

Walking School Bus

How-to Guide



The following is a guide to implementing a Walking School Bus program at your school. The goal is to start with a few routes run primarily by parents, then transition into a program that gives every student access to a safe, chaperoned route. This transition will be most successful when a designated school administrator or PTA member is overseeing the program. Please keep in mind that the Walking School Bus program is designed to be flexible and should be tailored to meet the needs of your students and community.

What is a Walking School Bus?

A Walking School Bus is a group of children walking to and from school with one or more adults. It's like a carpool — without the car — and with the added benefits of exercise and the company of friends and neighbors.

A Walking School Bus helps to:

- Increase daily physical activity for children and adults in the neighborhood.
- Increase safety for pedestrians in the neighborhood.
- Reduce traffic in and around the neighborhood and school.
- Increase community cohesion by helping neighbors get to know one another.

If a few or more of your students are walking to school with an adult, then congratulations — your school already has at least one Walking School Bus and a good start at developing a more comprehensive program!

Why develop a Walking School Bus?

Studies show that fewer children are walking and biking to school now compared to 20 years ago. Safety is often the main reason parents are hesitant to let their children walk to school. Encouraging students to walk to school requires creative solutions that are safe and fun — a Walking School Bus can be both.

How do you implement the Walking School Bus program school-wide?

Schoolwide implementation of the Walking School Bus program is designed to expand the informal routes that currently exist, giving all students access to a Walking School Bus. The following are suggestions to implement a Walking School Bus program at your school:

1. Appoint a school administrator or PTA member to be in charge of the program.

- Implementing the program schoolwide is an important job and should be given to someone with the time and ability to bridge the needs and desires of both school administrators and parents.

2. Work with parents to identify existing walking routes.

- Use parents with existing Walking School Bus routes as advocates to help gain support in the community for an expanded program.

3. Determine safest routes for all students based on your school's SNAP Map.

- Identify central locations in neighborhoods close to the school to serve as the routes for students.
- Designate a meeting point at a public parking lot or near a location where cars can park to allow families who live too far to walk to still participate. This location should be less than a mile from the school.
- Verify that every student is assigned and has access to a route regardless of where they live.

4. Use implementation tools* to promote the program with students and parents.

- Send an introduction letter and/or survey to parents/guardians to gauge the interest of parents.
- Communicate to parents when the Walking School Bus will begin, as well as the rules, designated staging areas, meeting place, routes and times. Some schools may choose to hold a meeting for families to get acquainted and ask questions.
- Send a letter/email to parents with your school's SNAP Map indicating where the staging points are located and the rules of the staging points. Rules can include:
 - When the Walking School Bus will leave.
 - What parents should do if their children will be absent.
 - What parents should tell their children about pedestrian safety and appropriate behavior when walking to school.
 - Consent form for participation.
 - Late arrival policy.
 - School delay and inclement weather policy.
 - Whom to contact with the school if they have questions.

5. Recruit volunteers.

- For adequate adult supervision, the following adult-to-student ratios are suggested:
 - One adult per three children ages 4 to 6.
 - One adult per six children ages 7 to 9.
 - Fewer adults may be necessary for children ages 10 and older.

6. Train volunteers on walking safety.

- For safety training, please visit the Walking School Bus at www.walkingschoolbus.org/safety.pdf.



7. Mobilize volunteers and start walking.

- Anytime is a good time to start the Walking School Bus program. Being consistent and making it fun for students will help the program grow.

Can students who ride the bus or live outside school boundaries still participate?

Yes. If you have students who ride the bus, designate a route(s) that begins at an approved drop-off location a mile or less from school. Invite parents of students who ride the bus to serve as chaperones on those routes.

Where can you find a copy of the school's SNAP MAP?

Contact your principal to get a copy of your school's SNAP Map, and let him/her know if updates are needed to the routes. Or, email us at snap@utah.gov for assistance in creating or accessing your map.

* Implementation tools are available at udot.utah.gov/snap.