

SAFE ROUTES CAMPAIGNS

Bike Train

What is a Bike Train?

A Bike Train is a variation of the Walking School Bus. A Bike Train provides students the opportunity to bike to and from school with an adult volunteer.

Bike Trains can be a great fit for communities that wish to encourage more bicycling to and from school. If you are already ride a bike, you likely have some ideas of the benefits and considerations of leading a student Bike Train.



Emerson School Bike Train goes to school in downtown Portland. Photo by Kiel Johnson

What Are the Benefits of a Bike Train?

There are many benefits of organizing a Bike Train.

- Bikes are cool and fun for elementary school age youth. Students may be more excited about the opportunity to ride than walk.
- Bikes are efficient! For students with longer distances to travel, biking can be a good, active commute choice.
- Cargo bikes, tag-a-long bikes, bike trailers, and bike seats allow for younger students to come along for the ride.
- Bike Trains can be inclusive. Consider students who use other wheeled devices to get to and from school. Wheelchair and scooter users can travel along with people biking if you plan ahead.



Chief Joseph School Bike Train in N Portland.

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Bike Train: The Simple Campaign

A Bike Train, like a Walking School Bus, is a fun and safe way to create another opportunity for students to be active before and after school. Below, are key steps to starting a Bike Train at your school.

- Decide if a Bike Train is a good campaign for your school.
- Check in with your school principal and share your plans.
- Contact SRTS staff for free resources and more info.
- Network with parents, volunteers, and staff to gauge their interest in supporting your project.
- Choose a route (or routes) and test it with adults for safety. Contact your Safe Routes Organizer for assistance choosing a safe route.
- Put posters up around your school and outreach to families along your route(s).*
- Post a Bike Train article in your school newsletter and on your school's website.*
- Ensure that Bike Train participants have the following:
 - A safe, properly maintained, and well-fitted bicycle (or scooter)
 - A well-fitted helmet
 - Some practice riding in the street (i.e. a Bike Train is not the best place to learn how to ride)
- Secure two adult volunteers to ride with the students, one at the front of the train and one at the back, to ensure student safety and comfort.
- Decide how often you will bike together (once a month, once a week, etc).
- Establish expectations with your participants and review safe group riding skills. Riding safely in the street requires practice and protocol. Contact SRTS staff for information.
- Start leading your train!



*Bike Train materials are included on the enclosed CD-ROM.

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Bike Train: If You Want to Do More...

If you want to reach more students and have multiple routes, the following are ideas for doing so.

- Build a team of interested volunteers who can lead different routes.
- Identify safe routes for students coming from various locations.
- Designate convenient meeting places that are safe and have sufficient space for bikes to gather.
- Work with your Safe Routes Organizer to create a map of your Bike Train routes to distribute to students and parents.
- Develop a phone tree so it is easy to communicate with Bike Train leaders.
- Spend time at your school during pick-up and drop-off hours to get a sense of school traffic congestion, student safety, and the number of students already biking to school. This will provide a pre-campaign benchmark that you can compare to post-campaign biking assess impact.

If you would like to see a Bike Train in action, or would like hands-on practice with how to safely manage a group of young riders in the street, contact your Safe Routes Organizer.



Students bicycling to Shaver Elementary in NE Portland follow the "Rules of the Road."