

# 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.





## **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





## **Partner roles:**

- Route design
- Determining Remote Drop Off Locations
- Recruiting families
- Coordinating timing and schedule
- Leading the walk to school
- Performing health checks
- 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