



# Fingal County Council Cycle Bus Guidelines



Promoting Active Travel

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## **Introduction**

Fingal County Council is committed to improving road safety throughout the County and to promoting and encouraging the use of sustainable travel modes (walking, cycling & public transport) for all road users for some of, or all of, their daily journeys. It is the vision of the Council that every child should be able to travel to school in a healthy, sustainable and safe way. This document provides information on how a school can set up a Cycle Bus and outlines how the setting up of a Cycle Bus can encourage pupils along a route to cycle to school together.

## **What is a Cycle Bus?**

A Cycle Bus is an initiative run by schools encouraging pupils to cycle to school. It consists of a group of pupils cycling to school together on a set route supervised by their parents or guardians. The Cycle Bus picks up 'Passengers' at specific 'bus stops' along a set route at set times, with the 'leader' at the front of the Cycle Bus and parents/guardians at the back and middle of the group. Only those pupils that are with their parents/guardian are permitted to join the bus. A minimum of 5 parents/guardians are required to set up a Cycle Bus. These should be experienced and confident cyclists who cycle regularly around the County. A maximum of 20 pupils are recommended to take part in one Cycle Bus. An additional Cycle Bus should be set up for greater numbers of cyclists. However, the actual number will depend on the quality of the route leading to the school.

Each pupil is required to wear a high visibility fluorescent vest provided by the Council and all cyclists are encouraged to wear a helmet. On the route to school, pupils can learn valuable road safety skills. Schools can decide how often the Cycle Bus will operate, to suit the needs of the school.

A video showing the Galway Cycle Bus, the first in Ireland which is run by a group of volunteers in Galway can be seen on

[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

## **Benefits of a Cycle Bus**

Each pupil who is part of a Cycle Bus is potentially one less car on the road near a school. This increases safety for all road users, helping to ease traffic congestion near schools and helping to improve air quality. Cycle Bus schemes can provide many benefits to pupils, their parents/guardians and the school;

- Cycling is a fun way to travel to school.
- It can promote a healthy lifestyle by helping to establish a pattern of exercise at an early age through regular cycling.
- It can improve awareness of road safety through a controlled exposure to roads and traffic.
- It can show young road users how to cycle safely on a route to school.
- It can form part of the Green Schools Travel Plan and the promotion of cycling to schools.
- It can reduce traffic congestion near the entrance of a school.

- It can improve air quality and health through a reduction in harmful exhaust emissions especially at the school gate where air quality problems can be acute.
- It can allow parents/guardians to meet and chat on the cycle to school.

## **Getting Started**

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Schools interested in setting up a Cycle Bus should contact Fingal County Council at [Road.Safety@Fingal.ie](mailto:Road.Safety@Fingal.ie) who will answer any initial queries and provide high visibility florescent vests. The following are some steps to ensure that the Cycle Bus is organised safely and effectively.

### **Step 1- Assess Interest**

The school that is interested in setting up a Cycle Bus should inform parents/guardians about the potential and benefits and encourage parents/guardians along a route to get together to discuss the initiative. This can be done by sending a letter to parents/guardians or inviting them to a meeting (see Appendix A) or placing a notice in the school newsletter or school notice board. A survey of parents/guardians can also be undertaken in the school to assess interest.

A number of parents/guardians that would be willing to drive the initiative should be identified at this stage.

### **Step 2 – Set up a Meeting**

A meeting should be set up within the school consisting of the Principal, teacher(s) and the parents/guardians who are interested in setting up a Cycle Bus along a particular route. The school can also consider inviting a member of An Garda Síochána.

At the meeting, the Cycle Bus guidelines are outlined in detail and a decision is taken whether or not to develop the initiative further along a route to the school. A Cycle Bus leader and co-ordinator should be nominated to help promote and drive the initiative. At this stage, a number of volunteers should be identified to get the initiative up and running. The matter of Child Protection and Welfare should also be raised at the meeting.

The Council can provide a map showing approach roads to the school to assist the school in choosing the route and bus stop locations. Any route must be cycle friendly and, in general, should not be longer than 3km in length or 20 minutes in time. Also, a direct route with few road crossing points and low traffic speeds is preferred. A footpath should not form part of a Cycle Bus route.

### Step 3–Route Assessment

Safety along the chosen route is a key consideration in setting up a Cycle Bus. The following should be considered when choosing a route.

- The route should be cycle friendly.
- The road or cycle track should be wide enough to allow other cyclists to overtake the Cycle Bus.
- The speed and volume of traffic along the route should not be high.
- Wide waiting areas/wide footpaths should be available along the route for the Cycle Bus stops.
- There should be visibility along the route of cars entering and exiting driveways and entrances.
- Use of any routes through Parks will have to be agreed with the Parks section if the chosen route is not an existing cycleway.

Having chosen the route, there may be minor works required to improve the route such as dishing at kerbs. The Council will endeavour to carry out minor works within a reasonable time of the route being chosen by the school. If there are roadworks commencing along a road, the Cycle Bus may have to be suspended in the interest of safety.

The Council will provide the school with appropriate high visibility fluorescent vests. The Council has no responsibility for the operation of the Cycle Bus but will facilitate its introduction and offer advice, as required.

Any parent/guardian who takes part in a Cycle Bus must adhere to the rules of the road, i.e. they cannot stop traffic along the road and must obey all traffic regulations and the rules of the road.

### Step 4-Promoting the Cycle Bus

Efforts should be made by the school and parents/guardians to promote the Cycle Bus in the media by issuing a press release to the media and inviting a local Councillor and/or local celebrity to join the Cycle Bus. The Council can assist schools in promoting the Cycle Bus and can offer road safety promotional materials for pupils such as lights and bells.

### Step 5-Monitoring the Cycle Bus

The Cycle Bus co-ordinator should keep records on the operation of the Cycle Bus, including participation levels on each bus route. Any issues that arise from time to time along the route should also be recorded. All incidents along a route should also be brought to the attention of the school.

## Role of Key People

### Role of Parents/Guardians

- The main aim is to make the Cycle Bus an enjoyable and safe experience for the pupils and other road users they meet on the route to school. Parents/guardians should encourage their own children to join the Cycle Bus.
- Parents/guardians should ensure that the pupils wear high visibility fluorescent vests when they use the Cycle Bus and make pupils aware of the need to obey the parents/guardians and to behave appropriately at all times.
- Any parent/guardian or pupil may stop the Cycle Bus if they see or encounter a problem ahead. If a pupil has difficulty in continuing for any reason, they are encouraged to talk to the parent or guardian. The Cycle Bus will then stop and attempt to rectify the situation rather than cycling into a potentially complex traffic situation.
- Parents/guardians need to make it safe for pupils to point out issues when cycling and encourage them to stop if required. This is done by creating an atmosphere of calm, patience and avoiding a sense of hurry or rush.
- Parents/guardians are not authorised, nor do they have the power to stop or direct traffic. However, parents/guardians may negotiate with others to achieve the safe passage of the Cycle Bus.

If any direct conflict arises, parents/guardians should not escalate or engage others more than the minimum

necessary to stop the Cycle Bus and keep the pupils safe. If there is no direct risk to the pupils, parents/guardians should not engage in conflict with other road users at all.

### Pupil Responsibilities

- Pupils should aim to enjoy themselves. They should ride in single file, not overtake and can stop at any time if safe to do so.
- Pupils must cycle and behave sensibly and not cause danger to themselves or others and must follow instructions from the parent/guardian at all times.
- Pupils taking part must wear high visibility fluorescent vests (vests can be provided by the Council). Use of a cycle helmet is recommended.
- Pupils should wait at junctions and wait until the parent/guardian say it is okay to proceed.
- If parents/guardians have agreed that you can walk or cycle home, your parent needs to be aware of the route you are taking to make sure you are safe.
- Bikes must be in good mechanical condition, appropriately sized and fitted with lights for dark Winter mornings. Pupils should have a bike lock and the ability to lock their bikes at the school.

## Cycle Bus Checklist

1. Cycle Bus Guidelines to be issued to the school.
2. School to identify a Cycle Bus leader and co-ordinator to assess if there are enough volunteers interested in helping.
3. Suitable routes should be identified and cycled by the volunteers and school representatives.
4. Cycle Bus 'stop' location to be identified and a timetable decided.
5. Potential users of the Cycle bus to be identified along the route.
6. School to agree and inform pupils of behaviour expected on the Cycle Bus.
7. High visibility fluorescent vests can be obtained from the Council.
8. Trial cycle of the route carried out by parents/guardians and pupils during an off-peak time period.

**You are now ready to start your Cycle Bus!**



