

**Number:** 25-71

**Proposed Title: Statewide Bike and Walk Bus Activity and Opportunity Assessment**

1. Concisely describe the **transportation issue** (including problems, improvements, or untested solutions) that Oregon needs to research.

The trip to and from school is made by nearly every child in Oregon every school day. Bike and walk buses, or organized groups of school children, parents, and ride/walk leaders, seek to encourage biking and walking to school. Aside from mitigating some of the negative effects of parents driving kids to school (such as traffic congestion in school zones, increased air pollution, including greenhouse gases, and safety risks), bike and walk buses provide benefits to kids such as physical activity, which has been associated with improved academics and behavior, and offers potential for positive social interactions, and learning about bicycling, traffic safety and navigating their communities. Research into these benefits is ongoing, including a current National Institute for Transportation and Communities project at Portland State University. That study is deploying surveys and interviews to document the experiences of parents and children participating in bike buses in the Portland area, including stated motivations, perceived benefits, and challenges.

As a relatively new concept, limited information exists on where bike and walk buses work best, the potential to spread the concept beyond early adopter communities and participants, and what supportive infrastructure and policies could advance the concept. For instance, there is likely significant barriers to BIPOC and low-income communities adopting bike and walk buses due parents having less time to organize as well as additional infrastructure barriers making safe bike and walk travel to school possible. Understanding barriers across the state using this equity lens can provide important information to increase overall adoption in Oregon.

2. Document how this **transportation issue** is important to Oregon and will meet the [Oregon Research Advisory Committee Priorities](#)

This project touches on multiple ODOT Strategic Action Plan priorities. Bike and walk buses provide a means of transport to school (mobility) using human powered vehicles (sustainability and climate action), and building connections between ride participants, be they children, parents or ride leaders (community vitality). Further, this research will seek to provide guidance and support for communities beyond those early adopter schools, including areas with lower-social economic and more BIPOC populations as well as in rural locations (equity).

In terms of the proposal evaluation focus area, this project best fits under the equity category, as it seeks to clearly understand and document the current locations of schools with bike and walk buses and categorize the characteristics of those locations, and then assess barriers and potential interventions to promote bike bus activity in non-participating communities and populations. Bike and walk buses are often organized by parents and school officials with more time and available resources, likely creating an inequity in access to these modes of travel for low-income students and students of color.

This research is also timely. Signed by Governor Tina Kotek in July 2023, Oregon House Bill 3014 provides flexibility for schools to receive funding for bike and walk buses starting in January 2024. Understanding how and where bike and walk buses are being implemented, and where there is future potential can help to amplify the impact of this bill.

**3. What final product or information** needs to be produced to enable this research to be implemented?

We anticipate that the final output will be a report with three primary components:

- First, a tally of existing knowledge / literature relating to bike and walk buses and their implementation and potential; along with an inventory of bike and walk buses around Oregon. As a component of these, we will work with SRTS stakeholders to develop a baseline data collection strategy for bike and walk bus participation, along with a pathway for ongoing data collection.
- Second, an assessment of demographic, land use and transportation characteristics around schools, with bike and walk buses and without.
- Understanding the differences in adoption and barriers between walk and bike buses acknowledging that bike buses may involve another layer of support including access to bikes, bike locks and helmets whereas walking is a lower barrier to entry.
- And finally, a statewide typology of locations for bike and walk buses including locations that have all the current ingredients and are primed for a bike and walk bus program; those that need some additional intervention but could work; and locations not well suited to bike and walk buses. For each location type, a menu of policy and infrastructure options will be presented.

**4. (Optional)** Are there any individuals in Oregon who will be instrumental to the success of implementing any solution that is identified by this research? If so, please list them below.

| Name          | Title  | Email                         | Phone |
|---------------|--|-------------------------------|-------|
| Heidi Manlove | Safe Routes to School<br>Non-Infrastructure<br>Program Manager | heidi.manlove@odot.oregon.gov |       |
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**5. Other comments:**

NA

**6. Corresponding Submitter's Contact Information:**

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