



SAN DIEGO COUNTY
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Step-by-Step: Instructions for Starting a Walking School Bus

Resources for Faith Communities

Since the invention of television, video games, and computers, electronic gadgets have competed for children's time to play outside and explore their communities for entertainment. In many neighborhoods regardless of the electronic gadgets, parents/guardians feel real concerns about the safety of their children walking or biking to school. Increased amount of screen time and less time outdoors puts children at risk for becoming overweight or obese. Obesity trends in the U.S. continue to rise and according to The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, only 13 percent of all trips to school are made by walking and bicycling. This is a stark contrast from the more than 50 percent of students who walked to school in 1969, as reported by [Science Daily](#). Adults and children can be physically active, enjoy a safe walk daily and build relationships with friends and neighbors by starting a walking school bus.

What is a walking school bus?

A walking school bus is a group of children walking to school accompanied by one or more adults. Adults act as "walking school bus drivers" picking children up along designated walking school bus stops and walking them safely to school.

Benefits:

- A chance to be more physically active.
- Increase children's alertness at school.
- Develop "street smarts" & practice safe pedestrian skills.
- Learn more about the environment.
- Spend time visiting with friends.
- Decrease traffic congestion, pollution & speed around school.
- Detour criminal activity from taking place around school and school routes.
- Make connections with neighbors to create safer neighborhoods for children to play.

How to Get Started:

Start Small- There is always room to grow!

- Research the web links below.
- Invite friends who live nearby to participate.
- Decide how often and when the walking school bus will operate; you may want to start with one week or one day a week.
- Develop ground rules to ensure the children's safety.
- Locate a potential route(s).
- Talk with the school administration about your plan, secure their approval, and discuss any training that volunteers or students might need.
- Gain the buy-in of any additional project partners (school staff, law enforcement officers, other community leaders).
- Develop outreach materials for volunteers and the parents of potential "school bus riders".
- Conduct a volunteer training.
- Test the route(s) with volunteers.
- Plan a date to kick-off the walking school bus. (International Walk to School Month is in October, which is a great time to start).
- Recruit "school bus riders" and get started.

Safety Tips:

- Pick routes that have crosswalks, sidewalks & paths.
- Pick routes that feel safe from criminal activity, etc.
- Pick routes that have little traffic or where drivers behave well.
- The Walkability Checklist listed below under resources is a great tool to assess routes for safety.

Need more help? Check out the resources below:

Walkability Checklist, Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center

<http://www.walktoschool.org/eventideas/checklists.cfm>

Starting a Walking School Bus

<http://www.walkingschoolbus.org>

International Walk to School in the USA

<http://www.walktoschool-usa.org/>

KidsWalk-to-School guide, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/kidswalk/resources.htm>

Walk to School Day, Pennsylvania Advocates for Nutrition and Activity (PANA)

<http://nrgbalance.org/for-schools/nrgwalks-walk-to-school-day.cfm>

***Adapted from Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center. (2009). Starting a walking school bus. Retrieved August 10, 2009 from

<http://www.walkingschoolbus.org>.

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