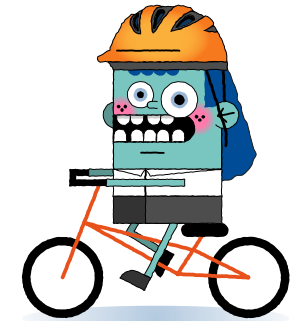


FRIDEDAYS BIKE BUS

YOUR HANDY TOOLKIT FOR
STARTING A BIKE BUS TO SCHOOL



SCHWALBE 

in partnership with  **Sustrans**

As a reminder

I'm confident and happy to jump on and ride.

For inspiration

I'm confident but need help with planning and coordination.

How to use the FRideDays Bike Bus Toolkit

From a five point outline, to training and support.

Whatever you need to start your bike bus, it's in the FRideDays Toolkit.

For education

I'm new to all of this and would like some support and training.

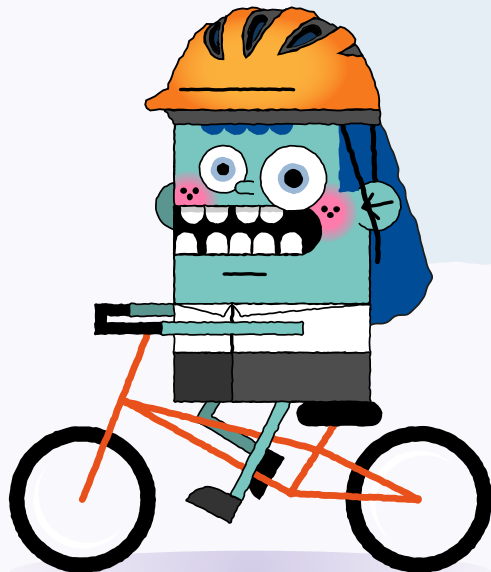


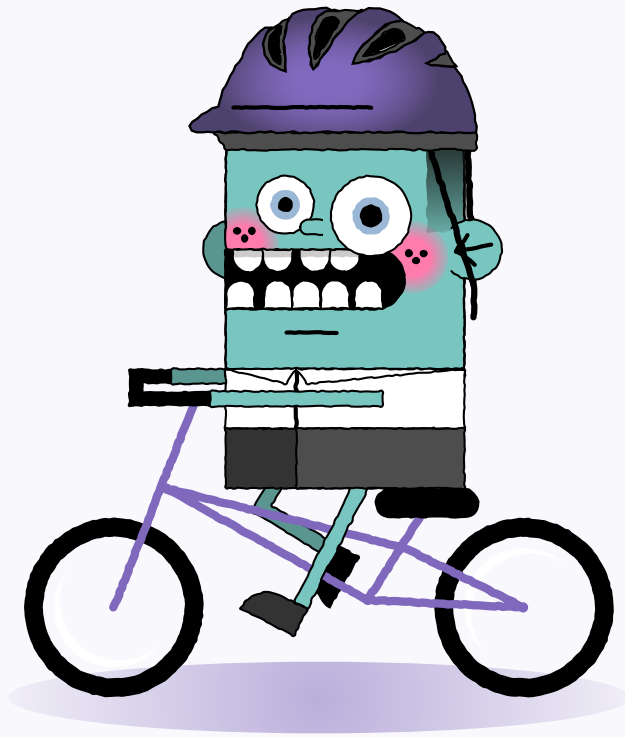


Photo by DroneScope

CONTENTS

What is a FrideDays Bike Bus?	04
Benefits of a bike bus	05
How to run a bike bus	06
Bike bus leaders and volunteers	10
Cycling tips and safety advice	11
Get support	12
Monitoring the impact of your bike bus	14
Setting up a WhatsApp community	16
Cycling information and resources	20
Discover other bike buses	21
Summary and contact information	22

Let's get your
FRideDays Bike
Bus rolling!



Thanks for your interest in setting up a bike bus for your school. For children, there's nothing like riding with friends by their side to get the day off to the best start.

Organising a bike bus to school, which means a group of people who ride together, is a fun way to make the benefits of cycling a regular part of the week. And research by Sustrans, sponsored by Schwalbe UK, shows Friday is the best day of the week to do it.

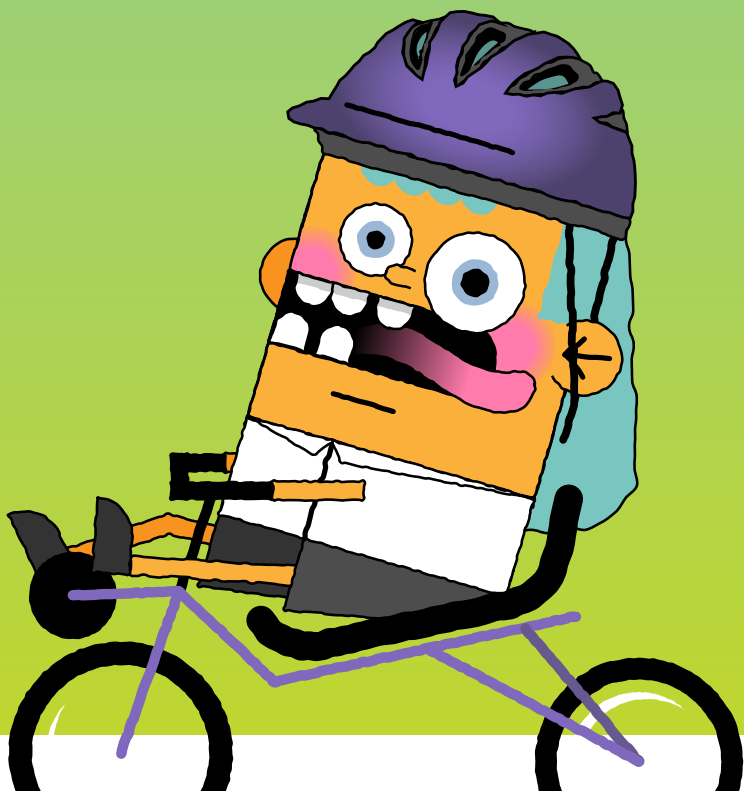
Starting a bike bus is a little bit of work to begin with, but once it's up and running, maintaining it gets easier and easier!

This toolkit includes advice, top tips from experts, and all the information you need to make sure your bike bus is fun, safe, and runs smoothly.

You don't need any leader training, but we recommend at least one experienced adult cyclist volunteers as a bike bus leader from the start. We can't plan and deliver your bike bus for you, but if your volunteers are less experienced, Sustrans offer FRideDays Bike Bus training to give you the skills and confidence you need. For more information, email bikebus@sustrans.org.uk.

Here's to even better Fridays!

On top of being great fun, there are heaps of other benefits to joining a bike bus.



Safety in numbers

Cycling in a bike bus is safer than cycling on your own. This is because a group of people cycling is more visible to other road users than one person by themselves. And everyone will be using a route they're familiar with, led by people with good cycling experience.

Help children enjoy exercise

Being active is essential for children's health and wellbeing. It boosts physical health, mental alertness, energy, mood and self-esteem, while reducing stress and anxiety. Children and young people aged 5 to 18 need at least an hour of physical activity every day, and adults need 2.5 hours a week. Cycling to school together is an easy way for everyone to get more movement into the day and set healthy habits for life.

Start the day right

Teachers find that children who have an active journey to school arrive more relaxed, alert and ready to start the day than those who travel by car. Riding a bike helps children connect with nature, feel more empowered, and learn their neighbourhood and local roads – great for encouraging independent travel as a teenager.

Get to know your community

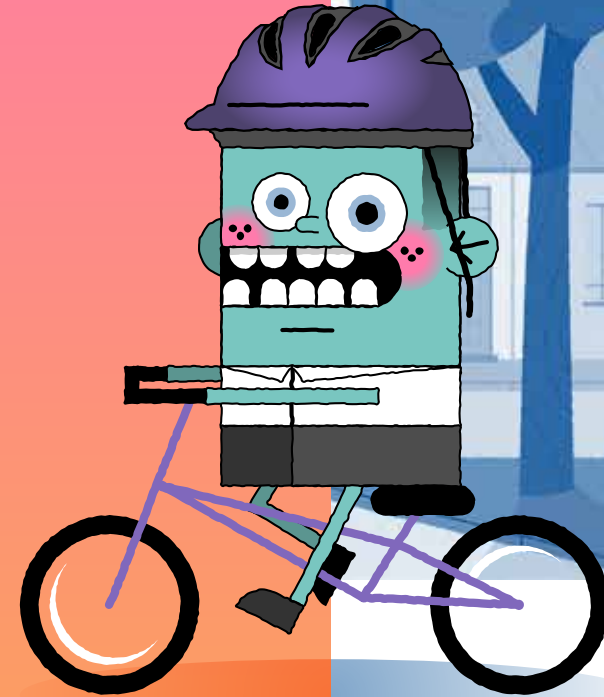
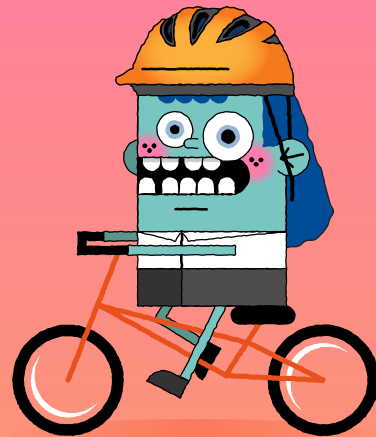
A FRideDays Bike Bus is an excellent way to get to know other parents, guardians, children and volunteers from your school.

Reduce traffic congestion

One in four cars at morning rush hour are on the school run, and we all know the frustration of getting stuck in a jam when we're in a hurry. Joining the FRideDays Bike Bus means fewer cars on the road, which makes travelling safer for pedestrians and drivers alike. And by leaving your car at home, you save money on fuel and take the hassle out of parking too.

Look after the environment

Choosing to cycle instead of driving reduces air pollution and cuts your carbon footprint. Cycling just one day a week soon adds up to a real positive difference.



How to run a FRideDays Bike Bus

Getting a FRideDays Bike Bus started for your school is a fun and rewarding experience for everyone who takes part. Here's your step-by-step toolkit, with some ideas to help along the way. Remember: once your bike bus is up and running, maintaining it gets easier and easier

1

Step 1: Find five for FRideDays

Starting small makes planning routes and finding volunteers easier than if you begin with a big group. That's why we recommend finding five people to join your FRideDays Bike Bus at first, for example two adults and three children.

1. **Reach out to friends** you think would be interested.
2. **Mention your plan** to other parents and teachers at the school gates. Or ask school to put a call-out in their newsletter.
3. **Simply start cycling to school** and invite others to join you.
4. **If the school are supportive**, ask them to send a newsletter to all the parents asking who would like to take part. If they aren't, show them the benefits and examples in this guide.

Remember to let parents and guardians know that they're responsible for making sure their children can ride safely on the chosen routes. And think about how you want to structure your bike bus as it grows. For example: will parents need to accompany their children, or will you find volunteer leaders?

When starting a bike bus, it is recommended that each child has its allocated parent or carer on the ride. You need to consider the responsibilities of each adult and discuss options.

Questions to ask are:

1. **How many children** can one adult safely look after on the ride?
2. **If the adult has volunteered as a bike leader**, what happens to the child/children they are responsible for?
3. **Who has ultimate responsibility** if there is a problem on the ride, such as a child dropping their bag or getting a puncture?
4. **Will the organisers ensure each child** has an allocated adult, or will it be the responsibility of the parents?

2

Step 2: Plan your bike bus route

Now you've found support for your bike bus, it's time to plan a practical route and set-off times. It's important to do a thorough safety assessment of the route so you can make changes before the bike bus starts. As you're planning, it's a good idea to take photos of the route and make notes of key areas or hazards. This makes talking about them with the group easier.

1. **Choose a time and start point** that has enough space for everyone to meet and won't obstruct others. Make sure to give enough time to get to school – cycling in a group with children takes longer than cycling on your own.
2. **Keep the route child-friendly** and between one to three miles. This distance will take around 10 to 30 minutes to cycle. Consider if other features of the route are suitable for younger children and smaller legs or if you should avoid them, like big hills!
3. **Look for routes with left turns** rather than right turns. This keeps you in the flow of traffic and makes junctions easier. A semi-circular route that goes anti-clockwise is ideal.
4. **Avoid busy main roads** and roads prone to traffic jams. Prioritise quieter streets and cycle lanes where possible.
5. **Consider possible hazards on the route.** For example, poor road surfaces, potholes, narrow sections, lack of dropped kerbs, or poor visibility. Are these manageable on the route or do you need to plan an alternative?
6. **Are there any accessibility considerations?** If someone's using a trike, cycle trailer, or an adapted cycle, check that the route has dropped kerbs and is wide enough to pass through.
7. **Include multiple bike bus stops and times** along the way if necessary. This can help more families come along for the ride. Make sure each pick-up point is easy to access, with space for families to wait safely.
8. **Will helmets and hi-vis be required?** Some bike bus organisers make them mandatory, and others leave it to personal choice. [Read Sustrans' view on helmets.](#)
9. **Do you need insurance?** Many bike buses start without. As some get bigger, they decide to get insurance. Another benefit of our FRideDays Bike Bus training is that if you're an official Sustrans volunteer, your bike bus is automatically insured. Or, you can get insurance as an affiliated Cycling UK group.
10. **Take your new route for a spin.** Go for a test ride at the time you'll be using the route to make sure they're not too busy for the bike bus. Do this again each time a new volunteer leader joins the team so they're familiar with the journey.

3

Step 3: Hold a FRideDays Bike Bus

Whether there's five of you on your first ever FRideDays Bike Bus, or you've been going for months with a bigger crew, these ideas will make your journey so smooth, safe, and fun that everyone will be excited for next week's journey.

Be consistent with your schedule. We recommend every Friday. Or start with one Friday a month and build up to every week.

1. Check the weather using the Met Office.

If there are any yellow weather warnings, or it looks like cycling conditions are poor, consider cancelling and letting the group know. You want the journey to be fun and enjoyable! (See page 19 for some template messages.)

2. Arrive at the start point early so you can make sure everyone is ready to leave on time. Ask the children to wait sensibly next to their bikes so no one's tempted to start racing.

3. Bring music. A good playlist played through a portable speaker will create a fun atmosphere and help everyone enjoy the ride more.

4. Introduce your volunteers. Let everyone know who your designated ride leaders, back markers, and junction managers are if you have them. (These are roles we suggest all bike buses use. See page 10 for more information.)

5. Brief your bike bus to ride together and slowly by following the volunteers and not spreading out or falling behind the back marker. Explain they should talk to each other, pass messages to and from the leaders, and be aware of other members riding closely to them. (Remember: you might need to cycle more slowly than you would on your own to make sure the group stays together.)

6. Refresh everyone on the rules of the road, like riding on the left and giving way to pedestrians. If there are any extra precautions

like roadworks, potholes, or bad weather, let everyone know. Remind adults that they're responsible for their child.

7. Explain how to tell a leader if there's a problem. For example, shout out 'mechanical!' and ask everyone else to pass it up the line.

8. Get everyone to do a safety check. Check tyres are pumped, brakes work, shoelaces are done up, and loose bag straps are kept away from wheels. [Use this video as a quick guide.](#)

9. Remind everyone to have fun! It's just a bike ride!

10. Celebrate your achievements. On your first ever bike bus you might want to have a small party or gathering to mark the occasion. And even when you've been doing FRideDays for a while, a high-five at the other end celebrates another great ride.

4

Step 4: Spread the word about your FRideDays Bike Bus

Seeing your FRideDays Bike Bus gain more members and knowing more children are getting the best start to the day is a great feeling. But be patient, as bike buses take time to establish. Remember that you're making a difference, however many people are in your group. Here are some ways to bring more people on board, and things to think about as your bike bus grows.

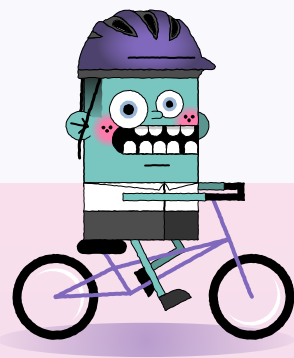
1. **Hold a bike bus coffee morning**, meeting, or stall at the school fair to tell other parents about the benefits of FRideDays.
2. **Ask the school to share FRideDays Bike Bus** information on their website, noticeboards, social media, or in their newsletter.
3. **Make flyers** to leave at school bus stops and bike sheds or racks.
4. **Use social media** to promote your bike bus. Use #FridayWeCycle and tag [@FRideDaysbb](#) on Twitter. Share what your bike bus has been up to, photos and updates, and invite others to join.
5. **Hold taster rides** for parents so they feel confident with the route their child will be cycling, and the volunteers who'll be leading the FRideDays Bike Bus. You could do these on a different day, or straight after the regular ride.
6. **Encourage word of mouth** and ask people to bring a friend.
7. **Recruit more bike bus leaders as you grow.** Ask school staff, advertise in your community, or reach out to local cycling and walking groups for help finding volunteers. Read more about roles and responsibilities on page 10.

5

Step 5: Keep everyone involved

Whether you're a bike bus of five or 55, these ideas make keeping in touch and riding together more fun.

1. **Set up a FRideDays Bike Bus WhatsApp Community group.** It's an easy way to share information about upcoming rides, any changes to schedule, news or community updates. Check out FRideDays Bike Bus WhatsApp Communities guide on page 16.
2. **Plan fun events** to keep people engaged and making friends. How about a bike breakfast at the start or end of the ride?
3. **Make certificates or small prizes** to reward people's achievements, milestones, or regular attendance.
4. **Share positive stories** from and with your bike bus. Try recording short videos for your WhatsApp Community or social media groups on your phone at the end of the ride, asking people about their experience. Remember to ask parents' permission and tell them where any photos or videos will be used.
5. **Ask for feedback and ideas regularly.** Getting people's thoughts and suggestions can help make future rides even better, and make people feel involved.



Roles for FRideDays Bike Bus leaders

There are lots of ways to get involved as a volunteer FRideDays Bike Bus leader. Allocate these four key roles for a fun and easy ride to school. If a parent volunteers for one of these responsibilities, we recommend another adult accompanies their child.

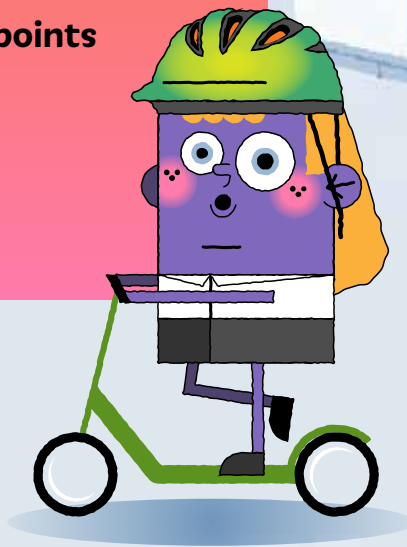
All volunteers should be experienced, confident and competent cyclists as they'll be required to negotiate traffic. If you or another volunteer would like training to improve your confidence or cycling skills, email bikebus@sustrans.org.uk for more information.

- **Bike bus boss:** Has overall responsibility on the day. They usually allocate the roles, give the ride brief at the beginning and decide when to start. Having one point of contact makes communication easier and the ride smoother.
- **Ride leader:** Leads the bike bus from the front to set the pace and stay visible to other road users by riding towards the centre of the lane. They're also responsible for communicating effectively with the bike bus and others on the road.
- **Back marker:** Rides at the back of the group and makes sure no one is left behind. They communicate with other road users, especially at junctions, to make sure the group can safely go ahead. Top tip: carry a whistle and make sure everyone knows a single loud blast means stop!
- **Junction manager:** Negotiates with traffic and lets everyone know when it's clear to cross or turn at a junction. When the road is clear for the bike bus to pass through, the junction manager can position themselves on the road so they can see and be seen by all oncoming traffic.

Initially, they negotiate with the traffic with an acknowledgement and a smile, which usually leads to cars waiting patiently. If needed, junction managers can pause the bike bus until the traffic has passed. If you have more than one volunteer, you can allocate specific junctions to specific people.

Riding tips for children and parents

It's important to share clear safety advice and guidelines for everyone who joins the FRideDays Bike Bus. Here are the main points to communicate to children, parents and volunteers.



1. **Stay in control of your bike** and be able to stop safely.
2. **Always ride as a group.** Cycle in pairs as a minimum and leave enough braking distance between you and the person cycling in front.
3. **Keep adults on the traffic side of the road,** especially in busy sections.
4. **Use good cycling practice and behaviour.** That means sharing the space, riding predictably, stopping at junctions and listening to the bike bus leaders.
5. **Follow the communication system in place.** Listen out for whistles and bells or look for hand signals used to communicate with the group. For example, two blasts of a whistle could mean 'let's go' while one blast could mean 'stop'. Bike bus leaders should explain these before setting off.



Photo by Naomi Wells Smith

Helping hands for you
and your bike bus

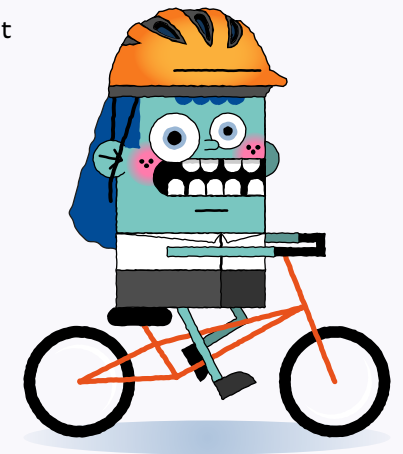
Some people might love to join your FRideDays Bike Bus but need a bit of extra help to do so.

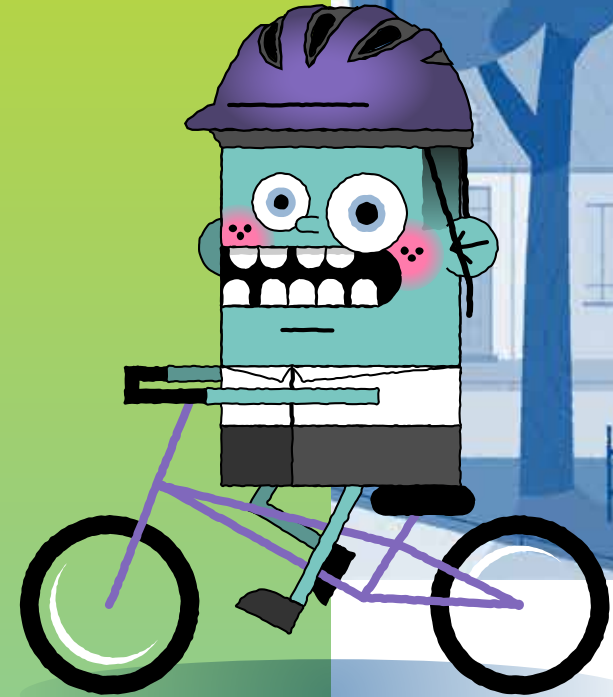
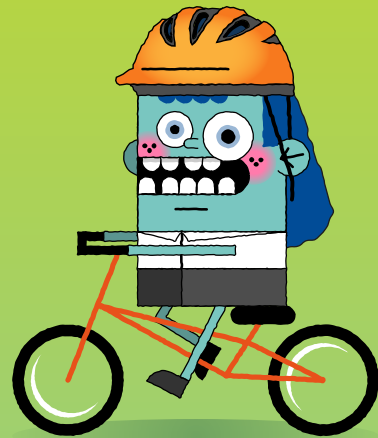
You might be able to find simple solutions for some, like adding an extra bike bus stop, sharing cycling advice to boost their confidence, reassuring them about the experience of your bike bus leaders, or finding an adult to cycle with their child if a parent can't join in.

Other families might need a bit of extra help, but there's loads of organisations and businesses who can lend a hand.

- **Bike recycling projects** could help people get access to spare bikes if they need one.
- **Sustrans school cycling officers, local bike shops and cycling clubs** may be able to help with other questions or finding volunteers.

If you can't find the answer, email Sustrans at bikebus@sustrans.org.uk.





Your FRideDays Bike Bus
and beyond...

Use the power of FRideDays Bike Bus for your community.

The FRideDays Bike Bus is more than a means of transport. It can be a powerful way to help local councillors and decision-makers monitor and support active travel, and improve cycling infrastructure in your area.

By monitoring and sharing impact data and success stories from your bike bus, you can influence the future of your streets' design and help create safer, more sustainable communities. Here's how to monitor and use your bike bus data from the start.

Monitoring the impact of your bike bus

Showing the impact of your bike bus can help organisations monitor sustainability and attract future funding. Tracking data like attendance, routes used, and carbon emissions are a few ways to see the positive differences you make.

Sharing this data with local councils and schools can help influence decisions about infrastructure and funding for cycling projects. It's also good to celebrate your bike bus' successes. Sharing them with the wider community can encourage more families to join in and promote cycling.

How to collect impact data

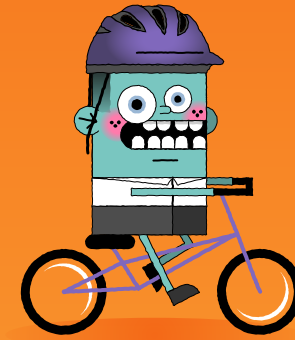
- 1. Conduct surveys** to collect feedback and data from parents and children who join in with the bike bus. Ask questions to understand things like how often people join in, why they take part, and what they like and don't like about it. Keep it short and clear, using mostly closed questions, and one open for more qualitative insights.
- 2. Monitor attendance** to keep track of the number of families and children who regularly participate in the bike bus. This helps show its popularity and success. The data can be presented to funding bodies or local councils as evidence of demand for better cycling infrastructure.

- 3. Map the routes** and highlight the number of families that use each route to help demonstrate the impact of the bike bus. It can also help to identify areas that require better cycling infrastructure.

- 4. Collect feedback** from schools to demonstrate the impact of a bike bus. This feedback can include improved attendance rates, concentration and alertness among children, and fewer traffic-related incidents near schools.

- 5. Share success stories** of families who have benefited from the bike bus. This can be a powerful way to demonstrate its impact. These stories can be shared on social media, newsletters or local newspapers, and can help to generate more interest in the program.

If this is all new to you, you can email Sustrans on bikebus@sustrans.org.uk for advice.



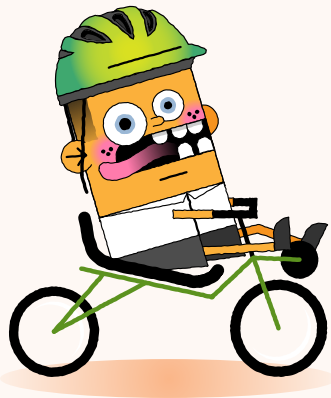
How to use WhatsApp Communities for your bike bus



Photo by DroneScope

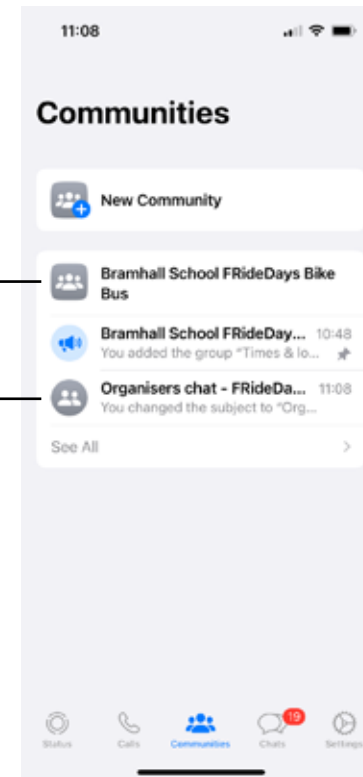
A WhatsApp Community is an easy way to manage your bike bus and make announcements to everyone. It also brings multiple WhatsApp groups together under one umbrella, which is handy if you want to organise different conversations or sub-groups. This means people only get notifications for the chats and updates that are relevant to them.

Your Community will look something like this when you're all set up. You can create more groups and add more participants as your bike bus grows.



Your FRideDays Bike Bus Community
All your FRideDays Bike Bus groups, organised together.

Bike bus leaders
A group for volunteers and organisers to discuss plans without the rest of the Community seeing.



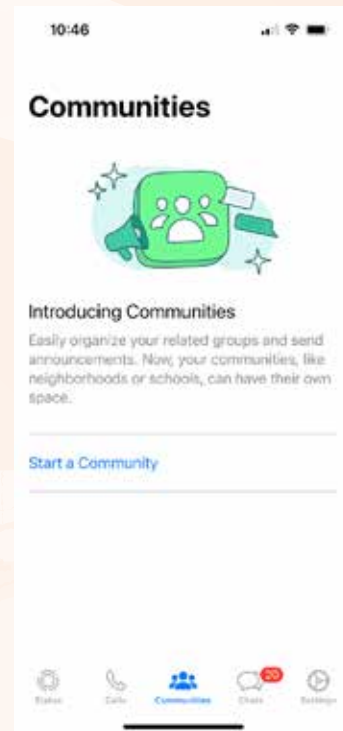
Bike bus announcements
This is created automatically, and all members are automatically added.

Use it to send weekly announcements to everybody in the Community and all its sub-groups. Share information and reminders about dates, routes or schedule changes. Only community admins can post announcements.

1. Start a new Community

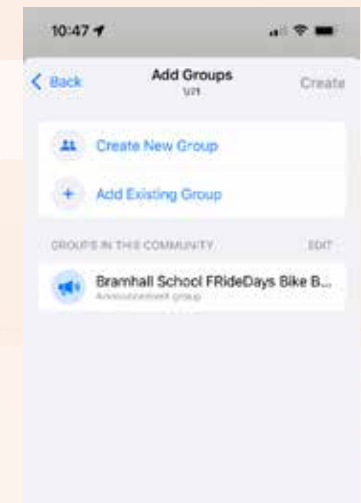
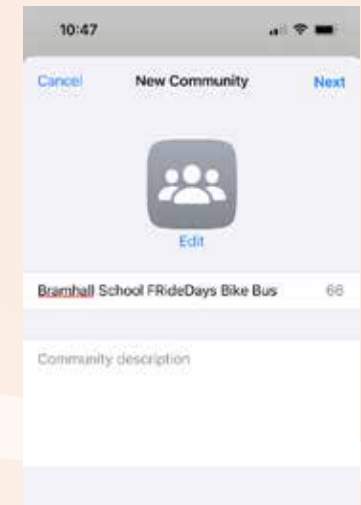
- **On Android devices:** Click 'Menu' above your chats list then 'Start a Community'.
- **On Apple devices:** Click 'Communities' in the bottom menu bar then 'Start a Community'.

You can also click the new chat icon and choose 'New Community', then follow the on-screen instructions.



2. Customise your new Community

- **Name your Community** something clear like [your school name] FRideDays Bike Bus.
- **Add a Community picture** by tapping the camera icon. You can take a new photo, choose one from your library or search the web to find one. Or you can download and use [the FRideDays Bike Bus logo](#) from Sustrans.

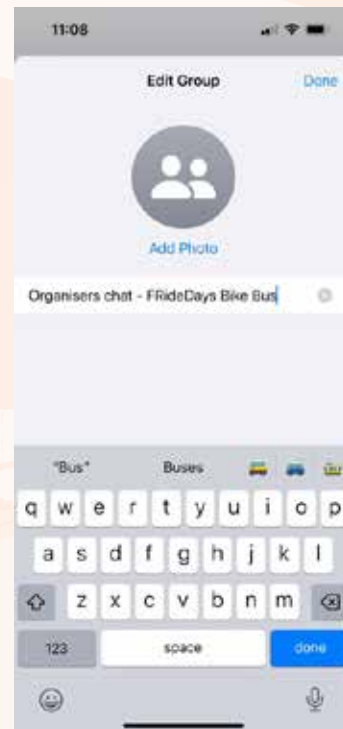


3. Add or create bike bus Groups to your Community

You can add multiple groups to a Community, with different topics or people in each. You can add participants to each group now or do it later.

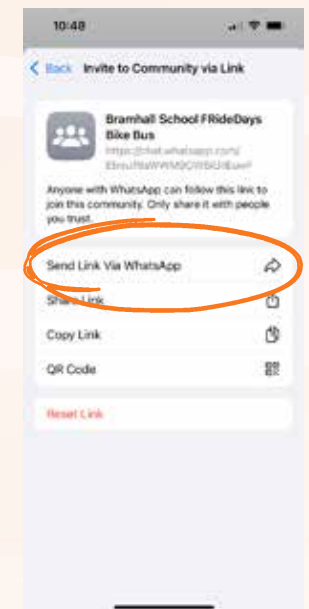
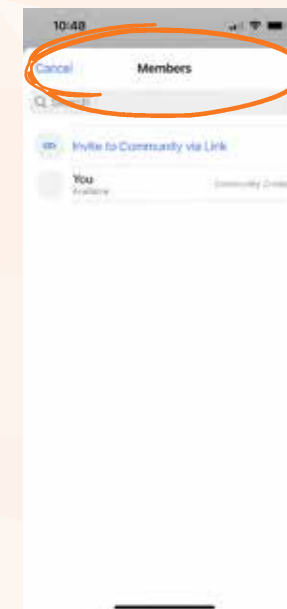
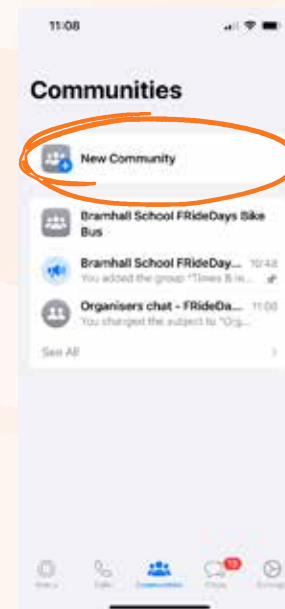
- **Click 'Add Existing Group'** if you already have a bike bus WhatsApp group and select it from your chats list. It will now be part of your Community.
- **Choose 'Create New Group'** just for bike bus leaders. Here, your volunteers and organisers can discuss plans separately from other members. You can add members from your phone's address book now or later on.

When you've created or added your groups, click the green tick on Android devices, or 'Done' on Apple.



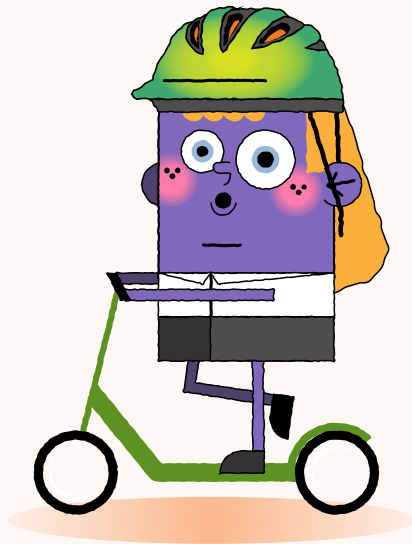
4. Add new Community members

Invite people to join by clicking on your Community name, then choose **'Invite to Community via Link'**. Click 'Copy Link' and share it with the person or people you want to invite. When they join, they will automatically get all Community announcements.



5. Send Community announcements

Click your announcements group to share information on your upcoming bike bus. Here are some template messages for you to use. Simply update the times and locations with your route information to share clear updates with your bike bus.



Weekly bike bus information (update with your times and stop names)

📢 Hello everyone! Looking forward to seeing you all on our next FRideDays Bike Bus. Below is all you need to know if you're joining us 📌

Meeting at [start location] at 8am.

Setting off: 8.15am

Stop 1 name: 8.20am

Stop 2 name: 8.25am

Stop 3 name: 8.40am

Arrive together: 8:45am

Please share with anyone who might want to join us – all wheels are welcome!



Weather update – before the day

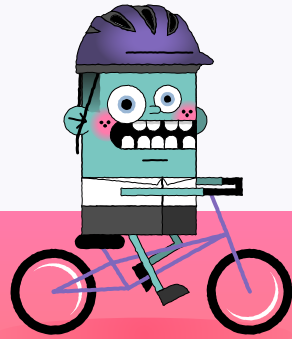
Weather update 🌤️

We're expecting rain/snow/windy/hot conditions this Friday but the FRideDays Bike Bus is still on! We're keeping an eye on weather reports and will let you know if anything changes. Otherwise we look forward to seeing you all 🚲

Cancellation (change reason as appropriate)

📢 CANCELLED: This week's FRideDays Bike Bus

Unfortunately, because of icy roads/illness/roadworks, this week's bike bus is cancelled. Hopefully see you all again next week!



Cycling information and resources

Check out these resources for more information about cycling safety, and riding with groups and children.

- **Bikeability** has turned the UK's national standards for cycling into bite-sized videos to help families master essential skills for riding on the road. [Watch them here.](#)
- **Transport for London** explains how to cycle with children and as a group. [Watch it here.](#)
- **Cycling Scotland** show key cycling techniques, like riding in control, observing the road, suitable riding positions and more. [Watch them here.](#)
- Cyclists don't legally have to wear a helmet in the UK, and helmet use is down to personal choice. We recommend your bike bus leaders, parents and guardians decide if it's mandatory to wear a helmet to take part or not. [Read Sustrans' view on helmets.](#)



Photo by DroneScope

Join a fun community
of UK bike buses

There are loads of successful school bike buses already up and running in the UK. Here are some great ones to inspire you to ride together.



Radnoor Primary School, Cardiff [@BikeWalkScoot](https://twitter.com/BikeWalkScoot)

This bike bus started because the school staff were passionate about the benefits of active travel. They worked with a Sustrans officer to develop it and now they hold a bike bus on the last Friday of every month.

Shawlands Bike Bus, Glasgow [@BikeBusShaw](https://twitter.com/BikeBusShaw)

A group of parents who were concerned about the safety of their children on the roads started this bike bus. They now run a regular bike bus, which has helped to reduce traffic congestion around the school and promote active travel.

Barrack Road, Dorset [@ActiveTravelEngland](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ActiveTravelEngland)

Volunteers started this bike bus after seeing one on Twitter. They thought it looked a fun way to get children cycling to school and wanted to do the same!



Photo by Anee D Hermy

Let's go!

Thanks again for finding out more about setting up a FRideDays Bike Bus for your school. If you choose to go ahead and get started, you'll be making a real difference to children's wellbeing, your local community and the environment. As well as being great fun for everyone who joins in, your bike bus will:

1. **Help children enjoy exercise** and boost their physical and mental health.
2. **Start the day right.** Teachers find children arrive more relaxed and ready to learn.
3. **Bring the community together.** A bike bus is a great way to get to know people.
4. **Reduce traffic congestion.** One in four cars in morning rush hour are on the school run.
5. **Support the environment.** Cycling one day a week helps cut your carbon footprint.

We'd love to hear all about your bike bus! For more information or to share your FRideDays journey, please email Sustrans at bikebus@sustrans.org.uk.

We can't wait to have you along for the ride!

