Get Rolling With a Bike Train Program

With a bike train, a group of students bike to school together, accompanied by adults who make sure students stay safe and have fun. A bike train is a fun and easy way for kids to safely get physical activity on the way to or from school and a great way for students who live too far to conveniently walk to participate in Safe Routes to School.

Frequently Asked Questions About Starting a Bike Train Program

Who starts and runs a bike train? A bike train can be started and led by a group of parents, school staff, community volunteers, or anyone who is interested in helping students get to and from school in a safe and active way using a bicycle. Bike trains often have a small group of stakeholders that helps plan and launch the program. Ideally, each school has a bike train coordinator. This person may be a PTO/PTA member or family volunteer, school staff or teacher, or member of a youth-serving, faith-based, or other community organization. A bike train coordinator can be a paid or volunteer position. If you have a city, town, county, or school district Safe Routes to School program, your bike train coordinator will work with that person and might share responsibilities and resources.

Who can be a bike train leader? A bike train leader must have some bicycling skills, understand traffic laws, feel comfortable riding on the road, and be authoritative but have patience with kids. A leader must have a working bicycle and required safety equipment such as a helmet. It is a plus for a leader to have some basic bicycle mechanics knowledge, although this is usually not required. Leaders can come from families and staff at your schools, high school students through a high school cycling club or volunteer program, community service organizations, cycling clubs, bike shops, fitness groups, or retirees.

What students participate typically participate in a bike train? Students that currently bike to school or students that would like to bike to school and live within a few miles (depending on age) of the school are great candidates. Creating routes that reach neighborhoods with a concentration of students and utilize bike lanes, paths, and low-traffic streets will help maximize the number of students that participate.

How long does it take to set up a bike train program? Three months provides a good amount of time to develop a bike train program from scratch. If you have families already biking to school with students, setup might take less time since you already have a pool of potential leaders and participants. Choose a good time to kick off a bike train program in terms of your climate and other events, and work backwards from that date to have plenty of planning time.

What kind of safety training is required for a bike train? You will want to make sure students have the skills, equipment, and knowledge to participate safely in your bike train. The training can be as simple as an informal conversation and equipment check by bike train leaders on the first day of the bike train. Or, you can hold a more formal training for students such as a two- to three-hour class the weekend before the bike train begins. Some communities pair the kickoff of their bike trains with a community education event such as a bike rodeo that features traffic safety games, skits, helmet fittings, and more. Bike train leader training should focus on safety for students and leaders. Bike train leaders need to understand traffic safety, bicycling laws, and any protocols your program has in place.

How to Get Started: Follow These Steps to Plan a Great Bike Train!

Planning a bike train might seem complicated, but resources are available to get you rolling. Our toolkit, The Wheels on the Bike Go Round and Round: How to Get a Bike Train Rolling at your School, walks you through how to plan a bike train and provides resources that you can tailor for your school, community, and students. Use these five steps to start your program:

1. **Roll Up to the Starting Line: Initial Considerations.** Make initial decisions about how your bike train program is structured, identify your partners, and ensure you have local buy-in.

2. **Get Ready: Recruit and Train Students and Volunteers.** Recruit student participants and bike train leaders. As discussed in the toolkit, there are different options for student sign up, bike train leader requirements, and student and leader training.

3. **Get Set: Identify Your Bike Train Route.** Plan routes that are convenient for many students with help from parents and family members, students, and other community members.

4. **Ride! Start, Run and Promote Your Program.** Launch your bike train program with a special event. Refer to the toolkit for additional ideas as well as tips to keep your program running smoothly.

5. **Cool Down: Evaluate and Adjust.** Gather information about how well your program is working and make adjustments as needed.

For More Information

If you are interested in bike train training or engaging the Safe Routes Partnership to develop your program, email us at info@saferoutespartnership.org.

Why start a bike train program?

Biking to school is good for students (and adults).
- Biking is more intense than walking, providing more vigorous exercise and greater health benefits.
- Bicycling to school is associated with better heart health compared with other means of getting to school.
- A study of Danish students found that bicycling to school was associated with lower BMI and lower odds of being overweight or obese, compared to being driven.
- Adolescents who bicycle are 48% less likely to be overweight as adults.

Many Americans are bicycling, and bike trains help them learn to do so safely.
- 34% of Americans rode a bike in the past year, and 53% would like to ride more often.
- Studies show that substantially more Americans are bicycling than previously realized.

Bike trains work.
- Research shows that bike trains are a successful way to increase bicycle commute trips to school.
- Bike trains have been shown to increase physical activity among low-income students.