

**Walking Bus Guidelines for Cheshire**  
**issued by Cheshire County Council's Road Safety Unit**

**The 'Walking Bus' – Best Practice Guidelines**

**Introduction**

The Walking Bus is made up of two adult operators, who act as a 'driver' and a 'conductor' and escort a group of children walking on their journey to and from school. The bus walks along a set route collecting children at 'bus stops' on the way at set times.

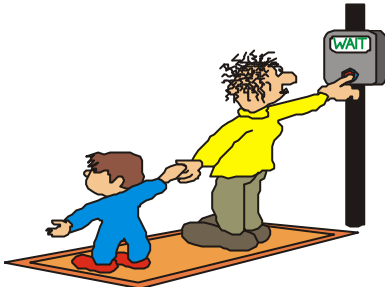
The scheme can provide benefits to children, parents, the school and the local community. The Walking Bus:

- Promotes healthy exercise
- Develops pedestrian and social skills
- Reduces traffic congestion around schools
- Improves air quality
- Saves time for parents
- Gives children an independence, whilst in a safe environment

**Preparation**

1. Ask the Head Teacher for permission and support for the walking bus. Explain that teachers will not be required to take on any additional work.
2. A parent or governor should be nominated by the school to act as a Walking Bus Co-ordinator, who will be responsible for making the necessary arrangements with outside organisations e.g. police, road safety unit and engineers to set up the scheme.

3. A letter should be sent out to parents to gauge parental interest and support for the scheme either as a volunteer driver / conductor on a rota basis or for their children to walk with the bus. The replies will determine the routes to be used.



### Routes

- Routes chosen for the bus will depend on the number of volunteers coming forward and where both they and the children live who will use the routes.
- The route must be risk assessed and be approved by the Safer Routes to School Officer.
- Once a route has been finalised it is important that the local police are informed in writing so that they can comment on its suitability from a 'stranger danger' perspective.
- The bus will:
  - Operate according to a strict timetable and will not wait for late comers.
  - Parents are responsible for the safe arrival at school of children who miss the bus.
  - Parents must ensure that they are waiting at the bus stop when their child is dropped off on the journey home, unless they have been given permission for them to continue home from that point unsupervised.
  - Parents need to be reminded that they are responsible for their child's safety on the way to and from the designated bus stops.

### Operators should

- Agree to apply for a Disclosure. – Disclosure is an information service provided by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). It helps employers and volunteering organisations make informed recruitment decisions and so protect the vulnerable members of society.
- Wear high visibility clothing when training and operating the bus. Cheshire County Council will provide the clothing.
- Agree to be monitored on any journey to ensure no problems have arisen.
- Complete a monitoring form once a term, and return it to the Safer Routes to School Officer.
- Provide a contact name and address to; other operators, the school and the Safer Routes to School Officer.
- Record and report any incidents to the bus co-ordinator.

## The Children

Before a child can use the Walking Bus:

- Parents / carers should complete the enclosed consent forms, one should be returned to the Walking Bus co-ordinator and the second should be kept for reference.
- Understand that they must behave well on the bus, otherwise they will be refused access to the bus.
- Under normal traffic conditions it is not necessary for children to be issued with high visibility clothing.
- No specific training will be provided, but the Walking Bus is an excellent opportunity to introduce pedestrian training. Schools may, however, decide to run an introductory session in the playgroup to establish a standard of conduct for participating children.



## Ratios

- The recommended ratio of children to adults on the Walking Bus is as follows:
  - For key stage 2 children  $\Rightarrow$  1 operator to 6 children.Children in Key stage 1 will need to be assessed for their ability to walk sensibly.
  - For Key stage 1 who can walk without close supervision  $\Rightarrow$  1 operator to 4 children.
  - For Key stage 1 children who require closer supervision  $\Rightarrow$  1 operator to 2 children.

There must be a minimum of 2 operators on any walking bus  
Operators should not delegate responsibility to older children to look after younger children.

At no times should these numbers be exceeded – the provision of an additional bus on the same route should be considered instead.

## Operation

- The bus should operate every school day for which it is planned, including the first day of term, whatever the weather.

- Notice should be given to all parents, if for any reason the bus can not operate on a particular day.
- Operators should work on a rota system. Each operator is responsible for finding someone to take their place if they are suddenly unavailable.
- Operators should have a list of all other operators names and addresses.
- The school's Walking Bus Co-ordinator should be informed of any changes to the rota.
- Each bus route will need a register of children who intend to use the bus and on what days they will be travelling. It is the responsibility of the volunteers to keep the register up to date, to ensure that a child is not left behind.
- The 'driver' will be in front leading the group with the 'conductor' following at the rear so that all children can be seen and kept in order.
- Volunteers are forbidden to order or request any vehicle drivers to stop and must not use signals or body language that might imply that drivers are expected to stop.

The Walking Bus will be covered by Cheshire County Council's Public Liability Insurance.

#### Setting Out

The Walking Bus can start once

- The operators have received a Disclosure and have been trained
- The route has been walked and risk assessed
- Written parental consent has been received



## **Risk Assessment – Walking Bus**

The Walking Bus route will be determined by the direction in which the children travel to and from school. However, operators must ensure that all risks on the journey are minimised.

The assessment must be carried out by two persons and the completed form returned to the Safer Routes to School Officer for approval.

### **Meeting / Collection Points**

- If meeting in a car park ensure that the collection point is away from the cars – children may run around waiting for others to arrive.
- If meeting on a grassed area, be aware of any drainage problems.
- If meeting near the road, select an area where the pavement is widest.

### **The route**

- Consider using routes that are away from traffic, such as country footpaths or bridleways.
- Ensure that the footpath is wide enough all the way. If there is a narrow pavement, consider how the children would safely get round the section.
- If there are no footpaths, check;
  - Visibility is good and safe for the speed of traffic?
  - The speed of the traffic acceptable.
  - Use 'step off's' at the side of the road, such as grass verges, if appropriate.
- Check busy entrances / exits. If they are factories or petrol stations, it may be worth writing to or speaking to the managers to warn them of your presence.
- Ensure that route is a reasonable distance for young people to walk.
- Ensure the local police are informed in writing, so that they can comment on its suitability from a 'stranger danger' perspective.

### **Crossing the road**

- Avoid crossing busy roads; try to find another way to go.
- Minimise the road crossing where ever possible.
- Always choose a Safer place to cross, such as a pedestrian crossing.
- Cross the road where there is good visibility, and cross away from parked cars.
- Consider alternative crossing points in the event of a problem.

### **The Operators**

- Ensure that all operators have read and understood the Walking Bus Guidelines.
- A contact list of all operators should be available to other operators.

- Must agree to apply for a Disclosure through the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB).
- Ensure that all operators wear high visibility clothing when operating the bus.

### **The Children**

- The recommended ratio of children to adults on the Walking Bus is as follows:
  - For Key stage 2 children  $\Rightarrow$  1 operator to 6 childrenChildren in Key stage 1 will need to be assessed for their ability to walk sensibly.
  - For Key stage 1 who can walk without close supervision  $\Rightarrow$  1 operator to 4 children.
  - For Key stage 1 children who require closer supervision  $\Rightarrow$  1 operator to 2 children.
- There must be a minimum of 2 operators on any walking bus.
- Parents / carers should have completed a consent form.
- A contact number for all parents / carers should be obtained for each child.
- Children should behave well, if not they may put themselves and other children at risk.

**Walking Bus Assessment**

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<b>Starting point</b>	
<b>Meeting points</b>	
<b>Route – name all roads</b>	
<b>Crossing points– name all roads crossed</b>	

	<b>Are controls in place</b>	<b>Any additional measures</b>
<b>Meeting / collection points</b>		
Car Parks		
Grassed area		
Pavement		
<b>The route</b>		
Type of path		

Width of footpath		
No footpaths		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visibility</li> <li>• Speed of traffic</li> <li>• Grass verges</li> </ul>		
Busy entrances / exits		
Length of route		
Police information		
<b>Crossing points</b>		
How many crossing points are there on the route		
Busy crossing points		
Crossing the road		
Safer Crossing points		
Visibility		
Alternative crossing points		
<b>The operators</b>		
Guidelines		
Contact list		
Disclosure		
High visibility clothing		
<b>Children</b>		
Ration		
Consent form		
Contact numbers		
Behaviour		

Signed.....

Date.....

Bus Operator

Signed ..... Date

.....

Bus Operator

Approved.....

Date.....

Safer Routes to School – Principal Advisor

## Monitoring Form

Name of School \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ School Term \_\_\_\_\_

How many children, on average, use the walking bus?	
How many operators assist with the Walking Bus?	
Have the numbers of children using the Walking Bus, risen, dropped or stayed the same?	
Does the weather affect the numbers of children using the Walking Bus?	
Do you have any problems with crossing points?	
Can you identify anything that might assist in improving the Walking Bus?	
Are there any comments you would like to add about the Walking Bus?	

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Please could you complete this form each term and return to:  
Safer Routes to School Officer – Road Safety Team  
Cheshire County Council  
Engineering Services  
Backford Hall, Backford  
Chester CH1 6EA

This form is available on email:

[millsj@cheshire.gov.uk](mailto:millsj@cheshire.gov.uk)