

GET ON THE **BIKE TRAIN**



Bike trek on the road in Monmouth



MaineDOT



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Biddeford, Intermediate and Middle Schools

Looking for a fun bike to school event? Try a Bike Train!

A Bike Train is an organized bike ride to and from school. It is supervised by chaperones who work with students to assure everyone's safety and fun. Students may begin riding to school from one designated location, or be picked up at designated stops along the way. Bike Trains are lots of fun and promote safe bicycling habits and healthy lifestyles.

Maine Safe Routes to School Program staff can provide technical assistance to you as you plan for your Bike Train. Staff can also provide safety incentives to help boost participation by your students.

The following is important information to make your journey to school a smooth and safe one.



Planning your Bike Train: An Overview

Get Support

- Talk to the school administration, PTO/PTA and champions to get their support.
- Organize adult volunteers and review the rules of the road with them.

Get Equipment

- Arrange a collection of supplies such as helmets, fluorescent safety vests, rain gear, gloves, first aid equipment and simple bike tools.
- Make sure a leader has a cell phone with school and EMS phone numbers programmed in.

Planning Logistics/Ideas

- Schedule a Bike Safety Fair before the start of the Bike Train to check bikes, fit helmets, and practice rules of the road.
- Develop contingency plans for poor weather, bike malfunctions or other issues that prohibit students from completing the ride.
- Determine where bikes will be parked and secured at the school.
- Secure a permission and liability release forms that meet your school's needs.
- Call a "Riders' Meeting" to review bicycle safety rules and to discuss how the Bike Train works.
- Consider arranging for refreshments after the ride.

- Ask a group of students to help plan the Bike Train program:
 - Develop a list of students interested in biking to school.
 - How to get volunteers.
 - One “Engineer,” one “Caboose,” and one adult for every five students.
 - When and how often to do it.
 - Where the route should go.
 - Whether to gather students at location or do pick-ups.
 - What time to arrive at school.
 - Whether it should be viewed as a team or club.
 - How to get announcements and permission slips out and signed.
 - How to promote the Bike Train effort.
 - What kind of incentives to offer.
 - Safe places for students to park and lock their bikes at school.
 - Remember to set up a Bike Train for the trip home too.

See
“Getting Started”
 for more
information.





Your Bike Train: An Overview

Gathering the Group

- Assure that participants have: permission slips, helmets, safety vests or bright clothing.
- Make sure that shoelaces are tied, pant legs aren't flapping, bike brakes work, etc.

Starting Out

- Welcome the group; congratulate them for biking to school.
- Set some basic ground rules for safe bicycle riding.
- Line the children up with their bikes, with one adult behind every four to five children.

Along the Route

- Ride with traffic, obey traffic signals, use hand signals and maintain adult communication. Sidewalks may be used if local ordinances allow it.
- If a child lags behind or has mechanical trouble, designate an adult to assist him/her to continue on.

Arriving at School

- Check students in when they arrive at school.
- Help students park and lock their bikes.
- Congratulate yourselves on a safe journey.
- Prepare for the return trip home.

Evaluating Success

Debrief with the volunteers and with your student committee to discuss what worked, what didn't work and how to keep students interested in your Bike Train!

Getting Started:

Get Support

- Get support from school administration and PTO/PTA.
 - Identify champions within the school (i.e. bike enthusiasts, Physical Education and Health teachers)
 - Keep administration informed so there are no surprises.
 - If possible, secure school-sanctioned status for the events.
- Organize adult volunteers and review the rules of the road with them (see *Rules of the Road for Bicyclists* and *Be a Safe Bike Driver* handouts on the Maine Safe Routes to School Program Web site).
 - Consider how parents can assist at train stops.
 - Volunteers at each stop can check equipment, and assure safe, working bicycles.

Get Equipment

- Establish a collection of helmets for students who have forgotten theirs or don't have one.
- Arrange a supply of fluorescent safety vests.
- Collect rain gear and gloves for students who need them in wet or cold weather.



- Gather a first aid kit and simple bike tools in case of falls or a bike malfunction.
- A group leaders cell phone should have school and EMS phone numbers programmed into it.



Planning Logistics

- Consider hosting a Bike Safety Fair before the start of the Bike Train to check bikes, helmets, and practice rules of the road.
 - Contact the Bicycle Coalition of Maine for more information.
- Develop a contingency plan for bike malfunctions or other issues that may prohibit students from completing the ride.
 - Consider identifying an “on-call” volunteer who could transport a student and his/her disabled bike to school.



- Develop a plan to secure bikes at school.
- Create a permission and liability release form, or use an existing one, that meets your school’s needs.
 - Contact the Bicycle Coalition of Maine to obtain sample liability forms if needed.



How Many Adults do I Need?

The total number of adult volunteers you need depends on the total number of kids riding the bike train. A good rule to follow:
One Engineer, One Caboose and One Adult for every five Students down the train



St. Brigid School, York

- Determine the best time to call a “Riders’ Meeting.”
 - We suggest having your meeting a few days before or the morning the program begins.
 - At the meeting, review the information from the “On The Road” Appendix of this booklet.
- Consider offering refreshments after the ride.
- Develop a rain plan.
 - How will you reach parents in the event of a postponement or cancellation?
 - Ask a group of students to help you plan the Bike Train program.



Pleasant Hill School, Scarborough

Determine: _____

1. Where students live and who can bike to school

2. How to get adult and teen volunteers

One Engineer, one Caboose, and one adult for every five students down the train.

3. When to do it

Every day, weekly, Wheeling Wednesdays, once a week for several weeks in the fall and spring, or once a month throughout the school year.

4. Where the route should go

Make sure the route is interesting and safe for your cyclists. A route that winds its way to school is more engaging than one that goes in a straight line on one road. Strive for routes that have interesting sites along the way.

Ride the route to determine how long it really takes.

5. Whether to gather students at one location or do pick-up

If you gather in one location to start, be sure you are out of the way of motorized traffic, and make sure you have permission to gather there.

If you are collecting students along the way, put together a list and map of where you need to do pick-ups.

6. What time to get to school

Make sure to arrive early enough so students don't miss school breakfast. In some cases students will want to arrive at a time when they will be seen by others - a celebration of their efforts. In other cases an earlier arrival ensures students don't feel too "different" from those arriving by other means.

7. Whether it should be viewed as a team or club

A club membership and camaraderie can foster long-term participation. Try offering club stickers that each student can wear on his/her bike or helmet.

8. How to get permission slips out and signed

Consider incentives for completed slips (i.e. smoothie party for class with highest return rate, raffle for parents who complete slip).

9. How to promote the Bike Train effort

School newspaper & e-mail, backpack mail, bulletin boards and signs on school doors.

10. What kind of incentives to offer

11. Where to park and lock bikes at school

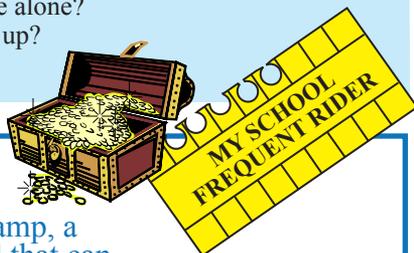
12. Encourage students to get and use bike locks

13. How to get home at the end of the day

Will there be an organized ride home?

Will students ride home alone?

Will parents pick them up?



Incentive Ideas:

Colorful bike hand-stamp, a “Frequent Rider” card that can be punched once each ride and then turned in for an incentive, t-shirt, ankle straps, blinking lights, bells, novelty valve covers, “I Biked to School” wrist band with school colors.



Gathering the Group

- Arrive at your starting location 5-10 minutes earlier than the gathering time for the students.
- As students arrive, or as you pick them up, check their name off the list you've developed.
 - If a student is not on the list, but has a permission slip "ticket" in hand, allow him/her to ride with the train.
 - If a student is not on the list and does not have a "ticket", assign an adult to accompany the student to school; the student will not be "officially" part of the Bike Train (for liability and precedent-setting reasons). Upon arrival at school, the accompanying adult should bring the student to the office so that the parents can be contacted.
- Be sure that every participant has a helmet. If they do not, they may borrow a helmet from your supply.
- Distribute safety vests to students who are not wearing bright clothing.
- Make sure that shoelaces are tied, pant legs aren't flapping, bike brakes work, etc.

Starting Out

- Welcome the group and congratulate them for biking to school.
- If you haven't already done so, call a "Riders' Meeting" and review the "On the Road" tips (Appendix). It is worth taking the time to set some basic ground rules for safe bicycle riding; explain that all adult bike rides start this way. Line the students up with their bikes, placing an adult behind every four to five students.

- Adults should keep their eyes on those four or five students in front of them, and instruct and assist them as needed. Adults should also watch and listen for signs of communication, such as an indication that someone has a mechanical problem (See “Along the Route”).

Leave your starting location a few minutes later than indicated on the schedule to allow for late-comers at each point along the way.

It is better to be late than miss late-arriving students who want to participate.

You might want to begin with a bit of ‘fanfare’ such as a “Walk and Roll to School, it’s Cool” chant, an “all Aboard! Bike Train!” call or a train whistle.

Along the Route

- If you are picking up students, stop briefly at the designated Bike Train stops; welcome and check in students.
 - Be sure their name is on the list or that they have a permission slip in hand. Check the time, and continue on, modifying the pace, if necessary, to reach your next destination just slightly behind schedule.
- If a student lags behind or has mechanical trouble, move off the road and designate an adult to stay with that student and assist him/her to continue on.



Arriving at School

- Once the Bike Train riders have checked in, they may proceed to the bike parking area. Volunteer(s) should help students park and lock their bikes. Collect borrowed equipment.
- Congratulate yourself on a safe journey, relax, have some refreshments and celebrate!
- Prepare for the return trip home.

Evaluating Success

- Debrief with the volunteers and with your student committee to discuss what worked, what didn't work and how to keep students interested in your Bike Train.



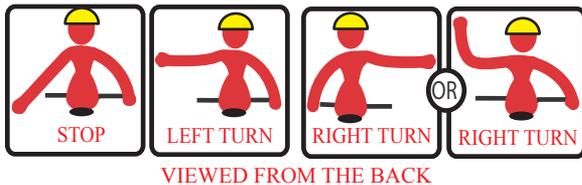
Appendix: On The Road

In Maine, bicycles are defined as vehicles under the state motor vehicle code contained in 29-A MRS. Adults and student bike drivers should ***be predictable and be visible*** - and follow these laws and rules of the road at all times on the Bike Train:

- **Ride with traffic:** Obey all traffic lights and signals. Bike Trains travel on the street, (in most cases) not on the side walk.
 - Occasionally, in a specific more dangerous circumstance, a Bike Train can decide to use a side walk but first check if there is a local ordinance prohibiting this.
- **Ride single file:** Leave space between bicycles (in case of a sudden stop); do not pass.
- **Only one rider per seat:** Never let a friend ride on the handlebars or wheel pegs.
- **Ride as straight as you can:** This may mean taking part of a driving lane. Do not dart in and out of spaces between parked vehicles and other obstructions on the right side of the road. By state law cars can pass when it is safe to do so, and must give three feet of clearance (3' rule).
- **Ride to the right:** Ride as far to the right as practical except when passing, avoiding hazards, preparing for a left turn or yielding to pedestrians in crosswalks.



- **Give ample space:** Be cautious when passing parked cars to avoid opening doors.
- **Signal:** Use hand signals before making turns (e.g. left arm extended horizontally to left to indicate a left turn, and similarly with the right arm for right turns). Stop and look left, right, then look again before leaving driveways or entering any street. Decide on these ahead of time and make sure to share them with everyone on the train. Calling out “turning right”, “slowing”, or “stopping” is also helpful.



- **Take care at intersections:** When turning at major intersections, where there is a traffic light or a crossing guard, you may want to get off the bike and walk it across both legs of the intersection to end up in the correct lane for continuing the ride. Look for a safe place off the road for students to dismount and mount again if possible.
- **Watch for school buses:** As a vehicle, you must stop your bicycle before reaching a school bus stopped with its red lights flashing to receive or discharge passengers regardless of which direction you are travelling.
- **Be Visible:** All adults wear fluorescent orange/yellow clothing (or vests) so the group is highly visible.
 - If you must ride at dawn, dusk, or after dark, all riders must use a white headlight and be sure their bikes are equipped with a rear red light or reflector and foot/ankle/pedal reflectors. A rear red blinking light is strongly recommended.

- **The Engineer:** The Bike Train Engineer rides at the front of the Train and sets an example for safe bicycling behavior. The Engineer knows the route and the stops along the way, and keeps track of the time.
- **The Caboose:** The Caboose rides at the back of the train to keep an eye on the students



For More Information:
www.MaineSafeRoutes.org

Contact
Maine Bicycle and Pedestrian
Safety Program

The ***Get on the Bike Train*** booklet is published by the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) and the Bicycle Coalition of Maine (BCM) as an aid to schools and other organizations.

The MaineDOT and BCM in no way warrant the safety or suitability of any Bike Train conducted by any school and/or other organization using this booklet as a guide. Schools and/or other organizations assume the risk for their own safety.

MaineDOT and BCM assume no liability for personal injuries or property damage suffered by Bike Train participants

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