or 'passengers'

Here are a few helpful items to have ready:

- ➔ Maps of the school area to hand out
- ➔ Clearly marked routes with different colors (See *sample Bus Route Map; Toolkit, g, page 24*)
- ➔ Consent forms parents can fill out to sign up their child (see *sample Parent Consent Form, Toolkit, b, page 18*)
- ➔ Child participation forms (see *sample Child Participation Form, Toolkit, d., page 20*)
- ➔ 'Rider Roster' of leaders that parents can keep with them (see *sample Rider Roster, Toolkit, f., page 23*)
- ➔ Guidelines and Rules for all W+B Bus participants (see *Step 4, page 10*)
- ➔ W+B Bus Safety Tips (see *Step 5, pages 11 and 12*)



DID YOU KNOW?

Healthy Kids Learn Better! Regular physical activity improves concentration, energy and self-esteem, and lowers anxiety and stress. (CDC)

Seven Steps to Organizing A Walk + Bike Bus

4

Promote the Idea
Find Kids and Adults
Get Organized
Guidelines and Rules
Safety Tips
Weather
Keep It Running

4. Guidelines and Rules

The Walk + Bike School Bus will run smoothly if everyone is clear about his or her roles. It is important to outline rules and general traffic safety practices to help volunteers and parents understand their responsibilities. Here are some general guidelines to follow when preparing parents, volunteers, and children for the W+B Bus program at your school.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

- Provide a signed Parent Consent Form and Child Participation Form before their child may join the Bus (See sample Parent Consent Form; Toolkit, b., page 18, and Child Participation Form; Toolkit, d., page 20)
- Get children to and from the Bus Stop on time.
- Contact bus driver and/or conductor if child is sick or will not be at the Bus Stop
- Reinforce the behavior contract and the rules and responsibilities of the road
- Ensure children are dressed appropriately for the weather
- Get their children to and from school if they miss the W+B Bus.
- Make a wagon or bike trailer available if their child has books, projects or musical instruments to carry that are too heavy or bulky for a backpack.

What about items too large to carry?

- Bus organizers may want to set up a regular system for bulky and heavy items if children are routinely transporting them between school and home. A designated wagon or trailer or stroller may be used, or a parent who normally drives can carry these items to school.

Volunteer Responsibilities (Drivers and Conductors)

- Aim for 2 adults/10 children (see Step Five: Safety Tips, pages 11 and 12)
- Position a 'driver' at the front of the Bus and a 'conductor' at the back
- Take roll at each Bus Stop and head counts during the Bus trip
- Establish yourself as an authority figure with the children on the Bus
- Reinforce pedestrian and bike safety road rules
- If you are unable to 'drive' or 'conduct' the Bus use the phone tree to find a volunteer to take your place
- Give the daily Rider Roster names to the school office (see sample Rider Roster; Toolkit, f., page 23)
- Complete volunteer criminal background checks and give to school administration (utilize school's regular volunteer screening process for this)

Student Responsibilities

- Arrive on time at their bus stop
- Listen to and obey the drivers and conductors
- Follow pedestrian and bicycle safety instructions
- Be considerate of other children – no bullying!
- Notify school staff and remain at school if they miss the W+B Bus

School Office Responsibilities

- Keep a copy of emergency contact info, Route Maps and volunteer background checks (see sample Route Map; Toolkit, g., page 24)
- Keep a copy of Rider Roster (see sample Rider Roster; Toolkit, f., page 23)
- Call parents if child misses the W+B Bus in the afternoon



“Stop every time at the edge of the street
Use your head before your feet
Make sure you hear every sound
Look left, look right, look all around”

Seven Steps to Organizing A Walk + Bike Bus

5

Promote the Idea
Find Kids and Adults
Get Organized
Guidelines and Rules
Safety Tips
Weather
Keep It Running

5. Walking Safety Tips - Make the W+B Bus safe and fun!

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends one adult for every six children. You may want to reduce or increase these numbers depending on the age of your children and whether you are walking or biking. If children are 10 years of age or older, fewer adults may be needed for walking. Generally, a ratio of 1 to 4 children per adult for 4-5 year olds, 1 to 6 children per adult for 6-9 year-olds, and 1 to 8 children per adult for 10-13 year-olds is manageable. Up to 10 youth per adult or a self-supervised group is generally manageable for 14 year-olds and above who understand the safety tips listed below. It is recommended that adults hold hands with children under seven years of age or have an older child do this, or have children walk in pairs, holding hands.

Walking Safety Tips:

- No more than 3-8 children per adult (depending on age of children).
- No more than 24 total walkers per Bus.
- Count children at the beginning and the end of each trip.
- One adult at the front (driver) and one in the back (conductor).
- Adults must give clear directions, which children must follow.
- The group will walk in a single or double-file line on the sidewalk or path.
- If there is no sidewalk or path the group will walk single-file in the street facing traffic.

Crossing the street:

- Stop at the curb or street edge and identify the safest place to cross.
- The best place to cross busy streets is at a signaled crosswalk.
- Always cross at a corner or marked crosswalk (because drivers expect walkers to cross at corners or crosswalks, not another part of the block).

Crossing at a signaled crosswalk:

- Wait for the walk signal.
- Look left.
- Look right.
- Look ahead and behind.

- Cross when it is clear and look for cars while you are crossing.
- If walk signal starts flashing while you are crossing continue to other side.
- If walk signal starts flashing before you start, do not cross.

Crossing at the corner:

- Stop at curb or street edge.
- Look left.
- Look right.
- Look behind you.
- Cross when it is clear and continue to look for cars while you are crossing.

ADDITIONAL SAFETY TIPS:

- Always look for cars and other vehicles!
- Remember that just because it is your turn does not mean that it is safe to cross.
- Do not trust that drivers will obey the laws or even see you.
- Look for cars pulling out of driveways and parking lots, and turning right in front of you.
- Drivers do not always look behind them and they may not see you even if they do look.
- If you are not sure what a car is doing, make eye contact with the driver – do they really see you?



Seven Steps to Organizing A Walk + Bike Bus

5

Promote the Idea
Find Kids and Adults
Get Organized
Guidelines and Rules
Safety Tips
Weather
Keep It Running

5. Biking Safety Tips - Make the W+B Bus safe and fun!

Children biking in groups require more adult skills and supervision than walking. We recommend one adult for every 3-5 children. It is up to parents and ride leaders to decide whether children are ready to ride in the street or if they should stay on sidewalks and trails. Younger children who are inexperienced cyclists **SHOULD NOT** ride in the streets on their own bike. Children under eight or nine years old should stay on sidewalks and trails unless they are in a trailer, a child carrier seat, or on a 'tag-a-long' bike securely attached to an adult bike. Parents should be encouraged to have their child's bike regularly inspected. If possible, ride leaders should know how to perform minor on-street repairs, or a second adult can walk the remainder of the trip with a child and bike.

HELMET:

- In Oregon all children under the age of 16 must wear an approved helmet; look for a 'CPSC', 'ANSI', 'ASTM' or 'SNELL' sticker on the inside
- A properly worn helmet covers your forehead. When you look up you should see the helmet's front edge; a finger-width or two above your eyebrows.
- Chinstrap should be snug, with up to two fingers width between your neck and the chinstrap. Straps should form a v shape just below each ear.
- The helmet shouldn't be able to wobble from side to side or front to back (too big), or cause headaches or sit on top of your head (too small)

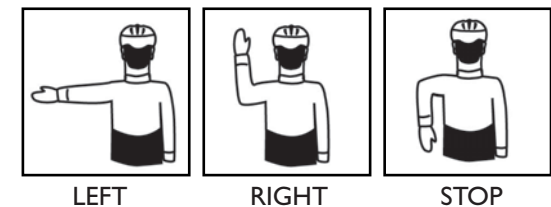
STREET RIDING:

- For children who are around 9 years of age and are ready to ride on the streets, here are some basic biking tips:
- One adult rides in the front (driver) and one in the back (conductor)
- Stay together as a group - however when crossing streets or at intersections each cyclist should individually stop, look, and listen before crossing
- Ride on the right hand side of the street and be predictable (never ride against traffic; if it is too dangerous, walk, or ride on the sidewalk, if legal)
- Look over your left shoulder to see what traffic is coming from behind, but be careful to ride in a straight line while looking

- Obey all traffic rules, lights and signs
- Ride single file at all times, with at least one bike length between each rider
- Follow the same right of way rules that vehicles follow at intersections
- Use hand and voice signals to warn others of your movements and road hazards
- When braking, use both front and rear brakes at same time, never just the front
- Ride in the designated bicycle lane when available
- On multi-use trails yield right of way to pedestrians and horses
- Give a loud warning when passing on the left (never pass on the right)
- Wear bright clothing and use reflectors and lights at night or in early morning darkness

HAND SIGNALS:

Always use left hand so drivers can see your signal.





Seven Steps to Organizing A Walk + Bike Bus

6

- Promote the Idea
- Find Kids and Adults
- Get Organized
- Guidelines and Rules
- Safety Tips
- Weather**
- Keep It Running

6. Weather

Traveling in the Rain and Cold

Walking and biking School Buses do not have to end in the winter months. They can operate in any weather if the participants are prepared. Before the weather turns cold, rainy or snowy, talk to your School Bus children and parents about raingear, warm clothes and appropriate shoe options. For some W+B School Bus programs it is beneficial to solicit raingear donations from a local outdoor clothing dealer and provide them for the participants. If everyone is dressed appropriately a cold rainy day can turn into an adventure rather than an uncomfortable journey to school.

- Keep hands and head covered
- Wear rain boots or waterproof shoes
- Use umbrellas or hats with visors
- Wear rain jackets and pants
- Wear wool, polyester or fleece clothes, not cotton



Jonathan Maus / bikeportland.org

- Designate meeting spots in a place where there is shelter from the elements
- Encourage kids to keep a dry pair of shoes and socks in their backpack or locker
- When biking in the rain consider that brakes and rims get wet, making braking time longer
- Regular riders should consider getting fenders for their bikes
- Metal and paint is very slippery when wet – riders should ride slow and straight on wet surfaces
- Also, visibility is reduced when it is raining, so the whole group will need to ride slower to adapt

Cancellation Policy:

There should be a clear policy determined in advance for canceling the walking/biking Bus in severe weather. Establish a phone number(s) that parents can call to find out if the Bus will be operating. Another option is to designate a person to contact parents the evening before or earlier in the morning so that they can make other travel arrangements.

Traveling in hot weather:

- Apply sunscreen
- Wear a hat with a visor
- Don't overdress
- Drink lots of water (adults should carry an extra water bottle on long routes)
- Take shade and water breaks if needed
- Walk or ride at a medium pace for the slowest person in the group



Seven Steps to Organizing A Walk + Bike Bus

7

- Promote the Idea
- Find Kids and Adults
- Get Organized
- Guidelines and Rules
- Safety Tips
- Weather
- Keep It Running**

7. Keep It Running

Find Sustainable Funding

The cost for walking/biking buses is fairly low or free, however, there are things to plan for to sustain it long-term. A single Walk + Bike School Bus can operate with just one or two parents, and may not need additional assistance. However, a school-wide, multiple bus program will need ongoing leadership and resources. Seek out sponsors who might want to donate vests, raingear or other needed materials, and seek financial and volunteer support from:

- ➔ PTA/PTO, site council or local school advisory committee,
- ➔ school district or student transportation department,
- ➔ walking or biking clubs,
- ➔ Rotary, Lions and Kiwanis clubs and churches,
- ➔ local charities, individuals and local businesses.
- ➔ transportation, planning, health, police and fire departments,
- ➔ hospitals and hospital foundations, medical societies and groups, community health partnerships,
- ➔ neighborhood associations,
- ➔ recreation and physical activity programs, parks and rec departments, and community centers.

There may also funding available through state Safe Routes to School programs. The Walk + Bike School Bus can be part of this larger effort to get more kids active and make conditions safer on the way to school. Safe Routes to School funding is now available through departments of transportation in every state. There may be a Safe Routes to School program already in operation or under development in your area. To find out, contact Oregon Walk + Bike to School at: 1.866.452.8300 or walknbike@bta4bikes.org

Find Ongoing Volunteer Support

Most school-wide Walk + Bike School Bus programs take two to three years to build enough community and parent buy-in to sustain multiple Walk + Bike School Buses on their own. Until then, your leaders (this may be you for now) may need to keep organizing until there is enough new volunteer energy to sustain it. Don't be discouraged! It takes time for people to change their travel habits, but once they participate a few times, they may develop the habit of walking or biking instead of driving.

Parent leaders will most likely only participate until their child graduates to another school. When this happens, someone will need to recruit a replacement. Getting the Walk + Bike School Bus sponsored by a school group such as the PTA, Site Council or Local School Advisory Committee will help to generate volunteers and leaders well into the future.

There may be other volunteer groups in your area, such as:

- ➔ non-profit volunteer organizations
- ➔ senior groups,
- ➔ walking or biking clubs,
- ➔ high school and community youth leadership groups,
- ➔ Rotary, Lions and Kiwanis clubs,
- ➔ Boy and Girl Scouts,
- ➔ Boys and Girls Clubs
- ➔ recreation and physical activity programs through local parks and recreation departments and community centers



“Setting good examples for children in our community, plus it’s fun too!”

-Elementary school parents and W+B School Bus drivers, Portland, OR

Seven Steps to Organizing A Walk + Bike Bus

7

- Promote the Idea
- Find Kids and Adults
- Get Organized
- Guidelines and Rules
- Safety Tips
- Weather
- Keep It Running**

7. Keep It Running

Ideas for Retaining Participants and Volunteers

It is important to keep the participants, parents, and volunteers enthusiastic in order to sustain the walking or biking School Bus. Providing incentives, challenges and special events is key to the long-term success of the Buses:

- ➔ Advertise walking and biking to school by creating inspirational notices for school newsletters and email lists, and find student volunteers who will make posters and hang them up in the school.
- ➔ *Contests:* A poster, sticker or t-shirt design contest is a fun way to get students excited about walking and biking. You may be able to find a local sponsor who can give away a prize for the chosen design. Students could also design posters for encouragement events such as Walk + Bike to School Day or Walk + Bike Wednesdays or Walk + Bike Across America. For more information on these fun events, go to www.walknbike.org.
- ➔ *Frequent Walker/Biker:* Give each participant a frequent walker or biker punch card, and after they walk a certain number of times they earn a prize.
- ➔ *Golden Sneaker Award:* Spray-paint a sneaker gold and mount it, and present it to the student or class that walks and bikes the most miles during a specific period of time.
- ➔ *Walk + Bike Across America:* Track each student’s miles and put a map up in the school to record the cumulative distance traveled. For more information about this fun and effective encouragement program, visit www.walknbike.org.

- ➔ *Themes:* Create theme days (color days, crazy hat day, decorate your shoes day, parade day)
- ➔ *Events:* Participate in national and international promotional events such as Walk + Bike to School day/week – the first Wednesday/week in October.
- ➔ Name the W+B Bus or create a song or cheer for your Bus.
- ➔ Have interactive activities while walking like ‘I Spy’ or ‘Scavenger Hunts’.
- ➔ Invite a police officer or local celebrity to join the bus periodically, especially on special event days like international Walk + Bike to School Day.

Volunteers can be crucial to the success of your walking or biking Buses. Some examples of ways to thank them are to:

- host a volunteer ‘thank you’ party,
- recognize volunteers in school and community publications,
- give awards to outstanding volunteers,
- give gift certificates from local businesses.

Manage your volunteers. Have leaders maintain regular check-ins with other volunteers to make sure they are well-informed, motivated and feel supported. Leaders should regularly ask and answer questions, provide guidance and information, and give positive feedback and encouragement.

“ It is such a great way to start the day, and it gives us a chance to have a fun conversation with our children and neighbors.”

- Parent testimonial

“ I didn’t think my son could actually walk all the way to school, but he was so inspired by the raffle, we tried it and it was fun! We now walk every day, and it’s my primary source of exercise. Why did I ever drive before?”

-Parent testimonial

“ I had so much fun doing it today, that I am going to go home and organize one for the parents on my block!”

- Parent testimonial

**WALK
+BIKE**
OREGON WALK + BIKE TO SCHOOL

Walk + Bike School Bus Toolkit

- a.** Startup Checklist
- b.** Parent/Guardian Consent Form
- c.** Parent Survey Letter/Form
- d.** Child Participation Form/Contract
- e.** Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
- f.** Rider Roster
- g.** Bus Route Map

Checklist for Starting A Walk + Bike School Bus

- Identified a suitable route and set up Bus Stops
- Devised a bus schedule for the walking or biking Bus
- Performed background check on all volunteers
- Assessed the route
- Trained the leaders
- Completed a Rider Roster for the walking or biking Bus
- Recruited passengers and collected signed Behavior Forms
- Made behavior expectations clear to passengers and parents
- Collected signed Parent/Guardian Consent Forms
- Issued guidelines to parents and volunteers
- Created Route Map
- Obtained safety vests, flags, helmets or other safety equipment

Walk + Bike School Bus Parent/Guardian Consent Form

Please return this form to the school by: _____

My child/ children will be using the _____ walk or bike school bus.

He/she/they will join the bus at the _____ bus stop.

Child's Name & Class: (please list all of your children who will be walking or biking)

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Parent's daytime phone: _____

Emergency Contact: _____

Please circle the days that your child/children will be using the bus:

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday

Morning Afternoon

- I realize that my child's journey to and from school is my responsibility even though they will be using the walk or bike school bus. If my child is late to the bus stop in the morning or in the afternoon and misses the bus, I am responsible for getting him/her to school.
- I have read the guidelines and explained the behavior expectations to my child.
- I will notify the bus leader if there are any changes to my child's bus schedule.

I _____, the undersigned, give my consent for _____ to participate in the Walk + Bike School Bus Program. I hereby release _____ School, the _____ School District, its employees and volunteers, the City of _____, Oregon Walk + Bike to School, Bicycle Transportation Alliance, Willamette Pedestrian Coalition, the State of _____, and all other affiliated groups and program participants from any and all liability related to Walk + Bike School Bus activities.

Parent / Legal Guardian Signature

Date

Walk + Bike School Bus Parent Survey

Dear parents,

In an effort to promote physical activity and to ease the congestion around our school at drop off and pick up times, we are setting up Walk + Bike School Buses.

These will operate like carpools, but without the car! Groups of students that live near each other can walk or bike to school under the supervision of trained adults. There will be at least two adults walking or biking with each group of students. We will set up routes that serve people who would like to participate and there will be Bus Stops along the route where students can join the Bus. The Buses will operate to and from school.

In order to set up routes, we need to find out who is interested in walking or biking with one of the Buses.

Volunteers will undergo background checks and receive training in pedestrian or bicycle safety.

Please fill out this form and give it to the school office if you are interested in participating

Hope to see you on the W+B School Bus!

How does your child(ren) usually travel to school? _____

If a walking or biking School Bus passed from near your home to your school would your child(ren) use it?

Yes No If no, please indicate why not? _____

Would your child most likely: walk bike other (Circle one: skateboard, scooter, rollerblade, wheelchair)

Would you be able to volunteer to walk or bike with the W+B School Bus? Yes No

What days would you be available? Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday

What time of day would you be able to volunteer? morning afternoon both

Child's Name and Age: _____

Your Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions at:

Walk + Bike School Bus

Child Participation Form

(to be filled out by parent/guardian)

My child, _____, will walk with the Walk School Bus or ride with the Bike School Bus.

He/she will be picked up and dropped off at the stop by _____

If we arrive at the stop after the bus has left I understand that I am responsible for taking my child to school.

I understand that my child must follow the Walk + Bike School Bus Behavior Contract and that if he or she is unable to act in a responsible manner he/she will be asked to not walk with the bus in the future.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone# _____

Emergency Phone #: _____

Child's Class _____

Child's Behavior Contract

(to be filled out by the participating child)

- I want to walk or bike with the walking or biking School Bus.
- I agree to listen to the adults at all times.
- I agree to wear my safety vest.
- I agree to wear my helmet while riding my bike, skateboard, rollerblades or scooter.
- I agree to stay with the group at all times and not drag behind or run ahead.
- I agree to respect other students, adults, and myself.
- I agree to respect other people's property such as their yards or cars.
- I will be on time.
- I understand that if I cannot behave responsibly I will be asked to not walk or bike with the School Bus in the future.

I have signed my name on the line below. By signing, I

understand and agree to follow the rules above.

Signed: _____

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q What is the recommended maximum number of children in a Walk + Bike School Bus?

A We recommend no more than 24 children. Any more than this and there should be a second Bus. A Walk + Bike School Bus can easily be broken into two separate groups traveling the same route.

Q What is the recommended length of a Walk + Bike School Bus route?

A The total trip shouldn't be much longer than 30 minutes. Bear in mind the slower pace of young children. A maximum of 1/2 to 1.5 miles for walking and 2 to 3 miles for biking is recommended, depending on the age, skill and willingness of the passengers. Children may be able to go longer distances, if they are willing and able. Parents may or may not know their child's ability, since parents may not walk or bike themselves.

Q What is involved in training volunteers?

A A 30-40 minute discussion, which takes place during the route assessment. This way you can discuss issues specific to the route. Make sure that they read and understand the walking or biking safety tips since walking or biking with a group of children is quite different than traveling with adults.

Q How often will parents need to volunteer each week?

A Usually parents will be needed two to three times per week. But this amount can increase or decrease depending on the number of kids on the bus, and on parent availability. More kids may mean that more parents are needed.

Q What if parents want their child to participate but the parent doesn't want to volunteer?

A Some school buses require that parents whose children participate must volunteer at least once per week, but this is up to the bus leader to decide. It will depend on how many volunteers are available.

Q What about carrying musical instruments, projects and book bags?

A Older children should be able to carry a moderate amount of books on their own. Some School Buses insist that children carry their own bags. Others provide a wagon or bike trailer for large items. Another option is to have one parent drive all the items to give to students when the bus arrives at school.

Q What if a parent does not meet their child when the bus passes their 'bus stop'?

A Parents are expected to meet their children when the Bus arrives at the meeting spot. If a parent feels that their child can walk the remaining distance alone, get written permission and acceptance of responsibility for the child from that point on. A 'safe house' system will work also, where neighbors agree to let children wait at their house until the parent arrives, or can be contacted by the safe house volunteer, in the event of a no-show or if the parent cannot be reached. Safe houses can also help lone children to avoid bullies.

Q What if a parent does not show up for their turn to walk or bike with the bus?

A It is the parents' responsibility to make arrangements for a replacement or swap if they cannot take their shift. A contact list of all the bus parents should be enough for them to find a last minute replacement. If a parent does not show up, other parents along the route could be asked to pitch in. In the afternoon, the school office staff could call another parent volunteer from the list for last minute help.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- Q** What if the biking School Bus leader doesn't have experience leading a group bike ride?
- A** Contact the local bike club and ask for an experienced group ride leader to lead a weekend practice ride with volunteers. In Oregon, you can also contact the Bicycle Transportation Alliance (BTA) to get advice and assistance: walknbike@bta4bikes.org or call toll-free at 1.866.452.8300 or visit www.bta4bikes.org
- Q** Who is liable if something goes wrong?
- A** The child's parent is liable for the child's behavior. However, there is always risk involved with any public activity. This is why volunteers should be screened by the school and trained, emergency contact information made available to leaders, and the school informed about the route and participants on the Walk + Bike School Bus. Of course, people have been known to sue for almost any reason. But the parental consent form should protect leaders from successful legal action unless negligence can be proven. Walking school bus programs exist in countries all over the world, and in cities all over the US, and to date, we know of virtually no legal actions brought upon walking or biking school bus programs. If the principal or school district is concerned, they can provide liability insurance coverage for Bus volunteers.

- Q** What if a child is sick or leaves school early?
- A** The child's parent is responsible for contacting the Bus leader for that day. Parents should be required to communicate to the leader. Make sure that your Walk + Bike School Bus RIDER ROSTER is updated regularly and is in the hands of all parents whose children walk or bike with the Bus. If a child leaves school early, the parent can have the school office staff note the child's absence when the Bus leader shows up at school.
- Q** What if there is a bike accident or a bike becomes unrideable due to a mechanical problem?
- A** In the event of a medical emergency, call 911, get the other children off of the street, and then plan a solution. Once it is safe, one of the ride leaders should lead the remaining children to school while the other waits behind for help, fixes the problem, or walks with the child and their unrideable bike. If possible, one leader (preferably the conductor at the rear) should carry some basic tools.
- Q** Should I administer medication to children with asthma, for example?
- A** No, you are not authorized to do this, unless you are a trained medical professional. Medication should either be administered before leav-

ing home or the child should have been taught how to do it for him/herself.

- Q** Does anyone need to be First Aid or CPR trained?
- A** No, but we recommend that at least one adult carry a mobile phone and first aid kit in case of an emergency. In the event of an emergency, call 911 and stay on the line until paramedics arrive, then call the parent and the school. Do not send the remaining children to school unless they are led by another Walk + Bike School Bus leader.
- Q** What if the biking School Bus gets split up?
- A** This may happen, especially with large groups of cyclists.
1. Make sure that adult volunteers know the route or carry route maps with them.
 2. Children can be organized into School Bus 'sections', and section leaders are taught to wait for all of their members to regroup just before or after proceeding through an intersection.
 3. Adult leaders can identify a street sign or mailbox or the next 'Bus Stop', at least 50 feet past an intersection, where riders can wait for the rest of the section to get through safely.
 4. Adult leaders can carry cell phones or 2-way radios if available, so that they can communicate with each other during the ride.

Walk + Bike School Bus Rider Roster

Thank you for participating in the Walk + Bike School Bus.

Below are 'Bus Stops', participant names and their contact information for your W+B Bus.

- ➔ Please arrange to swap with another parent if you need to change your scheduled day or time.
- ➔ Contact the Driver or Coordinator if your child will not be walking or biking with the Bus today.
- ➔ The Bus leaves on time and will NOT wait for children!
- ➔ If your child misbehaves, he or she may not be allowed to continue to walk or bike with the Bus.
- ➔ Be Safe and Have Fun!

BUS COORDINATOR:

Phone # _____

Driver/Conductor Roster (name and phone number):

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Morning	_____ #	_____ #	_____ #	_____ #	_____ #
Afternoon	_____ #	_____ #	_____ #	_____ #	_____ #

Passenger Roster:

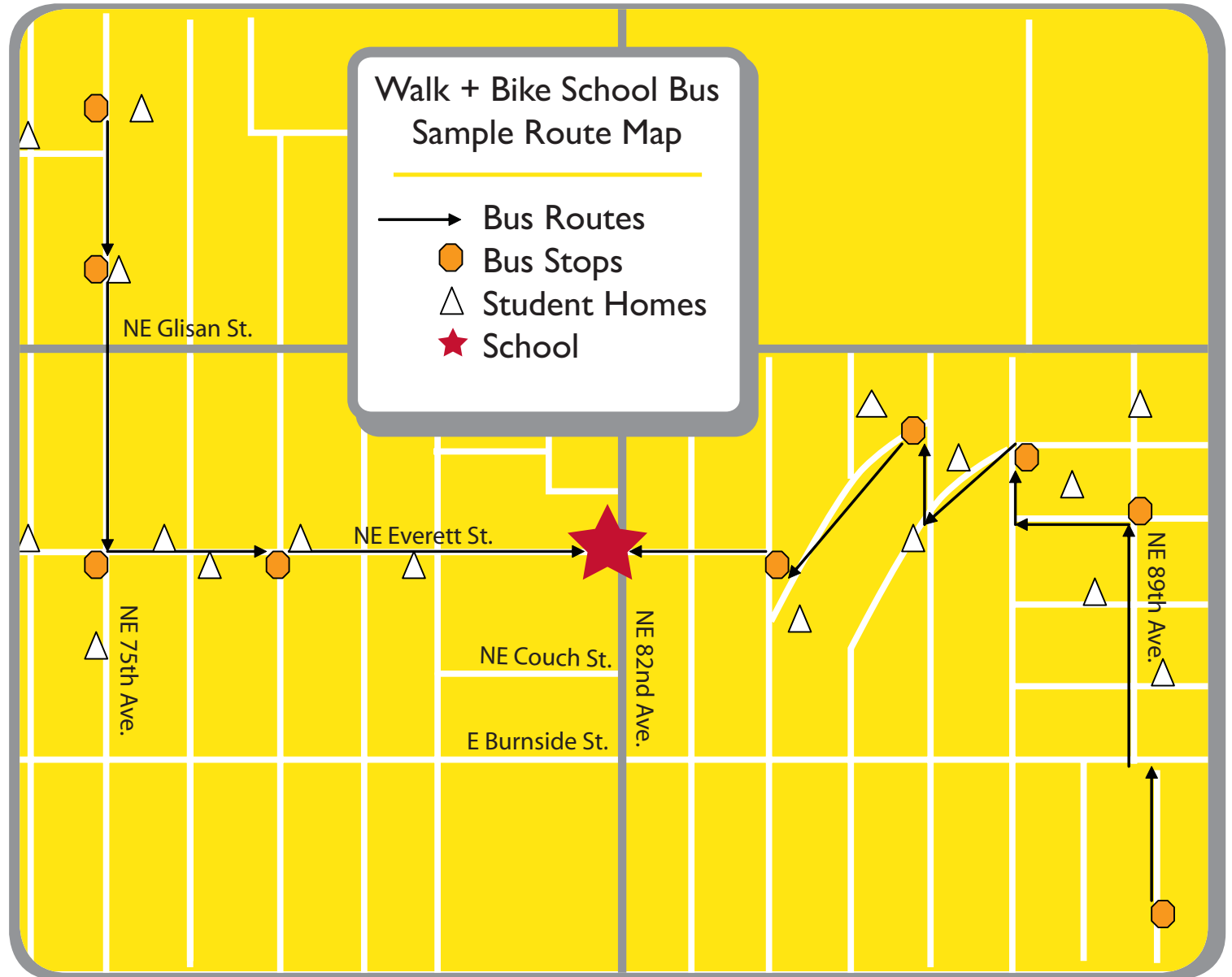
Name	Phone #	Mornings (Days of the Week)	Afternoons (Days of the Week)

* Please continue on other side for additional Passengers.

Bus Stop Schedule

Bus Stops	Morning Pickup Times	Afternoon Pickup Times

Walk + Bike School Bus Sample Route Map





Bicycle Transportation Alliance

-Opening minds and roads to bicycling-

BTA's mission: to create healthy, sustainable communities by making bicycling safe, convenient and accessible.

www.bta4bikes.org

Willamette Pedestrian Coalition

WPC is a non-profit community-based membership organization in the greater Portland area dedicated to promoting walking and making the conditions for walking safe and attractive.

www.americawalks.org/wpc

Oregon Walk + Bike to School is a partnership between the Bicycle Transportation Alliance, Willamette Pedestrian Coalition, NikeGO, Oregon Department of Transportation, Oregon Walk + Bike to School Committee, and teachers, parents, community members and schools throughout Oregon.

www.walknbike.org

Oregon Walk + Bike to School Committee

Alliance for Community Traffic Safety in Oregon

Bicycle Transportation Alliance

City of Portland Office of Transportation

Oregon Department of Education

Oregon Department of Health Services

Oregon Department of Transportation

Oregon Health & Science University Think First Program

Oregon Medical Association

Oregon Safe Kids Coalition

Willamette Pedestrian Coalition





walknbike.org • 1.866.452.8300