

OREGON SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL
BIKE BUS TOOLKIT



Oregon Department of Transportation
Safe Routes to School



ALTA • COMMUTE OPTIONS • CYCLE OREGON • THE STREET TRUST

Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge the participation of the following individuals and organizations in the development of this Bike Bus toolkit.

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OREGON SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) advances students' options to bike, walk, and roll to school by supporting safety-oriented programs and infrastructure.

Do you have more questions about Bike Buses or Safe Routes to School (SRTS) in Oregon? Contact the Oregon Department of Transportation's SRTS Technical Assistance Providers Team at: www.oregonsaferoutes.org

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Introduction

Bike Buses

A bike bus, also known as a bike train or bike convoy, is a group of students who bicycle together along a predetermined route to get kids to school. The concept of a bike bus is similar to that of a traditional school bus, where multiple passengers travel together under the supervision of one or more adults.



Photo credit: Megan Ramey



Photo credit: Megan Ramey

Toolkit Objectives

This toolkit is intended to support SRTS Coordinators, parents, caregivers, teachers, school staff, and anyone interested in forming a bike bus in their community. The toolkit provides information and guidance on the following elements:

BIKE BUS PROGRAM CREATION

This toolkit serves as a comprehensive guide that outlines the step-by-step process of setting up and running a bike bus program, including identifying leaders and designing safe routes.

SAFETY MEASURES AND PROTOCOLS

This toolkit will help to establish safety guidelines and protocols for bike bus participants, emphasizing the use of helmets and adherence to traffic rules.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

This toolkit provides training and educational resources to bike bus leaders and caregivers, covering topics such as bike maintenance, road safety, and route planning.

OUTREACH AND EVALUATION

This toolkit will help to set up mechanisms to collect data on participation, attendance, and feedback from participants, allowing for continuous evaluation and improvement of the bike bus program.

SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING

Lastly, this toolkit will help in developing strategies to ensure the long-term sustainability and growth of the bike bus program beyond its initial launch.



Photo credit: Megan Ramey

Bike Bus Benefits

SAFETY

Cycling in a group increases visibility and reduces the chances of crashes, making it safer for participating students, especially when navigating busy streets or intersections.

SOCIAL INTERACTION

Bike buses foster a sense of community. Students can exercise together prior to arrival at school, allowing students to arrive at class awake, focused, and ready to learn!

ENCOURAGES CYCLING

Riding in a group can motivate people who may be hesitant to cycle alone, helping them build confidence and adopt cycling as a regular mode of transportation.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Encouraging more people to cycle instead of drive can reduce local traffic congestion and vehicle emissions, contributing to a healthier environment.

HEALTH BENEFITS

Commuting to school by bike has been shown to improve student health, and by getting some exercise in the morning, students arrive at school refreshed and ready to learn.

Getting Started

1. DEFINE THE PURPOSE

Determine the goals you want to achieve, such as promoting active transportation, reducing traffic congestion, reducing absenteeism, improving student safety, or having fun and celebrating biking. This goal will guide how you develop your program.

2. IDENTIFY PARTNERS

Identify the key partners who will be involved in the bike bus. This may include school administrators, teachers, parents, students, local community members, law enforcement, and transportation officials.

3. IDENTIFY RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

Assess the available resources, infrastructure, and support that can contribute to the success of a bike bus. This may include route planning, volunteer support, and cooperation from local authorities.

4. ASSESS SAFETY AND ROUTE CONCERNS

Evaluate the potential biking routes, including road conditions, traffic volume, intersections, crossing points, and steep hills. A good bike bus route avoids crossing major streets without a signal or designated crossing, but those may be unavoidable. Having more adult riders can support students navigating challenging areas.



TIP: BikeBusPDX.org is an online resource for all things bike bus related in Portland!



Photo credit: Megan Ramey

CENTER ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVITY

- Ensure that the bike bus program is accessible and inclusive to all students, including those with disabilities. Identify potential barriers and ways to proactively accommodate diverse needs. Always plan for enough travel time for slow and young riders to participate!
- Non-profit organizations such as [Bikes for Humanity](#) in Portland and [Bicycle Resource of Bend](#) can help outfit riders with the bikes they need.

CASE STUDIES

May Street School Bike Bus, Hood River

May Street School's bike bus began in October 2020 when the principal asked Megan Ramey, a May Street School parent, to plan a bike parade on National Walk and Roll to School Day. Students, faculty, and staff had been distance learning since March of 2020, and they missed seeing each other's faces. The school community had concerns about the social well-being of everyone and looked for a safe, distant way to celebrate together. A bike bus was able to fit all those safety requirements.

The National Walk and Roll to School Day Ride received widespread community support and energized leaders and the school district to apply for grants to fund the first program for the county. Three years later, the coalition has raised \$11 million, and Megan is now the Safe Routes to School Manager.

When in-person teaching resumed in February 2021, Megan was able to piggy-back off the success of her October bike bus. May Street School organized three bike routes to bring students to school. The routes were designed to reflect the housing patterns of students but also as a way for the community to create pressure for safety improvements along key corridors.

Megan regularly shares her insights and information on social media channels.

LinkedIn - www.linkedin.com/in/megan-ramey-bikes/

Twitter - [@bikabout](https://twitter.com/bikabout)

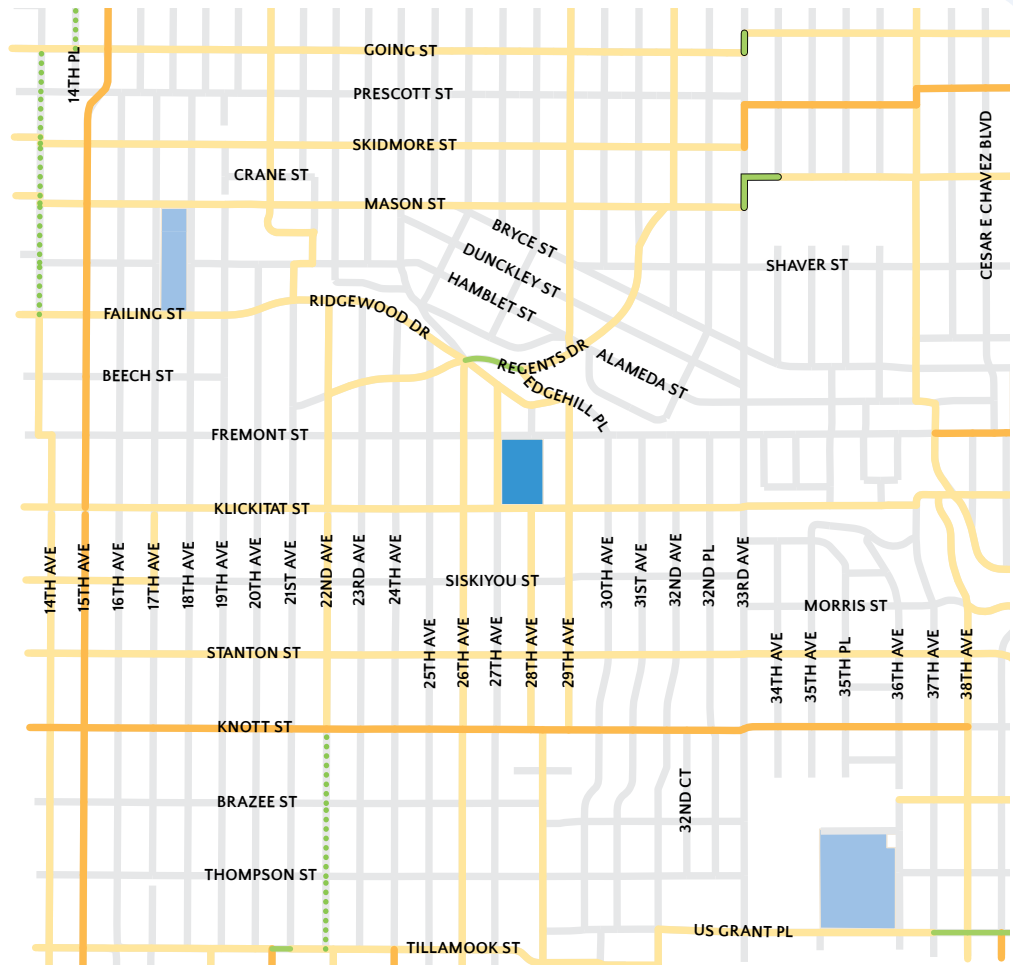
Instagram - [@hoodriverwalkandroll](https://www.instagram.com/hoodriverwalkandroll)



Photo credit: Megan Ramey

LEGEND

- Advisory Bike Lane
- Bike Lane
- Protected Bike Lane
- Separated In-Roadway
- Neighborhood Greenway
- Alameda Elementary
- Other School



Alameda Bike Bus, Portland

Bike buses in Portland Metro Area have received national recognition, particularly Alameda Elementary School's Bike Bus with Coach Balto. Alameda Elementary school is uniquely positioned at the confluence of several different Greenways in North East Portland. Every morning, hundreds of students navigate the greenways and residential streets to meet the larger group headed by Coach Balto.

Coach Balto works hard to make sure the bike is a safe, inclusive, and fun experience! Coach Balto has used his platform to advocate for improved infrastructure across Portland. A unique combination of Coach Balto's strong advocacy

for students to bike to school and the City of Portland's investment into the bike facilities within Alameda Elementary School's enrollment area has created the renowned success seen at Alameda Elementary School.

Coach Balto regularly shares his insights and information on social media channels.

Twitter - [@CoachBalto](#)

Instagram - [@CoachBalto](#)

TikTok - [@CoachBalto](#)



Photo credit: Megan Ramey

Supervising and Leading Bike Buses

Bike buses have a designated route leader who sets the pace, ensures adherence to traffic rules, and guides the group along the chosen route. Route leaders may also be responsible for organizing the bike bus, coordinating meeting points, and communicating with parents and caregivers.

The bike bus leader is the primary adult in charge of ensuring the ride goes off without a hitch! The bike bus leader should themselves be able to confidently ride and provide guidance to young riders of all abilities. Bike bus leaders should be

able to take attendance in accordance with any procedures required by the district.

Leading a recurring bike bus should not be a stressful or complicated process. Instead, recurring bike buses work best when an adult volunteer who is regularly commuting to school by bike makes small adjustments to their route and communicates with households to encourage more riders to join.



TIP: Accommodating slower riders can be difficult! If there are multiple adults, it's possible to split the group.



CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING STRATEGIES FOR RECRUITING ROUTE LEADERS:

- Parents, caregivers, teachers, and Safe Routes to Schools Coordinators make great route leaders!
- Conduct orientation sessions to familiarize volunteers with the bike bus concept, guidelines, and safety measures. Provide training on basic bike maintenance, emergency procedures, and communication protocols.
- Foster a sense of ownership and commitment among volunteers by highlighting the positive impact of their involvement.
- Establish regular communication channels, such as email lists or group messaging platforms, to keep volunteers informed and engaged.

Selecting Suitable Biking Routes

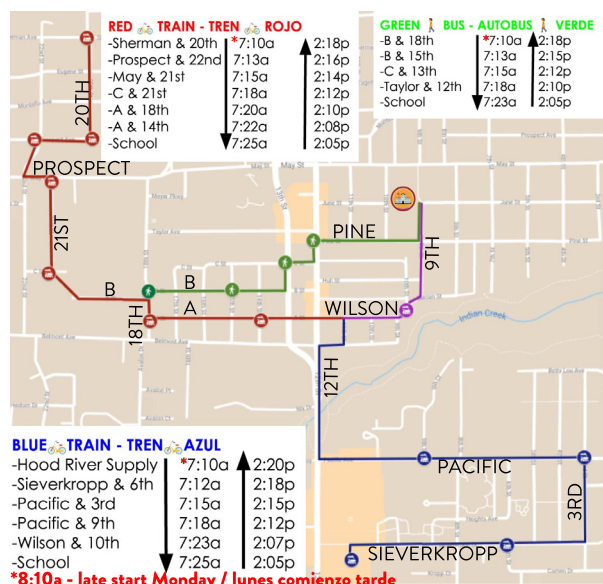
Choosing an appropriate route is important. The route should prioritize safety, accessibility, and convenience for participants.

The bike bus route might start a mile or even two from the school, depending on quality of local infrastructure, age of the participants, and their experience bicycling. Consider the routes that families are already taking to get to your school, and where larger clusters of families live. The process for determining a catchment area—the area your bike bus can serve—involves identifying the best, most comfortable routes and avoiding barriers as much as possible. If you are forming a bike bus program to reduce pressure on school buses, following existing school bus stops can be a good starting point.

Neighborhood Greenways and Bicycle Boulevards – streets with low motorized traffic volumes and speeds, designed to give bicycle travel priority – are some of the best roads for a bike bus. If the area lacks formally designated bikeways, look for streets with low traffic volumes and speeds. Where possible, avoid crossing major roadways (particularly those without signals or stop signs) and roadways in poor condition, as well as traveling on steep hills.

Remember: young cyclists often lack the skills and confidence to ride in bike lanes on major roadways. Instead, use neighborhood streets and separated infrastructure where possible to minimize conflicts between motorists and young cyclists.

Defining a well-planned and safe route will attract more participants and instill confidence in parents and caregivers!



Hood River's 2020-2021 Bike Train Routes

Once you have determined a route, you may consider making a map that you can use to advertise when and where your Bike Bus will go. To do this, you do not need access to GIS or design software. Google Maps can be used to identify cycling routes and communicate those routes visually. Simply setting the route on a Google Maps layer, taking a screenshot, and using this in communication materials can be very effective.



Communication

Communication with Route Leaders

Work closely with your route leaders to modify routes as needed, while providing one point of communication overall. Consider contingency plans, such as if you have a backup leader or need to cancel in the event that the regular leader is unavailable.

Communication with Caregivers

It can be helpful to provide regular updates to caregivers who have indicated interest in the bike bus. This could be via email, text, or your school's parent engagement mechanisms. Remind caregivers about the route and timing and make sure to communicate about any changes to the routing or timing. Share updates about theme days, weather events that might impact the ride, or other relevant information.



Photo credit: Megan Ramey

Tips for Social Media

Social media platforms can be used to promote your bike bus and communicate with participants. Follow these suggestions to make the most of social media.



UNDERSTAND SCHOOL SOCIAL MEDIA POLICIES

Schools and districts will have guidance on what can and cannot be posted on personal and official social media channels. Oftentimes, the district communication office enforces these policies. Coordination with the relevant parties is vital to respect the privacy and consent of students and caregivers.



FOCUS ON JOY

Biking to school is a fun and engaging activity. Emphasize the benefits such as improved health, reduced traffic congestion, and enhanced community bonding. Share success stories of schools or communities that have implemented bike buses or related programming.



IDENTIFY YOUR AUDIENCE

Understand who your target audience is—parents, students, school staff, local community members, and so on. Tailor your content to address their interests and concerns.



CHOOSE RELEVANT PLATFORMS

Select social media platforms that are popular among your target audience. Facebook and Instagram can be effective for bike bus outreach and concerns.



COLLABORATE WITH SCHOOLS

Partner with schools to share information about upcoming safe routes to school events, workshops, and initiatives. Schools can help spread the word to parents and students.



POST REGULARLY

Maintain a consistent posting schedule to keep your audience engaged. Consider using scheduling tools to plan and automate posts. The key to successful social media outreach is consistency.



USE HASHTAGS

Use relevant and trending hashtags to increase the visibility of your posts. For example, #BikeBus, #SafeRoutesToSchool, #BikeToSchool, and so on.



TIP: Take photos from behind to hide faces and respect the privacy of young riders!

Maximizing a Safe and Comfortable Ride

Safety is paramount when organizing a bike bus. Clear guidelines and safety measures, such as the ones listed below, will ensure the well-being of all participants:

- Oregon state law requires all bicyclists under the age of 16 to wear a helmet!
- Encourage participants to practice riding in the street and develop basic riding skills before joining the bike bus.
- Communicate the expectations for safe group riding, such as when and how to form a single-file formation and use hand signals.
- Provide instructions on how to handle challenging situations, such as intersections or heavy traffic areas.
- Remind participants to stay together as a group and not to race or deviate from the designated route.
- If two adult riders are available, have one lead and one “sweep,” that is at the back of the Bike Bus to be sure that no student is left behind.

Regularly review and reinforce guidelines to maintain a safe and organized bike bus.



Photo credit: Megan Ramey



Photo credit: Megan Ramey

Monitor Attendance

It's important schools and households know the bike bus is a safe, reliable, and convenient mode of transportation. When organizing a bike bus, work with the school district to understand any safety concerns that may need to be addressed. A bike bus leader needs to always carry a cell phone and have communication with relevant school staff. After some time, a bike bus leader will just do a simple head count and remember each rider's face.

Have Fun!

A bike bus allows students time to get the wiggles out and socialize with their friends before school! Bring a speaker, print spoke cards, or find your own way to have fun on the way to school.

Evaluation and Sustainability

Gathering Feedback from Participants and Volunteers

Continuous evaluation and adaptation are essential for the long-term success of a bike bus. Regularly assess the effectiveness of your bike bus program and make necessary adjustments. Consider the following evaluation and adaptation strategies:

- Gather feedback from participants, parents, caregivers, and volunteers through surveys or open discussions.
- Monitor participation rates and identify any barriers or challenges faced by participants.



Photo credit: Megan Ramey

Program Sustainability

If your school community has an existing Safe Routes to School Coordinator, they can lead in the development of the program as part of their regular job duties. If the school community has a robust number of volunteers, they may be able to provide much of the work required to plan and implement a bike bus.

The following actions can set your program up for sustainable success:

- The [Jump Start](#) Train the Trainer program can teach school staff and volunteers how to implement bicycle safety education in schools. This is a wonderful way to bring bicycle education into the school day in addition to the school commute!
- Organize community events, such as bike safety workshops or group rides, to raise awareness and promote biking as a viable transportation option.
- Participate in regional or national bike advocacy campaigns or initiatives to amplify your message and engage with a wider audience.
- Stay updated on other bike buses to inform your program!
- Collaborate with stakeholders, such as school administrators, transportation authorities, and local government, to address any infrastructure or policy issues that may impact the bike bus.

Once you have established your bike bus and it is running smoothly, consider expanding its impact and influence. Explore opportunities to collaborate with other schools, community organizations, or local government to promote biking and active transportation on a broader scale. Sharing your success story with other schools within your district or community can encourage others to start their own bike bus programs.



Appendix A

ABC Quick Check

Performing an ABC Quick Check only takes a few minutes but can identify any obvious issues that might affect your ride!

A: AIR

Check tire pressure and ensure that it matches the recommended pressure indicated on the sidewall of the tire.

Look for any signs of damage or excessive wear on the tires, such as cuts or bulges. Make sure there are no objects embedded in the tire that could cause a puncture.

B: BRAKES

Squeeze each brake lever individually to make sure they engage smoothly and effectively.

Check that the brake pads make proper contact with the rim or disc and are not excessively worn. If needed, adjust or replace the brake pads.

C: CHAINS

Inspect the chain for any signs of rust, dirt buildup, or damage. Ensure it is properly lubricated.

Check the chain tension by pulling it away from the teeth of the front chainring. There should be a slight amount of play, but it should not sag excessively.

Q: QUICK

Are any quick-release levers securely closed?

C: CHECK

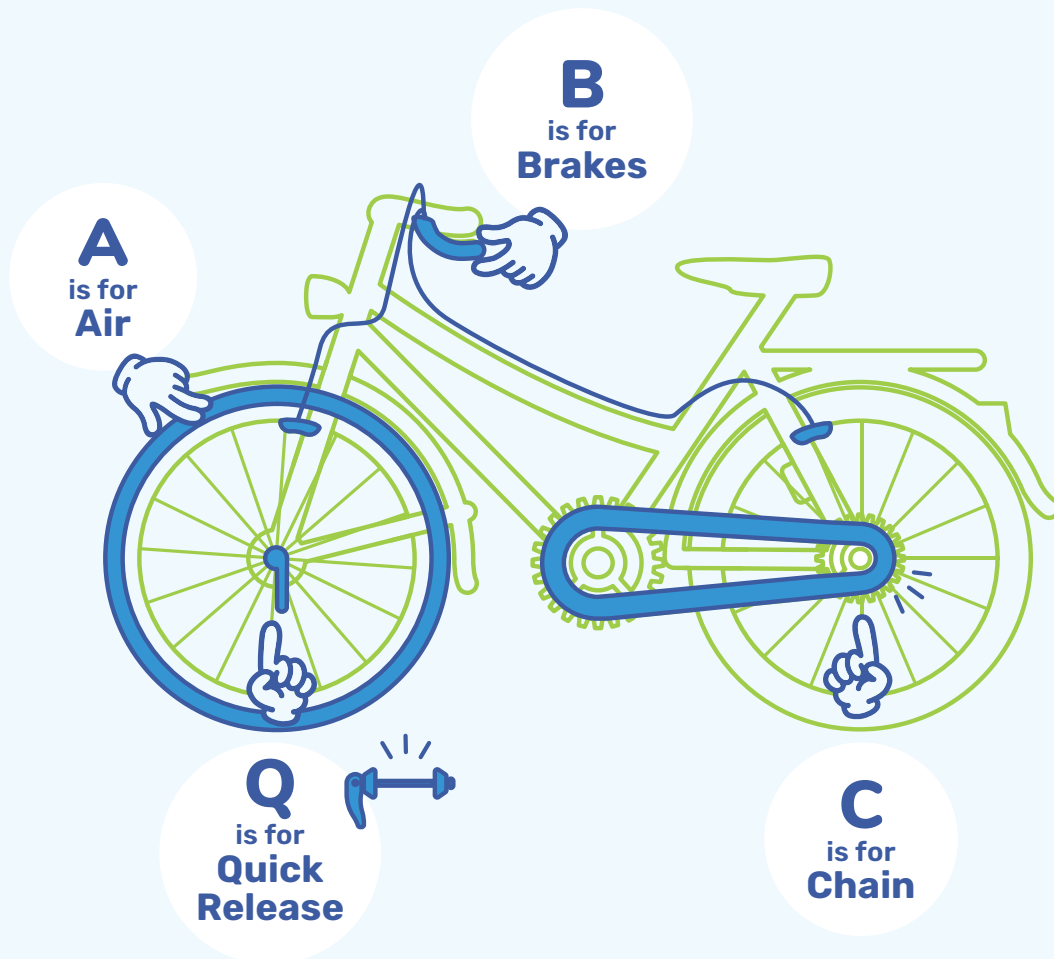
Take a quick, slow ride around to make sure everything is working properly.



Photo credit: Megan Ramey

Students come from varying socioeconomic backgrounds, and there will be disparities in the quality of equipment. Do not discourage a student from participating due to poor equipment; instead, help the student and their household to bring their bicycles up to a safe standard!

BIKE SAFETY CHECK



ABC QUICK CHECK

Ensuring Proper Helmet Fit and Use

Cyclists of all ages and abilities should wear helmets! In Oregon, bicycle riders under the age of 16 are required by law to wear their helmets.

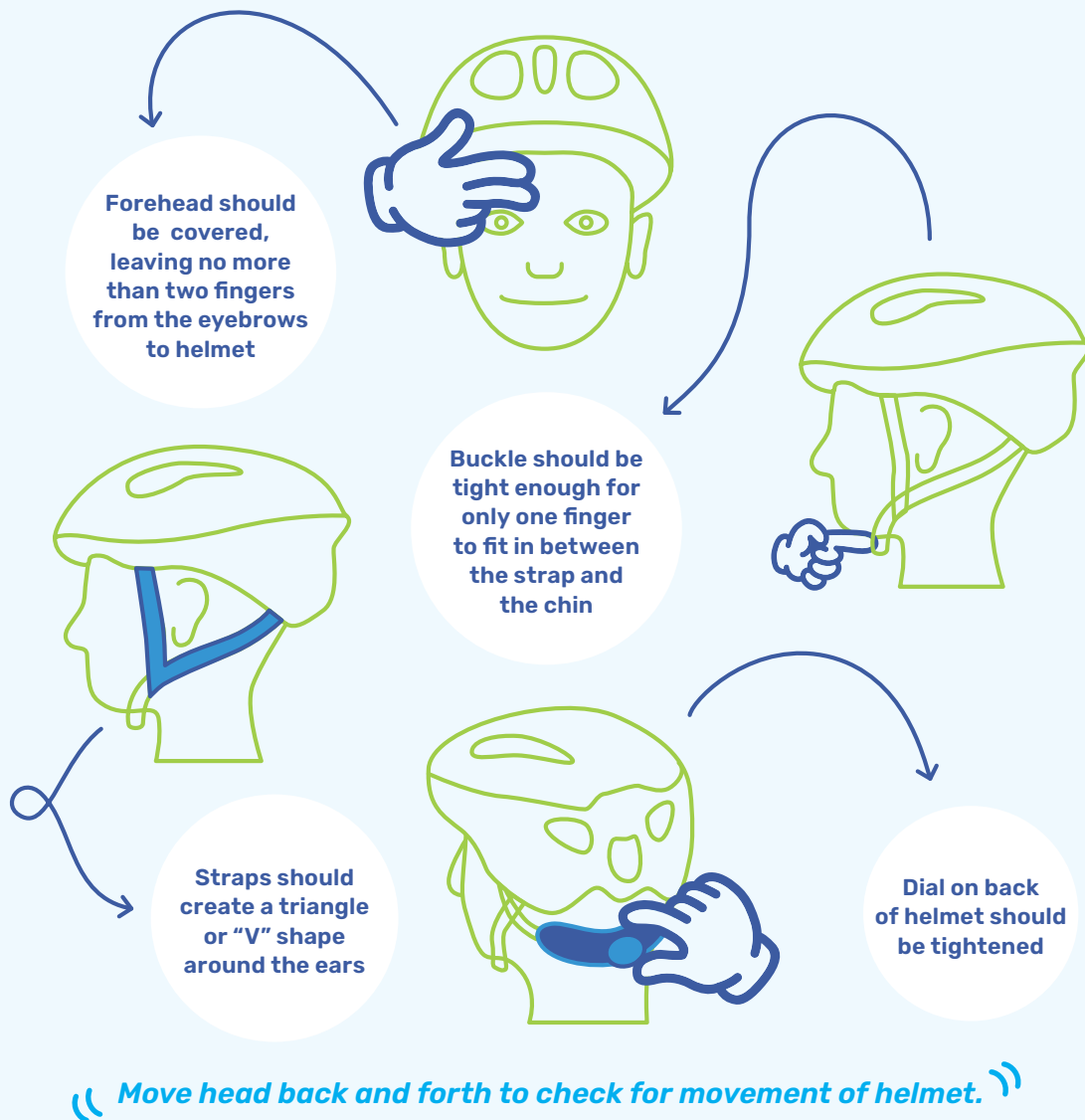
Bicycle helmets should be replaced after a crash or five years after purchase.

Helmets come in all shapes and sizes. A helmet should fit comfortably on a student's head without buckling. When fastened, the buckle should not be able to slide over the chin. Many helmets come with an adjustable dial in the back for greater sizing control. Children's helmets often come with different-sized foam padding, which should be adjusted for maximum comfort and safety.



Photo credit: Megan Ramey

HELMET FITTING



Sample Flyer

Bike Train & Walking Bus

Daily, Sept 7-June 16, Monday-Friday



Woot, Woot! Start the school year off right! Parents are volunteering to lead Bike Trains and a Walking Bus to and from school to give students a chance to wake up their body and free up parent time.

WHAT IS A BIKE TRAIN OR WALKING BUS?

A bike train and walking bus has two parent conductors, one at the front (conductor) and one in the rear (caboose). Students can ride or walk with or without their parents to the school to learn safety and safe routes. We will depart from three locations, picking up students at noted stops (see map). Following the end of school, students will find their train or bus and ride or walk to the stop nearest to their home.

RULES of FUN

1. Be on time
2. Wear a mask
3. Bikers under 16 years old must wear a helmet by law
4. Stay behind the train or bus conductor
5. Bring a bike lock and dress for the weather
6. **Notify your teacher that your child is a "walker" and include your phone number in their backpack. You are responsible if your child deviates from plans, but we will do our best to notify you of the unexpected.**

SIGN UP and VOLUNTEER

Email your child's name, location and phone. Volunteers needed to conduct, caboose or cork intersections - will train.

CONTACT:

- Megan Romey - 608-215-1154 (English)
- Lindsay Rivera - lindsay.rivera@hoodriverk12.or.us (Español)

@MayStreetWalkandRoll

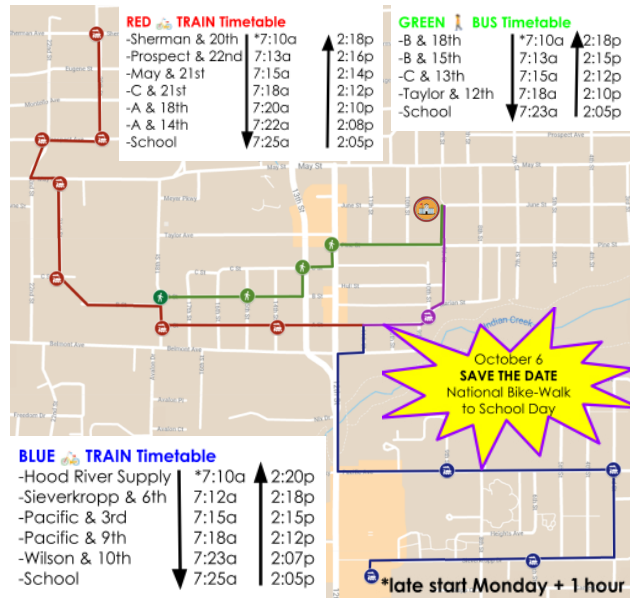


Photo credit: Megan Ramey

[Your School Name]
[Address]
[City, State, Zip Code]
[Date]

Sample Permission Slip

Permission Slip for Bike Bus Program

Dear [Parent/Caregiver],

We are excited to introduce our new Bike Bus Program at [Your School Name]. This program aims to promote active transportation, encourage a healthy lifestyle, and provide a fun and safe way for students to commute to school by riding their bicycles in a group setting.

We understand the importance of safety and have taken measures to ensure a secure biking experience for all participants. We kindly request your permission for your child, [Student's Full Name], to take part in our Bike Bus Program. Please read and complete the following permission slip:

BIKE BUS PROGRAM DETAILS

Program Start Date:	[Start Date]
Program End Date:	[End Date]
Program Schedule:	[Days and Times]
Meeting Point:	[Designated Meeting Point]
Meeting Point Time:	[Designated Meeting Time]
Return Time:	[Approximate Return Time]
Program Coordinator:	[Coordinator's Name and Contact Information]
Emergency Contact Number during Program Hours:	[Emergency Contact Number]

Permission and Assumption of Risk: I, as the parent/legal guardian of [Student's Full Name], give permission for them to participate in the Bike Bus Program. I understand that this program involves biking on public streets and may include potential risks inherent to outdoor activities. I assume all risks associated with my child's participation in this program, and I confirm that [Student's Full Name] is capable of participating in the biking activities.

Safety Agreement: I also agree to ensure that my child follows all safety guidelines provided by the school and program coordinators during the Bike Bus Program. I understand that a properly fitted helmet is mandatory for participation, and my child will wear it at all times while cycling.

Medical Information: In case of any medical emergency, I authorize the school staff and program coordinators to seek immediate medical attention for my child. I will promptly inform the school of any medical conditions or allergies that may require special attention during the program.

Transportation Release: I understand that my child will be commuting to and from school by bike as part of the Bike Bus Program. I release the school and program coordinators from any liability arising from the student's participation in the program.

Please sign and return this permission slip to [School Office/Teacher Name] by [Due Date].

Thank you for your support in making our Bike Bus Program a safe and enjoyable experience for all participants. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]
[Parent/Guardian]
[Contact Information]

Permission Slip - Biking School Bus Program

I, [Parent/Guardian's Full Name], give permission for my child, [Student's Full Name], to participate in the Bike Bus Program at [Your School Name]. I have read and understand the details of the program and agree to the terms outlined in this permission slip.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Let's Go! ¡Vamos!



Friday, October 6
el viernes, 6 de octubre

International Walk+Roll to School Day
Día Internacional Walk y Roll a la Escuela



International Walk+Roll to School Day is a global event that involves communities from more than 40 countries walking and rolling to school on the same day.

Celebrate with May Street Elementary

Día Internacional Caminar+Rodar a la Escuela es un evento global que involucra a comunidades de más de 40 países caminando y rodando a la escuela el mismo día.

Celebre con Escuela de May Street



megan.ramey@hoodriver.k12.or.us



@HoodRiverWalkandRoll

Sample Flyer (back)

ABOUT

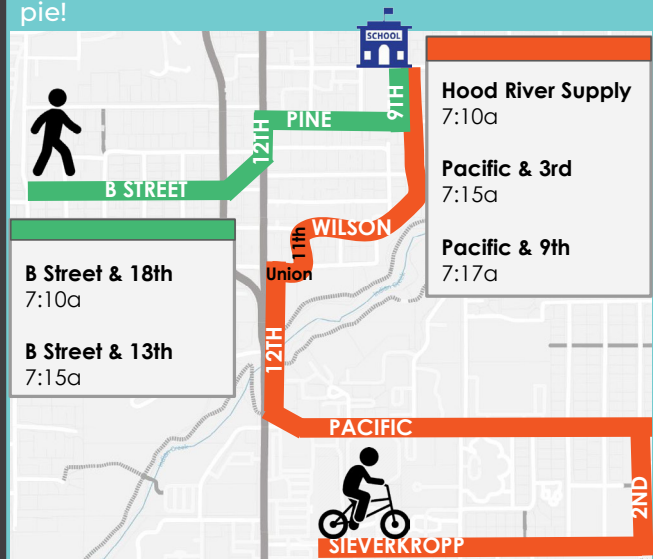
Walk + Roll to School for Hood River County School District was funded by an ODOT Safe Routes to School grant to provide education, make streets safer for students, increase mobility equity and inspire caregivers and students to use their feet and wheels to get to school.

SOBRE

Walk + Roll a la Escuela para el distrito escolar del condado de Hood River fue financiado por una subvención de ODOT Safe Routes to School para brindar educación, hacer que las calles sean más seguras para los estudiantes, aumentar la equidad de movilidad e inspirar a los cuidadores y estudiantes a usar sus pies y ruedas para llegar a la escuela.

Join a bike train or walking bus!

Unirse a un tren de bicicletas o un autobús a pie!



Caregivers welcome to join!

¿Primera vez? ¡Bienvenidos los cuidadores!

Free Bikes & Tune-ups!

Bicicletas y Puesta a Punto Gratis



Bike Safety Rodeo

Rodeo de Seguridad en Bicicleta





Oregon Department of Transportation
Safe Routes to School



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