# GETTING STUDENTS TO SCHOOL DURING COVID: THE BASICS

One of the challenges schools face during the 2020-2021 school year involves transportation and lost instructional time due to regulations for COVID-19.

# **Encouraging students to walk or bike to school will help schools** manage some of those challenges by:

- Reducing the number of students who will need to be health screened on site at the school (see the next page for how to do that)
- Making the start to the school day more efficient and reduce lost instructional time
- Decreasing traffic congestion and air pollution around schools
- Providing students with an opportunity to be social with students outside their cohort in a safe outdoor setting
- Ensuring that students are physically active, which improves academic performance and reduces disciplinary action

Most schools can implement some kind of walk/bike program, even if the school isn't ideally located for a walk/bike program. Here's how:

#### Walking Schoolbus/Bike Train

How it works: A parent or community member walks or bikes a set route (like a school bus route) through a neighborhood, picking up students at their homes along the way, and walking or biking them safely to school.

#### Remote drop off, or Park & Walk/Roll

- How it works: Parents drive their children to a location off site from the school, and students and their parents (or just a volunteer) walk from that location to school together.
  - This is a good solution for schools where walking and biking from home to school isn't feasible.
  - Some schools work with local landowners to allow students to be dropped off at and/or cut through their property to school to avoid poor on-street infrastructure around a school
  - You can have multiple remote drop off locations, to collect students from different neighborhoods more efficiently.



### GETTING STARTED:

## Walking School Buses/Bike Trains

#### Who can participate:

- Bike Trains are better for older students
- Walking School Buses are good for students of all ages
- Adults who satisfy the school's volunteer requirements

#### **Safety During COVID:**

- Have trained Walking School Bus leaders perform health checks at each pick up location, similar to that of a regular school bus.
- Students and adults should wear face masks while walking
- Students not in the same family should maintain a 6' distance from each other, unless during brief periods when that distance creates a safety concern Ex: while crossing the road, or when turning a corner, and the volunteer needs to be able to see all of the children.
- Once the road hazard has been navigated, students should return to 6' spacing.
  Try to keep Walking School Bus groups to no more than 6 children per adult

### Logistics:

#### **Engage your partners, including:**

- Parents
- Community volunteers
- Teachers

- Administrators
- Local Businesses

#### **Partner roles:**

- Route design
- Recruiting families
- Coordinating timing and schedule
- Leading Walking School Buses/Bike Trains
- Identifying "pit stops" along the way (often with local businesses) in case of issues that may arise

#### Decide how many Walking School Buses or Bike Trains you want to set up

You may start with one Walking School Bus or Bike Train. Or set up multiple buses/trains to accommodate more students.

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#### **Identify routes. A good route has the following characteristics:**

- It contains residences of families interested in walking to school
  - Use anonymized student addresses to determine where students reside
  - Create routes based on the resulting map of student residences
- There is good infrastructure in place (sidewalks, crosswalks, etc.)
- The route is within a mile from the school for a Walking School Bus or 2 miles from school for a Bike Train.
- Schools may conduct a Walk Audit to help determine the best routes to school.
  - Local Motion or your local Regional Planning Commission can support your school on creating walking routes for your school.

Determine the frequency of your Walking School Bus or Bike Train. You may organize your bus or train for special events, weekly or monthly walks, or on a daily basis.

#### Plan stops and timing.

- Do a test walk or bike of your chosen route, keeping track of how long it takes to walk from the starting point to each stop along the way.
  - Note that children walk more slowly than adults, or about 20-25 minutes per mile.

### Create a map with meeting times for each stop. Your map may be online, printed, or hand-drawn.

 Share map with all school bus participants, and make sure it is always available to families



# GETTING STARTED: Remote Drop-Offs

#### **Safety During COVID:**

- Remote Drop Off Location space should be large enough for cars to drop students off, and for waiting students to be 6' distant from each other
- Students and adults should wear face masks while waiting at the drop off location and walking
- A trained adult should be set up to do health screenings on site, and be prepared to send a child home if they do not pass the screening.
- Children should have clearly, visually indicated, spots that keep them distanced from each other while they wait for their walking group to arrive
- Students not in the same family should maintain a 6' distance from each other, unless that distance creates a safety concern
  - Ex: while crossing the road, or when turning a corner, and the volunteer needs to be able to see all of the children.
  - Once the road hazard has been navigated, students should return to 6' spacing.
- Try to keep walking school bus sizes to no more than 6 children per adult (a 1:6 ratio of adult: children)
- Once about 6 students (up to 12 if there are 2 adults) have arrived at the drop off site, the volunteer leader(s) should take that group of children to school, to minimize mingling and physical distancing errors.
  - Continue to take groups of 6-12 students (with 1-2 adults with each group) as they arrive, until all the children have arrived, and have been taken to school
  - Always have two adults at the Remote Drop Off Location for the safety of students on-site.

### Logistics:

#### **Engage your partners. Partners can include:**

- Parents

- Administrators
- Community volunteers
- Local Businesses

- Teachers

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#### **Partner roles:**

- Route design
- Determining Remote Drop Off Locations Performing health checks
- Recruiting families
- Coordinating timing and schedule
- Leading the walk to school
- Identifying "pit stops" along the way (often with local businesses) in case of issues that may arise

#### **Decide how many Remote Drop Off locations to set up**

Ideally, you will have several, so families in multiple locations in your community can participate

#### Identify Remote Drop-Off locations. A good drop off location has the following characteristics:

- It is near where families live, without having to pass the school to get there
  - If necessary use anonymized student addresses to determine where students reside
  - Develop a map based on those addresses
  - Determine drop-off locations based on the resulting map of student residences
- There is good infrastructure in place for students to walk to the school from the drop off site (sidewalks, crosswalks, etc.)
- It is large enough for cars to park and for students to wait while enough. students arrive to take to school
- The drop off site is within a mile from the school, 2 miles if students are biking.

#### **Determine the frequency of your Remote Drop Off events. You may** organize these for special events, weekly or monthly walks, or on a daily basis.

#### Plan timing of walk/bike to school

- Do a test walk or bike of your chosen route, keeping track of how long it takes to walk from the starting point to school.
  - Note that children walk more slowly than adults, or about 20-25 minutes per mile.

#### Create a map with Remote Drop Off Locations and departure times. Your map may be online, printed, or hand-drawn.

Share map with all participants, and make sure it is always available to families