

## Walking bus

### What are they?

The Walking Bus is a group of primary school children who walk to and from school. The groups are supervised by adults. The goals and benefits of this activity are multiples.

### What are the benefits?

#### For children:

- To get to school safely and in time
- To gain autonomy and sense of responsibility
- To develop and individuals part of a community and a team
- To get familiar with their neighbourhood
- To make friends while having fun walking to school



#### For parents and family:

- To get families to know each other and feel part of a larger community
- To strength the links of parents to the school
- To save money not using the car
- To save time, sharing with other parents the obligation of taking their children to school

#### For the whole community:

- Reduce traffic congestion, pollution, and speed near schools
- Encourage physical activity by teaching children the skills to walk safely, how to identify safe routes to school, and the benefits of walking.
- Raise concern for the environment.
- Take back neighbourhoods for people on foot.
- Reduce traffic congestion, pollution, and speed near schools.
- Share valuable time with local community leaders, parents, and children.

### How do they work?

It is organised as a group of parents and teachers, who live along and close to a route walk to school, and collect children at "picking up" points along the way.

They collaborate walking with the Bus on a rota system.

The routes are previously designed and checked by the local police/parents and staff to make sure that they are safe.

### How do I help to set one up?

The approach:

#### 1. Set up a steering committee

Fist of all it is necessary to evaluate the interest of the parents during an information meeting.

The first step is then to establish a Walking Bus Steering Committee. It could be constituted by: enthusiastic parents/volunteers, school principal, teachers, representatives of the local police, representatives of the town council, members of the LEA.

Its functions are: establish the functioning of the Walking Bus (routes, stops, timetable, etc), coordinate the volunteers, register the Walking Bus users, report the incidents.

## **2. Survey on the transport modes**

Before acting, it is necessary to know the current situation. It is important to know the habits of the parents and the feasibility of such an organisation.

Send questionnaires for parents to identify their willingness to participate in such a project. Include questions to be answered by children to know their preferences to go to school. A prize can be offered as an incentive to have the questionnaires back.

## **3. Decision regarding the local needs and possibilities**

Arrange a meeting with the parents who are interested in the project.

Present how the "Walking Bus" will operate and give forms to the interested participants to complete with further information on contact details, times and dates volunteers will be available each week.

## **4. Solutions proposal, discussion and action plan**

The Steering Committee will define suitable routes for the bus. These routes should maximize accessibility and suitable pedestrian infrastructure. It will be necessary maps of the town that can be supplied by the town council.

Moreover, suitable "pick up" points should be selected. It's important that children have a "pick up" point as near home as possible. The routes must be checked by the local police/parents/staff to determine its safety.

Information about the routes (track, location of the "pick up" points, bus timetable) must be edited and delivered to the parents.

A coordinator for each route must be appointed. It can be a volunteer or a member of the Steering Committee. S/he will be the point of contact for particular route for parents to notify absence on a particular day or answer any enquires. It is important to provide the coordinator with an Accident Report Book to register any improper behaviour of the children, accidents, points of the route that are becoming a safety concern or any feedback from parents.

## **5. Implementation of the system**

Each route must have at least two volunteers to escort the children ("drivers"). The route coordinator must devise a rota for volunteers and issue details to them. One possibility is to involve a group of pensioners of the town to act as volunteers.

The list of volunteers and their contact details should be given to parents who have registered their children for the Walking Bus.

Reflective jackets must be delivered to all children registered for the Walking Bus.

Parents must sign an agreement and consent forms for their children participation in the Walking Bus.

It is recommended to organise a talk for the children about road safety before starting with the Walking Bus.

It is recommended a ratio of 1 adult to 4 infants (children between 4 and 6) and 1 adult to 8 juniors (children between 7 and 11).

It is very important that the registers are updated regularly by the Walking Bus Steering Committee and that everyone involved is informed.

## **6. Monitoring and evaluation:**

For the evaluation of the project a questionnaire can be delivered to participating parents and children. It will include a section for suggestions so that the service could be improved.

## **What are the costs?**

The cost will vary regarding the number of pupils and schools included and the number of lines open.

For example:

A study and test by a private study office for 2 schools is 18 500€

Communication and safety accessories can represent between 4700€ and 5000€

It is necessary to evaluate the cost of a person in charge of the coordination of the project: 400h can be necessary .

## Unsuccess/risk factors

- The implication of parents and teachers: difficult to motivate them to start the project and to go on with it.
- Find volunteers to accompany the children (a solution would be to find volunteers in other group of people: retired people or students)
- Help of the council and the police for safety: for securing the area
- Hard environmental context of the street
- Maintain time table
- Alternative routes in case of woks or strike in the streets

## The most likely sucess factor.

- Communication toward the targeted publics
- The targeted public build the walking bus project : Involvement of parents, of the teacher of head of school
- Clear rules and information

## More information:

**Official Website of International Walk to School**

[www.iwalktoschool.org](http://www.iwalktoschool.org)

**The walking bus: a safe way for children to walk to school (Friends of the Earth, UK)**

[http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/factsheets/walking\\_bus.pdf](http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/factsheets/walking_bus.pdf)

**Italian site**

<http://www.piedibus.it/>

**Living Streets – Walk to School**

<http://www.walktoschool.org.uk/>



**How to set up a 'walking bus'**

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/schooltravel/grantsforwalkingbuses/howtosetupawalkingbus>

**French sites**

How to set up a walkin'bus in 10 points :

[http://www.chambery-metropole.fr/uploads/Document/WEB\\_CHEMIN\\_4574\\_1189094689.pdf](http://www.chambery-metropole.fr/uploads/Document/WEB_CHEMIN_4574_1189094689.pdf)

or experiences

<http://www.tousapied.org/le-pedibus/>

[http://www.ademe.fr/paysdelaloire/sup/transport\\_ouilsPDE.asp](http://www.ademe.fr/paysdelaloire/sup/transport_ouilsPDE.asp)