



Walking School Buses (WSB) Safety is Paramount

If the children are not safe
WSBs will not be sustainable.




Overview

- Safety issues involved when setting up a WSB.
- Difficulties that face a volunteer workforce.
- Initiatives at North Shore City to deal with these difficulties.
- WSB sustainability.



WSB Statistics

- 2001
- 28 out of 45 primary schools operate WSBs
- 72 WSB routes
- Over 1200 children
- Around 500 volunteers
- 550 less cars at school gates due to WSBs



Safety Issues Involved When Setting Up A WSB



Safety Audit of the Route

- Undertaken by traffic engineer, road safety co-ordinator and a parent from the WSB.
- Copy of the audit is given to the parent co-ordinator.
- Volunteers need to maintain the safety of their route(s).



Police Education Officer Involvement

- A police education officer walks the route with parents and children.
- Police education officers teach road safety to children in schools.



Bus Stops

- NSCC installs and maintains bus stops (stencil on footpath).
- Used for a number of purposes:
 - Bus stop
 - Mark out the route
 - Crossing points



Electronic Mapping of Routes



- Funding Application to Auckland Regional Transport Authority (ARTA) - \$1500



Difficulties That Face A Volunteer Workforce

- However, once all the work to set up a WSB has been completed and the information has been passed on to the volunteers, ensuring WSBs remain sustainable is another issue.....



Why....?

- Little chance for council to communicate with volunteers.
- The WSB volunteer work force is fluid.
- Routes may become inactive for a period of time.
- Volunteers need reminding to maintain the safety of their routes.
- New volunteers do not always receive complete information from the others.
- Changes to routes.



WSB Safety Initiatives at North Shore City Council



North Shore WSB Network Meetings (2002)

- Introduce new parents to the wider WSB community.
- They don't have to recreate the wheel.
- Longer term volunteers share experiences.
- Act as a motivator for new and existing volunteers.
- Networking continues after via email.
- Has helped to create a North Shore WSB community.
- Most importantly these meetings help to maintain safety standards.



(Informal) North Shore WSB Newsletter (2003)

- Staying in touch with volunteers.
- A3 poster size goes to the school.
- Conveying safety messages.
- Information sharing.
- Collecting statistics.
- Communicating with principals of WSB schools.
- Also helps to create a North Shore WSB community.



Health & Safety Workshop – ARTA (2004)

- Run in conjunction with ARTA.
- The *Health & Safety in Employment Act 1992* also covers volunteers.
- Volunteers also fill out a 'Hazard Identification Register'.



Annual Road Safety Workshop – PEO (2005)

- "How to" walk with a group of children.
- Council staff - footpath maintenance, call centre, traffic engineer.
- Feedback from volunteers show that there is a real need for this type of workshop.



Social Events

- Networking.
- Parents talking about their children and sorting out their WSB issues.
- Contribute to WSB sustainability.



Christmas Morning Tea Chipmunks Playland (2003)

WSB Family Fun Day (2005)

2 New Initiatives (2006)

- Communicating via the newsletter with WSB children.
- Competition – road safety
- Same safety messages as PEOs.

Texting Competition for Volunteers (2007)

- Communicating interactively with parents.
- Encourage and remind them to maintain their routes.

Schools that attend most or some of the support activities:

- Parents and children are more aware of WSB safety issues.
- More likely to operate within the WSB safety guidelines.
- WSBs operating more effectively & efficiently.
- They are part of the WSB network.
- Community development.
- Sustainable WSBs.

Schools that operate in isolation:

- Can operate successfully.
- However, in my experience over time they end up working outside the WSB safety guidelines.
- In some instances safety can be compromised.
- Perception of WSB not safe.
- Less likely to be sustainable.

WSB Sustainability

Initially the support activities were focused on safety, and safety is still the overriding issue, however they also contribute to the overall sustainability of WSBs.

