



A GUIDE TO SETTING UP A

WALKING BUS

A useful guide for schools,
parents, and other
interested parties.



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INTRODUCTION

Do you want the streets around school to be safer with fewer vehicles and less congestion?

Then a Walking Bus could be for you.

THE WALKING BUS

The Walking Bus will improve children's health and road sense, and will also reduce congestion and pollution around school gates. The following pages are a guide to setting up a Walking Bus in North Yorkshire.

What is a Walking Bus?

A "Walking Bus" is the term used to describe a scheme where children are walked to school in an organised group, usually led by volunteer parents with a member of teaching staff.

The children usually walk in pairs, along a set route, with a 'driver' at the front and a 'conductor' at the back, this is where the term 'Walking Bus' comes from.

Everyone wears a high visibility tabard so that the Walking Bus can be easily identified and seen by drivers and will also enable the children to feel they 'belong' within the Walking Bus. A sign stating '<school name> Walking Bus' can also be used.

Like a bus, there are scheduled stops along the route, where children are collected at agreed times.

Benefits of a Walking Bus:

- Children learn essential road safety skills on their journey to school- making them safer, wiser, and more independent.
- Congestion and pollution around school is reduced as fewer car journeys are made.
- Parents can share the duty of getting children to school.
- Children get more exercise and may arrive at school better prepared for the day ahead- arriving awake and alert.



HOW TO SET UP A WALKING BUS

As soon as you have decided that you would like to set up a Walking Bus, it would be advisable to decide who in the school will take the lead on this.

Establishing demand

It is very important from the outset that a firm estimate of the likely demand for the Walking Bus is established.

Establishing the availability of volunteers.

It is also crucial to establish the availability of parents willing to help.

Each Walking Bus must be supervised by a minimum of two adult volunteers.

Recommended ratio of adult supervisors to children is: 1:8 for juniors, 1:4 for infants.

Gathering Information

To establish the number of potential Bus passengers and volunteers, a letter could be sent to all parents via the school.

Working out a specific route needs to be identified.

Safety is the priority, and careful planning will be needed to ensure that the route is as safe as possible, all road safety procedures are followed and potential hazards reduced i.e. is there a crossing available, dropped kerbs along the route, streetlights, wide enough pathways. Routes can be assessed by your school Walking Bus coordinator and your local North Yorkshire Council Sustainable Travel Officer can support the school with this.



FAQ'S

Which type of Walking Bus is best?

Some Walking Buses simply start at a given departure point with a full load of passengers and volunteers, and end at the school without collecting further passengers en-route. Others work on "Request Stop" basis, whereby passengers are picked up at pre-arranged stops at specific times.

How often should the bus run?

Find out the demand for a Walking Bus, whether that's every day, just a couple of days or just one-way.

Walking Buses could start off by operating for just one morning a week, it may then be possible to expand. It should be remembered that any Walking Bus scheme will help to reduce car journeys and even a slight reduction in traffic levels can be beneficial.

Getting volunteers to run the Bus.

This is the crucial element to the success of any Walking Bus. The support and commitment from parents and teachers is essential.

For each Walking Bus it is necessary to establish a lead volunteer, this should be a member of staff from school. They will be responsible for running the Bus, and duties will include keeping a register of the passengers and liaising with the other volunteers to ensure the Bus is fully staffed and runs on time.

The lead volunteer will act as the first point of contact for the parents and children using the Bus, so must be prepared to be contacted at home if a child cannot catch the Bus on a given day. Given this level of responsibility, a back-up lead volunteer should be identified who can assist when needed.



Volunteer Recruitment Tips

1. Start with Personal Invitations

Approach parents individually during school drop-off or pick-up. A friendly, personal ask often works better than a general announcement.

2. Highlight the Benefits for Volunteers

- "It's a great way to meet other parents."
- "You'll help make the school run safer and greener."
- "It only takes 20-30 minutes a day."

3. Offer Flexible Commitment

Allow volunteers to choose days that suit them – e.g. even one morning a week helps.

4. Recognize and Appreciate Volunteers

- Certificates or thank you notes from the school.
- Mention their contribution in newsletters or assemblies.
- Organize a small thank-you coffee morning at the end of term.

5. Make It Fun

Suggest themed walks (e.g., "Superhero Day" where volunteers wear capes) to make the experience enjoyable.

6. Use Multiple Channels

Promote through school newsletters, WhatsApp groups, and social media.

THE ROLE FOR PARENTS OF BUS PASSENGERS

Parents need to ensure they get their child(ren) to the right stop in plenty of time each day and are punctual in collecting them at the end of the day.

It is important that parents spend time discussing road safety issues with their children and their behaviour. Parents/guardians will be required to sign a consent form before their child(ren) use the Walking Bus.

If someone other than the usual person is to collect a child, the school must be informed as soon as possible so that the leader can be advised. If no one turns up, the lead co-ordinator will have to return the child to the school.

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

The school should consider creating a system of incentives or rewards for children who use the Walking Bus. Basic incentive schemes might include giving out stickers, house points or certificates.

EVALUATING THE WALKING BUS

The school, lead volunteers and parents should meet regularly to evaluate how the Bus has been operating.

North Yorkshire Sustainable Travel team can provide hi-vis tabards to schools who establish Walking Buses.

For more information, please contact opennorthyorkshire@northyorks.gov.uk

Volunteers:

- Must wear high visibility tabards (fluorescent and reflective)
- Have a valid DBS check
- Follow the highway code fully including the Green Cross Code



WALKING BUS GUIDELINES

- Everybody on the Walking Bus wears a high visibility tabard
- Leaders have contact lists for all passengers
- Leaders count people on and off the Bus
- Children are responsible for their own possessions
- Children must always obey the Walking Bus leaders
- The Bus will run regardless of the weather
- The Bus will depart at
- The Bus will wait no longer than five minutes maximum at each stop
- Children and parents carry the responsibility to arrive at their Bus stops on time
- Children and leaders must always act in a responsible and courteous manner to the public and those on the Walking Bus
- Frequent lateness and bad behaviour can result in expulsion from the Walking Bus
- The leader must be notified of any change or cancellation at least 15 minutes before the Bus
- In an emergency dial 999. Then contact the school.



For more information or advice please contact
opennorthyorkshire@northyorks.gov.uk

Example parental interest and example consent forms can
be downloaded from **opennorthyorkshire.co.uk**