

# Bicycle Train



Bicycle trains are a fun way for kids to get regular exercise and practice bicycle safety skills while traveling to school

## What's a bicycle train?

Bicycle trains are adult supervised bicycle rides. They are similar to walking school buses (see WAY TO: Walking School Bus) but are better suited to older elementary and middle school students with bicycle experience.

## How do I set one up?

### Decide what kind of bicycle train fits your community

- Bicycle trains can be simple or elaborate.
- They can operate daily, weekly or monthly.
- They can include park and ride sites, to allow children who live far from school to participate.

### Pick a safe route

- Find a starting point with enough space for cyclists to gather and safe places to enter the roadway or path.
- Incorporate shared-use paths if possible. Otherwise, choose streets with minimal traffic and enough space for bicyclists riding single file.
- Select bicycle-friendly crossing locations, e.g. intersections with push button pedestrian signals that cyclists can easily reach. Look for a safe place OFF the road, like a driveway, for the kids to dismount and mount again after if possible.
- Consider how the bicycle train will enter and exit school grounds. Pick a route that avoids school traffic as much as possible.
- Test the route during arrival and dismissal times to make sure it works, before making it official.

### Provide adequate adult supervision

- Bicycle trains generally require more adult volunteers than walking school buses. One adult for every three to six children is recommended.
- For more information on the roles and responsibilities of adult volunteers, see Guidelines for Bike Train "Engineers" and "Cabooses": <http://www.atlantabike.org/sites/default/files/Guidelines%20for%20WaRtS%20Bike%20Trains.pdf>



*A bike train waits at an intersection before heading on to Glennwood Academy in Decatur, Georgia. It is one of several bike trains operating at the school every day.*

Got questions? Your School Outreach Coordinator is here to help.

Georgia SRTS Resource Center

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## Safety first!

- Children should practice bicycle safety and handling skills before joining the bike train.
- All riders must wear helmets. It's the law in Georgia for all children under the age of 16 to wear a helmet. Adults should set a good example by wearing one too.
- All riders should wear brightly colored or reflective clothing.
- Make sure shoe laces are tied, pant legs are tucked in, and bicycle equipment is checked before heading out.
- Review the rules of the road before each ride (at right).

## Rules of the Road

- Ride on the street or shared-use paths, not on the sidewalk
- Ride single file, leaving space between bicyclists in case of a sudden stop. Do not pass.
- Ride on the right side of the street, generally about an arm's length from the curb. Stay to the right and ride as straight as you can so that cars can pass.
- Use hand signals to show you are turning, slowing, or stopping. Calling out "turning right," "slowing," or "stopping" is also helpful.
- At major intersections, where there is a traffic light or a crossing guard, get off the bike and walk it across the street.

## Putting It into Practice: Bike Trains at Mason Elementary School -Duluth, GA

Planning their kick-off Walk and Roll to School Day, the Mason Safe Routes to School Team knew they'd have kids interested in a walking school bus. But they didn't think many would be interested in a bike train, since only one student seemed to bike to school until then. In spite of their doubts, the team offered a bike train, expecting one or two students to participate that morning. To their great surprise, 45 children showed up with bicycles and helmets, eager to participate in Mason's first-ever bicycle train.

With that overwhelming start, the Mason bicycle train has become an integral part of the school's monthly "Walk and Roll to School Day" events. The train is led by volunteers from the local Gwinnett County Bicycle Users Group and a few Mason parents. One volunteer leads the group, while another brings up the rear. Other adults ride among the student bicyclists, with a typical ratio of one adult to four children. Two separate bike trains start from different locations, merging to form a large train that rides to the school. In the afternoon, the bicycle trains run back to their starting locations.

Prior to each monthly event, the Safe Routes Team sends each student home with a flier announcing the Walking School Bus and Bike Train schedule. The flier includes a permission slip. Students who want to participate in either the Walking School Bus or Bike Train must return a signed permission slip. This procedure helps in two ways. First, it clarifies liability issues. Second, it lets parents know the number of adults needed for the event. Children in kindergarten through second grade must have a parent accompany them. At the start of each ride, the adult volunteers leading the bike train receive a list of participants.

Riders bring their own helmet and lock, but the bicycle train leaders always have extra helmets on hand. As the group gathers, the leaders distribute bright neon-green reflective safety vests provided by the Georgia Department of Transportation. The vests provide high visibility for safety on the road and have become the signature of the Mason bike train.



A few years ago, bicycling to school was unheard of at Mason. The monthly well-supervised bicycle trains have shown families in the neighborhoods around the school that bicycling can be a transportation option and many have now incorporated bicycling into their own daily travel patterns.

Find flyer templates, banners, and other downloads at: <http://saferoutesga.org/resources/downloads>  
Learn more at [www.walktoschool.org](http://www.walktoschool.org) and [www.saferoutesga.org](http://www.saferoutesga.org)

