

## SD46 - Walking School Bus Pilot – June 2022 – Gibsons Elementary



### Summary

A pilot Walking School Bus at Gibsons Elementary School (GES) in May-June 2022 was announced via school newsletter. Interested parents were asked to register their children to walk to school for a 3-week period. A route map, start time, meeting location and other details and a contact email was sent to GES families.

10 parents responded, 7 of which were within 1 km of the designated route. The other 3 parents were offered support information to do a Walking School Bus in their own neighborhoods. Basic expectations of children participating, and a short phone call check-in confirmed student enrollment. A Signal App group invite helped enable easy communication.

Over a 3-week period (Monday through Thursday), Walking School Bus started in Lower Gibsons off Glassford Road and followed the Mahan Trail route up the hill to Shaw Road and along Shaw, turning onto Poplar Lane and then school ground trails. The route covered 22.5km in distance with 100 m of elevation gain. 12 children ranging from Kindergarten to Grade 5 participated. Two thirds of children walked all or nearly all (10+) of the 12 trips taken.

Two adults (one parent/ one teacher at GES) volunteered to walk students to school – return travel from school was the responsibility of families. Over the 3-week period, only 1 day was cancelled due to unavailability of both volunteer adults. While light rain was forecast and occurred on 2 days, Walking School Bus proceeded. On about 1/3 of trips one or more parents of children in the group. 95% of the walks issued from Glassford Road, although a secondary pickup (on Shaw Road) resulted in 2 additional children joining for several of the walks.

### Parent Feedback

Parent responses were very positive in a short anonymous online survey. 2/3 of participating families had 1 child at GES, the rest had 2, with most kids in Grade 1 or 2. Parents motives to sign up were:

- Build children's independence
- Provide social opportunities
- Learn to navigate their neighborhoods, and
- Help kids to be wakeful and energetic before the start of school

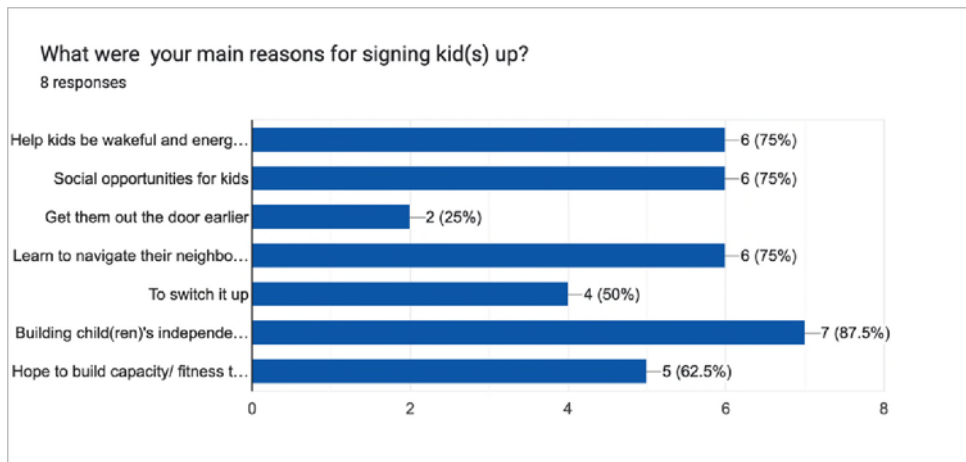
Children rated the opportunity for connect time with other kids as the HIGHEST value in participating, followed by exercise and fresh air. Both Parents and Child were very enthusiastic. Most parents said Walking School Bus increased their children’s exercise moderately. Parents comfort in their child navigating this route on their own varied from low to high, unsurprisingly given the varied age and stamina of participating children (age 5 to 10).

Parents unanimously indicated that being ready and out the door on time in the morning was the largest challenge. Most children were motivated by the social aspect of the WSB, some by the exercise and others by the small candy treats offered children on arrival to school.

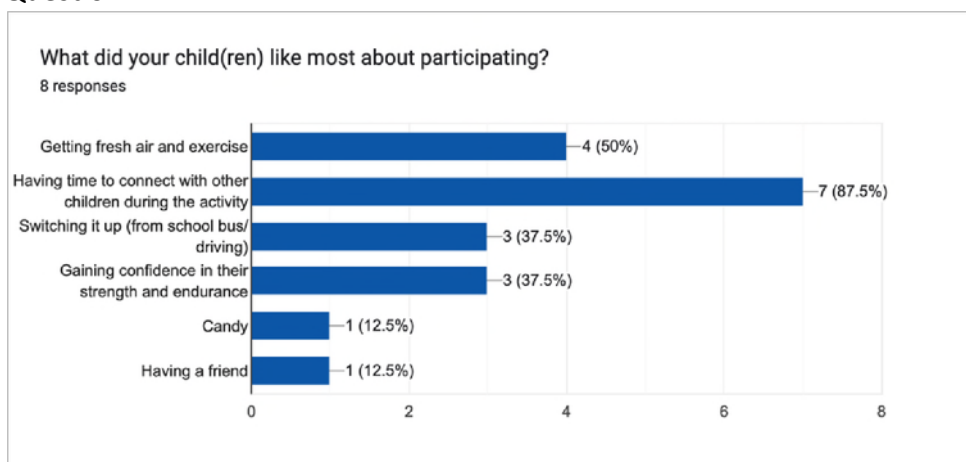
All parents said September-October, May to June were ideal for active travel with 62.5% adding March and April. 2/3 of parents indicated walking 3 to 4x per week was reasonable and 12.5% of parents, all days – with the other trips flagged as biking, bussing or vehicle drop-offs. Nearly all parents confirmed interest in continuing this program in the fall, and the same number indicated a willingness to assist by offering to volunteer to walk sometime.

### SAMPLE PARENT SURVEY RESPONSE DATA

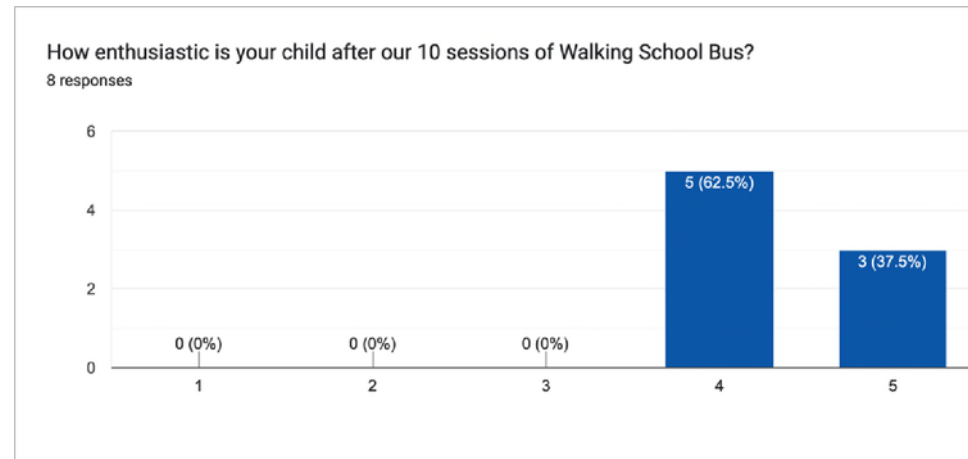
#### Question 3



#### Question 4



## Question 5



## Question 11. What has been the most challenging part of Walking School Bus for you as Parent?

- Getting out of the house earlier, but we are getting good at it :)
- Getting the timing right
- Getting both kids ready with enough time to walk:)
- Motivating my son to try it on the first day (he was shy).
- Since it leaves earlier than the bus, we must be more organized in the morning.
- Organization in the morning to be on time.
- Preparing for the weather
- It's always a challenge to get out the door on time

## Question 12. What has been the best part for you / your child?

- Knowing my child was safely walking to school with a group and having the app to notify me that they arrived at school. Burning off extra energy before school. Challenging each other in steps for fit bit. etc.!
- Candy motivation
- Confidence in route finding to school, knowing they can do it
- Seeing him excitedly run out the door to join the group each morning! • Increased confidence and feeling of belonging to a group
- Exercise and social time in the morning.
- More exercise, something different for them, a new adventure
- Having a friend

## Question 13

In appropriate seasons, how often a week do you feel is ideal for your child to walk this 35 minute route (distance from Lower Gibsons is about 2 to 2.5km one way, elevation gain 100m)?

8 responses

