

Walking School Bus Information

Definition

A *Walking School Bus* is a group of students who walk to and from school along a set route, accompanied by supervising adults. One adult is at the front of the 'bus' while the other adult supervises at the rear. The *Walking School Bus* picks up or drops off 'passengers' at designated stops on the way to and/or from school.

Background

It is recommended the:

- intended audience for this document is P&C representatives, volunteers and school principals
- decision to implement a *Walking School Bus* is made in consultation with the school community. Careful consideration in planning is advisable before implementation.
- implementation and management of a *Walking School Bus* is coordinated by the P&C, with school leadership consultation.
- local council's Road Safety Officer and Police Youth Liaison Officer may be able to provide support in planning / implementing a *Walking School Bus* at your school.

Responsibility

Parents and carers are responsible for how their child travels to and from school.

It is recommended that:

- the implementation and management of a *Walking School Bus* is coordinated by the P&C/parent or volunteer group.
- the group organising the program are responsible for regularly reviewing and evaluating the *Walking School Bus* program to check for ongoing safety and risk management.
- there is consultation with the school principal to review the activity to align with local school procedures.
- schools take over responsibility and duty of care for the student once they enter the school premises.

Making a decision

After examining all considerations and additional specific factors it is recommended the organiser check for ongoing safety and risk management as evidence to support the decision to proceed with the *Walking School Bus* initiative.

- Communicate all decisions with the school Principal.
- Contact your [Road Safety Education Officer](#), [local council](#) and/or the [Parents and Community Association](#) for further assistance.
- Review [safe travel advice](#) for walking and Transport for NSW's [Safety Town](#) for advice for families.

Considerations to be made by the organisers

Organisers are to consider the unique aspects of each *Walking School Bus* and tailor their strategies according to their local contexts. These considerations are a guide and not designed to be used as a definitive checklist.

Planning

- volunteer to student ratio clearly defined
- age of each student is considered, so an adult can hold a child's hand if under 8 years of age.

Volunteers and supervisors:

- have a *Working with Children Check for Volunteers*
- are given access to training and resources to support them in the role
- are provided with:
 - a) knowledge of safe road user behaviours and management practices
 - b) expectations of the role
 - c) routes/timetables and safety procedures.

Management of permission and attendance

Parental permission notes are:

- received for all students who travel on the *Walking School Bus*
- stored and shared with the school, so students can be released to the volunteers of the program after school.

Procedures are developed for:

- the management of attendance lists and absent/late/new students
- the management of behaviour issues of bus 'passengers' in the traffic environment
- wet weather, changes in routine, emergencies and clearly communicated to parents and carers
- absent/late/unavailable bus 'drivers' and supervisors.

For Privacy issues, P&C are to maintain all documentation.

Route

- risk assessment of the route to be developed by the organising group
- route, distance, time, direction and crossing locations communicated to school and school community
- routes are regularly reviewed to evaluate safety
- hazards communicated to volunteers and students.

Possible strategies to assist volunteers:

- Carry communication devices, such as mobile phones or walkie talkies if mobile reception is poor
- Carry a first aid kit
- Access to direct contact details for parents/carers and the school
- School bus 'drivers' wear high visibility vests
- Knowledge/plan of what to do in the event of an emergency
- Clear communication channels developed around routes/timetables and procedures. These are readily accessible to the whole school community
- Key pedestrian safety messages are provided to and reinforced by parents/carers, students, staff and the walking school bus drivers and supervisors.

Add any other considerations you will need to discuss with your parent community