

How to promote walking and biking to school

Most Safe Routes to School programs aim to increase the number of students who safely walk or bicycle between home and school. SRTS programs encourage walking and bicycling to school in a variety of ways. Activities include installing or upgrading pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, conducting education and encouragement campaigns, and increasing law enforcement along the route to school. Read on to learn about walking school buses and bike trains and how they are tools for promoting walking and biking to school.

Snapshot: A foot-powered bus in Winterville

The Langston Farms neighborhood is ideally situated for its families to walk and bike to Ridgewood Elementary School. Ten years ago when the school opened, a few families joined forces to start a cooperative walking school bus, and the program continues to be run by dedicated parents who take turns walking neighborhood students to and from school every day. The walking school bus helps foster a strong sense of community within the neighborhood, acquainting families who otherwise may have never known each other.

Amanda Funai, an experienced walking school bus leader, notes that the walking school bus saves time compared to driving her kids to school every day. A schedule is set so that a parent from each participating family walks students two to three of the ten school trips per week. A phone notification system lets parents know if inclement weather will change the daily routine. Early on, a Walking School Bus Council helped set policies for participation so that students and families know what to expect.

Funai encourages getting the school involved – even if it is only to advertise the program. She also suggests having a way sustain excitement for kids – a once-per-week biking option has been a big hit.