

Case Study

The Ottawa Walking School Bus Pilot Project



Photo credit: David Kawai / Ottawa Citizen

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May 2015



Acknowledgements:

The author wishes to thank the following individuals for their many valuable contributions to the success of this project and their support for active school travel in Ottawa:

Kathleen Cameron, Ottawa Safety Council

Sherry Cashman, Ottawa Safety Council

Sophia Hanafi

Shari Kneen, Ottawa Public Health

Vicky Kyriaco, Ottawa Student Transportation Authority

Marie-Claude Lang, Ottawa Public Health

Katie Maddock, MScN student, University of Ottawa

Rob Masterson, Ottawa Student Transportation Authority

Robin Ray, Ottawa Public Health

Jessica Sheridan, Green Communities Canada

Rob Wilkinson, City of Ottawa

Introduction/Background

Levels of active travel (walking, cycling) to school have fallen significantly among Canadian children in recent years, contributing to lower physical activity, poorer air quality and increased traffic dangers around schools. Green Communities Canada (GCC) has been working to reverse this trend through its Active & Safe Routes to School and School Travel Planning initiatives.

In early 2010 GCC was contracted to launch and coordinate the Ottawa School Travel Planning (STP) Project. Working on behalf of and in cooperation with the City of Ottawa, local school boards, the Ottawa Student Transportation Authority and other stakeholders, GCC has successfully introduced STP to 24 elementary schools across the city (as of April 2015). STP surveys results at these schools indicated consistently that more parents would allow their child to walk to school if they did not walk alone.

In other communities Walking School Buses (WSB) have proven an effective tool for addressing this barrier to active school travel. However, while interest has been high at many Ottawa STP schools, only one has successfully launched a daily WSB: Viscount Alexander Public School. This was made possible through a unique partnership with the [Sandy Hill Community Health Centre](#) which coordinates the Viscount Alexander WSB. This includes recruiting, insuring, training and supervising volunteer drivers drawn from the neighbourhood (mostly retirees as well as students from nearby University of Ottawa). This school also recorded a 38% increase in its rate of active travel from 2010-13, the largest increase to date of any school in the Ottawa STP Project. At some schools parent-led WSBs have been started but these tend to operate on a weekly and/or seasonal basis only, have proven difficult to sustain, and tend to attract only those families who are already walking.

What's a WSB?

A Walking School Bus (WSB) is simply a group of children walking together under the supervision of one or more adult “drivers” following a prescribed route and schedule.

Like a regular school bus, it offers a safe, dependable, healthy and green way for children to get to school vs. being driven in a car.



Addressing Barriers to Walking School Buses

In light of this experience, GCC conceived of the Ottawa Walking School Bus Pilot Project as a means to allow more schools to reap the benefits of a WSB by reducing several identified barriers to starting and sustaining them. They include:

- **Over-reliance on parent volunteers:** Due to time and other constraints, few parents can commit to lead WSBs and ensure reliable, daily operation throughout the school year. At some schools there is insufficient parent volunteer capacity to even offer a WSB on a weekly or occasional basis.

- **Coordination & support:** Most schools (administrators, teachers, parent councils) simply do not have the capacity to create and manage a daily WSB program on their own due to the many other mandated priorities and existing activities competing for limited time and resources.
- **Managing risk:** Some school administrators are hesitant to promote or permit a WSB at their school due to concerns over potential risks and lack of direction from their school board.



Project Goals

- To provide a select number of schools with the necessary guidance and support to introduce and sustain a daily WSB during the 2014-15 school year. This included provision of at least one screened, trained, insured, supervised and remunerated WSB leader for each route.
- To measure participation rates in and attitudes about the WSB.
- To increase rates of active travel at participating schools.
- To demonstrate to school and community stakeholders how a well-supported daily WSB could increase the number of children walking to school.
- To identify the operational and financial considerations necessary to develop a sustainable and successful WSB program more widely across Ottawa, and communicate these to decision-makers.

Project Objectives

- Launch and sustain a daily WSB (a.m. only) at up to 8 schools over a 12-week period between September 29 and December 19, 2014.
- Develop & disseminate WSB recruitment materials for schools and parents.
- Recruit schools & families to the project.
- Identify walking routes & schedules for each participating school.
- Recruit, train and manage WSB leaders for each route.
- Develop evaluation tools to track participation rates, parent attitudes about the WSB and demand for future participation.
- Prepare a case study on pilot project results, lessons learned and next steps for dissemination to local stakeholders including school boards and the City of Ottawa.

Project Partners

A steering committee met regularly to plan and deliver the project with representation from GCC, Ottawa Student Transportation Authority (OSTA), Ottawa Safety Council (OSC) and Ottawa Public Health (OPH).



The following table outlines each partner's primary responsibilities:

Organization	Lead Responsibilities
GCC	Project coordination & financial management; school recruitment & liaison; promotion & information materials; case study & webinar.
OSTA	Funding; route planning & mapping; registration system; WSB procedure policy.
OSC	Driver recruitment & police checks; liability coverage; training & supervision; remuneration; daily WSB operations.
OPH	Funding; route planning; school recruitment & liaison; media event; evaluation.

Funding

The project budget was \$45,000.00 with funding from the following sources:

- Ottawa Public Health \$25,000.00
- Ottawa Student Transportation Authority \$15,000.00
- City of Ottawa (TDM Program) \$ 5,000.00

As the project manager, GCC signed contribution agreements with both OSTA and OPH while the City of Ottawa's contribution was channelled through its regular funding of the Ottawa STP Project.

GCC in turn put in place a service agreement with OSC covering all deliverables related to Leader recruitment, training, supervision, remuneration and insurance. This represented about 80% of all expenses with the remainder covering project coordination and promotion costs.

In addition all partners contributed in-kind staff time.

Operational Highlights

a) School Recruitment

Candidates were selected from two groups: current and past participants in the Ottawa STP Project or schools identified for less intensive active transportation interventions by Ottawa Public Health. Due to the pilot's short timeframe it was determined that focusing on school communities with a demonstrated interest in and commitment to promoting walking would increase the chances of WSB success.

The principals at 12 schools were approached about possible involvement in the pilot and were asked to provide an expression of interest by e-mail. Eleven schools responded favourably and 8 were short-listed for participation. Additional selection criteria included ensuring a mix of urban and suburban locations as well as proportional representation of both English-language school boards (Ottawa-Carleton District and Ottawa Catholic).

Principals were then sent a detailed Q&A document (see Appendix 1) providing specific information about the project. They were also asked to sign a Letter of Agreement (see Appendix 2) confirming their school's participation and responsibilities.

Schools Selected for Ottawa WSB Pilot

School / Week	Profile	Location	STP or AT intervention school
Convent Glen CS	K-6	suburban	AT Intervention (OPH)
Corpus Christi CS	K-6	urban	STP (GCC)
Henry Larsen PS	K-8	suburban	STP (GCC)
Hilson Ave. PS	K-6	urban	AT Intervention (OPH)
Robert Bateman PS	K-6	suburban	STP (GCC)
St. Gabriel CS	K-6	suburban	AT Intervention (OPH)
Steve Maclean PS	K-8	suburban	STP (GCC)
Woodroffe Ave. PS	K-6	urban	STP (GCC)

b) Route & Schedules

WSB routes and schedules were drafted by OSTA using its internal mapping software combined with registration data provided by its parent school boards. Each route was designed:

- to potentially serve as many students as possible living within the school's existing walk zone
- to require under 30 minutes travel time
- to arrive no later than 5 minutes before the bell.

Prior to being finalized, each route was walked by the project partners to identify any safety concerns (ex. sightlines affected by overgrown vegetation, missing or faded pavement markings etc.) and report them to the City of Ottawa. Stop locations and timings were also finalized. This step resulted in mostly minor changes to several routes.

OSTA then produced final route maps (see Appendix 3). Due to project timelines there was insufficient time to seek feedback on the proposed routes from the schools.

c) Promotion

Several promotional flyers (see Appendix 4 for an example) were created for schools to use to promote the WSB to parents in paper format, via e-mail and the school website or Synervoice. These directed families to OSTA's website (www.ottawaschoolbus.ca/resources/safe-routes) to view the route map and schedule for their school as well as registration materials (see below).

Both OPH and GCC staff also talked up the WSB when interacting with staff or parents by phone, email and in person (ex. STP committee meetings).

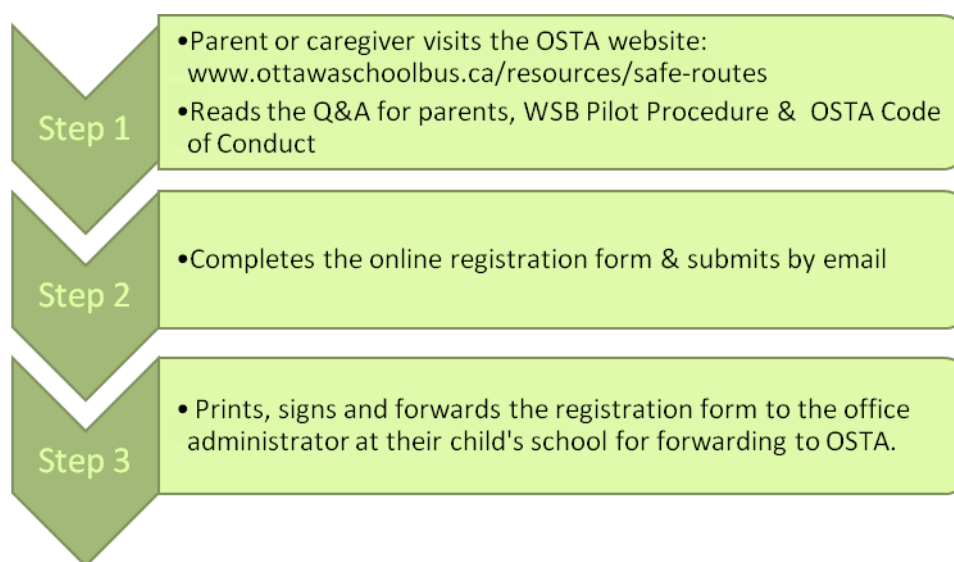
A media launch was organized on October 6th to coincide with the pilot's second week of operations as well as International Walk to School (iWALK) Week. See Appendix 5. This event generated a very positive story including video and photos in The Ottawa Citizen: <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/walking-to-school-bus-offered-at-8-ottawa-schools>

Project partners as well as the two school boards also used social media (principally Facebook & Twitter) to publicize the WSB.

Brightly coloured reflective "I ♥ the WSB" snap bands were also distributed to participating students as an additional means of promoting the service.

d) Registration

Registering for the WSB involved a three-step process.



See www.ottawaschoolbus.ca/resources/safe-routes for examples of all forms.

Upon receiving the signed application form OSTA sent an email confirmation to the parent. In addition it forwarded the child's registration details to OSC. An information sharing protocol was put in place between both organizations to ensure the privacy of this information.

Confirmed Registrations By School & Week

School / Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Convent Glen	9	9	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14
Corpus Christi	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1				
Henry Larsen	0	0	0	0	0	0						
Hilson Ave.	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
Robert Bateman	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
St. Gabriel	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4
Steve Maclean	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3
Woodroffe	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
Totals	41	41	46	46	46	46	46	46	45	46	45	45

e) The Leaders

The Leaders were recruited, screened, insured, trained, managed and paid by the Ottawa Safety Council under contract to GCC. The Council was invited to participate in the pilot based on its experience managing the Adult Crossing Guard program in Ottawa (+140 locations) and its track record in promoting safety.

The job posting (see Appendix 6) was advertised through the OSC and OSTA websites, Kijiji, and school newsletters. Forty-five applications were received, 29 interviews were held and 19 applicants were selected. Their hiring was conditional on passing a Criminal Reference Check for the Vulnerable Sector.

OSC developed a job description (see Appendix 7) as well as a detailed employee handbook based on an existing version for Adult Crossing Guards. This handbook included policies and procedures regarding pedestrian safety, dress and footwear, student discipline, behaviour management, emergencies and incident reporting. Leaders also signed a confidentiality agreement covering student information.



Mandatory training included:

- Occupational Health and Safety Awareness
- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Customer Service Training
- Violence and Harassment in the Workplace
- Level C First Aid/CPR (including Epinephrine Auto-Injector)
- Two-hour in-class orientation session
- On-site orientation (walk the route)

Each Leader was also equipped with a vest, cleats and backpack containing:

- Employee ID card
- First Aid Kit
- Route map & schedule
- Emergency contact list
- Student list (name & age only) & medical forms (for life-threatening conditions)
- Reflective “snap bands” to be worn by the students
- WSB information flyers to be passed out on request

Leaders were assigned to each route on the basis of the following ratios which had been agreed to by the project steering committee: 1 WSB Leader for 1-10 registered students and 2 WSB Leaders for 11-20 registered students. If registrations reached 11 or more, a waiting list was established until such time as OSTA approved a second leader for the route.

f) Cancellations



Despite the promotional efforts of the project’s stakeholders and school administrators, 2 of the 8 routes were permanently cancelled before the end of the pilot due to low registration: Henry Larsen PS (week 6) and Corpus Christi CS (week 8). However a second Leader was assigned to the WSB at Convent Glen CS.

A protocol for weather-related cancellations was also developed for the following conditions:

- a) freezing rain overnight and the sidewalks are not passable;
 - b) accumulation of more than 10 cm of snow overnight and the sidewalks have not been plowed;
 - c) severe winds, severe storms or tornado warnings.
- During the pilot the protocol was only applied on one occasion due to freezing rain.

Results & Evaluation

a) Participation Rate

The WSB leaders recorded the number of children participating each day. The table below displays the results expressed as a weekly average. Rates remained fairly constant over the course of the pilot and were relatively unaffected by colder weather in November and December.

School / Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Convent Glen	6	7	7	7	9.6	11	9.6	10	9	10	8	8
Corpus Christi	1	.5	1	1	1	1	1	1				
Henry Larsen	0	0	0	0	0	0						
Hilson Ave.	3	3	3	3	3	2.6	3	3	3	3	2	3
Robert Bateman	6	6	6	6.4	7.4	6.8	5.6	6	7	6	7	5
St. Gabriel	4	3	4	4	3.6	4	4	2	3	3	2.5	2
Steve Maclean	1	1	1	1	.2	1	2	?	1	1	1	1
Woodroffe	6	?	?	5	4	6	6	6	4	5	?	4

b) Modal Shift

On the WSB registration form parents/caregivers were asked to indicate whether their child normally travelled to school by school bus, car or walking. More than one mode could be selected.

Of the 54 registrations received, 21 or 39% previously travelled to school by bus or car only.

Almost 4 in 10 children who were registered for the WSB did not previously walk to school.

While 8 of those registrations were not confirmed or the child was withdrawn later, this suggests that the WSB attracted a significant portion of families who were not previously considering active transportation for their journey to school.

c) Formal Evaluation

Ottawa Public Health conducted a process evaluation of the pilot. Its purpose was to identify formative information about the project's implementation and make recommendations for future improvements. It used a combination of electronic surveys, focus groups and stakeholder interviews with parents, school administrators, WSB leaders, Public Health nurses and project partner representatives.

Successes:

- **Parent satisfaction:** 100% would participate again and recommend it to others.
- **Perceived benefits to students:** increased physical activity, active travel, peer interaction, community connection and composure on arrival at school.
- **School acceptance:** 100% of administrators were happy to have pilot at their school
- **Skills development:** More than 8 in 10 parents perceived “improved safety skills” and “improved fitness” as the top benefits for their child.
- **Leaders:** paid model positively perceived by stakeholders; leaders were highly engaged and dedicated.



Photo credit: David Kawai / Ottawa Citizen

Challenges:

- **Communication:** parents unclear about whom to talk to.
- **Promotion:** short, insufficient time to build enrolment.
- **Registration process:** not straightforward and not available in multiple languages
- **Choosing routes** that appealed to the largest number of families.
- **Parental attitudes** about active travel vs. driving to school.
- Perceived safety risks with **leader/student ratio**.
- More **in-kind staff time** was required than anticipated.

Recommendations for Improvement:

- **Promotion:** start promotion in the spring in preparation for launching the WSB on the first day of school in September.
- **Parental Involvement:** involve parents during the planning and implementation stages.
- **Registration:** simplify the process and improve on-line functionality.
- **WSB Leader:** consider lowering the leader to child ratio to 8:1.
- **Delivery Model:** future iterations could include tailoring the program based on language needs at each school, working with extended day programs, and establishing minimum participation rates for maintaining routes.
- **Funding:** establish sustainable funding including potential corporate sponsorship.

See Appendix 8 for the Executive Summary.

From Pilot to Program

In early December, 2014, OSTA committed to fund the remaining six WSB routes until the end of the 2014-15 school year. This was followed by a decision in March, 2015 to transition the pilot project into a program led by OSTA and with funding committed until June 2016.

This extension and evolution of the pilot will allow for additional promotion of existing routes to increase participation levels; the launch of two new WSBs in September, 2015; development of new marketing tools; and implementation of other improvements as identified in the evaluation study.

At the time of writing (May 2015) of this case study:

- A new professionally produced promotional video has been created in cooperation with the Safer Roads Ottawa Program. View here: <http://www.ottawaschoolbus.ca/wsb>
- New marketing materials are under development (see Appendix 9).
- Program partners are planning outreach activities to parents via school events (ex. BBQ's, school council meetings, kindergarten information nights etc.) to promote the WSB and increase registrations.
- The registration process is being simplified.
- Planning and promotion of two additional WSBs has begun. This includes pre-consultation with the selected schools regarding route options.



Ottawa Walking School Bus Program

Concluding Observations

- Most of the project's goals & objectives were achieved.
- It produced the largest roll-out of WSBs in Ottawa to date and helped raised the profile of active school travel among other schools, the media and political decision-makers.
- This WSB model effectively addressed the liability barrier by migrating responsibility from parent volunteers at the school level to paid leaders organized at the school board and community level.
- Partnership model: None of the project partners could have successfully delivered the project by themselves. Each added value and credibility based on their expertise, reputation and commitment.

- School Travel Planning and other ASRTS interventions provided a solid foundation for the introduction of a WSB although this did not guarantee success at every school.
- Engagement on the part of school boards led directly to additional funding from the transportation authority.

Appendix 1: Principal Q&A



Ottawa Walking School Bus (WSB) Pilot Project Q&A for Principals

Q. Who is responsible for this project?

A. The pilot is a partnership between the Ottawa Student Transportation Authority (OSTA), Ottawa Public Health, the Ottawa Safety Council and Green Communities Canada.

Q. When will the WSB operate?

A. From Monday, Sept. 29 to Friday, Dec. 19, 2014. It will operate every day in the morning only (ie. for the journey to school). There will be one WSB per school.

Q. What about safety and liability?

A. Each WSB will be led by an adult Leader. This Leader will be employed and assigned to the route by the Ottawa Safety Council and will meet the same training and other requirements as a School Crossing Guard including a Criminal Reference Check for the Vulnerable Sector. Liability insurance coverage will be provided by the Safety Council. Routes will use the road, sidewalk and winter-maintained pathway networks in OSTA's database and will respect established walking hazards according to OSTA's Hazard Zone Criteria and Assessment Methodology.

Q. What route will the WSB follow?

A. The route at your school will be established by OSTA and will be designed to provide access to students from residential areas within the existing walk zone for each school. Travel time will not exceed 30 minutes and the WSB will be scheduled to arrive no later than 5 minutes before the bell.

Q. Who can participate in the WSB?

A. Any student attending your school who wishes to walk the established WSB route is welcome. Students using mobility aids may also participate, however a barrier-free route cannot be guaranteed. Note that students with life threatening medical conditions may not receive appropriate medical attention in an emergency.

Q. Is registration required?

- A. Yes. Parents will be required to register their child on the OSTA website in order to participate. If more than 10 registrations are received, additional support will be necessary to ensure safe operation of the WSB. You will be contacted to discuss the options appropriate for your school community.
- Q. Where will students meet the WSB?**
- A. Designated stops will be established at regular intervals along the route and this information will be sent to registered families. Students will be expected to join at the stop nearest home but may also join anywhere along the route. The WSB will not wait for late arrivals and door-to-door or other special stops will not be established. There will be no maximum distance requirements for stops.
- Q. Can students bring their bikes, scooters, roller blades etc. on the WSB?**
- A. No.
- Q. Can parents/caregivers walk with their children?**
- A. Yes. However the WSB Leader will be the adult in charge of the group at all times and parents will be required to respect their authority.
- Q. Can parents/caregivers apply to be WSB Leaders?**
- A. Yes. They should contact the Ottawa Safety Council at 613.238.1513.
- Q. Will the WSB be cancelled during bad weather?**
- A. In general the WSB will operate in all weather conditions. However, in the case of freezing rain or other extreme weather events (as determined by the Ottawa Safety Council) it may be cancelled. Parents/caregivers will be notified no later than 30 minutes before the route is scheduled to begin.
- Q. What is my/my school's role?**
- A. You and/or your school council will be required to distribute promotional and registration information about the WSB to parents in a timely and proactive manner using materials that will be provided. As principal you will be responsible for disciplining students who do not behave in a safe or appropriate way (when notified by the WSB Leader) and reporting any serious incidents to OSTA. In addition you will be requested to provide feedback as part of an evaluation process at the end of the pilot.

Appendix 2: School Letter of Agreement



Ottawa Walking School Bus (WSB) Pilot Project Letter of Agreement

I, _____, Principal, agree that [school name] will participate in the Ottawa Walking School Bus (WSB) Pilot Project as described in the attached Q&A document and which I have read and understand.

I acknowledge that I and our school will have the following responsibilities:

- Distribute promotional, Leader recruitment and registration materials about the WSB to our school community in a timely manner.
- Discipline students participating in the WSB who do not behave in a safe or appropriate manner as reported by the WSB Leader.
- Assist with identifying assistant WSB Leaders if required (for routes with more than 10 registrations). This might include identifying potential parent volunteers or students (Grade 6 and higher).
- Provide feedback at the conclusion of the project.

For the School:

Name (print)

School

Signature

Date

For the Project Partners:

Vicky Kyriaco

General Manager
Ottawa Student Transportation Authority

Signature

Date

Appendix 3: Route Map & Schedule

Woodroffe Ave - Walking School Bus



Appendix 4: Promotional Flyer



Coming to Our School: The Walking School Bus!

As part of our efforts to promote active transportation, our school has been selected to participate in a new Walking School Bus pilot project.

A Walking School Bus (WSB) is a group of children who walk to school together under adult supervision following a specific route and schedule. It's a safe, convenient, healthy and fun way for your child to travel to school with their friends!

Starting September 29th the WSB will operate every school day in the morning under the supervision of a trained Leader. It will continue until the last day of school in December.

Don't wait! Registration is required and space is limited.

www.ottawaschoolbus.ca/resources/safe-routes

Want to be a Walking School Bus Leader?

www.ottawasafetycouncil.org/join-our-team/job-opportunities

This project is an initiative of



Appendix 5: Media Release



MEDIA ADVISORY / AVIS AUX MÉDIAS

For immediate release:
October 3, 2014

New active and safe routes to school for Ottawa children

Ottawa – Several students will take the Walking School Bus from their homes to Robert Bateman Public School as part of a new pilot project at eight Ottawa schools. The Walking School Bus is a group of children who walk to school together under adult supervision following a specific route and schedule.

Date: Monday, October 6

Time: 7:45 a.m. – 8:15 a.m.

Location: Blohm Drive and Taj Court (start of the route)

Parking: On-street parking available

[The Walking School Bus route](#) begins at 7:56 a.m. and ends at 8:15 a.m. at Robert Bateman Public School at 1250 Blohm Drive.

The Walking School Bus pilot project is led by the Ottawa School Transportation Authority (OSTA) in partnership with Ottawa Public Health (OPH), the Ottawa Safety Council and Green Communities Canada (GCC). Representatives from these organizations are available for interviews upon arrival at the school.

-30-

For more information:

Media contact
613-580-2450

Public inquiries:
ottawa.ca

Appendix 6: WSB Leader Job Posting

Do you enjoy working with children?
Are you active, energetic and do you want to make a difference?
Then we need you to steer our bus.



WALKING SCHOOL BUS LEADER

Part-time Employment – Operational School Days

Morning Routes

\$33.00 per route + 4% vacation

Paid training and equipment provided by OSC

What is a Walking School Bus?

A Walking School Bus is a group of children walking together under the supervision of one or more adult called “Leaders”, following a prescribed route and schedule. Like a regular school bus, it offers a safe, dependable, healthy and green way for children to get to school vs. being driven in a car.

A Walking School Bus Leader demonstrates the following characteristics:

- They enjoy working outdoors in all kinds of weather;
- Have a commitment to children and safety;
- Are reliable;
- Have energy and the ability to cope with stress;
- Have the ability to problem solve and deal with conflict situations.

Walking School Bus Leaders are required for the following schools:

- Connaught Public School
- Convent Glen Catholic School
- Elmdale Public School

Employment Eligibility:

- Age 18yrs or older
- Eligible to work in Canada
- Clear Police Records Check for the Vulnerable Sector
- English essential
- Work or Character References (2)
- Ability to walk (up to 3.5 kilometers within the assigned scheduled route times)

Experience Required/desirable:

- Working with children, through employment, volunteer work, or practical application.

For more information and Online Application: www.ottawasafetycouncil.ca

Appendix 7: WSB Leader Job Description

Title

Walking School Bus Leader

Reports To

Program Coordinator, Ottawa Safety Council

Summary

The Walking School Bus Leader will be responsible for the safe passage of the students on their assigned routes, according to applicable safety standards and regulations. This individual will maintain a calm, professional demeanor at all times.

Core Competencies

- Customer Focus
- Communication
- Energy and the Ability to Cope with Stress
- Problem Solving
- Accountability and Dependability
- Ethics and Integrity

Job Duties

- Direct or escort students across the street, at their route, stopping traffic as necessary.
- Maintain focus and avoid disruptions while escorting students across the street.
- Communicate traffic and crossing rules and other information to students and adults.
- Report unsafe behavior of children to school officials.
- Review their route on a daily basis and report any unsafe conditions to the Program Coordinator. Monitor traffic flow to locate safe gaps through which students cross streets.
- Maintain alertness at all times.
- Be aware of emergency vehicles approaching the area, ensuring that they have priority over both vehicular and pedestrian traffic.
- Document licence plates of dangerous motorists and report to appropriate officials.
- Comply with all safety requirements, and wear all required and approved safety equipment, including safety vest and cleats.
- Ensure clean, visible and safe condition of all protective materials.

Requirements

- First Aid and CPR training
- Recent Police Records Check (For the vulnerable sector)
- Confirmation of physical health from a licensed physician.
- Effective verbal and listening communications skills.
- Have the ability to communicate information so others will understand.
- Time management skills.
- Respect diversity - treat everyone with respect.
- Conflict resolution skills
- Ability to work independently and complete daily activities according to work schedule.
- Ability to walk (up to 3.5 kilometres within the assigned scheduled shift times day) and perform moderate physical labor under adverse environmental conditions
- Requires the ability to see details at a distance.
- Requires excellent depth perceptions and peripheral vision.
- Requires good manual dexterity (hand, hand with arm) and multi-limb coordination. Must be able to quickly move arms and legs.
- Excellent stamina is required.

Work Conditions

- Outside work conditions that include inclement weather, heat and humidity, and exposure to dust.
- Hazards associated with high traffic conditions.

Appendix 8: Project Evaluation Report – Executive Summary



In Ottawa, Canada, a Walking School Bus (WSB) pilot project took place from September 29 to December 19, 2014. WSBs were led by trained, paid leaders who walked students to school along a predetermined route. Eight English speaking elementary schools from the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board and the Ottawa Catholic School Board participated in the project with a total of 54 students participating. Key stakeholders of the project included Green Communities Canada (GCC), Ottawa Public Health (OPH), Ottawa Student Transportation Authority (OSTA), and Ottawa Safety Council (OSC). A process evaluation of the project took place from December 2014 to March 2015. A process evaluation was conducted for the WSB pilot project with the goal of improving future WSB implementation. Electronic fluid surveys were sent to parents of participating students. In addition, focus groups were conducted with WSB leaders and Public Health Nurses (PHNs) who participated in the project. Four principals and vice-principals of participating schools as well as representatives from each key stakeholder group took part in semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions. WSB leaders also completed a survey regarding their experiences with the WSB leader training program.

Evaluation Purpose

The WSB pilot project evaluation sought to identify formative information about the implementation of the project, with the goal of improving future project implementation. Successes and challenges to the WSB pilot project were ascertained so that the project may be enhanced and future implementation of the WSB project may be changed for the better.

Evaluation Limitations

This evaluation had some limitations: Students were not interviewed regarding their perceptions and experiences of the WSB project, and half of all parents who were involved in the project did not participate in the evaluation. Lastly, only parents of children who participated in the WSB pilot project were surveyed. The attitudes and beliefs of parents who chose not to enrol their child in the project were not explored.

Successes

The evaluation revealed several successes of the WSB pilot project, which include:

- 100% of parents who participated in the evaluation would like their child to participate in the WSB project again, and 100% would recommend that others participate in the WSB.
- All respondents perceived the WSB pilot project as beneficial to the students. Perceived benefits included: increased physical activity, social interaction with peers, connectivity to their communities, and composure when arriving at school.
- 87% of parents felt that “improving safety skills” was the top perceived benefit for their child while participating in the project, followed by “improved fitness” at 83%.

- All principals and vice-principals surveyed were happy to have the WSB pilot project at their schools. They also felt that participation showcased their commitment to active transportation to the whole school community.
- WSB leaders were extremely satisfied with the training process, and were highly engaged in and dedicated to the project.
- The paid leader model was viewed as successful among stakeholders

Challenges

- Communication - parents were unclear about whom to speak to about the WSB pilot
- Promotion of the WSB pilot to parents was short, leaving little time to promote enrollment.
- Registration was not straight forward and was not available in multiple languages.
- Choosing safe routes that allowed for the greatest number of families to participate
- Combating ‘car culture’ - parental attitudes around using a car to travel as opposed active travel.
- Perceived safety risks with the 1:10 ratio of leader to children.
- Ensuring backups for WSB leaders should they be unable to work.
- More in-kind staff time was required during implementation than anticipated.

Future Recommendations

The results of this evaluation should be considered for the planning and implementation of future WSB projects. Future recommendations are as follows:

- **Roles & Responsibilities.** The WSB project should continue to have a steering committee with one coordinator. Defined roles and responsibilities and lines of communication should be clearly established at the beginning.
- **Promotion.** Be more aggressive in promoting the program. Start promotion of the WSB in the spring for the following September in order to be ready to start the WSB on the first day of a new school year.
- **Parental Involvement.** Involve parents during the planning and implementation stages of the process. Parents want clear information, as well as to fully understand what is involved in participating in the WSB.
- **Registration.** Change the process from a 2-step to a 1-step process. Improve the online system to ensure usability.
- **WSB Leader.** Improvements to the back-up system were recommended, such as combining the WSB leader pool with that of the crossing guards to increase staff availability. Also recommended was decreasing the leader to child ratio from 1:10 to 1:8.
- **Delivery Model.** Future iterations of the WBS project should include: tailoring program based on language needs at each school, consider working with extended day/gifted programs, expanding to include more routes, as well as considering a minimum student participation rate for maintaining WSB routes.
- **Funding.** Sustainable funding is needed. Some respondents felt corporate sponsorship may be an option. Also mentioned was to account for in-kind costs in the budget.