

# Walking Bus

Guidance for schools, parents/carers, and  
volunteers



# Note

This document has been produced by the Sustainable Travel Team at Shropshire Council as part of our new Active Travel Toolkit for schools. The information provided should be treated as guidance on how to establish a walking bus and can be used by schools, parents/carers and volunteers.

Requirements for your school and from your liability insurer may be different so please ensure to check these before setting up a Walking Bus.

# Contact

For questions about this guidance please contact us by email:  
[sustainabletravelplanning@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:sustainabletravelplanning@shropshire.gov.uk).

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# What is a walking bus?

A walking bus is a group of children walking to school supervised by one or more adults. It can be a structured route with meeting points, a timetable, and a regularly rotated schedule of trained volunteers or as informal as friends taking each other's children to school. This initiative can combine with a 'Park and Stride' site where parents that live further away or on their way to work, can park safely at one of the Walking Bus 'stops'.

## Why have a walking bus?

- Promotes healthy exercise for both the pupils and adults
- Makes the journey to school safer
- Helps ease congestion outside the school
- Gives children and adults a sociable journey to school
- Can save time and help parents / carers get to work
- Assists with the development of road safety awareness
- Helps with lateness and improving attendance
- Benefits the school with completing Modeshift STARS



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# Setting up your walking bus

## Step 1 – Is a walking bus needed?

- Speak to parents / carers to find out who would use the walking bus, where they live and if they are able to volunteer.
- Are any of the volunteers willing to be the co-ordinator (responsible for ensuring the smooth running of the Walking Bus) or Leader (leads the Walking Bus).
- Find out how much time and when each volunteer can give.
- Volunteer coordinator can then develop this into a timetable for volunteers.

## Step 2 – Preparation

- Volunteers will need to have Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks arranged by the school. This can take a few weeks so include this in setting your start date.
- Agree the route to accommodate the pupils that will use the Walking Bus, taking into account suitable pavements and safe crossing points – the Sustainable Travel Team can help with this.
- Walk the route at a time that the Walking Bus will be in operation and risk assess (see below for Risk Assessment template).
- Set up a volunteer rota (adult to child ratios of 1:4 for KS1 and 1:8 for KS2).

## Step 3 – Materials and resources

- Purchase high visibility jackets for adults and children.
- Consider paying a member of staff to co-ordinate, organise and manage the admin and rota.
- PTA, local business sponsorship or pupil premium could help with these costs. For more information contact the Sustainable Travel Team.

## Step 4 – Paperwork and consents

- Ensure the school's public liability insurance covers a Walking Bus.
- Complete your risk assessment and get this signed off by the Headteacher.
- Arrange for consent forms to be completed by parents / carers for each child participating.



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## Step 5 – Ready to go

<b>Check list for appointed Walking Bus Co-ordinator / Leader:</b>		
Volunteer and child rota	A record of all the children and volunteers scheduled on that day's walking bus.	Print off and carry whilst on the walking bus
Volunteer details	Contact details for all volunteers including the reserve volunteers	Print off and carry whilst on the walking bus
Details of each child on the walking bus	Emergency contact and medical details for all involved	Print off and carry whilst on the walking bus
Risk Assessment of route and stops		Print off and carry whilst on the walking bus



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# Sample Risk Assessment

Description of the proposed route and stops (give as much detail as possible, including roads and paths used and timings)

Bus Stop 1	
Bus Stop 2	
Bus Stop 3	
Bus Stop 4	

Identify any hazards on the route, and what you need to do about them (see below for examples) Different times of year mean different hazards so review summer and winter

Hazard / Location	What needs to be done

Sign off matrix			
	Name	Sign	Dated
Risk assessment carried out by:			
Headteacher Sign Off			
Date of next review:			



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Example of Hazard	Ways to reduce risk
<p>Footway</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>width, surface condition i.e. slippery surface/ leaves</li> <li>no pavement</li> <li>Vegetation (trees/ bushes)</li> <li>Other obstructions i.e. Bin Day</li> </ul>	<p><b>Be aware</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children to hold hands and be reminded to keep away from the kerb</li> <li>be aware</li> <li>Volunteers to ensure care is taken when group descends wet or slippery slopes</li> <li>Remind participants to be weary of uneven footways</li> </ul> <p><b>Contact The Council</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walking Bus Coordinator to call Shropshire Council in autumn if path is covered in leaves.</li> <li>Walking Bus Coordinator to call Shropshire Council if footway is obstructed by vegetation</li> </ul>
<p>Visibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>from child height</li> <li>child to driver</li> </ul>	<p><b>Be aware</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Point out the difficult visibility; crouch down to child's height to demonstrate child's sight line.</li> </ul> <p><b>Route</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Point out where to walk for clear visibility and reduction of potential conflict with moving traffic</li> </ul>
<p>Parked cars</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wing mirrors</li> <li>Opening doors</li> </ul>	<p><b>Be aware</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extra care to be taken behind parked cars, and children encouraged to be aware also.</li> <li>Where there are lines of parked cars point out wing mirrors and remind to check for occupants who may be opening doors.</li> </ul> <p><b>Training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Give a quick run through on what is covered in how to cross a road with parked cars during volunteer training.</li> </ul>
<p>Junctions, visibility/ complexity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Narrow corners</li> </ul>	<p><b>Be aware</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrate looking beyond sight line, remind about children holding hands at this point, walking straight across, looking and listening.</li> <li>Point out clearly how many and from which directions traffic can come and they will need to look. Suggest that they point this out to children and encourage children to take part in checking all directions before crossing</li> </ul>



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	<p><b>Training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procedure for approaching this junction covered in volunteer training</li> </ul> <p><b>Single File</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For a narrow corner children can walk in single line along narrow paved areas and parents with buggies fit in behind their child to maintain single file</li> </ul>
<p>Crossing points</p>	<p><b>Route</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the signal crossing</li> <li>• Defer crossing the road until much nearer the school</li> <li>• Cross road earlier to avoid dangerous section of road or where route is more appropriate on other side of the carriageway</li> <li>• Cross where visibility is good</li> </ul> <p><b>Be aware</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When using signal crossing watch the lights carefully and ensure that the traffic has stopped before starting to cross the children</li> <li>• Bring all children out of the footpath and line up alongside the road so that they can see, cross in one group</li> <li>• Split the bus into groups, and cross them over with adequate adult to child ratio, so that all children can see the road prior to crossing</li> </ul> <p><b>Training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Route training covers procedure</li> </ul>
<p>Entrances/ Exits/ Driveways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building sites/ possible site of development</li> </ul>	<p><b>Be aware</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be aware of traffic entering and leaving at this point</li> </ul> <p><b>Contact external organisation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School to write to organisation on site to highlight Walking Bus route.</li> <li>• Walking Bus Coordinator agreed with organisation to ask customers not to park on pavement during the school run. Non-compliance is reported to local beat Police Team</li> </ul> <p><b>Training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteer training to include site specific information as a hazard area</li> </ul>



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Other pedestrian flow	<p><b>Single file</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To allow pedestrians to pass children can walk in single line along narrow paved areas and parents with buggies fit in behind their child to maintain single file</li> </ul>
Street lighting	<p><b>Be aware</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remind children and volunteers to watch out for lamp posts and posts for signs</li> </ul>
Weather, flooding	<p><b>Route</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Locate bus stops for Walking Bus near to bus shelter for use if weather is very bad</li> <li>Have variations of route pending on dry or wet weather (e.g. for routes across fields)</li> </ul>
<p>Air pollution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traffic fumes</li> </ul>	<p><b>Route</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avoid routes along busy main roads</li> <li>Carry out a 'Cleaner Routes to School' exercise to determine less polluted routes</li> </ul>
Dog mess/ aggressive dog	<p><b>Be aware</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remind everyone to be aware of where they are putting their feet.</li> <li>Leader to be aware of any dog fouling and alert group</li> </ul> <p><b>Contact Police</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If dogs are acting in a dangerous or aggressive manner (giving people reasonable fear of attack), the leader should contact the Police on 101 unless an emergency where you should dial 999.</li> </ul>



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