



SONOMA COUNTY SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL BIKE TRAIN GUIDELINES

Bike trains are lots of fun – kids and adults alike really enjoy them!

The following is some important information to make your journey to school a smooth and safe one. Check out our [“How to Organize a Bike Train”](#) webinar and our [“Tips for Successful Bike Trains”](#) video for more information!

Before running your bike train:

- Establish and preview your route
- Recruit support (one or more additional adults to supervise & support the ride)
- Establish a policy that encourages participation while also ensuring that parents are informed & students are properly supervised.
- Create and distribute copies of your Bike Train meet up location(s), route, and departure time(s). You may also include meet-up time(s). *If only including departure time(s), be sure to leave a cushion.*
- Obtain a bike pump, basic tools, and a couple of extra helmets to have on hand that morning. It is also advised that leaders wear a brightly colored jacket or vest. Consider obtaining/bringing extra vests for other adults or even student riders.

Your “Job” as the Bike Train Engineer and Caboose

- The Bike Train Engineer rides at the front of the “train” and sets an example for safe bicycling behavior. (See “Bike Train Basics” below.) The Engineer knows the route and the stops along the way, and keeps track of the time.
- The Caboose rides at the back of the train as the “sweep,” to keep an eye on the children in front of her/him and make sure no one falls behind.
- Both the Engineer and the Caboose wear bright clothing (or vests) so that the group is highly visible to motorists.
- Additional support may be desired, depending on the number of students expected.

Gathering the Group

- Please arrive at your starting location at least 5 minutes earlier than the meet-up time for the children.
- Be sure that the children have a place to gather that is out of the way of motorized traffic.
- As children arrive, greet them and their parents (if the parents are there), and make sure:
 - they have a helmet & it fits (*have a couple extra helmets on hand just in case!*)
 - their brakes work

- their tires are inflated
- shoelaces are tied, pant legs are secured/not flapping
- they are comfortable riding in the street, and
- there is a plan for getting home.
- Consider distributing safety vests to adults and/or children who are not wearing bright clothing.
- Note--if you have a very large group, over 30ish riders, there may be other considerations and safety measures to be aware of. Please reach out to Safe Routes to School (saferoutes@bikesonoma.org) if you have questions.

Starting Out

- Welcome the group and congratulate them on participating in Bike to School Day or Walk & Roll to School Day.
- Call a “Rider’s Meeting” and review “**Ready to Ride Key Points**” (see below for key points). Though the children will want to get going, 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, too.
- Line the children up with their bikes, placing an adult BEHIND every 4 to 5 children (if there are enough adults). Tell adults that they should keep their eyes on those 4 or 5 children in front of them, and instruct and assist them as needed. Explain that the adults should also watch and listen for signs of communication between adults, such as an indication that a child has a mechanical problem (See “Along the Route.”)
- If able, consider leaving your starting location a few minutes later than indicated on the schedule to allow for late-comers at each point along the way. (It’s better to be slightly late than early to avoid missing children 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 or an “All Aboard! Bike Train!” Call or a train whistle.

Ready to Ride Key Points:

- Review helmet fit/bike fit
- Have kids check their Air-Brakes-Chain-Down/Drop-Quick Release
- Be Visible and Predictable!
 - Adult-supervised Bike Trains travel on the street, not on the sidewalk. *Exceptions to this rule may be made in certain situations, which should be communicated to bike train leaders before departing on the route.*
 - Ride single file, leaving 3 feet of space between bicycles (just in case of a sudden stop); do not pass.
 - Ride on the right side of the street, generally about 3 feet from the curb. Stay to the right and ride as straight as you can so that cars can pass.
 - Adult leaders ride further out in street.
 - If a street is too narrow to share with cars, then riders should “take the lane”, meaning they ride in the center of the lane. If 5 or more vehicles are behind the group, wait until there is a safe place to pull over and let the vehicles pass. (see full text of California Vehicle Codes 21202 and 21256 below)
- Communicate with other road users and bike train participants!
 - Make eye contact and use your voice.
 - Use hand signals to show you are turning, slowing, or stopping. Calling out “Turning right!” “Slowing!”, or “Stopping!” is also helpful.

- Other things to give participants a heads up about:
 - Be aware of driveways/door zones (area where a parked car's door can open).
 - It's recommended to double up riders at busy intersections so that the group can get through faster.
 - At major intersections, where there is a traffic light or a crossing guard, you may choose to have participants get off their bikes and walk across. If so, look for a safe place off the road, like a driveway, for the kids to dismount and mount again, if at all possible.

Along the Route

- Stop briefly at the designated Bike Train stops (if any are established); welcome and check in any waiting students. Check the time, then continue on, modifying the pace, if necessary, to reach your next destination just slightly behind schedule.
- If a child lags behind or has mechanical trouble, move off the road and designate an adult to stay with that child and assist him/her to continue on.

Arriving at School

- Volunteers may be waiting at the school with treats or prizes for each of the students.
- Once the bike train riders have received their swag, they may proceed to the bike parking area & park and lock their bikes. Be sure to collect helmets and safety vests if they have been distributed.

Your duties are now completed!

Congratulate yourself on a safe journey, relax, have some refreshments, and celebrate! Thank You!

***Pertinent California Vehicle Codes**

California Vehicle Code 21202

(a) Any person operating a bicycle upon a roadway at a speed less than the normal speed of traffic moving in the same direction at that time shall ride as close as practicable to the right-hand curb or edge of the roadway except under any of the following situations:

- (1) When overtaking and passing another bicycle or vehicle proceeding in the same direction.
- (2) When preparing for a left turn at an intersection or into a private road or driveway.
- (3) When reasonably necessary to avoid conditions (including, but not limited to, fixed or moving objects, vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians, animals, surface hazards, or substandard width lanes) that make it unsafe to continue along the right-hand curb or edge, subject to the provisions of [Section 21656](#). For purposes of this section, a "substandard width lane" is a lane that is too narrow for a bicycle and a vehicle to travel safely side by side within the lane.

California Vehicle Code 21656

On a two-lane highway where passing is unsafe because of traffic in the opposite direction or other conditions, any vehicle proceeding upon the highway at a speed less than the normal speed of traffic moving in the same direction at that time, behind which five or more vehicles are formed in line, shall turn off the roadway at the nearest place designated as a turnout by signs erected by the authority having jurisdiction over the highway, or wherever sufficient area for a safe turnout exists, in order to permit the vehicles following it to proceed.