

# Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council School Travel Plan & Walking Bus Guidelines



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## *Ag Siúl agus ag Rothaíocht to School*



Comhshaoil, Pobal agus Rialtas Áitiúil  
Environment, Community and Local Government



An initiative of the



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# Sustainable Travel

## Introduction

Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown County Council is committed to improving road safety in the County and to promoting and encouraging the use of sustainable travel modes (walking, cycling, use of public transport) for all road users for some or all of daily journeys. It is the vision of the Council that every child should be able to travel to school in a healthy, sustainable and safe way. This document outlines two ways a school can help promote sustainable travel to their pupils. A School Travel Plan is a document produced by the school to help plan travel to and from school. The School Walking Bus aims to encourage pupils along a route to walk to school together.

This guide should be read in conjunction with the National Transport Authority ‘Toolkit for School Travel’ which presents a set of measures for use by schools who wish to promote ways of reducing car use on the trip to and from school, and to reduce the impact of traffic on the community around the school.

## Completing your School Travel Plan

### What is a Travel Plan

A School Travel Plan is a simple written document which identifies the issues

surrounding the journey pupils make to and from school. It sets out agreed aims to overcome these issues and outlines a series of practical steps to reduce the number of car trips made to school by parents, children and staff and can improve children’s safety on the journey to and from school. A School Travel Plan benefits pupils, parents, staff and the wider community by promoting sustainable and safer transport on the journey to and from school.

A school can use its School Travel Plan to demonstrate a real commitment to the promotion of health, environmental and community issues. It will help to support and define school policies in relation to travel which can then be embedded in the ethos and ongoing development and improvement plans of the school.

In Smarter Travel ([www.smartertravel.ie](http://www.smartertravel.ie)), the National Transport Policy document, all schools are required to have a Travel Plan. Travel Plans can also be required as part of the Planning process.

## Contents of a Travel Plan

The following sections outlines what your School Travel Plan should include, allowing you to achieve real change for your school travel habits.

### A. Cover

Add the name of your school and the date you completed your School Travel Plan. You could add a photo of your school underneath, or run a competition amongst pupils to design the front cover.

### B. School Details

Include the following details:



- Name, address and contact details for the Plan
- Type of school, primary or post primary or special school
- Age range and number of pupils.
- Opening times/pre-school and after-school clubs and activities/extended schools
- Existing policies regarding school travel
- Regular off-site journeys during the school day
- Other initiatives like Green Schools and Healthy Schools
- Description of school's location: Make this as detailed as possible, so that the reader can gain a good impression of where your school is located. If possible, please include a labelled site plan and map of your catchment area. Also details of nearby roads should be provided, i.e. any pedestrian crossings, any traffic calming, nearby bus stops, nearby train stations.
- Existing facilities: Include details like the number of school entrances; whether there are separate entrances for cyclists and pedestrians; the number of car and cycle parking spaces for staff and visitors; whether you have a school warden nearby; whether you run cycle training; whether cycling is allowed inside the school gate; whether you have lockers for storing cycle helmets and showers for staff, etc. Photos of your school site would be a good idea in this section.

## C. Travel and Traffic Issues

Give details of the travel issues or problems at your school. These can be in text or bullet form. It should be clear how these problems have been identified and

when and by whom, i.e. parents, residents, students etc. It would also be useful to identify future developments which may increase traffic levels or travel patterns. This section should also outline things people are interested in, i.e. setting up a walking bus, more cycle parking etc

## D. School Travel Team

In order to develop and promote the school's travel plan, a school Travel Team is needed. This should be led by a member of school staff or a parent with real enthusiasm and a willingness to champion sustainable travel. The Travel Team should try to meet as frequently as possible whilst developing and implementing the School Travel Plan. The group should be made up of a variety of people including possibly teachers, parents, pupils and parents association representative.

In this section, give the names and roles of all those in the School Travel Team, including the Travel Plan Leader, that will be responsible for implementing the School Travel Plan and a brief outline of tasks undertaken during the project.

## E. Survey Results

For each class the following should be recorded:

- Class details and Teacher
- Date of Survey
- Number Present:
- Number Absent:
- How pupils travel to school
- How pupils would like to Travel to school
- How teachers and staff travel to school

How all pupils travel to school:



The following Table should be used as part of the Travel Survey

<b>Date of survey:</b>		
<b>Mode of Travel</b>	<b>No of Pupils</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Walk		
Cycle		
School bus		
Public service bus		
Train		
Car (share)		
Car (alone)		
Other		
<b>Total no. surveyed</b>		

A hands-up survey for each class should be used for the baseline on how all pupils travel to school, where available. This should be done over a few days or on a Wednesday. If pupil numbers are high and it is not feasible to survey all pupils, a representative sample should be surveyed. One option would be to survey a minimum of one class in each year, provided the allocation of pupils to different classes is not related to factors, such as socio-economic group. Alternatively, a random sample could be done based on the number of pupils on the school roll.

The following information should also be included:

- How all pupils would like (realistically) to travel to school: It is essential that you complete this part of the table. Please make sure that children give realistic options for travelling.
- Analysis of data collection: What did you learn from the data collection about how pupils travel to school (the most/least-used mode of transport, possible reasons for this)? How does this data compare with how pupils would like to travel? Pupils could help to analyse this data and make graphs

which you could include in the travel plan.

- Analysis of mapping exercise: What did you learn from the mapping exercise about where children live, how they travel and where danger spots are? Are there any obvious concentrations of families and how do these relate to travel modes? Have you gained any ideas about measures you might adopt as part of your travel plan, e.g. walking buses or car sharing. Engage the pupils in analysing the mapping exercise and thinking about possible options for change.
- Consultation with pupils, parents, staff and teachers. This section should demonstrate that the School Travel Plan is the result of joint efforts by all interested parties and, as a minimum, consultation must include parents, pupils, staff and a teacher. A table format could be included to outline who, when, how groups were consulted. Evidence of the consultation must be included, either as an appendix or in the main body of the plan: e.g. detailed findings from questionnaires with pupils, parents and staff, parents association, board of management meeting agendas and minutes, newsletters, displays to elicit parents' views or concerns, etc. Once again, pupils could help with the analysis and recording of questionnaires in text and graph form.
- Consultation with other parties: Who did you consult when compiling your travel plan (apart from pupils, parents, staff and teacher), and how did you consult them? (Examples might include the local authority, Gardaí local residents). Attach as appendices, or include in the main body of the plan, evidence of consultation, e.g. minutes of meetings with road safety



officer or school travel plan adviser, letters to local residents, parish council minutes, articles in local magazine, etc. Note: If you have not consulted with other parties when drawing up your School Travel Plan you must include something in Section 7 about how you are going to make relevant bodies aware of your completed plan.

## F. Aims of the Travel Plan

This section must include clear statements of intent, which should be linked to the problems and issues that have been identified. The following are some examples of aims:

- To reduce the number of car trips made to the school at the beginning and end of the school day.
- To encourage more walking and /or cycling to school.
- To encourage more use of public transport.
- To improve the health of the school community by promoting walking.
- To create or improve opportunities for pupils to become independent travellers.
- To promote the opportunity for exercise by encouraging walking to school.
- To improve safety on the school journey for those walking and cycling.
- To raise awareness about the health benefits of walking and cycling.

You can, and of course should, come up with your own aims which link to the needs and priorities of your school.

## G. Targets and Action Plan

**Target:** What are you trying to achieve? E.g. to increase the number cycling by 10%, to cut back on individual cars arriving at the school gates by 10%, to increase the number of children walking by 15%, to improve provision for Road Safety Education. Your targets must be SMART – i.e. specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed. You are advised to have one short-term target (a year hence) and a longer term target over about three years – e.g. In Year 1 reduce use of the car for the school journey by 5%; by end of Year 3 reduce use of the car for the school journey by 20%. (Where a target for mode share exceeds levels indicated in the preference survey, then the target could be considered unachievable and unrealistic and therefore not SMART. If the target is set above preference level a clear case needs to be made as to why.)

**Target date:** When do you hope to achieve your target? Please give a month/term and year (see above for short and longer-term targets).

**Actions:** What specific measures will you take to achieve this target? For example, set up a walking bus, set up cycle training at school. Any measure or action that has been identified within the body of the School Travel Plan should be included within the action plan (or a reason given as to why it is not taken forward). (See Appendix A).

**Person responsible:** Who will be responsible for these actions? What is their role within the school? Please make sure that you complete this section, ensuring that one person is not responsible for all actions. Spreading the load around the school will help to sustain the plan. It is advisable to identify specific individuals from larger organisations where their



help and support are required to achieve actions identified.

**Completion date:** Make sure that you give a month/term and year for completing the action.

Target for staff travel in secondary schools: Secondary schools should set a target and devise an action plan for reducing car use amongst staff, since staff vehicles account for a high percentage of traffic to school.

## H. Curriculum Work and Awareness raising

Curriculum work and awareness raising you already do: Give details of curriculum work and awareness raising that are already taking place at the school. This should cover road safety education, and the health and environmental issues around travel choices.

Curriculum work you plan to do: Give details of curriculum work and awareness raising that you intend to do to help embed the travel plan ethos at your school – e.g. in Geography, Science, PSHE, etc.

How will you inform and involve the staff? How will you inform and involve parents? Give details of how you will try to raise awareness of the health, safety and environmental benefits of walking and cycling amongst staff and parents.

## I. Monitoring and Reviewing

Your School Travel Plan must show how you intend to monitor your progress and the process for reviewing the plan. This must include details of:

- Date of the next hands-up survey

- Date of annual review
- Date of carrying out a complete review, i.e. a month and a year. Schools should re-write their travel plans every 3 years to reflect changes within the school, progress since the first plan, and new problems and opportunities related to school travel.
- Who will be responsible for ensuring that the surveys and review will take place?
- A commitment that the review will consider pupil travel needs arising from new developments in education and transport provision.

## J. Signatures

The School Travel Plan should be signed and approved by the School Principal. You may wish to also have a representative from the Parents Association and the student body council to sign the plan.

Where the School Travel team or a class have played a large part in developing the School Travel Plan, please include their signatures.

You are also encouraged to include the signatures of any other parties who have contributed significantly to the development of the School Travel Plan or who will have a role to play in its delivery.

## Summary

A successful School Travel Plan will address environmental and health issues and provides increased travel choices for students, parents and teachers. A good School Travel Plan will aim to do the following things:

- reduce the number of vehicles on the school run



- improve safety on the school journey
- encourage healthy and environmentally friendly travel choices

Overall a School Travel Plan can benefit everyone attending school pupils, parents, staff and the wider community by promoting a safer journey to and from school.

## Setting up a School Walking Bus

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### What is a Walking Bus?

A Walking Bus is an initiative encouraging pupils to walk to school. It consists of a group of pupils walking to school together on a set route supervised by their parents or guardians. The Walking Bus picks up 'passengers' at specific 'bus stops' along a set route at set times with the 'driver' at the front of the Walking Bus. Only those pupils that are with their parents/guardian or are known to a parent/guardian are permitted to join the bus. A maximum of 24 parents and pupils is recommended as part of one Walking Bus and additional Walking Buses are recommended for greater numbers.

Each pupil is required to wear a high visibility florescent vest provided by the Council. Along the way pupils can chat to their friends, learn valuable road safety skills and gain some independence. Usually schools operate the Walking Bus

on one day a week, i.e. as part of 'Walk on Wednesday' day.

The overall aim of a Walking Bus is to promote the health and well-being of pupils by encouraging them to walk to school. It can also increase the road safety awareness of pupils and reduce traffic congestion and pollution near schools.

### Benefits of a Walking Bus

Each pupil who is part of a Walking Bus is potentially one less car on the road near a school thus increasing safety for all road users, helping to ease traffic congestion and helping to improve air quality. Walking Bus schemes can provide many benefits to pupils, their parents/guardians and the school:

- Walking is a fun way to travel to school.
- It can promote a healthy lifestyle by helping to establish a pattern of exercise at an early age by regular walking.
- It can improve awareness of road safety through a controlled exposure to roads and traffic
- It can show young road users how to cross a road safely.
- It can form part of the Green Schools Travel Plan and the promotion of walking to schools.
- It can reduce traffic congestion near the entrance of a school.
- It can improve air quality and health through a reduction in exhaust emissions especially at the school gate where air quality problems can be acute.
- It can allow parents/guardians to meet and chat on the walk to school.





## Getting Started and Main steps

Schools interested in setting up a Walking Bus should contact Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council who will outline the steps involved, provide a technical assessment of the proposed route and provide high visibility fluorescent vests for the pupils if the school wishes to proceed.

The local Gardaí should also be consulted prior to setting up the Walking Bus to assist the Council in determining the suitability of the chosen route and to advise on any potential for anti social behaviour along the route.

The following are some steps that should ensure the bus is organised safely and effectively.

### Step 1 – Assess Interest

The school should inform parents about the potential and benefits of setting up a Walking Bus and encourage parents/guardians along a route to get together.

This can be done by sending a letter to parents/guardians or inviting them to a meeting (see Appendix A) or placing a notice in the school newsletter or school notice board. A survey of parents/guardians can also be undertaken in the school to assess interest. A number of parents/guardians that would be willing to drive the initiative should also be identified at this stage.

### Step 2 – Set up a Meeting

A meeting should be set up within the school consisting of the Council, the Principal, teacher(s) and the interested parents/guardians. The school may also consider inviting a member of An Garda Síochána. At the meeting, the Walking Bus guidelines are outlined in detail and a decision is taken whether or not to develop the initiative further along a route to the school. A Walking Bus co-ordinator should also be nominated to help promote and drive the initiative. The Council can provide a map showing approach roads to the school. Any possible route must be





pedestrian friendly and in general should not be longer than 1.5km in length or 30 minutes in time. Also, a direct route with few road crossing points and low traffic speeds is preferred.

Having decided on a route, a Council representative, a school representative and some parents should walk the route for an informal assessment and to make a decision on 'bus stop' locations.

### Step 3 – Formal Route Assessment

A Council representative, usually a Traffic Engineer, in conjunction with the local Gardaí will carry out a formal road safety risk assessment along the chosen route and chosen Walking Bus stop locations and make a recommendation on its suitability (see Appendix B). If the route is deemed suitable, a map of the route will be prepared by the Council and a timetable agreed for bus stops on the route. Details of possible conflict points will be shown on the map. The Council then provides the school with appropriate high visibility fluorescent vests. The Council has no responsibility for the operation of the Walking Bus but will facilitate its introduction.

### Step 4 – Promoting the Walking Bus

Efforts should be made by the School and Parents/guardians to publicise the first day of the Walking Bus in the media by issuing a Press Release to the media and inviting a Local Politician and/or Local Celebrity to join the Walking Bus. The Council can assist schools in promoting the Walking Bus and can offer road safety promotional materials for pupils. A case study on the

walking Bus in Rathmichael School can be seen in Appendix C

## Step 5 – Monitoring the Walking Bus

The Walking Bus Co-ordinator should keep records on the operation of the Walking Bus including participation levels on each bus route. Any issues that arise from time to time along the route should also be recorded.

## Role of Key people

### Role of Parents/Guardians

- Encourage their children to join the Walking Bus.
- Educate the pupils on how to cross roads safely.
- Ensure that the pupil is wearing a high visibility fluorescent vest when they use the Walking Bus.
- Ensure each pupil is aware of the need to obey the parents/guardians and to behave appropriately at all times.

### Pupil Responsibilities

- Pupils taking part in the Walking Bus scheme must wear the high visibility fluorescent vest provided by the Council.
- Pupils must walk and behave sensibly and not cause a danger to themselves or others and must follow instructions from the parent/guardians
- Pupils should aim to enjoy themselves!



## Walking Bus Checklist

1. Walking Bus Guidelines issued to the schools.
2. School to identify a co-ordinator and assess if enough volunteers interested.
3. Suitable routes identified and walked by the School Representative / Parent(s).
4. Formal Risk assessment carried out on route by the Council and Gardaí
5. Walking Bus stop location and timetable decided.
6. Potential users of the Walking Bus identified along the route.
7. School to agree and inform pupils of behaviour expected on Walking Bus.
8. High Visibility Florescent Vests obtained from the Council.
9. Trial walk of route carried out by Parents.

**You are now ready to start  
your Walking Bus!**  
***Good Luck! Enjoy! Have fun!***



## Appendix A Sample School letter

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### Re: Walking Bus Initiative

Dear Parent/Guardian,

**I am writing to ascertain your interest in setting up a 'Walking Bus' from your area to the school. This will ensure regular exercise for the pupils and help pupils make new friends. It may also help reduce traffic congestion around the school in the mornings.**

A Walking Bus is a fun and healthy way for pupils to get to and from school. It is a scheme that involves parents/guardians walking their children to school together along a set route while picking up additional 'passengers' at specified 'bus stops' along the route. As the Walking Bus proceeds to school, pupils can chat to their friends and learn valuable road safety skills.

There will be a meeting on the \_\_\_\_\_ to discuss the Walking Bus initiative in more detail and to find out whether or not this suggestion has your support. I think this would be a wonderful initiative for the school, parents and pupils.

Looking forward to meeting you.

Yours Sincerely

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Name of Pupil (s)**

**I wish to attend a meeting on setting up a Walking Bus**

**Print Parent/Guardian Name:**

**Mobile:**

**Parent/Guardian Signature:**

**Date:**



# Appendix B Route Assessment

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## Safety Guidelines

A Route Assessment of the Walking Bus route will be carried out by a Council representative and a member of An Garda Síochána to ensure it is suitable and convenient and pedestrian friendly. The following are considered when carrying out the risk assessment along a route:

- Footway width along the route and at busy crossing points. Is the footway wide enough to allow other pedestrians to overtake the Walking Bus?
- Dishings/ appropriate tactile paving at crossing points along the route.
- Volume and type of traffic.
- Speed of traffic along the route and on roads leading to the route.
- Availability of safe crossing points.
- Availability of wide waiting areas/wide footpaths for Walking Bus stops.
- Visibility along the route of cars entering and exiting driveways and entrances.
- Overgrown bushes and natural hazards such as unfenced drops.

If there are roadworks commencing along a road, a further risk assessment may be required to identify a safer alternative route for the period of the works. In general, roadworks should be suspended during the school trip period.

Arising from the risk assessment, the Council may recommend some improvements to the footway along the route to enhance pedestrian safety. These must be complete before the Walking Bus can commence or an alternative route is required to be identified.

It should be noted that the Walking Bus driver should not, in any circumstances, use signals or body language that might imply that vehicle drivers are expected to stop as they are not legally entitled to do so.

The following are some road safety guidelines for volunteers on how to cross various junction types safely along the route of a Walking Bus safely.

### **Uncontrolled Road Crossing – (i.e. no Traffic Signal Control)**

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- When the ‘Driver’ reaches the road crossing point he/she should wait and assemble pupils in preparation for crossing.
- Check for oncoming traffic and allow oncoming traffic to pass.
- If there is no traffic coming and it is safe to do so, the Walking Bus crosses the road with the driver looking and listening for traffic.
- The conductor(s) should ask the pupils to look and listen while crossing.
- The Walking Bus should not proceed until everyone is safely across.



## Crossing Controlled by Pedestrian lights / School Warden

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- When the 'Driver' reaches the road crossing point he/she should wait and assemble pupils in preparation for crossing.
- When the 'Driver' is satisfied that the group is all together, then the 'Driver' should press the pedestrian button to activate the lights for the group to cross or wait for instructions from the School warden.
- When the lights favour pedestrians (green pedestrian bulb illuminated) or as instructed by the School Warden and it is safe to do so, the 'Driver' should proceed onto the crossing before allowing the group to cross.
- The conductor(s) should ask the pupils to look and listen while crossing.
- The Walking Bus should only cross in front of a school warden.





