**TIPS AND TRICKS**

**HOW TO DESIGN WALKING ROUTES**

A good Walking School Bus route…

1. **Meets one or several needs**

* Parents often prefer using their car to save time, instead of letting their children walk.
* Some parents do not let their children walk to school for safety reasons: they have to cross boulevards, busy intersections, streets with no sidewalk or wooded areas.
* Parents are willing to let their children walk on this route as long as they are accompanied by a responsible adult.

1. **Follows streets that are densely populated** with children attending the school, or streets that drain from densely populated streets.

* Using the map created with the survey results, it is easy to see the natural and potential routes to follow, based on the number of children and volunteers living in the area.

1. **Starts more than 500 metres from the school** and ideally measures between 1 and 1.6 kilometre in distance.

* Generally, school children living within 500 metres of the school already walk to school and don’t need the Walking School Bus.
* It is difficult to find volunteers other than parents who agree to walk on a route of 500 metres or less (less than an 8 minute walk).
* A pedestrian bus route of 1.6 km represents a 25-minute walk approximately. A longer route is a bit too much for school children.

1. **Respects the children’s natural path,** which means that it is the shortest way to get to school without unnecessary detours.

* The children’s interest in walking is greatly reduced if they have the impression they are making a detour.
* Observing the current walking habits of school children in the neighbourhood can help design the best possible pedestrian routes.

1. **Is safe**

* Clearly indicates on which side of the street one must walk.
* Uses existing sidewalks; if there are none, uses the roadway edge. Otherwise, walks in the opposite direction of traffic.
* Only crosses at crosswalks or where there is a crossing guard, a stop sign or a traffic light.

1. **Respects the children’s walking rhythm**

* Calculate approximately 8 minutes for each 500 metres.
* Add a little more time if there are many intersections to cross and at least 2 additional minutes for each traffic light.

1. **Arrives at school at the desired time**

* Arrives 3 or 4 minutes after the beginning of the monitoring of the schoolyard. This way, even if the Walking School Bus is a little early, the children are supervised upon their arrival.
* Arrives at least 5 minutes before the bell. This way, even if the Walking School Bus is a little behind schedule, children will not be late to class.

1. **Has at least 4 or 5 time markers**

* Indicates the departure time at the beginning of the route.
* Indicates the arrival time at the end of the route (at school).
* Indicates at what time the Walking School Bus should be passing at important intersections (at least two). That will help volunteers manage their pace.

**IMPORTANT!!!**

A new Walking route will not truly be finalized until it is used for 1 or 2 days. **It is important to follow-up with volunteers after 2 or 3 days** to ensure that the route and times are accurate. Last minute changes are sometimes required and must be mentioned to volunteers and parents as of the first week of the Walking School Bus.

Common adjustments:

- Time changes when the Walking School Bus always arrives too early or too late.

- Walking on the other side of the road because the majority of children wait on that side.

- changing the starting point farther down the road to accommodate more families.

