



SOMa Bike Bus

**Biking to School as a
Catalyst for Safer Streets**

Martin Ceperley



“Bike Bus means teamwork, getting up, bodies moving and spirits connecting to start the day!”



“The bike bus is inspiring and gives me hope that we can become a community where kids have freedom and fun and parents aren’t terrified”



“It is amazing! As family bonding, as exercise, as community-building, and as climate action. We love Bike Bus!”



What's a Bike Bus?

- A group of families **riding their bikes to school together** along a route & schedule
- Frequency can vary, but **it's often weekly**
- Typically **one-way** in the morning
- **Walking school buses** are the same idea for walking students
- A **popular trend** that has taken off in the last few years

Benefits of a Bike Bus

- It's **FUN** - We listen to music and ride bikes together!
- Kids arrive to school **energized** and **ready to learn**
- The school **community** is strengthened
- Reduced **traffic & parking** congestion
- Kids want to be part of a **climate** solution
- Teaching safe biking skills gives kids **independence**

Starting SOMa Bike Bus

- Biking with kids to school was **intimidating**
- Students were getting **hit by cars walking & biking to school**
- A group of us had been advocating for **safer roads & bike lanes** in Maplewood
- Saw success of groups like **Montclair Bike Bus**
- I **started a group of parents** at my elementary school
- We **mapped an easy route** that all students could ride
- We started as a small group with volunteers and **just tried it**
- Parent leaders started bike buses at **4 more elementary schools**

Where we're at now

- We just started our 2nd year of weekly routes to 5 of 6 district elementary schools.
Hundreds of kids bike to school every Friday.
- **Over 400 local parents** have joined our community
- We have **community rides** like a Halloween ride, a food drive, grown-up night rides, bike swap events
- The **joy of the bike bus** message spreads worldwide through our videos

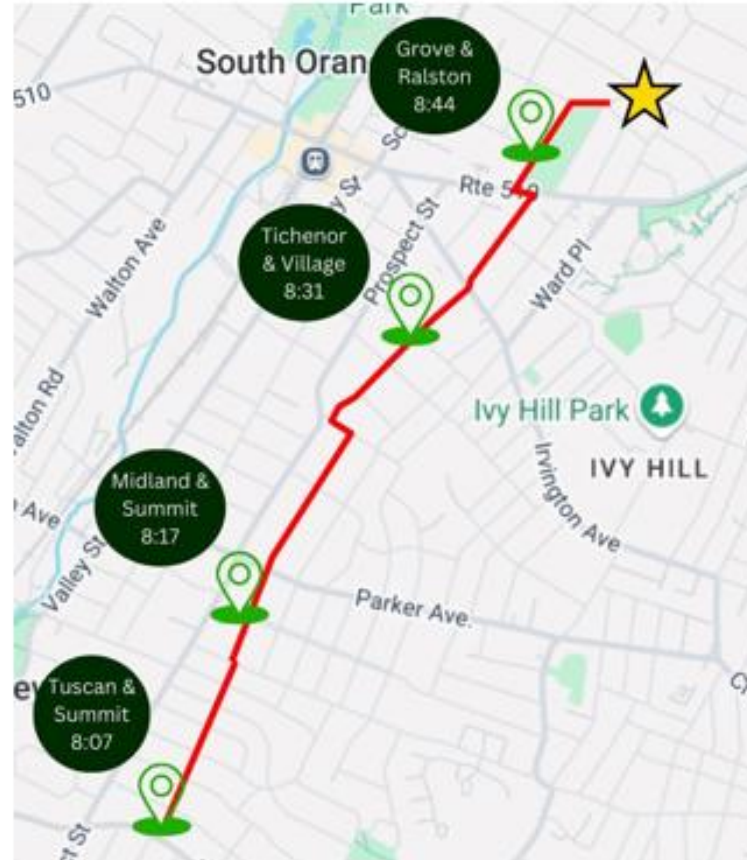


Coordinating the Bike Bus

- Each of our 5 school routes is independent & **lead by parents**
- We take a **lightweight approach** and just ride to school together every Friday
- Our **school community & local leaders** are supportive
- We've **advocated for improved road conditions** around town for students walking and biking to school, and **improved school district policies and facilities**

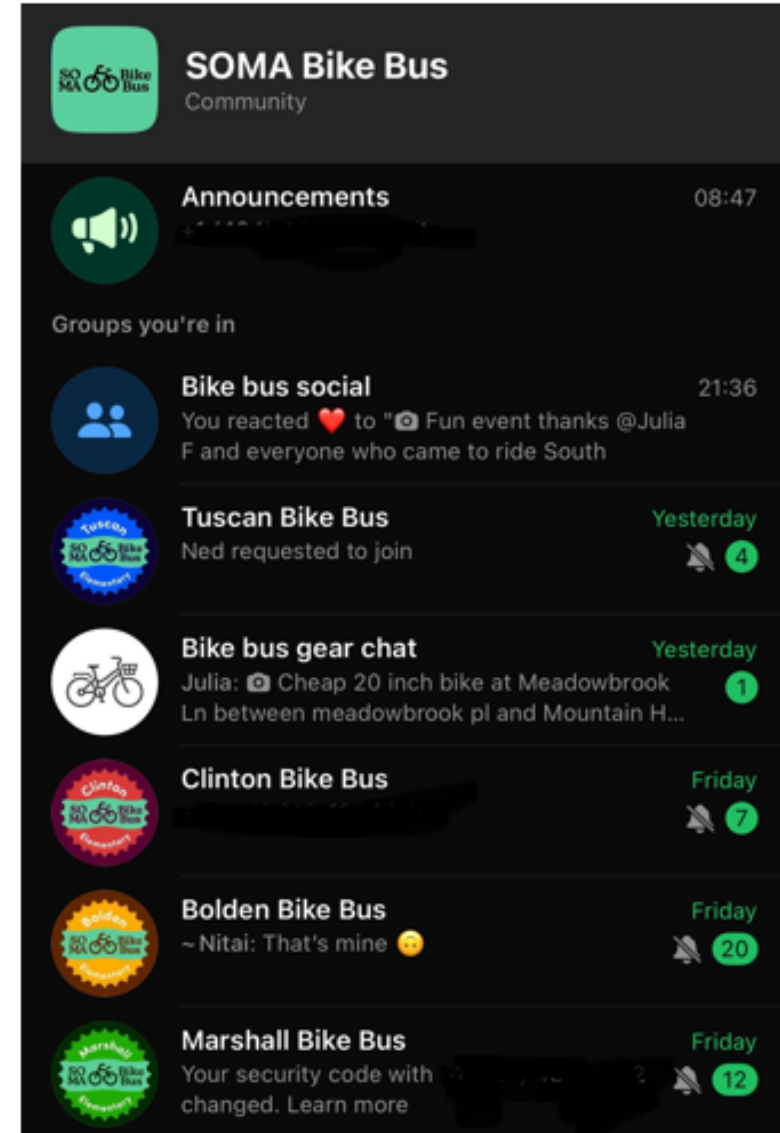


Our Routes



Communications

- **WhatsApp** community
- Each School Route has their own group
- Bike Bus Social / Gear Chat / etc. provide community resources
- Real-time coordination, less overhead than email



Challenges

- **Bike Parking**
 - Bike Bus shows demand before there might be bike racks at a school
 - We had the Department of Public Works drop off a barrier as a temporary bike rack
- **Policies around biking**
 - Some schools had policies against students biking to school
 - We worked with principals and advocate for a district-wide walking and biking plan



Safety

- **Volunteer Ride Marshals** help keep our groups safe & visible on the roads
 - **Captain** - front
 - **Caboose** - back
 - **Sprinters** - block intersections
- Large groups get spread out. It's important to **regroup**
- **Police Assistance** - We have a relationship with our local police department. They can assist us with larger events if needed
- **Weather** - We cancel in inclement weather. If it's too cold we may pause the bike bus. We want to keep the experience fun.



Weather

- We **cancel our rides** in significant inclement weather for safety.
- In the winter, **everyone has different tolerances for biking in the cold.** Sometimes we'll have small rides and sometimes pause the bike bus during the coldest months.
- While the dutch saying "**We're not made of sugar**" applies, we want to keep the experience fun and joyful for the kids and parents.



Bike Bus as a Catalyst for Safer Streets

- Towns will **claim there's not enough demand** for bike infrastructure despite providing unsafe road conditions for people outside of cars.
- **Bike bus is a demand catalyst.** One bike bus turns into three more bike trips. Families are now biking more through the week and on the weekend.
- **Bike bus is a culture agent.** Bike bus brings community together, and pushes for improved road safety and bicycle access by getting more people on their bikes enjoying our towns.
- **Bike bus advocates for safer streets.** Maplewood recently approved its first bike lanes on Parker Avenue in front of Columbia High School. Our goal is routes to every school that kids can safely ride on their own.
- **Show, don't tell.** We show the joy of biking. You don't have to be riding with us to see it.



**Bike Bus is an
educational
platform**

“The bike bus has brought us so much joy. It’s a special time for our 6 year old daughter and her dad to spend together every Friday and they both look forward to it”



Thank You!

<https://somabikeb.us>

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Instagram, Facebook, TikTok

@maplewoodbikelanes

Instagram