

WASSON WAY AMBASSADOR TRAINING GUIDE

Volunteer Program Manual Version 2



1. Program Purpose and Outcomes

Wasson Way is a nonprofit organization responsible for maintaining a multi-use bike and pedestrian trail in Cincinnati, Ohio. The trail property is owned by the City of Cincinnati, and Wasson Way is entrusted with its upkeep, safety, and community engagement.

The Wasson Way Ambassadors program is a volunteer initiative designed to enhance the safety, cleanliness, accessibility, and community atmosphere of the trail. Ambassadors serve as the eyes and ears of the organization on the ground, providing a visible, welcoming presence for trail users while identifying and reporting concerns.

1.1 Program Outcomes

The Wasson Way Ambassadors program is intended to achieve the following outcomes:

- Make the trail safer for all users by maintaining an active, visible volunteer presence.
- Keep the trail cleaner and better maintained through observation and timely reporting.
- Create a more welcoming environment by greeting and assisting trail users.
- Strengthen the connection between the trail and the surrounding community.
- Support the identification and resolution of hazards, maintenance issues, and safety concerns.
- Provide a structured channel for reporting inappropriate behavior, safety incidents, and infrastructure problems to the appropriate authorities.

2. The Ambassador Role

Ambassadors are community volunteers—not security guards, law enforcement officers, or rule enforcers. Your primary role is to be a visible, friendly, and approachable presence on the trail. You represent Wasson Way and help create an atmosphere where all trail users feel safe and welcome.

2.1 What Ambassadors Are

- A welcoming, identifiable presence on the trail.
- Observers who identify and report safety hazards, maintenance issues, and inappropriate behavior.
- Friendly helpers who greet trail users, answer basic questions, and offer assistance.
- Representatives of Wasson Way who model courteous, professional conduct.
- Community connectors who encourage respect for the trail and its users.

2.2 What Ambassadors Are NOT

- Law enforcement or security personnel.
- Authorized to enforce rules, issue citations, or detain anyone.
- Expected to physically intervene in any situation.
- Armed or carrying weapons of any kind.
- Responsible for confronting or disciplining trail users.

2.3 Visible Presence

Ambassadors should wear official Ambassador identification (T-shirt with crest, lanyard, vest, or hat) when available. Your visible presence alone is one of the most effective tools for promoting positive trail behavior. Simply being seen on the trail regularly helps deter unsafe and inappropriate conduct.

3. Specific Responsibilities

3.1 Monitoring Trail Conditions

While on the trail, Ambassadors should observe and note:

- General trail surface condition (cracks, bumps, potholes, or uneven surfaces).
- Obstructions such as debris, fallen leaves, twigs, branches, broken glass or trash.
- Downed trees or large limbs blocking the path.
- Standing water, ice, or other weather-related hazards.
- Areas needing cleanup, mowing, or general beautification.

3.2 Greeting and Assisting Trail Users

- Greet trail users with a friendly wave, nod, or verbal hello.
- Answer basic questions about the trail (length, access points, restrooms, connections).
- Provide directions to nearby amenities or neighborhoods.
- Encourage safe and respectful trail use through positive engagement.
- Share information about Wasson Way events or volunteer opportunities when appropriate.

3.3 Identifying Hazards

Ambassadors should watch for and report the following types of hazards:

- Debris, fallen limbs, and downed trees blocking the trail.
- Blocked sight lines at intersections or curves.
- Graffiti, vandalism, or damage to signs, fences, benches, kiosks, or other infrastructure.
- Trail surface hazards including cracks, raised sections, or trip-and-fall risks.
- Overgrown vegetation encroaching on the trail or blocking sight lines.
- Damaged or missing signage.
- Unsafe road crossings or intersections.
- Lighting issues (burned-out lights, dark areas).
- Drainage problems or flooding.
- Broken glass, sharp objects or trash on the trail surface

3.4 Supporting Cleanliness and Beautification

- Note areas with litter accumulation or overflowing trash receptacles.
- Identify locations where additional trash cans or pet waste stations may be needed.
- Report graffiti or vandalism for prompt removal.
- Identify areas that would benefit from landscaping, pruning, or planting.
- If willing and able, pick up small litter items during your walk (optional, not required).

4. Conduct Standards

As an Ambassador, you represent Wasson Way to the public. Your conduct reflects directly on the organization and affects public trust. The following standards apply at all times while you are serving in your Ambassador role.

4.1 Be Friendly and Approachable

- Smile, wave, and greet trail users warmly.
- Maintain open, relaxed body language.
- Be patient and helpful when answering questions.
- Treat every trail user with respect, regardless of their behavior or appearance.

4.2 Be Non-Confrontational

- Never argue, shout, or use aggressive language.
- Do not block anyone's path or physically impede trail users.
- If someone is hostile or uncooperative, calmly disengage and walk away.
- Never chase, follow, or pursue anyone.
- Avoid making demands or giving orders to trail users.

4.3 Be Courteous and Professional

- Use polite, respectful language at all times.
- Dress appropriately for the weather and activity (clean, presentable attire).
- Do not use profanity or make offensive comments.
- Respect the privacy of trail users—do not photograph individuals without their consent except when documenting a safety incident or rule violation for reporting purposes.
- Refrain from consuming alcohol or using controlled substances while serving.

4.4 Represent the Organization Well

- Wear your Ambassador identification visibly.
- Speak positively about Wasson Way, the trail, and the community.
- If you do not know the answer to a question, say so honestly and offer to find out.
- Do not express personal political opinions or engage in controversial discussions while serving.
- Remember that you are a volunteer—your role is to help, not to control.

5. Handling Safety Issues and Inappropriate Behavior

This section addresses the specific safety concerns that have been identified as recurring problems on the Wasson Way trail. It is critical that all Ambassadors understand and follow these guidelines.

5.1 Identified Safety Concerns

The following issues have been identified by the Wasson Way Board as ongoing concerns:

- Reckless and high-speed e-bike and motorcycle riders endangering pedestrians and other cyclists. Notes: ebikes without operating pedals and gasoline-powered bikes of any kind are not allowed. The speed limit is 15 mph.
- Physical assaults between trail users.
- Yelling, verbal harassment, and intimidation.
- Generally inappropriate, threatening, or disruptive behavior.

5.2 Your Role in Safety Situations

You are NOT enforcement personnel. You are not expected to stop, confront, or intervene in unsafe or criminal behavior. Your safety is the top priority.

In any safety situation, your role is limited to:

- Observing and documenting (from a safe distance).
- Reporting to the appropriate authority (911, 311, or Wasson Way contacts).
- De-escalating ONLY through calm verbal engagement if it is safe to do so.
- Disengaging and leaving the area if the situation feels unsafe or escalates.

5.3 Responding to Reckless E-Bike and Motorcycle Riders

- Do NOT step into the path of a fast-moving e-bike or attempt to physically stop a rider.
- If safe and appropriate, you may calmly and politely ask a rider to slow down (e.g., “Hi there—would you mind slowing down through this section? We have a lot of pedestrians.”).
- If the rider is hostile or ignores you, do not pursue or escalate. Simply note the time, location, and description of the rider and bike.
- Report repeated or dangerous speeding to the Wasson Way program coordinator.
- If an e-bike rider causes an accident or injury, call 911 immediately.

5.4 Responding to Assaults, Threats, or Physical Altercations

If you witness an assault, fight, or physical threat:

- DO NOT physically intervene or attempt to break up the altercation.
- Move to a safe distance immediately.
- Call 911 right away. Provide the dispatcher with your location on the trail, a description of what you are observing, and the number of people involved.
- Stay on the line with 911 if possible and follow their instructions.
- If safe, note descriptions of individuals involved (clothing, physical appearance, direction of travel).
- Do not attempt to detain, restrain, or chase anyone.
- After police respond, provide a written report to the Wasson Way program coordinator.

5.5 Responding to Yelling, Harassment, or Inappropriate Behavior

- Assess the situation from a safe distance. Is the person a danger to themselves or others?
- If the behavior is merely rude or annoying but not threatening, you may choose to simply observe and move on.
- If you feel safe doing so, you may calmly and briefly engage (e.g., “Hi, is everything okay?”). Sometimes a calm presence defuses a situation.
- If the person directs hostility toward you, immediately disengage. Walk away calmly and do not respond to provocations.
- If the behavior involves direct threats, following/stalking, or makes you feel unsafe, call 911.
- For ongoing nuisance behavior (repeated incidents by the same individual), report to the Wasson Way program coordinator with details.
- Never yell back, use profanity, or engage in a verbal argument.

5.6 De-Escalation Principles

If you choose to verbally engage in a tense situation, follow these principles:

- Speak calmly and quietly. Lower your voice rather than raising it.
- Use non-threatening body language (hands visible, relaxed posture, no pointing).
- Keep a safe physical distance (at least 6–10 feet).
- Use neutral, non-judgmental language (“I noticed...” rather than “You need to...”).
- Offer an exit (“I just wanted to check if everything is okay. Have a good day.”).
- If de-escalation is not working, STOP. Disengage and leave the area.
- Your safety always comes first. There is no situation that requires you to remain in danger.

5.7 When to Call 911

Call 911 immediately if you observe:

- Any physical assault or fight.
- A person brandishing a weapon.
- Direct threats of violence against you or another trail user.
- A serious injury or medical emergency.
- Criminal activity in progress.
- A person who appears to be in immediate danger.
- Any situation where you feel your personal safety is at risk.

6. Reporting and Documentation

6.1 Reporting Channels

Use the following reporting channels based on the type of issue:

- Emergency (assault, weapon, serious injury, active threat): Call 911.
- Non-emergency safety issue: Use the designated Wasson Way reporting process (contact your program coordinator).
- City service issue (potholes, streetlights, drainage, city infrastructure, overflowing trash receptacles): Call 311.
- Graffiti, vandalism, or repeated problems: Report to the designated Wasson Way contact.
- General observations and routine maintenance notes: Include in your regular report to the program coordinator.

6.2 Documentation Practices

Good documentation helps Wasson Way track patterns, prioritize resources, and work with the City. When you observe an issue, record:

- Date and time of observation.
- Your location on the trail (use landmarks, cross streets, or mile markers).
- A brief description of what you observed.
- Photos when helpful and safe to take (infrastructure damage, hazards, graffiti, trail conditions).
- For safety incidents: descriptions of individuals involved (clothing, direction of travel, type of bike/vehicle if applicable).
- Whether you called 911 or 311, and any case/reference numbers provided.

6.3 Regular Reporting

Share your observations regularly with the program coordinator. This may be done via email, a shared digital form, or another method designated by Wasson Way. Regular reporting—even when nothing unusual has occurred—helps the organization understand trail usage patterns and plan maintenance.

7. Volunteer Expectations

7.1 Time Commitment

- There is no minimum number of hours required.
- Volunteer on a schedule that works for you—weekly, biweekly, or as available.
- Even brief walks (30–60 minutes) are valuable.
- Consistency is appreciated but flexibility is built into the program.

7.2 Trail Section Selection

- You may choose a section of trail to monitor regularly.
- Familiarity with a consistent section helps you notice changes and new issues.
- You are welcome to vary your route or cover different sections as desired.
- Coordinate with the program coordinator to ensure coverage across the full trail.

7.3 Working Alone or in Groups

- You may work individually or in small groups (2–3 people).
- Working with a partner can enhance safety and provide a witness for incidents.
- Groups should not be so large as to obstruct the trail.

7.4 Identification

- Wear Ambassador identification when available (badge, vest, lanyard, or hat).
- Identification helps trail users recognize you as a volunteer and not a random stranger asking questions.
- If identification materials have not yet been issued, introduce yourself verbally as a Wasson Way Ambassador when engaging with trail users.

7.5 Personal Safety

- Carry a charged cell phone at all times.
- Let someone know when and where you will be on the trail.
- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Trust your instincts—if a situation feels unsafe, leave the area immediately.
- Stay hydrated and dress appropriately for weather conditions.
- Do not volunteer during severe weather or dangerous conditions.

8. Prohibited Conduct

The following conduct is strictly prohibited while serving as a Wasson Way Ambassador. Violation of these rules may result in immediate removal from the program.

- Carrying firearms, knives, pepper spray, or any other weapon while serving as an Ambassador.
- Engaging in any physical altercation, fight, or use of physical force against any person.
- Attempting to physically restrain, detain, grab, push, or block any trail user.
- Chasing or pursuing any person on foot, by bike, or by any other means.
- Vigilante enforcement of any kind—you are not authorized to enforce laws, trail rules, or policies.
- Using threatening, abusive, or discriminatory language toward any person.
- Consuming alcohol or controlled substances while serving.
- Engaging in any illegal activity.
- Misrepresenting your authority—never claim to be law enforcement, security, or a city official.
- Taking actions that put yourself or others at unnecessary risk.

9. Training Completion Checklist

Before beginning your service as a Wasson Way Ambassador, confirm that you can:

1. Explain the Ambassador role and its purpose.
2. Describe what Ambassadors are and are not authorized to do.
3. Identify common trail safety and maintenance issues to watch for.
4. Describe the proper reporting channels (911, 311, Wasson Way contacts).
5. Explain when to call 911 versus when to use the Wasson Way non-emergency reporting process.
6. Demonstrate friendly, non-confrontational communication techniques.
7. Describe how to respond to reckless e-bike and motorcycle riders, assaults, yelling, and other inappropriate behavior.
8. Explain de-escalation principles and when to disengage.
9. List the prohibited conduct items and understand the consequences of violating them.
10. Describe proper documentation and reporting practices.

Upon successful review of this Training Guide, you will be asked to sign the Wasson Way Ambassador Certification acknowledging your understanding of and agreement to these policies.

10. Key Services

Keep the following contacts accessible during your Ambassador shifts:

- Emergency: 911
- City of Cincinnati Non-Emergency Services: 311

—<https://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/311/requests/>

Browse & Request 311 Services

Learn more about all of the services you can request or issues you can report through the 311 system, including: Who handles it? What is the process?

Use the list below to browse 311 services or open a request. You can filter by category or agency.



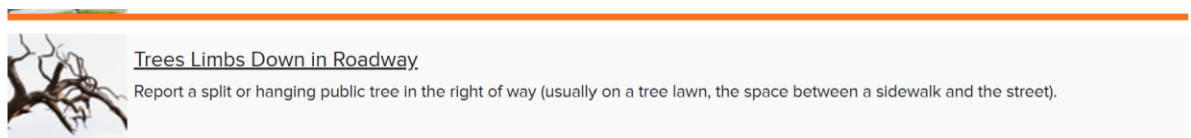
Top Service Types

BULK ITEMS	CODE VIOLATIONS	GARBAGE	PARKING
RECYCLING	WATER & SEWER	YARD WASTE	

Browse All Services

Request Category Agency

Please click in **Request Category** and scroll through the list



10. Contacts

- Wasson Way Ambassador Coordinator: [David Hapner]
- Wasson Way Board Contact: [Ralph Brueggemann]

11. Resources

11.1 SignupGenius

After you have signed off on the certification for, you will receive access to the signupgenius.

—<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C054FA4A729A4F9C70-64697045-wasson#/>

11.2 T-Shirts



11.3 Business Cards

The QR code links to the Visitor Safety Program website page.

—<https://wassonway.org/visitor-safety-program/>



12. Acknowledgements

We would like to recognize the Friends of the Little Miami State Park. We have permission to use their internal documents, including the Trail Sentinel Duties manuals, which outline the responsibilities and expectations of volunteers participating in this type of program. These materials are available on the Documents & Forms page of its website:

—<https://littlemiamistatepark.org/>

Thank you for volunteering as a Wasson Way Ambassador. Your presence on the trail makes a real difference in our community. Stay safe, be friendly, and remember—when in doubt, observe and report. Never put yourself at risk.