

What initiative will work for you?

There are a variety of initiatives to help you promote sustainable school travel. Below is a basic outline of some of the main schemes and initiatives that could be developed. Each initiative is briefly described followed a list of positive and negative aspects for you to consider, although many of the obstacles can be relatively easily turned into positives so don't be put off by this! When you have decided which initiative will work best for your school, return to the [resource index](#) and select the relevant 'how to guide' which will explain in detail the process of setting up each scheme.

Of course, every sustainable transport initiative encourages physical activity, reduces traffic congestion, creates a more pleasant environment around school, helps pupils to learn important pedestrian skills and enhances social well-being. In the descriptions below these benefits are automatically assumed. Similarly, every initiative needs constant promotion to remind parents and pupils to take part so they don't forget about walking to school! Consequently only the advantages and disadvantages of the specific scheme are covered.

Park and Stride

A Park and Stride scheme makes use of a suitable parking area 5 or 10 minutes away from school and those parents and pupils who can't walk the whole journey are encouraged to park at this location and complete the remainder of the distance on foot. Parents are still responsible for their children when using a Park and Stride, unlike a Walking Bus where pupils are accompanied by adult volunteers (see below). Some parents may choose to let their child walk to school alone or with friends from the Park and Stride point, but this is up to parents' discretion.

Plus Points:

- Relatively easy to set up.
- Even those who live some distance from school can participate.
- If you intend to use a public car park the scheme can be easily trialled to ascertain longer term success.
- Many schools already operate successful schemes. It is one of the most popular initiatives due to the limited amount of work it takes to set up and establish compared with some of the other walking initiatives.
- Many car park owners are keen to co-operate and allow parents to park in their car park; there is potentially increased trade for them if it's a supermarket car park for example!
- Encourages parents to park away from the school gate.

Obstacles:

- You will need to find a suitable location for parking and obtain written permission from the car park owner; convenient parking areas may be difficult to find in some areas.
- You will need to carry out a risk assessment of the walking route which takes a little thought and time.
- There may be a suitable parking location within reasonable walking distance, but finding a suitable walking route may be more difficult.
- Children should still be accompanied from the Park and Stride site to school by their parents, unlike a Walking Bus (see below) where pupils are escorted by volunteers.
- Some parents may not want to give up time to use a Park and Stride, even if it's only 5 minutes away from school.
- Those parents and pupils which could easily walk to school may use the Park and Stride which is obviously less beneficial than travelling on foot for the whole journey.

Walking Bus

A Walking Bus is a supervised group of children making their way to school on foot. It is an excellent way to encourage more walking to school as even busy parents travelling to work can drop children off to join the bus and then continue on their way. Adult supervisors are trained to lead the walk with a 'driver' at the front of the bus and a 'conductor' at the rear. Walking Bus Schemes can operate in two different ways;

1. **From a designated car parking area.** In the mornings, pupils gather at the designated car parking area, adult volunteers will then escort them for the remaining walking journey into school. At the end of the school day, adult volunteers escort pupils on the return journey to the car park. This type of walking bus may also have designated 'bus stops' on its walking route from which more pupils could be collected and dropped off at specific times.
2. **Following a pre-determined route.** Adult volunteers begin at a designated starting point and follow a pre-defined route stopping at pre-arranged 'bus stops' at specific times to pick up pupils on route into school. On the return journey the walking bus follows the same route dropping off pupils at the 'bus stops'.

Your Road Safety Officer can advise about the most suitable routes for your bus, they will also risk assess the route for you. Hi-visibility walking jackets are worn to ensure the bus is seen at all times. The Walking Bus will set off from the agreed starting point at a designated time and may be timetabled to arrive at school in time for Breakfast Club or normal morning starting time.

You may decide to operate your Walking Bus for one day a week to begin with and then slowly increase this as a way to gradually accustom your parents and pupils to using it. Additionally, it can be set up to operate at the start or end of the school day, or at both of these times.

Plus Points:

- Pupils walk with adult supervisors from an agreed starting point, meaning that busy parents can drop off children and continue on their journey to work.
- Each bus route has a register so all pupils are accounted for.
- Because a register is kept on the Walking Bus, there is a ready made means to quantify your success.
- Hi-visibility clothing is worn.
- All volunteers are trained by Durham County Council's Road Safety Team.
- All volunteers are CRB checked.
- A reward scheme is offered by Durham County Council's Travel Plan Team for those pupils who take part in a Walking Bus. Pupils who have used the bus for 70% of each term receive a special metal pin badge. There is a different design to collect each term.
- Walking Buses are high profile – everyone who passes by, will see the Walking Bus on its way to school.

Obstacles:

- It can take time to plan the route and recruit enough volunteers to help.
- It is sometimes difficult to retain adult volunteers.
- Adult supervisors need to be CRB checked and trained, this takes additional time.
- If numbers of children increase on a route, then more adult supervisors may be needed.
- Those choosing to join the Walking Bus could already be walking to school anyway.
- Parents may not like the idea of volunteers, whom they don't know, walking their children to school.

WOW (Walk Once a Week) Scheme

A WOW scheme, as the name suggests, promotes Walking Once a Week. The School Travel Plan Working Group, with the help of the School Council, choose a specific day and all the school community make a special effort to walk at the same time, every Wednesday for example. A WOW scheme can also work whereby pupils to pledge to walk one day a week, but they choose their own day, taking into account their own personal circumstances. Such schemes are often called 'Walk Whenever'. However, bear in mind that this type of scheme is likely to have less visual impact than a specific day WOW scheme.

WOW is an ideal way to promote walking to school for children who would normally travel by car and could be incorporated with the Park and Stride scheme (see above). If a Park and Stride is unavailable, those children who genuinely have to travel by car can walk around the playground a certain number of times, enabling participation of a different kind. WOW schemes are often implemented as a pre-cursor to other walking schemes and are a good way to gauge longer term commitment of parents and pupils.

Plus Points:

- The initiative can be very quick and easy to set up compared with other walking initiatives.
- You can determine when in the week the scheme operates.
- Pupils can choose their common walking day and then name the day i.e Walk on Wednesday, Stride-day Friday.
- In a Walk Whenever type scheme, pupils choose a day personal to them; this enables individuals to avoid days when they have sports or music equipment to carry.
- A WOW scheme can be used to gradually encourage greater participation in walking over a longer period of time as the more apathetic parents begin to enjoy the benefits of walking.
- It's a good way of gauging commitment for other major walking initiatives, i.e. a Walking Bus, Park and Stride or 5 minute Walking Zone.
- The limited effort of this campaign may encourage school staff to participate along with the pupils.
- The initiative is very simple to understand with even young children being able to grasp the concept of walking once a week.
- This initiative has been popular in many County Durham schools and has had proven success at raising the levels of walking, albeit sometimes only on the particular chosen Walking Day.

Obstacles:

- Parents may be of the opinion that only walking once a week won't make much difference.
- Inappropriate parking may only be dealt with on the chosen walking day, rather than throughout the school week. However if parking is removed on the Walking Day it is a good indication of what could be achieved every day with further campaign and walking initiatives.
- Those taking part could be those who are walking anyway.
- In a Walk Whenever type campaign, there may be a limited visual affect on the parental parking outside school compared with a walking day which is common for the whole school community.

Walking Zone

A Walking Zone is a car free area around your school. With this scheme, the zone disperses vehicles thus reducing congestion on the roads immediately around school. Parents who travel to school by car are encouraged to park at the boundary of the zone and continue the journey with their children on foot.

The scheme is developed by a class, often Year 5 in primary, or Year 7/8 in secondary. The pupils decide how big the zone will be (normally either a 5 or 10 minute walk), mark out the zone in a practical field work activity, and then launch the scheme with posters and leaflets. Setting up this type of scheme offers pupils the opportunity to complete real life mapping work as they plan the zone and make use of ICT skills as they prepare materials to promote the scheme. Parents will need to be fully supportive and committed to observing the car free zone boundaries as it is not officially enforceable; the scheme will only be successful if all parents adhere to the rules! However, because this is a pupil led initiative, it does tend to increase participation pressure on parents.

Plus Points:

- Parents and pupils who have to drive to school still benefit from some exercise.
- A Walking Zone keeps school access points and local roads free from parental traffic and parked cars.
- Pupils determine and set up the Walking Zone as part of their curriculum activities; this means they take ownership of it.
- The Walking Zone is very effective at displacing traffic congestion associated with a school.
- A school can choose how big their Walking Zone will be.

Obstacles:

- It takes commitment from the class teacher who will work with the pupils to set up the zone.
- It often takes several weeks for the zone to be completed in a number of class based activities.
- Volunteers will be needed to assist with the fieldwork element of the zone's preparation.
- The zone is not enforceable but relies on the good will of parents.
- There could be complaints from residents if cars move into streets previously unaffected.
- A Walking Zone may be difficult for an infant school to set up, since it does not really relate to the KS1 curriculum. However, there is no reason why KS1 pupils can't take part in the scheme, if set up either by the School Travel Plan Working Group, or KS2 pupils who will lead by example to show how the scheme should be used.

Car Sharing Scheme

Car sharing takes place when children from **different households** share the same car. Whilst car sharing is a useful initiative for some schools, it should only be considered **after** walking and cycling initiatives have been fully investigated since these are the preferred modes of travel to keep pupils fit and healthy. Car sharing is useful for schools who have managed to encourage all those pupils that could walk, to walk, but would like to achieve further modal shift away from single occupancy car journeys. Additionally, car sharing is a suitable initiative for primary schools with large catchments, secondary schools and 6th form students.

Plus Points:

- It may help to remove additional vehicles from outside school if you have managed to get all families who can walk, to walk.
- It could be useful for schools with a large catchment area.
- It could be useful for rural schools where pupils travel longer distances.
- It is suitable for 6th Form students as well as school staff.

Obstacles:

- Pupils don't benefit from physical exercise (although they could still use a Park and Stride, Walking Bus or Walking Zone if your school has these initiatives in place).
- Car journeys are still generated.
- Families may think that if they car share, they don't need to walk to school.
- Seat belt and child restraint laws will need to be followed where appropriate.
- Some families may not like to send their child to school with those they don't know very well.
- The school will have to decide if car share drivers need to be CRB checked.