



# Benson Safe Routes to School Plan 2013 - 2018

Benson School District | Benson | Swift County | Minnesota



Three to Five Year Implementation Guide  
September, 2013

## Executive Summary

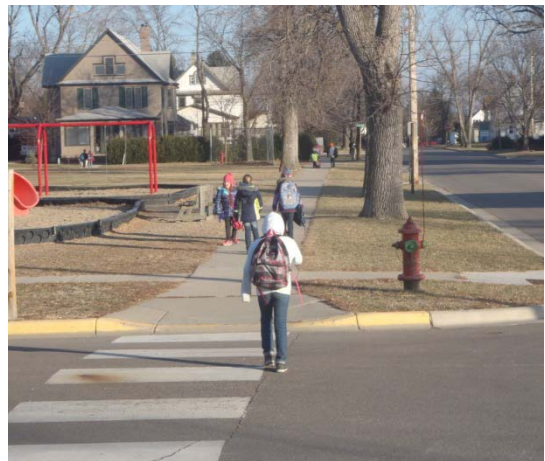
Safe Routes to School (SRTS) efforts are gaining momentum nationally, state-wide and locally for a wide variety of reasons. Health trends, incorporation of more physical activity into daily routine, availability of funding, lack of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and stress on academic achievement are some of the many reasons why schools, parents and communities are excited to participate in SRTS efforts. Now, fewer children are walking or bicycling to school than ever before and school officials, health advocates and transportation officials feel that increased walking and bicycling to school can positively contribute to the well-being of students.

This Safe Routes to School Plan and the continuing SRTS program in the Benson community uses the model of “The Five E’s” to improve the health and safety of children walking and bicycling to school. “The Five E’s” include Education, Encouragement, Engineering, Enforcement and Evaluation. Recommendations in this Plan cover each of these five core areas.

Before changes can take place, it is important to understand current conditions and issues; develop a shared vision and goals for Safe Routes to School; and engage stakeholders and the community in developing strategies to overcome barriers regarding walking and bicycling to school. All of these steps were taken as part of the Benson SRTS planning process. As another part of the SRTS planning process, a SRTS Team was formed to provide input into the process and was ultimately responsible for the direction of the SRTS Plan and future program in the Benson community. SRTS Team members included representatives from the schools, the City of Benson, parents, Countryside Public Health and other interested stakeholders. The SRTS Team met at key benchmarks during the process to oversee the preparation of the plan and provide direction for policy development.

The SRTS Team developed recommendations to address current barriers to walking or bicycling to school as well as strategies on how to increase the number of students walking and bicycling to school. The recommendations have been developed into an action plan for implementation prioritized by the SRTS Team. In general, this plan recommends education and encouragement activities for the near-future and bigger infrastructure improvements for the long-term. Potential funding sources for implementation of infrastructure and non-infrastructure strategies are also listed in the action plan in Chapter 5.

Finally, evaluation of SRTS efforts is a key component to a successful SRTS Program and Chapter 6 details evaluation that should be done to measure the effectiveness of SRTS strategies that have been implemented.



## Acknowledgements

A special thanks goes out to all of those who helped provide input into this plan. Thanks to MnDOT for providing the funding and various technical resources for this plan and the local SRTS Team Members who devoted their time and expertise to this Safe Routes to School Planning process.

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## Chapter 1 | Introduction

### HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) has recently been gaining popularity among health advocates, school officials and transportation officials nationally, state-wide and locally. However, research on the safety of children walking and bicycling to school began in the United States in the early 1970s and was highlighted by release of the United States Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) publication “School Trip Safety and Urban Play Areas” in 1975. The term “Safe Routes to School” was first used in Denmark in the late 1970s as part of a very successful initiative to reduce the number of children killed while walking and bicycling to school. Safe Routes to School spread internationally, with programs springing up throughout Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States.



The first modern Safe Routes to School program in the U.S. began in 1997 in the Bronx, N.Y. Then in 1998, Congress funded two pilot SRTS programs through the US DOT. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) issued \$50,000 each for Safe Routes to School pilot program in Marin County, California and Arlington, Massachusetts. Within a year of launching the pilot programs, many other grassroots Safe Routes to School efforts were started throughout the United States.

Efforts to include a larger SRTS program in federal legislation began in 2002. In 2003, the League of American Bicyclists organized the first meeting of leaders in pedestrian and bicycle issues to talk about Safe Routes to School and how a national program might work. At the same time, a number of states were developing their own SRTS programs, continuing to build momentum for the movement.

After the initial success of Safe Routes to School pilot programs in the United States, subsequent federal funding facilitated SRTS's expansion nationwide. The 2005 passage of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) institutionalized Safe Routes to School by allocating \$612 million among the fifty states. The Federal Highway Administration administered the Safe Routes to School program funds and provided guidance and regulations about SRTS programs. Federal SRTS funds were distributed to states based on student enrollment, with no state receiving less than \$1 million per year. SRTS funds could be used for both infrastructure projects and non-infrastructure

activities. The legislation also required each state to have a Safe Routes to School Coordinator to serve as a central point of contact for the state.

# SafeRoutes

National Center for Safe Routes to School



Safe Routes to School programs operate in all 50 states and D.C. Children benefiting from SRTS funds live in urban, rural and suburban communities representing varying income levels and a range of walking and bicycling conditions. With legislative extensions, the Federal Safe Routes to School Program has apportioned nearly \$1.15 billion to states as of September 30, 2012. These funds have benefited or will benefit more than 13,000 schools.

In July 2012, Congress passed a new federal transportation bill, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (MAP-21), which continued funding for SRTS activities; however it eliminated SRTS as a stand-alone program. SRTS activities are now eligible to compete for funding alongside other programs including the Transportation Enhancements program, the Recreational Trails program and National Scenic Byways program, as part of a new program called Transportation Alternatives. SRTS funds can still be used for both infrastructure projects and non-infrastructure activities; however states are no longer required to have a SRTS Coordinator under MAP-21.

Historical investment of SAFETEA-LU federal dollars on SRTS activities in Minnesota has ranged from \$1 million in 2005 to a high of nearly \$3.4 million in 2011. Between 2005 and 2012, a total investment of \$18,573,023 in federal funds has been made on SRTS projects, programs and initiatives. This does not include funding for SRTS activities under MAP-21 because states are currently in the process of determining how to adapt the program to the new legislation.

In addition to federal funds that support SRTS programs, the State of Minnesota has recently made the decision to invest in the program, a step that few other states have taken. This step shows the broad support for SRTS in Minnesota as an effective and successful program to make walking and bicycling to school safer and increase the number of students who do so. In the 2013 legislative session, Minnesota provided funding for a statewide SRTS program. This new SRTS program provides \$500,000 for the biennium for non-infrastructure SRTS activities. Additionally, SRTS advocates hope to secure funding for infrastructure projects during the next legislative session.

Another opportunity unique to Minnesota that supports Safe Routes to School is the Minnesota Department of Health's (MDH) Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP). One of the focus areas of this program is active living and MDH has made SRTS a big part of that focus area.

**Health:** Rates of obesity and overweight are at all-time highs for all ages. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), obesity has more than doubled in children and tripled in adolescents in the past 30 years. In 2010 that meant that more than one-third of children and adolescents were overweight or obese.<sup>1</sup> Even more alarming is the increasing rate at which youth are obese or overweight. The percentage of children aged 6 through 11 years in the United States who were obese increased from 7 percent in 1980, to nearly 18 percent in 2010. Similarly, the percentage of adolescents aged 12 to 19 years who were obese increased from 5 percent to 18 percent over the same time period.

Childhood obesity has both immediate and long-term effects on health and well-being, which are depicted below.

#### **Immediate Health Effects:**

- Obese youth are more likely to have risk factors for cardiovascular disease, such as high cholesterol or high blood pressure. In a population-based sample of 5- to 17-year olds, 70% of obese youth had at least one risk factor for cardiovascular disease.
- Obese adolescents are more likely to have pre-diabetes, a condition in which blood glucose levels indicate a high risk for development of diabetes.
- Children and adolescents who are obese are at greater risk for bone and joint problems, sleep apnea, and social and psychological problems such as stigmatization and poor self-esteem.

#### **Long-Term Health Effects:**

- Children and adolescents who are obese are likely to be obese as adults and are therefore more at risk for adult health problems such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke, several types of cancer, and osteoarthritis. One study showed that children who became obese as early as age two were more likely to be obese as adults.
- Overweight and obesity are associated with increased risk for many types of cancer, including cancer of the breast, colon, endometrium, esophagus, kidney, pancreas, gall bladder, thyroid, ovary, cervix, and prostate as well as multiple myeloma and Hodgkin's lymphoma.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/obesity/facts.htm>



The CDC says that healthy lifestyle habits, including healthy eating and physical activity, can lower the risk of becoming obese and developing related diseases. The CDC also emphasizes that schools play a particularly critical role by establishing a safe and supportive environment with policies and practices that support healthy behaviors and that schools also provide opportunities for students to learn about and practice healthy eating and physical activity behaviors.

Despite the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' recommendation of at least one-hundred and fifty minutes of physical activity per week, inactivity among adults and youth remains high throughout the country. According to County Health Rankings, twenty-eight percent of Swift County residents are physically inactive, compared to only nineteen percent for the State of Minnesota as a whole.<sup>2</sup> The health implications of inactive Americans are problematic not only to public health officials, but to all residents, communities and tax payers due to rising healthcare costs.

In 2000, medical costs in Minnesota associated with physical inactivity were \$495 million (Minnesota Department of Health, 2002). However, just one additional day of physical activity per week has been found to reduce medical charges by 4.7% (Pronk, Goodman, O'Connor & Martinson, 1999).<sup>3</sup>

Bicycling and walking are healthy transportation options for students and people of all ages. If students walked or bicycled to school more often, that time could help contribute to the recommended levels of physical activity per week that many people are not getting.

*"A 2008 study for the state of Minnesota shows that healthcare costs are 12 percent higher for overweight people and 37 percent higher for obese people, relative to those for people of normal weight. By 2020, the cost of treating an obese person will be 61 percent greater than that of treating an average-weight person, if trends continue. The study also notes that nearly 31 percent of the overall increase in healthcare costs between 2005 and 2020 will be due to the projected increases in obesity and overweight. The two conditions are projected to add \$3.7 billion to Minnesota's annual healthcare costs by 2020." World Watch Institute*

**Environmental:** According to the Environmental Protection

Agency (EPA), transportation is the fastest growing source of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States, accounting for twenty-eight percent of all greenhouse gas emissions. Of that twenty-eight percent, passenger vehicles account for nearly half of all U.S. transportation sector's greenhouse gas emissions.

Children in particular are more vulnerable to air pollution because they breathe faster than adults and inhale more air per pound of body weight. The congregation of school buses and passenger vehicles around schools where children are present then become even more harmful air pollution hazards.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/minnesota/2013/swift/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot/by-rank>

<sup>3</sup> From *Why Parks and Trails are Important*, the Foundation for Preserving a Minnesota Legacy, 2010.

Walking and bicycling are the most environmentally friendly forms of transportation and could play a large role in helping Americans of all ages reduce their carbon footprint. For all ages, the potential to replace driving with bicycling or walking trips is high for many Americans, including many Benson residents. The U.S. DOT reports half of all trips in the United States are three miles or less, a distance easily traversable by bicycle. However, seventy-two percent of those trips are made by vehicles and less than two percent are made by bicycle. Additionally, trips of a mile or less are made by automobile sixty percent of the time.

For short trips, switching to a more environmentally friendly mode choice, such as bicycling or walking, can make the most environmental impact; as short automobile trips cause the most pollution per mile driven. According to the League of American Bicyclists, “sixty percent of the pollution created by automobile emissions happens in the first few minutes of operation, before pollution control devices can work effectively. Since ‘cold starts’ create high levels of emissions, shorter car trips are more polluting on a per mile basis than longer trips.” Reducing the short automobile trips to and from school can help to reduce the auto emissions and pollution around the schools where they are harmful to children.

With an area of two and a half square miles, the City of Benson is easily traversable by bicycle or walking. However, there are many barriers to walking and bicycling in Benson that are discussed in the existing conditions chapter of this plan.

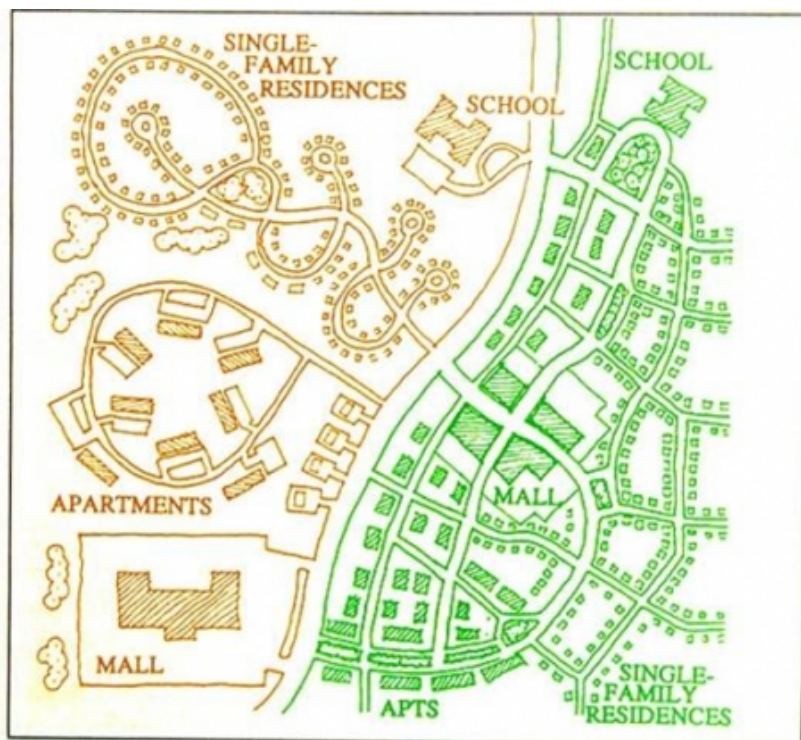


**Land Use & Livability:** Land use patterns have a big impact on the ability to walk or bicycle safely and easily in a city. The cores of many cities are walkable and bikable, due to their well-connected grid patterned streets, available sidewalk infrastructure, compact and mixed-use development and a building scale that is comfortable for bicyclists and pedestrians. However, areas of cities that were developed in the last sixty or seventy years are much more auto-oriented in nature with a lack of sidewalk infrastructure, large intersections that make crossing the street as a pedestrian a terrifying experience, and seas of parking between the road and buildings. Additionally, newer developments use more land, making the distance between places too great to walk or bicycle. Recent development patterns are one reason parents may choose to drive their children to school.

School siting or location has been a major barrier to walking and bicycling to school in many communities. Traditionally, schools were located in the center of communities and in close proximity to residential areas. This made it easy for students to walk and bicycle to school. However, beginning in the 1970s, rather than renovating existing schools or building schools within existing residential communities, districts often built new schools located on the edges of communities where the land costs were lower. School siting policies may also dictate a certain acreage minimum that precludes many inner-community locations. Schools located on the edges of communities inherently have fewer children who live close enough to these facilities to make walking or biking to school practical.

Although Benson's schools are located in locations close to residential areas where many students can easily walk or bicycle, Benson has experienced consolidation and a school closing. The closing of the old Southside Elementary School in the late 1990s means there is no longer an elementary school on the south side of Benson, which would make it easier for students living on that side of the city to walk or bicycle to school. Additionally, Benson and most of the school districts in the Upper Minnesota Valley Region have seen a decline in enrollment due to the declining population of the region. This fact alone makes Benson and other communities in the region vulnerable to future school consolidation.

On a nationwide level, the effects of consolidation are measurable. Between 1940 and 2003, the number of public school districts decreased from 117,108 to 14,465, and the number of public and private elementary and secondary schools went from over 226,000 to approximately 95,000 in 2003. During this same period, the number of students who attended elementary and secondary schools grew from 28 million to 54.5 million according to the U.S. Department of Education (DOE).



*A connected network of streets (right side of drawing) with sidewalks cuts walking distances between housing, shopping, work and school.*

*(Source: A. Duany/E. Plater-Zyberk)*

The consolidation of schools has increased the number of students attending each school, while decreasing the number of school buildings. Consolidation has created increased efficiencies in many areas, but it has also had many unintentional consequences such as increased expenditures in transportation and traffic



congestion around the schools due to the concentrated the flow of traffic to one location.

**Safety:** Safety was often the number one concern and impetus to undergo the Safe Routes to School planning process for schools and communities in the Upper Minnesota Valley Region. School officials and community members were right to be concerned about student's safety when it comes to transportation to and from school. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), motor vehicle traffic crashes were the leading cause of death for ages 3 through 14 as of 2007. During 2009, there were a total of 33,808 traffic fatalities in the United States. The 14-and-younger age group accounted for 1,314 or four percent of those traffic fatalities. This represents a 3 percent decrease from the 1,350 fatalities in 2008. However, an average of 4 children, age 14 and younger, were killed and 490 were injured every day in the United States in motor vehicle crashes during 2009.<sup>4</sup>

While traffic fatalities are decreasing among many modes of transportation, pedestrians were one of the few groups of road users to experience an increase in fatalities in the United States in 2011. Pedestrian deaths accounted for fourteen percent of total motor vehicle deaths nationwide in 2011, totaling 4,432 deaths.

Traffic fatalities also increased nine percent among pedalcyclists from 2010 to 2011. Pedalcyclists include bicyclists and any other riders of wheeled, non-motorized equipment powered solely by pedals. According to NHTSA, 677 pedalcyclists were killed and an additional 48,000 were injured in motor vehicle traffic crashes in 2011. Pedalcyclist deaths accounted for two percent of all motor vehicle traffic fatalities and made up two percent of the people injured in traffic crashes during the year.<sup>5</sup>

Often these pedestrian and pedalcycle crashes are most prevalent during morning and afternoon peak periods, when traffic levels are highest, and coincidentally, when children are out of school. Bicycle crashes, like pedestrian crashes, affect all age groups, but the highest injury and fatality rates (per population) are associated with younger bicyclists. The ten to fifteen age group has both the highest fatality rate and the highest injury rate. Crash-involvement rates are also highest among five to nine year-old males, further emphasizing the gravity of preventative traffic safety efforts. Crash types for this age group include ride-outs from driveways and intersections, swerving left and right, riding in the wrong direction and crossing midblock. These are not the same crash types observed in other age groups.

Overwhelmingly, crashes experienced by child bicyclists are due to inappropriate behavior by the bicyclist. Likewise, nearly three out of four pedestrian deaths occur in urban areas at non-



<sup>4</sup> <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/811387.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/811743.pdf>

intersections, again indicating inappropriate behavior by the pedestrian.

Therefore, bicycle and pedestrian safety training is crucial to a successful Safe Routes to School Program. Children are not adults and they do not have the same understanding of traffic safety. There are several key differences between children and adults that affect children negatively when it comes to traffic safety. Children have a narrower field of vision, cannot easily judge a car's speed and distance, assume that if they can see a car, the driver is able to see them, and have difficulty concentrating on more than one thing at a time.

Fortunately, safety training and education programming can increase a child's awareness of automobiles and their place within the traffic network, potentially reducing traffic conflicts leading to crashes. There are many safety training programs readily available. In fact, MnDOT has recently created a traffic safety curriculum specifically designed for Safe Routes to School programs for all schools in the state to use and adapt as they see fit.

Wearing proper safety equipment, such as helmets, also affects the severity of crashes children experience. While wearing a helmet may not impact the frequency of crashes,



numerous studies have found that use of approved bicycle helmets significantly reduces the risk of fatal injury, serious head and brain injury, and middle and upper face injury among bicyclists of all ages involved in all types of crashes and crash severities. This is where Safe Routes to School programs can provide guidance in safety education and enforcement. A detailed list of education programs is provided in Chapter 5.

## WHY SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL?

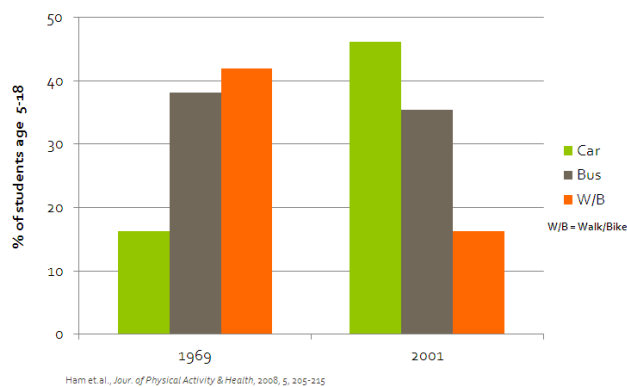
Nationally, and locally in Benson, students are walking and bicycling to school less than ever before. At the same time, childhood obesity is increasing, more children are dying in automobile crashes, air quality has deteriorated, time for physical activity during the school day has decreased, and land use practices have centered on automobile reliance.

Figure 1.1 shows a dramatic inverse representation of students' transportation modes to and from school in 1969 compared to 2001. In 1969, over 40 percent of children walked or biked to school, while about 15 percent were driven in a personal vehicle. In 2001, however, those statistics are quite the opposite with approximately 45 percent of students arriving to school via car and approximately 15 percent walking or bicycling to school.

Over the very same time period, the rates of obesity and overweight among children in all age categories increased dramatically. There are many factors that contribute to this increase; however, the lack of physical activity is certainly a big one. Walking or bicycling to school can help increase levels of physical activity among students.

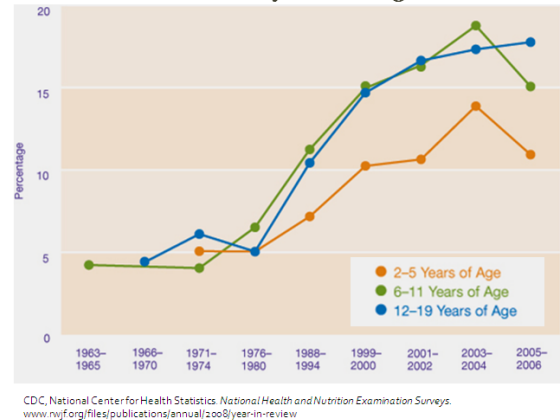
**Figure 1.1 Walking & Biking Comparison**

*Changes in Walking & Cycling to School, 1969 to 2001*



**Figure 1.2 Obesity Trends**

*Trends in Childhood Obesity & Overweight*



Walking and bicycling to school can be important tools to help address and potentially reverse the trends identified previously. Walking and biking to school can help to increase physical activity among students to help lower rates of childhood obesity, prevent environmental pollution caused by automobiles, cut back on gas costs for school transportation departments and families, and lower traffic congestion at school drop off and pick up areas. Walking and bicycling to school can also empower children by giving them a sense of responsibility and independence, allow for time to enjoy the outdoors and provide time to socialize with their parents, friends and neighbors.

Safe Routes to School programs are sustained efforts to improve the health and well-being of children by enabling and encouraging them to walk and bicycle to school. The SRTS effort begins by understanding why children are not walking and bicycling to school safely. Safe Routes to School programs audit conditions around the school and conduct surveys of parents, teachers and students to determine existing attitudes and facility conditions surrounding the school. SRTS programs then identify opportunities to make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation choice, thus encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age.



## THE SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PLANNING PROCESS



The planning effort undertaken by Benson's Safe Routes to School Team and planners from the Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission (UMVRDC) entailed collecting and analyzing information, identifying community needs and priorities, and recommending steps to remedy existing problems and accomplish community goals and objectives.

Safe Routes to School refers to a variety of multi-disciplinary programs and facility improvements aimed at promoting walking and bicycling to school. SRTS largely centers around five core areas, called "The Five E's". They are Education, Encouragement,

Engineering, Enforcement, and Evaluation, and are described below. This plan is organized around policy change, programs and projects in all five core areas.

### Engineering -

Engineering is a broad concept used to describe the design, implementation, operation, and maintenance of traffic control devices or physical measures. It is one of the complementary strategies of SRTS, because engineering alone cannot produce safer routes to school. Safe Routes to School engineering solutions may include adequate sidewalks or bike-paths that connect homes and schools, improved opportunities to cross streets (such as the presence of adult crossing guards, raised medians, or pedestrian signals), and traffic calming measures (such as reduced speed limits, speed bumps, or stanchions).

### Enforcement -

Enforcement includes policies that address safety issues such as speeding or illegal turning, but also includes getting community members to work together to promote safe walking, bicycling, and driving.

### Education -

Education includes identifying and promoting safe routes, teaching students to look both ways at intersections, obey crossing guards, learning how to handle potentially dangerous situations, and to recognize the importance of being visible to drivers. Education initiatives also teach parents to be aware of bicyclists and pedestrians and the importance of practicing safety skills with their children. SRTS education efforts alert all drivers to the potential presence of walkers and bikers and the need to obey speed limits, especially in school zones. Additionally, the Safe Routes to School plan educates local officials by identifying regulatory changes needed to improve walking and bicycling conditions around schools. This strategy is closely tied to Encouragement strategies.

### Encouragement -

Encouragement combines the results of the other "E's" to improve knowledge, facilities and enforcement to encourage more students to walk or ride safely to school. Most importantly, encouragement activities build interest and enthusiasm and help ensure the program's continued success. Programs may include "Walk to School Days" or "Mileage Clubs and Contests" with awards to motivate students.

### Evaluation -

Evaluation involves monitoring outcomes and documenting trends through data collection before and after SRTS implementation to identify methods and practices that work and those that need improvement.

While Safe Routes to School plans largely prioritize improvements in areas where children predictably congregate, such as school zones and major transportation links between the school and residential areas, it is important to remember that children are a part of every community. Adequate facilities are therefore necessary everywhere where people walk or can be expected to walk. Streets that allow children to walk and bicycle to school safely will better accommodate all users and create a more vital pedestrian environment.

Formation of the Safe Routes to School program in Benson was a community-driven effort with planners from the Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission working in tandem with the local SRTS Team. The SRTS was made up of school staff, municipal officials, local law enforcement, local elected officials, the county engineer, parents and other interested community members. Development of the plan entailed collecting and analyzing information, identifying community needs and priorities and recommending steps to remedy existing problems and accomplish community goals and visions.

The SRTS Team was comprised of a variety of people from different disciplines and among “the 5 Es” to help guide the planning process and set the vision and goals for the plan. The people listed in the chart to the right made up the Benson Safe Routes to School Team.

The initial kick off meeting focused on giving the SRTS Team an overview of the

SRTS planning effort, including the purpose and benefits of SRTS, planning process timeline and goals and the role of the SRTS Team. The first meeting was also used to discuss local issues and concerns, develop a vision statement to guide the planning process and assign specific tasks to the SRTS Team members.

The second SRTS Team meeting was used to share with the SRTS Team the information and data that had been collected, as well as the results of the walking/biking audit, observation of dismissal, student travel tallies and parent surveys. The Team also reviewed the vision statement and goals generated at the first meeting and began brainstorming solutions to current identified issues and barriers.

Benson SRTS Team	
The SRTS Team was comprised of a variety of people from different disciplines and among “the 5 Es” to help guide the planning process and set the vision and goals for the plan. The people listed in the chart to the right made up the Benson Safe Routes to School Team.	Brad Johnson, Northside Elementary Principal (Team Leader)
	Dennis Laumeyer, Benson Elementary Principal
	Clint Schiller, Teacher
	Roger Ebnet, Teacher
	Kristy Johnson, Teacher
	Kristin Wiozeschke, Parent & Librarian
	Karri Berreau, Parent
	Hope Lenz, Parent
	Rob Wolfington, Benson City Administrator
	Elliot Nelson, Public Works Director
	Mike Fugelberg, City Council Member
	Ian Hodge, Police Chief
	Nancy Dosedall, School Police Officer
	Andy Sander, Swift County Engineer
	Natasha Haukos & Wanda Ness, Countryside Public Health

The third SRTS Team meeting focused on developing an action plan of projects, programs and policies that can be implemented over the next five years to increase the number of students and community members who walk and bicycle and to making it safer for them to do so. The last and final meeting was the public open house used to inform the community about the Safe Routes to School projects, programs and policies that the SRTS Team wants to implement. It also provided valuable public input and feedback to the SRTS Plan. From the beginning, the Benson SRTS Team wanted the SRTS Plan and principles to extend beyond just the students in Benson, the SRTS Team wanted this plan to help make walking and bicycling the easy, safe, fun and convenient choice for all Benson residents.



The process included SRTS Team review at key benchmarks in the process. Over a 12-month time period, there were three SRTS Team meetings, a walking and biking audit completed by a small group of SRTS Team members, and a community open house. The planning process is outlined in greater detail below. All meeting materials, notes, tools and reports can be found in the Appendix.

### Safe Routes to School Planning Process

- Introduction to SRTS and Visioning
  - SRTS Plan Start Up and Introduction to SRTS
  - Meeting # 1 Introduction to SRTS and Goal Setting (September 11, 2012)
  - Visioning and Goal Setting
- Assessing Existing Conditions and Current Issues
  - Assessment of Issues and Barriers
  - Collect and Review Existing Information (existing policies, programs, bike & ped facilities, crash data, etc.)
  - Conduct Walking/Biking Audits and Observation of Dismissal (November 7, 2012)
  - Administer Student Travel Tallies and Parent Surveys (October, 2012)
  - Meeting #2 Identifying Issues and Developing Action Steps (March 27, 2013)
- Developing Strategies and Action Steps
  - Develop Recommendations
  - Meeting # 3 Finalizing Action Steps (July 9, 2013)
  - Meeting #4 Public Open House (August 28, 2013)
  - Finalize SRTS Plan

## VISION STATEMENT, GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The SRTS Team, with help from the planning team, developed a vision statement, goals objectives and strategies for Safe Routes to School in the Benson community. A vision statement is an idealistic statement about where the community aspires to be in the future. As such, a vision statement must combine idealism and pragmatism. It should express the highest hopes for what citizens want their community to become regarding Safe Routes to School, while taking into account the realities of where the community is at and the directions it is currently going. The vision statement for Safe Routes to School in the Benson community is as follows:

*Vision Statement | Benson is a community where students can and do walk and bike to school safely because the physical and social environment promotes walking and biking.*

To support and achieve the idealistic and futuristic vision statement, it needs to be broken down into more specific actionable items that can take place over time that contribute to and move in the direction of the vision statement. These specific actionable items are the goals and strategies.

Goals are the main framework for the strategies, which in turn, provide specific information on how decisions should be made by the schools, city, county and other SRTS partners on a day-to-day basis. Strategies are based on Benson's current and emerging issues that were identified during the SRTS planning process and parent survey. Together these goals and strategies establish a foundation for implementing the action plan related to "The 5 E's" in Chapter 5.

Goals are general, broad, idealistic statements that express the overall focus of this Safe Routes to School Plan and are intended to be attained at some undetermined future date. They are purposely general in nature and describe ideal outcomes for which the community will strive. Goal statements answer the question, "What do we want to achieve?"

Benson's Safe Routes to School Goals are as follows:

1. Provide safe and adequate routes to and from school.
2. Increase the number of bicycle and pedestrian facilities so that more students are able to walk or bicycle to school safely.
3. Educate parents, students and community members about safe driving, walking and biking practices.
4. Increase the enforcement of existing traffic controls around the schools.
5. Increase the number of children walking and biking to school and thereby decrease the prevalence of family vehicles at the school site during arrival and dismissal times.
6. Reduce conflicts between pedestrians and motor vehicles along identified routes, crossings and drop-off points through engineering solutions such as bicycle and pedestrian facilities, signage or intersection designs and treatments as well as

educational solutions such as bicycle and pedestrian education and safe driving campaigns.

Strategies offer a **recommended** course of action to achieve the desired outcomes described in the community's goals. Strategies can also be converted into action work plans. It should be noted that the strategies are "**guides**" that may not be feasible to carry out in all circumstances. Strategies are specific, measurable activities that answer the question, "How will I meet my goal?"

*Strategies for Goal #1: Provide safe and adequate routes to and from school.*

- 1.1 Identify the primary routes students use, or could use if they existed, to access local schools.
- 1.2 Make specific recommendations that will improve safe pedestrian and bicycle access to Benson schools.
- 1.3 Make specific recommendations regarding students using transit to get to or from school in a safer manner.
- 1.4 Perform regular maintenance of marked crosswalks with epoxy markings if identified as in-need along identified school routes.

*Strategies for Goal #2: Increase the number of bicycle and pedestrian facilities so that more students are able to walk or bicycle to school safely.*

- 2.1 Make specific recommendations regarding bicycle and pedestrian facilities on identified primary routes to school that will make getting to and from school via foot or bicycle safer and more enjoyable.
- 2.2 Identify costs, where possible, and potential funding sources for proposed recommendations.
- 2.3 Ensure that the City and School District work together to identify bicycle and pedestrian needs throughout the city, especially on identified routes to school.
- 2.4 Seek outside sources of funding such as federal and state Safe Routes to School funding to fund the implementation of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

*Strategies for Goal #3: Educate parents, students and community members about safe driving, walking and bicycling practices.*

- 3.1 Build awareness in the community about bicycle and pedestrian laws through events, community education, enforcement, marketing materials and other efforts.
- 3.2 Educate students about Minnesota bicycle and pedestrian rules and helpful safety pointers through classroom curriculum, Bike Rodeo events, and other efforts.
- 3.3 Work and partner with other entities and programs that are working to educate the public about safe driving, walking and bicycling practices such as SHIP or Bike Alliance of Minnesota.

*Strategies for Goal #4: Increase the enforcement of existing traffic controls around the schools.*

- 4.1 Encourage collaboration among the Benson Police Department and the School District to develop new and creative ways to enforce traffic safety laws for drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists around the schools.
- 4.2 Explore creative enforcement ideas of school policies that do not involve the police department for both students walking and bicycling to school and for those that are being dropped off by private vehicles.

*Strategies for Goal #5: Increase the number of children walking and bicycling to school, thereby decreasing the prevalence of family vehicles at the school during arrival and dismissal times.*

- 5.1 Make walking and biking to school part of a normal routine through education and encouragement activities taught in the classroom and throughout the community.
- 5.2 Incorporate Safe Routes to School principles and ideas into other City Plans and whenever possible, incorporate Safe Routes to School ideas into planned construction projects.

*Strategies for Goal # 6: Reduce conflicts between pedestrians and motor vehicles along identified routes, crossings and drop-off/pick-up points.*

- 6.1 Develop effective off-site loading zone locations at each school in order to mitigate traffic conflicts and increase the incidence of walking and bicycling to school.
- 6.2 Ensure the continuation of separate areas for school buses and parent vehicles.
- 6.3 Continue to work cooperatively with local units of government such as the police department, city officials and traffic authorities to enhance the safety and effectiveness of the pedestrian network.



## Chapter 2 | Existing Conditions

This chapter provides an overview of the Benson community, school district and specifically, the Northside Elementary and Benson Elementary school sites. It details an inventory of existing policies, plans, physical and social infrastructure and programs related to biking, walking and Safe Routes to School concepts. This chapter also highlights past plans or studies that may impact recommendations or action steps identified in Chapter 6 of this plan.

### COMMUNITY AND SCHOOLS OVERVIEW



Northside Elementary (K-4) and Benson Elementary (5 & 6) Schools are part of the Benson School District that covers approximately 401 square miles and serves the residents of several communities and townships in Pope and Swift counties on the western edge of the State of Minnesota. See Appendix C for school district boundaries. The schools primarily serve the cities of Benson, Clontarf, Danvers and DeGraff, with Benson being the largest of the four cities and the location of both Northside Elementary and Benson Elementary.

The City of Benson is located in Swift County in western Minnesota. It is approximately 120 miles northwest of Minneapolis, 30 miles northwest of Willmar and 75 miles southwest of Saint Cloud. Benson is the County Seat and serves as a small regional center. According to the 2010 Census, Benson's population was 3,240. Over the years, Benson has seen a fluctuation of population gains and losses; however, its overall rate of change since 1960 has been negative, having lost nearly 12 percent of its population. Benson is projected to decline in the future, which may have negative impacts on school enrollment numbers.

Figure 2.1 provides a snapshot of demographic information for the communities that make up the Benson School District, as well as a comparison to Region 6W (Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift and Yellow Medicine Counties), the State of Minnesota, and the Nation. The data depicted in figure 2.1 is five-year estimates gathered from the 2007 - 2011 American Community Survey from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Figure 2.1 Demographic Information

Demographic	Benson	Clontarf	Danvers	DeGraff	Swift County	Region 6W	Minnesota	United States
Population	3,165	143	133	76	9,852	45,276	5,312,239	309,231,244
Median Age	47.3	51.4	33.9	45.8	44.4	45.4	37.5	37.2
Average HH Size	1.87	2.30	2.77	1.69	2.14	2.28	2.47	2.62
Average Family Size	2.44	3.00	3.16	2.58	2.73	2.82	3.04	3.21
<b>Gender</b>								
Male	48.0%	55.2%	42.9%	53.9%	50.9%	50.10%	49.60%	49%
Female	52.0%	44.8%	57.1%	46.1%	49.1%	49.90%	50.40%	51%
Median HH Income	\$37,773	\$44,375	\$44,583	\$17,083	\$43,846	\$46,401	\$57,439	\$51,484
Poverty Status	10.5%	4.2%	2.3%	36.8%	9.2%	10.90%	11.60%	15.20%
<b>Educational Attainment</b>								
High School Grad +	85.1%	81.7%	94.1%	82.0%	87.0%	88.20%	91.70%	85.60%
Bachelor's Degree +	18.1%	7.7%	2.4%	14.0%	14.1%	16.40%	31.90%	28.20%
Race, % White	97.4%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	95.8%	96.10%	86.00%	74.20%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 American Community Survey

Since 1990, the Benson School District has seen a decrease in enrollment of slightly over 20 percent. For the 2010-2011 school year, the school district enrollment was 970. This included students at Northside Elementary and the Junior and Senior High School. The enrollment at Northside and Benson Elementary for the 2011-2012 school year was 445 with students in grades Kindergarten through sixth grade. In addition to the public schools, Benson is also home to the Benson Christian School.

All of the school buildings in the Benson School District are located in the city of Benson, which is located in Swift County. It is home to several U.S., State and County Highways; however, there are no interstate highways. Major highways include U.S.-12, MN-29 and MN-9. These roads carry the majority of traffic through the heart of the city and see considerable heavy commercial traffic as well as general automobile traffic.

Conditions for walking and biking vary throughout the city. Sidewalks are not prevalent throughout many areas of the city. Where they exist, they are often in poor condition and there are several areas of the city with significant gaps in sidewalk infrastructure that make walking in those parts of the city difficult. The streets in Benson are not well suited for biking, especially for school-age children due to high traffic volumes, including heavy commercial truck traffic, on the city streets and the railroad tracks that divide the town. Therefore, many parents fear allowing their child(ren) to ride on the streets.

Below is a map of the Benson community. It shows that schools are not the only place children may wish to walk or bicycle. There are many parks throughout the city that children walk or bicycle to as well as other community facilities, such as the library and swimming pool.

Figure 2.2 Benson Community Amenities Map



## Crash Data

### Minnesota Data:

In 2012 there were 395 fatalities on Minnesota roadways. Of those 395 fatalities, 7 were bicyclists. An additional 47 bicyclists were severely injured in a crash, 261 moderately injured and 566 sustained minor injuries and 54 were not injured in their crash. Overall 935 bicyclists were involved in a crash in Minnesota in 2012 alone. Of the 395 fatalities, 40 were pedestrians. An additional 108 pedestrians were severely injured in a crash, 285 were moderately injured, 480 sustained minor injuries and only 6 were not injured in their crash. Overall, 919 pedestrians were involved in a crash in Minnesota in 2012 alone.

### Local Benson Data:

In Benson in 2012, there were 12 crashes of all kinds. There were no bicycle or pedestrian crashes reported in 2012. However, in the last ten years, there have been five reported crashes involving pedestrians and six crashes involving bicyclists. The overall trend in the last ten years is a reduction in all types of crashes as seen in figure 2.3; however, bicycle and pedestrian crashes have increased and become a major topic of conversation nationally.

Figure 2.3 Crash Data

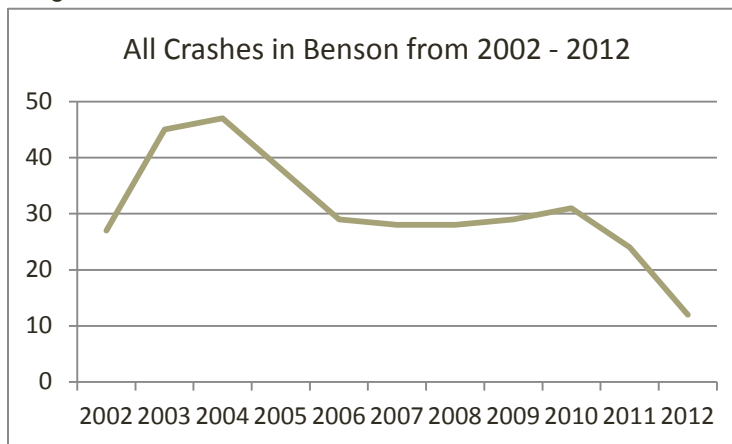
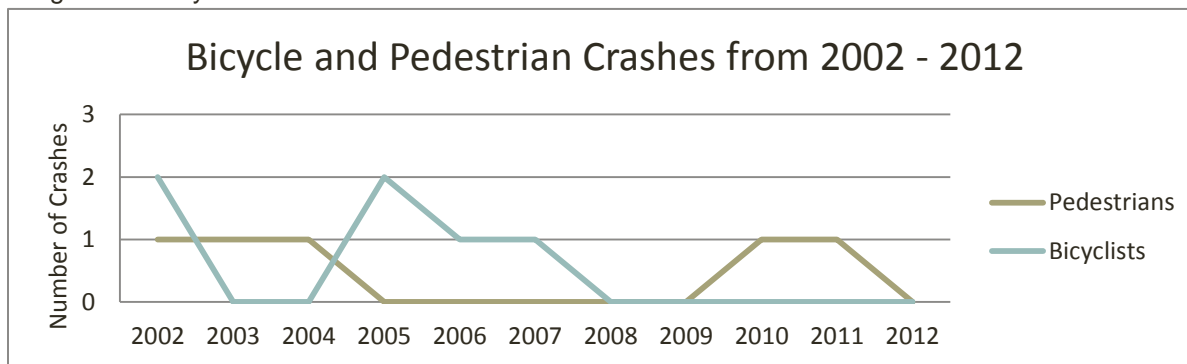


Figure 2.4 Bicycle & Pedestrian Crash Data



Speed plays a factor in survival rates for pedestrians. If a vehicle traveling 20 miles per hour or slower crashes into a pedestrian, that pedestrian has a 95 percent survival rate. However the survival rate decreases dramatically as speeds increase. For example, the survival rate for a pedestrian who was hit by a vehicle traveling 40 miles per hour drops to only 15 percent.



The map below depicts all of the crashes that have occurred in Benson from 2002 through 2012, highlighting bicycle or pedestrian crashes, severe injury crashes and fatal crashes. There have been several bicycle or pedestrian crashes near the schools in the past ten years. It also depicts all other crashes including those that are less serious, which make up the majority of the crashes in the City of Benson.

Figure 2.5 Crash Data Map

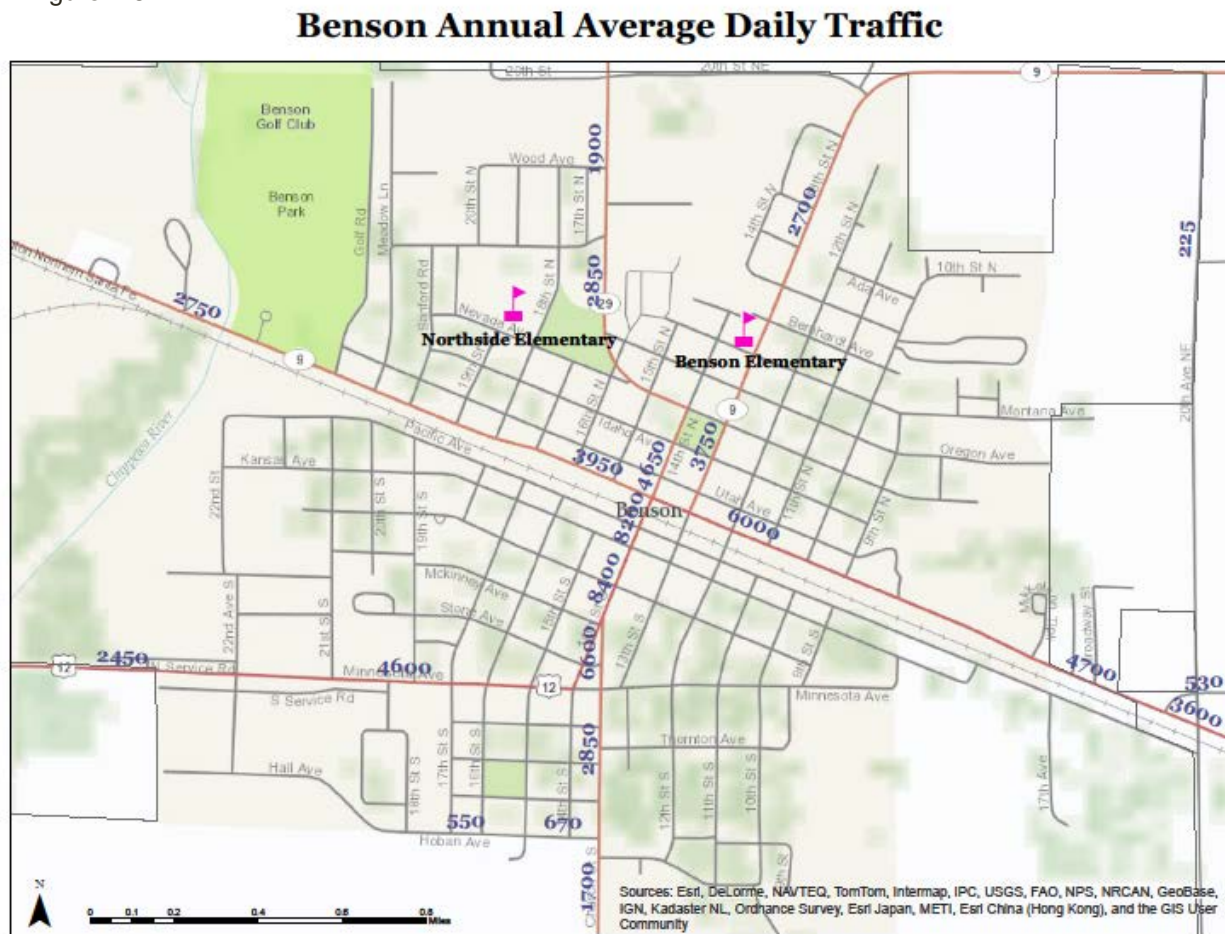
### Benson Crash Data, 2002 - 2012



### Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT)

Benson experiences a lot of through traffic on the three major highways that divide the city into four parts. These highways and the traffic they carry can be major barriers to walking and bicycling in the City of Benson. The road segment with the heaviest traffic at 8,400 cars per day is on U.S. Highway 12 and Minnesota State Highway 29 or 14<sup>th</sup> Street South. This is also the location of a group bus stop. There are high visibility crosswalks and crossing guards in this location; however, the heavy traffic is cause for concern. Benson Elementary is also located along Minnesota State Highway 9, which carries a considerable amount of traffic.

Figure 2.6 AADT





## Student Travel Tally Results

Student travel tallies were conducted in October of 2012 to gather baseline data regarding the number of students who walk and bicycle to school. They were conducted in all grades at both Northside Elementary, which is home to grades kindergarten through four and Benson Elementary, which is home to grades five and six. The student travel tallies revealed that most students at both Northside and Benson Elementary arrived and left school in a family vehicle or the school bus.

Figure 2.7 Student Travel Tally Results

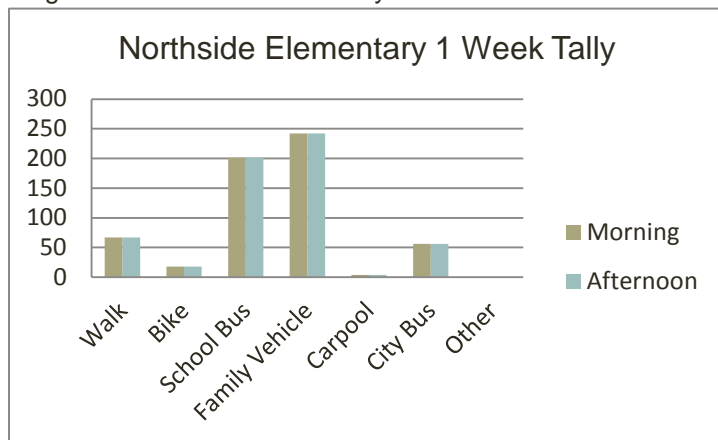
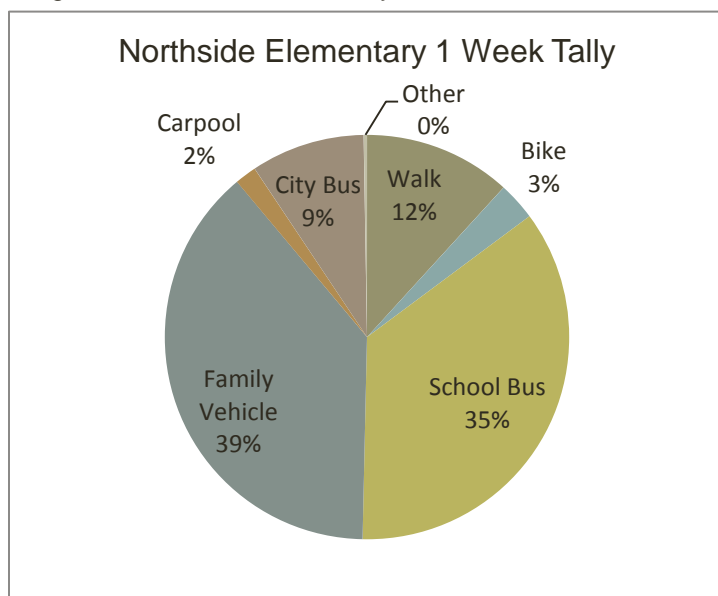


Figure 2.7 Student Travel Tally Results



comfortable letting children that age walk or bicycle to school than the younger children at Northside Elementary.

The Benson Elementary student travel tally results showed that family vehicles are much more prevalent in the morning than in the afternoon. This causes more automobile congestion in the morning compared to the afternoon. In the afternoon, the percentage of students

At nearly 40 percent, Northside Elementary had a higher percentage of students getting to and from school via family vehicle compared to Benson Elementary at 35 percent. The Benson schools will always have a portion of students who are unable to walk or bicycle to and from school due to distance. Many students live outside of the city in rural areas where walking and/or bicycling to school are simply not feasible. However, this data, coupled with knowing where students live, gives the SRTS Team a better indication of how many students could feasibly walk or bicycle to school. Additionally, at Northside Elementary, there are an unusually high number of students (9 percent) who get to and/or from school via the City Bus.

The rates for students walking to school are higher at Benson Elementary than at Northside. This might be expected as students at Benson Elementary are in grades five and six and parents may feel more

taking the school bus and walking home from school both increased. This shows the potential for increased numbers of students to walk to school in the morning and the potential for decreased morning automobile congestion around the school.

Although there is potential to make the shift from students who get to and from school via a family vehicle to students who walk, it is important to note that a large percentage of the students at both schools get to and from school via the school bus. Many students live outside the city of Benson in rural areas where walking or bicycling to school will never be a viable option.

The Benson Safe Routes to School Team does not want to forget about those students throughout this planning process. Therefore, it will be important for the Benson SRTS Team to identify ways that students who live outside the city limits can still participate in the Safe Routes to School program.

Figure 2.8 Student Travel Tally Results

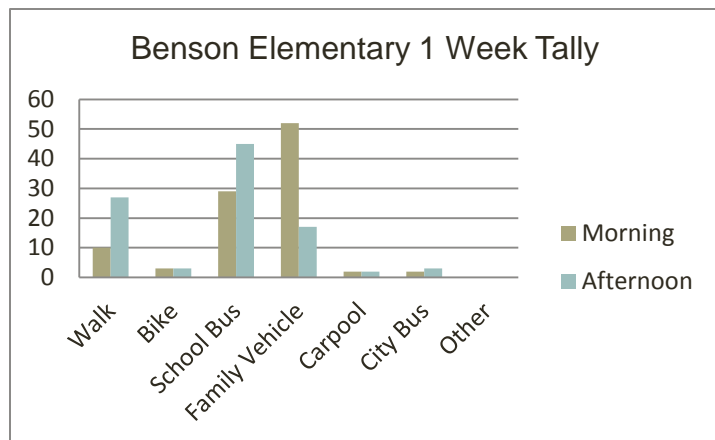
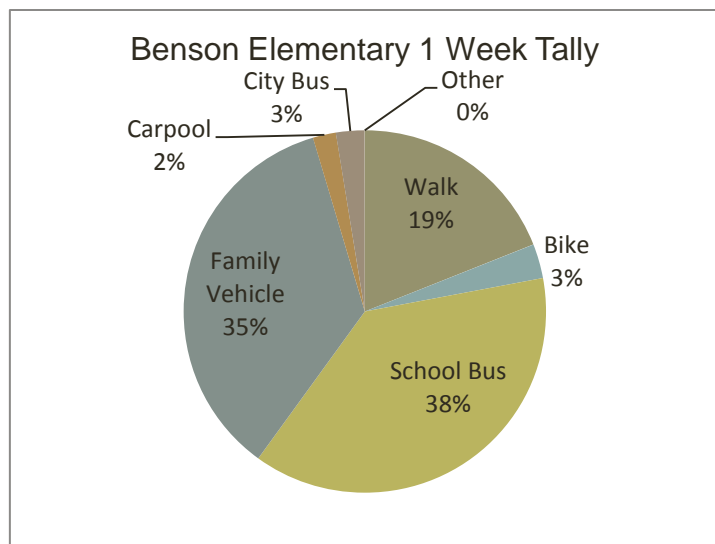


Figure 2.8 Student Travel Tally Results



### Physical Environment/Infrastructure –

Benson has an existing network of infrastructure that serves pedestrians relatively well in many areas of the city due to the grid street network and existing sidewalks. However, there are also many areas throughout the city that lack sidewalk infrastructure and carry a considerable amount of traffic. Benson sees quite a bit of heavy commercial truck traffic as well.

#### Roads

Benson has approximately 50 miles of roads contained within the city limits. Of those 50 miles, 12 miles are US or State Roads, 8 miles are on the county system and about 30 miles are local roads.

#### Sidewalks

The approximate number of miles of sidewalk in Benson is unknown; however, there are not sidewalks along all city streets. A next step would be to map the existing sidewalk infrastructure in Arc GIS or another program to have that data readily available for future evaluation metrics of the SRTS Program.

#### Bike Lanes

As of the fall of 2013, there are no marked bike lanes, sharrows or other on street bicycle infrastructure with the exception of a signed, but not marked, bike route on 19<sup>th</sup> Street North.

#### Trails

As of the fall of 2013, there are approximately 3 miles of paved trails and 1.5 miles of unpaved trails in Benson.

### Social Infrastructure -

Social infrastructure is as important as physical infrastructure to a Safe Routes to School Program or any other successful active transportation initiative. The community and schools within Benson have strong social infrastructure consisting of many individuals within the school system, city government, and community who are excited and passionate about the students, safe and active transportation and making their community a better place for all residents. There are many partners in the Benson community who currently do and potentially could play a large role in Safe Routes to School and active living efforts.

#### Partnerships:

- Benson School District and Individual Schools
- City of Benson
- Benson Police Department
- Swift County

- Local Businesses
- Women of Today
- Local Media
- Drivers Education Programs
- Safe Communities Coalition
- Countryside Public Health
- Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission

#### Current Bike-Walk/Active Transportation Initiatives and Events:

Organization/project/event/program	Inception	Timeframe	Emphasis
Mileage Club	Unknown	On-going	Elementary school is tracking mileage of students
Bike Rodeo	Unknown	Yearly	Bike safety
International Walk to School Day	Fall 2012	Yearly	Encouragement
Remote Drop Off Location for Walk to School Day	Fall 2012	Yearly	Including bused students in encouragement events
School Wellness Policy/Committee	Unknown	Ongoing	Student and faculty health
Safe Routes to School Team	Summer 2012	Ongoing	Planning and Policy
School Patrol	Unknown	Ongoing	Crossing safety

#### *Political Infrastructure—Laws and Policies Related to Active Transportation -*

##### Sidewalk Requirements

Sidewalks are now required concurrent with development. However, that has not always been the case, so there are neighborhoods where gaps exist currently. There is no policy or plan in place to fill the gaps in the sidewalk network at this time.

##### Snow Removal Requirements

Snow removal on sidewalks is required and the responsibility of the property owner. The City is responsible for snow removal on streets and sidewalks on City-owned property.

##### Crossing Guard Policies

Crossing guards exist at three locations: 14<sup>th</sup> Street South (US 12/MN 29) and Wisconsin Avenue; the mid-block intersection on Nevada Avenue (MN 29) between 15<sup>th</sup> Street North and 16<sup>th</sup> Street North; and 13<sup>th</sup> Street North (MN 9) and Montana Avenue. Crossing guards receive training once a year.

##### School Wellness Policies

The Benson School District has a wellness policy with a purpose to assure a school environment that promotes and protects students' health, well-being, and ability to learn by supporting healthy eating and physical activity. Under this policy, the following are general statements of policy:

1. The school board recognizes that nutrition education and physical education are essential components of the educational process and that good health fosters student attendance and education.
2. The school environment should promote and protect student's health, well-being, and ability to learn by encouraging healthy eating and physical activity.
3. The school district encourages the involvement of students, parents, teachers, (K-12 specialists in health, physical education and science), food and nutrition services staff, school board, school administrators, and other interested person (such as Public Health Specialists) in implementing, monitoring, and reviewing school district nutrition and physical activity policies. A Wellness Committee shall be formed to plan, implement and improve the school district's nutrition and physical activity in the school environment.
4. Children need access to healthy foods and opportunities to be physically active in order to grow, learn, thrive, and to achieve academic success.
5. All students in PreK-12 will have opportunities, support, and encouragement to be physically active on a daily basis.
6. Qualified food and nutrition services personnel will provide students with access to a variety of affordable, nutritious, and appealing foods that meet the health and nutrition needs of students; try to accommodate the religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the student body in meal planning; and will provide clean, safe, and pleasant settings.

The following are policies related to physical activity:

1. Physical Education (P.E.) K-12: All students in grades K-10, including students with disabilities, special health-care needs, and in alternative educational settings, will receive daily physical education or the equivalent of 125 minutes per week for Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade students and 120 minutes per week for grades 9 and 10 students for the entire school year. Our goal would be to increase the curriculum for grades 11-12 by offering a physical education or lifetime sport or skill class each semester and to expand the curriculum for grades 9-12 to include classes in lifetime sports or skills. A certified physical education teacher will teach all physical education classes. Physical education courses will be in the environment where students learn, practice, and are assessed on developmentally appropriate motor skills, social skills and knowledge. Student involvement in other activities involving physical activity (i.e. interscholastic or intramural sports) will not be substituted for meeting the physical education requirement. The physical education curriculum should be coordinated with the health education curriculum.
2. Integrating Physical Activity into the Classroom Setting: For students to receive the nationally recommended amount of daily physical activity (i.e. at least 60 minutes per day) and for students to fully embrace regular physical activity as a personal behavior, students need opportunities for physical activity beyond P.E. class. Toward that end:

- a. Classroom health education will reinforce the knowledge and self-management skill needed to maintain a healthy lifestyle and reduce sedentary activities;
  - b. Opportunities for physical activity will be incorporated into other subject lessons (such as science, math and social studies), where appropriate; and
  - c. Classroom teachers will provide short physical activity breaks between lessons or classes, as appropriate.
3. Daily Recess: All Elementary school students (grades Pre-K through 6), will have at least 20 minutes per day of supervised recess, preferably outdoors, during which schools should encourage moderate to vigorous physical activity verbally and through the provision of space and equipment. Schools will discourage extended periods (i.e. periods of 2 or more hours) of inactivity. After school childcare and enrichment programs will provide and encourage—verbally and through the provision of space, equipment, and activities—daily periods of moderate to vigorous physical activity for all participants.
4. Physical Activity and Punishment: Teachers and other school and community personnel will not use physical activity (i.e. running laps, pushups) or withhold opportunities for physical activity (i.e. recess, physical education) as punishment.
5. Use of School Facilities Outside of School Hours: School spaces and facilities will be available to students, staff, and community members before, during, and after the school day, on weekends, and during school vacations for physical activity and health related programs.

#### Transportation Policies

Students within the city limits are not provided transportation unless they have special needs or reside within the Hazard Bus Area.

#### Hazard Bus Area Policies

The hazard bus areas include all areas south of the railroad tracks and students outside the city limits. Of the 445 students in kindergarten through grade 6, 104 students reside within the hazard bus area and 116 students are not eligible for busing.

#### Past Studies and Plans:

- *City of Benson Comprehensive Plan, 2000:* Benson's Comprehensive Plan is a vision of what the City wants to be. It is a guide to help the City preserve what they value and to enhance what they feel should be improved. It addresses physical planning issues such as land use, transportation, housing, public facilities, and parks and open spaces. Yet it also considers social and economic issues. It addresses the needs of the community broadly over a long period of time. The following are policies and goals in the Comprehensive Plan that support or affect this Safe Routes to School Plan.



- Policy: ensure that the highway system compliments and facilitates movements provided by local roads, trails and pedestrian walks.
- Policy: provide transportation opportunities that meet the mobility needs of all individuals within the community according to the American Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines and requirements.
- Policy: reduce, where possible, dependency upon automobile oriented transportation.
- Policy: discourage through traffic from penetrating residential areas.
- Policy: establish safe access points to all uses abutting highways and arterial streets.
- Policy: plan street and highway improvement projects to include facilities for pedestrians and bicycles within existing and new areas of the City.
- Policy: develop all additional elements of the street system (sidewalks, lighting, landscaping, etc.) with high design and construction standards, considering abutting land uses and overall transportation objectives and policies.
- Policy: appoint a committee to: 1) oversee the development of a sidewalk plan showing existing and proposed City walkways and walkways in need of repair, and 2) determine appropriate incentives to develop and repair sidewalks in existing residential neighborhoods.
- Policy: reduce overall demand and resulting space requirements for parking through consolidation and concentration of related land uses and through improved pedestrian and bicycle facilities.
- Goal: continue to develop trails as an important component of the Transportation Plan.
- Addendum to Comprehensive Plan, 2010: The purpose of the addendum is to refresh the goals and strategies within the Benson Comprehensive Plan in the areas of Land Use, Housing, Transportation, Community Facilities & Services, Recreation/Natural Resources, Utilities, Historic/Cultural Resources, Infrastructure, and Economic Development. It is to be used as a guide to assist the City in preserving what they value and to enhance what they feel should be improved. The following are policies and goals in the Addendum to the Comprehensive Plan that support or affect this Safe Routes to School Plan.
  - Goal: create a wide range of transportation options including public transportation, walking, biking and light rail.
  - Goal: preserve the river corridor with a trail system and dedicated open spaces.

*The Vision that motivates this addendum is, that through attentiveness to the desires of its citizens the City of Benson strives to be a community that provides a wholesome and balanced environment in which open space, agriculture, recreation, residential, commercial and industrial land uses can continue to successfully coexist and prosper.*

- Strategy: construct a walking bridge between Ambush Park and the aquatic center.
- Central Business District Master Plan, 2006: The Central Business District Master Plan focuses on the downtown business district specifically related to design issues. It's a plan with recommendations to make downtown Benson a vibrant business district. The following are policies and goals in the Central Business District Master Plan that support or affect this Safe Routes to School Plan.
  - Streetscape and Park Elements Recommendations:
    - Masonry Columns and Ornamental Metal Fencing: the proposed masonry columns and ornamental metal fencing are located on both sides of the existing railroad tracks where they provide an aesthetic backdrop to the parks adjacent to the tracks. The fencing also provides a functional barrier that discourages pedestrians from crossing the tracks anywhere other than the approved sidewalk crossings.
    - Bump Outs: the Plan proposes "bump outs" at the corners of Pacific Avenue. These areas have existing bump outs and the Plan simply proposes to reinforce the appearance of these bump outs with concrete pavers. Bump outs help reduce the distance of the roadway, making it easier for pedestrians to cross the street and be seen by automobiles.
- 2013 Region 6W Trails Plan: the Plan provides trail guidelines priorities and resources for not only trail developers, but also trail funders such as the DNR and MnDOT. Below are the overall priorities in the region for trail development. The plan places the highest priority on local and community trails that connect residential areas to schools, parks, downtowns and other community attractions.
  - Priority #1: local and community trails
  - Priority #2: trails that are part of the Minnesota River State Trail
  - Priority #3: other regional trails

## Chapter 3 | Issue Identification

This chapter explores issues and barriers related walking and bicycling that may exist in the community regarding attitudes, policies, programs and infrastructure. Issues and barriers to walking and bicycling to school in Benson were identified in a number of ways. Information was collected from the SRTS Team; parent surveys, student travel tallies and a walking/biking audit were conducted; observations of the dismissal procedures at the school sites were made; and a public open house was held to review the draft plan and share information about the Safe Routes to School program.

### PARENT SURVEY RESULTS

Student travel tallies and parent surveys were administered in the fall of 2012 as part of the planning process. They provided valuable insight on parent views regarding walking and bicycling to school as well as information on how many students are currently walking or bicycling to school. The parent survey response rate was good and it had good representation from all grades kindergarten through sixth grade. This section of the plan shares some of the information gathered from the parent survey, but all survey results can be found in Appendix H.

Most, or 59 percent, of respondents said their child lives within two miles of school and 43 percent actually live within one mile of school. However, 39 percent live more than two miles from school and often ride the bus to and from school. As seen in the graphs to the right, the family vehicle is the most common mode of transportation to school in the morning, while the school bus is the most common in the afternoon.

On average, approximately 16 percent of Benson students walk or bicycle to school. However with 43 percent of students living within one mile of school, the number of students who walk or bicycle to school could be much higher. When parents were asked at what age they would let their child walk or

Figure 2.3

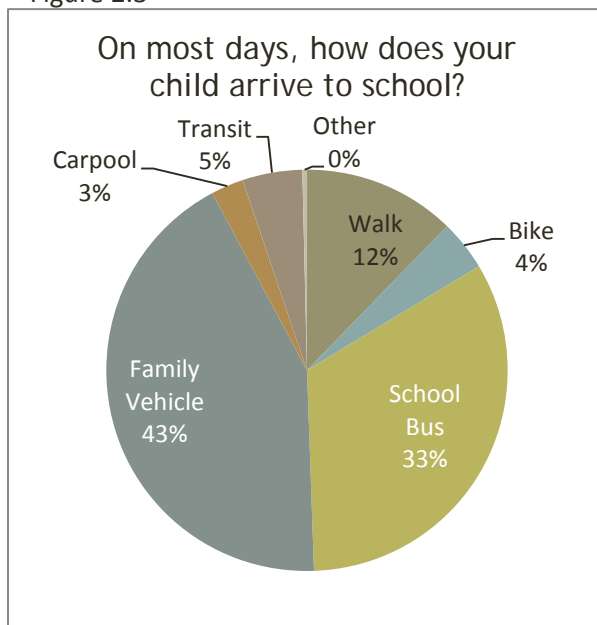
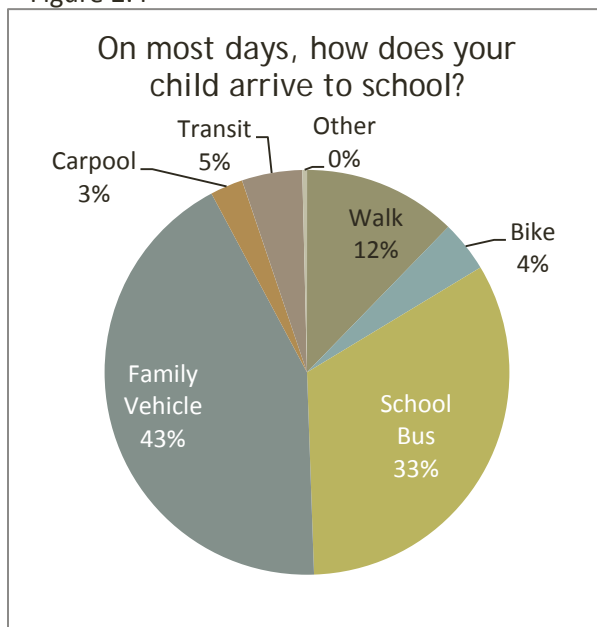


Figure 2.4



bicycle to school without an adult, many (31 percent) responded that they wouldn't feel comfortable at any age. This response may be due to the fact that 39 percent of students live more than two miles from school in rural areas. Figure 2.5 shows all responses from the survey question asking at what age parents would allow their child to walk or bicycle to school without an adult.

When asked about the issues affecting parents' decisions to allow or not allow their child to walk or bicycle to school, distance was cited the most often as a barrier to walking or bicycling to school. Weather or climate and amount of traffic along routes were also commonly cited issues affecting parents' decisions to allow or not allow their child to walk or bicycle to school.

Figure 2.5

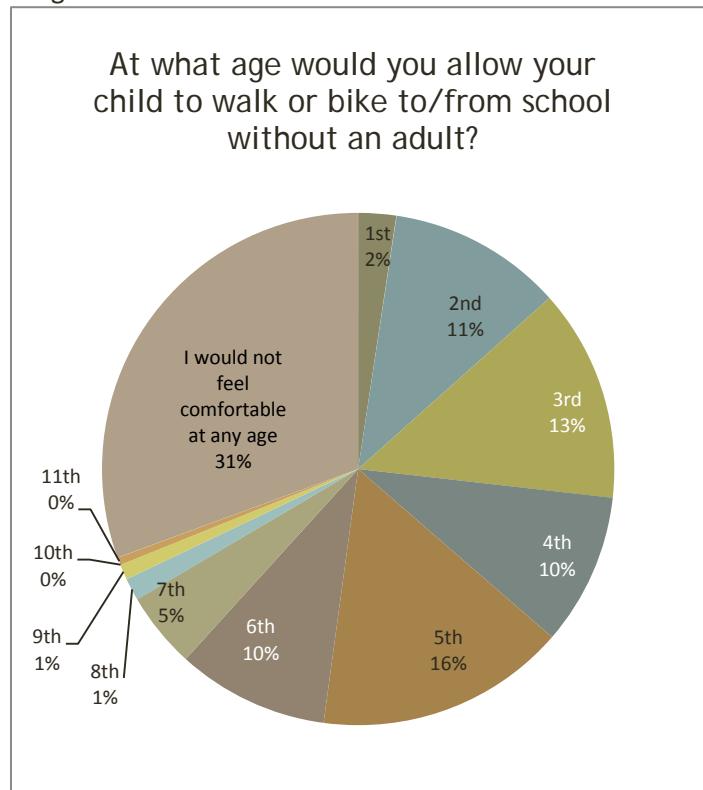
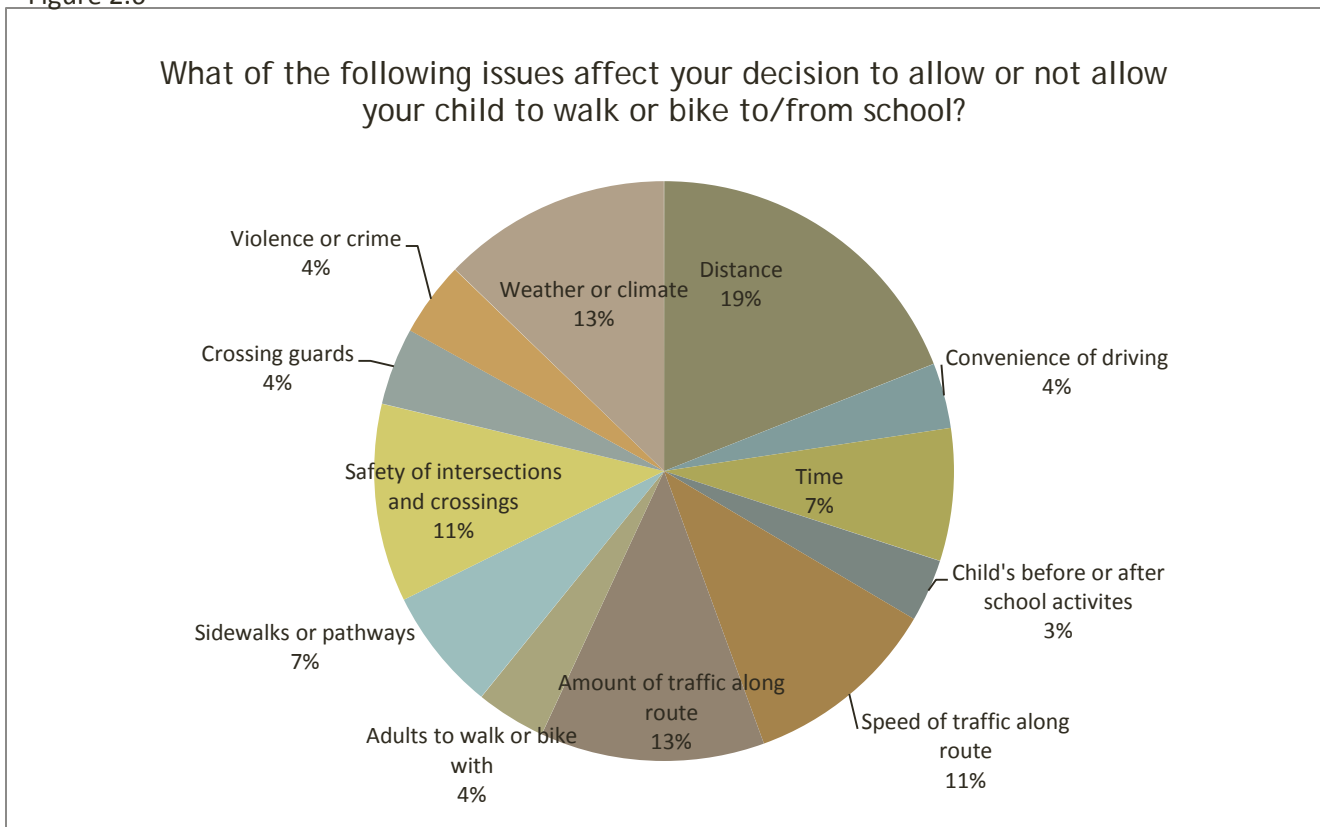
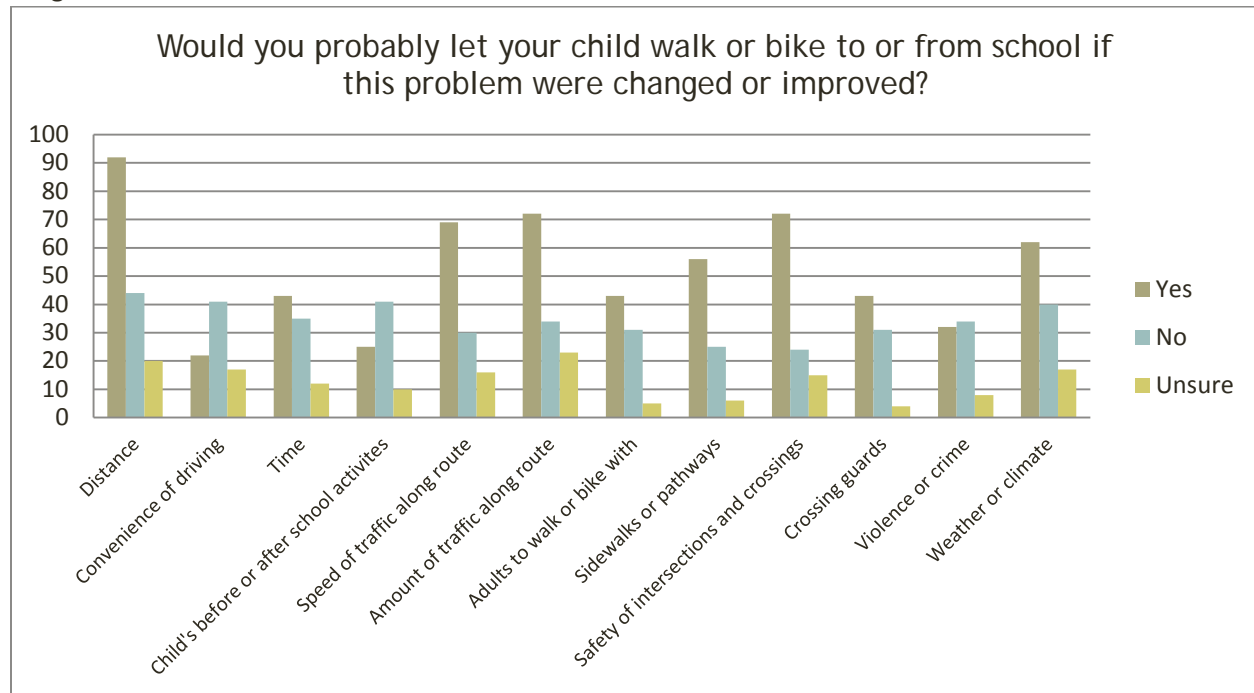


Figure 2.6



Some issues, such as weather or climate, distance and child's before or after school activities cannot be easily changed. However, many of the issues presented in the survey, such as crossing guards, safety of intersections and crossings and sidewalks or pathways can be addressed throughout the SRTS planning process. The SRTS Team spent time looking at those issues that can be changed or improved and this plan addresses those issues. The plan also addresses those issues identified in the next question that if changed or improved, parents would probably let their child walk or bicycle to school.

Figure 2.6



Comments from the parent surveys reveal that parents are extremely worried about the safety of their children. However, some indicated that if measures were taken to address safety issues, such as having crossing guards at more intersections, or more separated bicycle facilities, they would feel more comfortable allowing their children to walk or bicycle to school.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

A small group of SRTS Team members met to observe dismissal at both Northside and Benson Elementary Schools to assess current procedures and identify issues.

*Arrival/Dismissal Procedure at Northside Elementary:* School buses park in a separate, designated driveway along the east side of the school. Teachers are present while students board the buses. Automobiles line up along Montana Avenue on the south side of the school or park in a parking lot along 18<sup>th</sup> Street on the east side of the school. There are no crossing guards or school patrol at this location. Walkers and bikers access the school mostly from the southeast.



Arrival and dismissal go fairly smoothly at Northside Elementary as automobile and bus traffic is separated.

*Arrival/Dismissal Procedure at Benson Elementary:* School buses park in the driveway loop at the front of the school. Automobiles are not allowed in the driveway loop during arrival and dismissal times; however this is sometimes a problem. Automobiles are allowed to pick up or drop off in a number of other locations including, in the large parking lot on the southwest side in front of the school, on Elizabeth Avenue and 14<sup>th</sup> Street N at the back of the school and on Montana Avenue on the south side or front of the school. Crossing guards are located at two locations near Benson Elementary. One is located at the intersection of 16<sup>th</sup> Street N and Minnesota State Highway 29 or Nevada Avenue. At this location there is also a flashing crosswalk sign that the City installed. The other crossing guard is located at the intersection of Montana Avenue and Minnesota State Highway 9 or 13<sup>th</sup> Street North. Walkers and bikers access the school from all sides. Arrival and dismissal go fairly smoothly at Benson



Elementary, however, with the school located adjacent to Minnesota State Highway 9; it can be difficult for walkers and bikers to cross to the east.

### *Walk/bike Audit Results*

After observing dismissal the small group of SRTS Team members conducted a walk/bike audit around the schools to assess and evaluate biking and walking infrastructure in the community. Sidewalks exist on many, but not all city streets throughout Benson. Crosswalks are sometimes marked and most are marked with two white lines. There is one zebra style crosswalk marking at the intersection of Montana Avenue and Minnesota State Highway 9 or 13<sup>th</sup> Street North, which is adjacent to Benson Elementary School, as well as several zebra style crosswalks in the downtown area along Pacific and Wisconsin Avenues.

The largest infrastructure barriers to walking and biking to school appear to be the gaps in the sidewalk network and the difficult crossings at major highways. See map for sidewalk network, difficult crossings, etc. The assessment worksheets and results can be found in Appendix I and J.

## SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND BARRIERS TO WALKING AND BICYCLING IN BENSON

**Physical Environment:** The major barrier to walking and biking in Benson is the three major state and federal highways (US 12, MN 29 and MN 9) and the railroad tracks that bisect the town. These highways and the railroad make crossing the street in numerous locations around the city difficult. Figure 2.7 identifies difficult crossings on suggested routes to school. Each of these crossings is on a highway with high levels of traffic, including heavy commercial traffic. Although speeds at each of these intersections are posted at 30 miles per hour, they are often difficult to cross and dangerous for young students because they are often wide, un-signalized and experience a lot of traffic.

Specifically, figure 2.7 identifies the intersections that are problematic, identifies what makes them problematic and offers suggestions to help mitigate the problems.

Figure 2.7

Safer Crossings Matrix			
Crossing	Current Conditions	Problems	Possible Solutions
Mn Hwy. 29 and Trail Crossing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zebra style pavement markings</li> <li>• Crosswalk signage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wide street</li> <li>• Fast moving traffic</li> <li>• Heavy commercial traffic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedestrian scale streetscaping</li> <li>• Intersection lighting</li> <li>• Crosswalk flags</li> </ul>
16 <sup>th</sup> St. N. and Nevada Ave. (Mn Hwy 9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flashing pedestrian sign</li> <li>• Zebra style pavement markings</li> <li>• Crossing guard</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wide street</li> <li>• Speeding traffic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HAWK signal</li> <li>• RRFB signal</li> <li>• Curb bump outs</li> </ul>
13 <sup>th</sup> St. N. and Montana Ave.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crossing Guard</li> <li>• Zebra style pavement markings</li> <li>• Crosswalk signage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wide street</li> <li>• Speeding traffic</li> <li>• Heavy commercial traffic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HAWK signal</li> <li>• RRFB signal</li> <li>• Curb bump outs</li> </ul>
13 <sup>th</sup> St. N. and Idaho Ave.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curb bump outs on NW side across Idaho Ave.</li> <li>• Marked crosswalk - double white line</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wide street</li> <li>• Heavy commercial traffic</li> <li>• Heavy volumes of traffic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More visible crosswalks</li> <li>• Raised crosswalks</li> <li>• Crosswalk flags</li> </ul>
14 <sup>th</sup> St. S. (US Hwy 12/Mn Hwy 29) and Wisconsin Ave.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crosswalk signage</li> <li>• Zebra style pavement markings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extremely wide street (has center turn lane)</li> <li>• High volumes of traffic—highest levels in the city</li> <li>• Heavy commercial traffic</li> <li>• Speeding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedestrian refuge island</li> <li>• Restrict left turns</li> <li>• RRFB signal</li> <li>• HAWK signal</li> </ul>
14 <sup>th</sup> St. S. (Mn Hwy 29) and Minnesota Ave. (US Hwy 12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crossing discouraged on north side of intersection</li> <li>• Marked crosswalk - double white line</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Odd intersection alignment</li> <li>• High volumes of traffic</li> <li>• Heavy commercial traffic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New intersection alignment</li> <li>• Pedestrian refuge island on north side of intersection and encourage crossing there, so as not to disrupt turning on the south side of intersection</li> </ul>
17 <sup>th</sup> St. S. and Minnesota Ave. (US Hwy 12) - note that there is a crosswalk one block to the west, however this location has better connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No crosswalk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wide street</li> <li>• Heavy commercial traffic</li> <li>• Heavy volumes of traffic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High visibility crosswalk</li> <li>• Crosswalk signage</li> </ul>

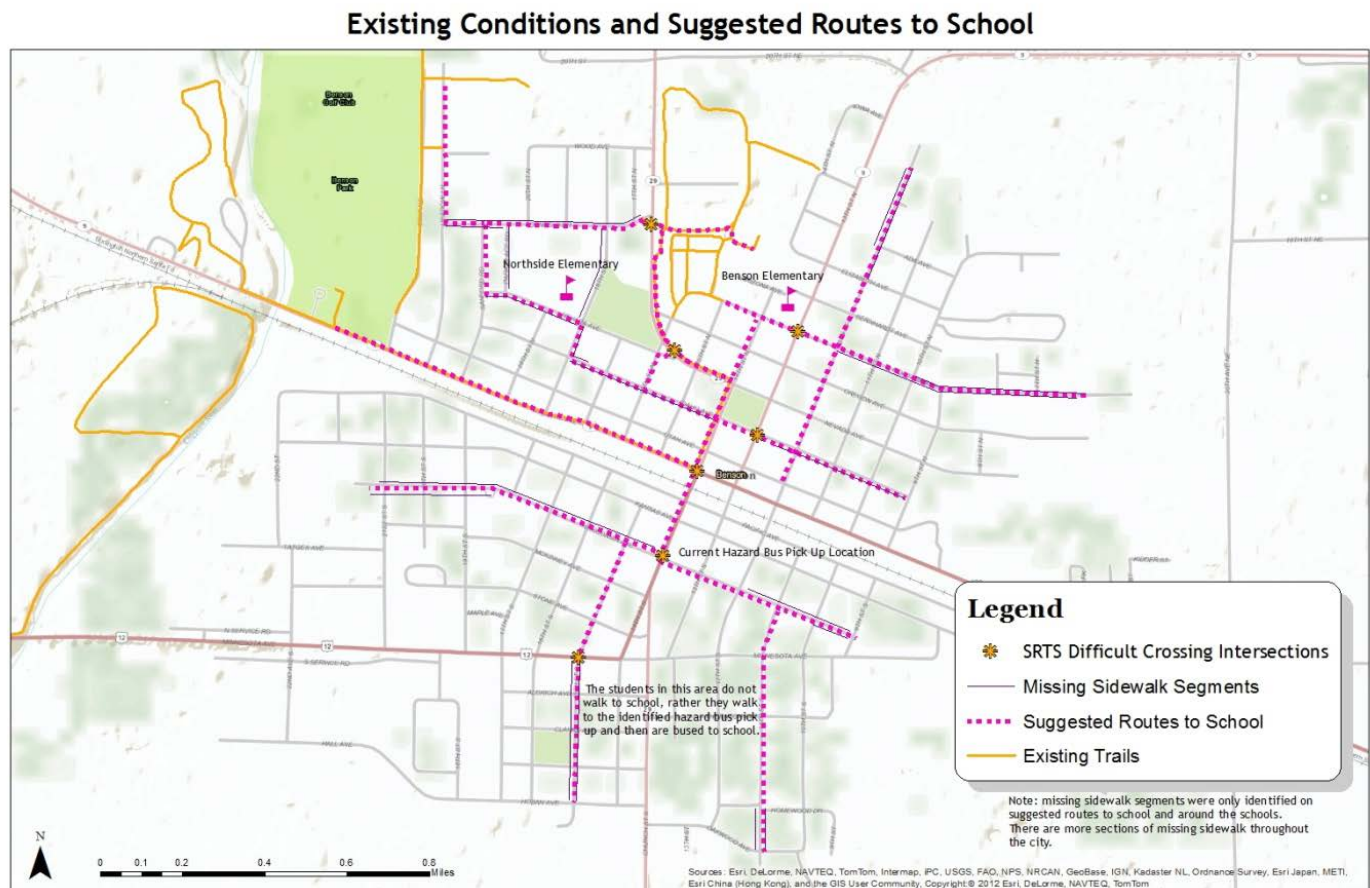
Another barrier to walking in Benson is the gaps in the sidewalk network. This coupled with the highways that bisect the city make it difficult for anyone, let alone children, to walk throughout the city easily and safely. There are areas with good sidewalk networks; however, even where sidewalks exist, there are gaps in the network in key places that make it difficult for one to get from one place to another. Figure 2.8 shows the existing conditions in Benson as well as suggested routes to school. From that map, one can see there are gaps in the sidewalk infrastructure, even on suggested routes to school. These gaps in the sidewalk network make parents uneasy about letting their children walk to school.

A major barrier to bicycling in Benson is that there is very little infrastructure to support bicycling. There is one signed bicycle route in the city, however, it is short and doesn't connect many places. From the parent survey results, it is obvious that parents would feel more comfortable letting their child bicycle to school if there were separate bicycle and walking trails that lead to the schools. This may not be feasible in all areas due to right of way; however other bicycle facilities should be explored in Benson to accommodate all users.

In addition, other issues or barriers that have emerged throughout the SRTS planning process include:

- Minor problems with the drop off and pick up areas at both schools where parent vehicle drop off is located on the street;
- Students arriving and leaving school in the winter months in the dark and lack of adequate lighting around the school; and
- Several surges of traffic throughout the city from major employers letting out that occur when students are walking and bicycling home from school.

Figure 2.8



**Social Environment:** The major social barrier to walking and biking to school is fear for children's safety related to traffic volumes, speeds and the lack of supervision. Additionally, like in many cities, large and small, throughout the country, walking and bicycling are not the common modes of transportation in Benson, despite its compact size. There are many misconceptions about bicycle and pedestrian laws which tend to pit drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians against one another, and the City of Benson is no exception.

Several other issues or barriers that have emerged throughout the SRTS planning process include ill-behaved dogs throughout the city and a problem with bicycle stealing. Both of these issues make it difficult or scary for students to walk or bicycle to school.

**Political Environment:** The major political barrier to walking and biking to school is that funding bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure projects can prove to be difficult and sometimes viewed as non-essential when funds are in short supply. While there may be political support for walking and bicycling to school, it is difficult to actually allocate the appropriate funds to make positive impacts on bicycling and walking throughout the city. Additionally, there are few Safe Routes to School or bicycle and/or pedestrian advocate groups that exist at the local level to give a political voice to bicycle and pedestrian concerns and issues.

## Chapter 4 | Best Practices and Implementation Resources

This chapter provides information on best practices for Safe Routes to School programming and implementation as well as resources for ideas, case studies and funding Safe Routes to School projects and programs. Before jumping into the recommendations specific to the Benson community, this chapter offers a variety of different bicycle and pedestrian facility types that could provide solutions to problems identified in Benson related to walking and biking.

### THE “FIVE E’s” OF SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

Flourishing Safe Routes to School projects see remarkable changes in the way students and parents choose to travel to and from school. These projects succeed by including each of the “Five E’s” of Safe Routes to School to ensure that their project is a well-rounded, multi-faceted and time-tested approach to getting more students walking and bicycling. The Five E’s of Safe Routes to School include:

**Engineering** – Creating operational and physical improvements to the infrastructure surrounding schools that reduce speeds and potential conflicts with motor vehicle traffic, and establish safer and fully accessible crossings, walkways, trails and bikeways.

**Evaluation** – Monitoring and documenting outcomes, attitudes and trends through the collection of data before and after the intervention(s).

**Education** – Teaching children about the broad range of transportation choices, instructing them in important lifelong bicycling and walking safety skills, and launching driver safety campaigns in the vicinity of schools.

**Encouragement** – Using events and activities to promote walking and bicycling and to generate enthusiasm for the program among students, parents, staff and others in the community.

**Enforcement** – Partnering with local law enforcement to ensure that traffic laws are obeyed in the vicinity of schools (this includes enforcement of speeds, yielding to pedestrians in crosswalks and proper walking and bicycling behaviors) and initiating community enforcement such as crossing guard programs or student safety patrols.



## BEST PRACTICES – Engineering Solutions, Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Types:

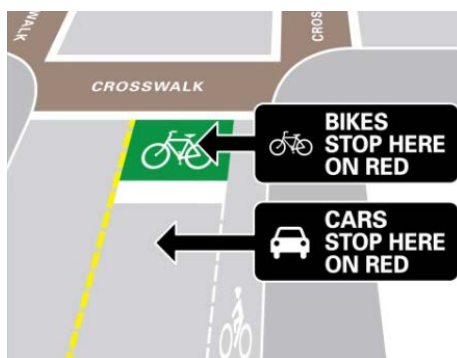
This section of the chapter provides an overview with illustrations of common, but not all, bicycle and pedestrian facilities that the Benson community may wish to consider to carry out the goals and recommendations of the Safe Routes to School Plan. These facility types are simply meant to give an idea of what other communities are doing to become more bicycle and pedestrian friendly for people of all ages. They are not intended to be specific recommendations, and some of these solutions may not be appropriate for young children, or may not be a good option for the City of Benson.



**Bicycle Boulevard:** Low-volume, low-speed streets that have been optimized for bicycle travel through treatments such as traffic calming, traffic reduction, signage, pavement markings and intersection crossing treatments. Bicycle boulevards often restrict through traffic, forcing automobiles to turn left or right while bicyclists and pedestrians can make through movements. Traffic calming measures can be as many or as few as needed to achieve the desired level of automobile traffic on the bicycle boulevard.

**Bicycle Lanes:** One-way, on-street lanes that are marked and signed to designate the space occupied by cyclists on the roadway, typically in the direction of traffic. Common widths for bicycle lanes range from five to six feet.

**Bicycle Path or Trail:** A paved path physically separated from motor vehicle traffic. It is often shared with pedestrians and other non-motorized users. Typical widths are ten to twelve feet.



**Bike Boxes:** An intersection safety treatment designed to prevent bicycle/car collisions. The box creates space between motor vehicles and the crosswalk that allows bicyclists to position themselves ahead of motor vehicle traffic at the intersection. They are especially helpful for bicyclists wanting to make a left turn.

Bicycle Lane



Bicycle Path/Trail



**Bike Dots or Wayfinding Pavement Markings:** In Seattle, bike dots are used as a tool to provide wayfinding. They are pavement markings for signed bicycle routes. Unlike sharrows, bicycle dots are not intended to provide guidance on bicycle positioning, they are rather to mark designated bike routes.

**Buffered Bike Lane:** Bicycle lanes that are buffered from motor vehicle lanes with extra width from striping or cross-hatching.

**Color Contrast Crosswalks:** Create a more visible crosswalk by differentiating the color and/or texture of the crosswalk from the roadway.

**Colored Bicycle Lane:** Bicycle lanes that are striped and painted with a solid color of paint. They increase the visibility of the bike lane for drivers and are particularly helpful in conflict areas, such as turning lanes.

**Contraflow Bike Lane:** Bicycle lanes in the opposite direction of motor vehicles on a one-way street. They are usually separated by delineators and marked with signage. Contraflow lanes are not preferred, but are a good choice when it is the most direct route or provides access to a popular destination.

Bike Dots



Buffered Bike Lane



Color Contrast Crosswalk



Colored Bicycle Lane



Colored Bicycle Lane





**Curb Extensions or Bump Outs:** Areas at intersections where the sidewalk and curb extends to reduce the roadway width from curb to curb. They increase pedestrian crossing safety as they shorten the crossing distances, draw attention to the crosswalks and increase visibility of pedestrians for drivers. They also tighten the radii at corners, reducing the speed of turning vehicles.



#### Cycletrack



**Cycletrack or Median Separated Bicycle Lane:** Bicycle lane or lanes in one or two directions that are physically separated by a curb or median from motor vehicle lanes.

#### HAWK



**High Intensity Activated Cross Walk (HAWK):** A treatment to make midblock crosswalks on busy streets safer. The HAWK consists of red and yellow signals for motorists to stop for pedestrians crossing the street. The signals remain off until a pedestrian activates the system by pressing a button. Drivers are allowed to proceed during the flashing red after coming to a complete stop and making sure there is no danger to pedestrians.

#### Refuge Island



**Medians or Refuge Islands:** Raised islands placed in the street at an intersection or midblock to separate crossing pedestrians from motor vehicles. They are typically used when the street is very wide, or at a crossing where no light exists to provide a safe midpoint resting spot for pedestrians crossing the street.

**Pedestrian Linkages:** When a grid or other dense street network is not available, pedestrian linkages should be provided to maintain walking continuity.



Cul-de-sacs, loop roads and similar road designs that disrupt pedestrian continuity should incorporate pedestrian linkages, such as 'cut-throughs' to adjoining developments. These shortcuts enable pedestrians to travel by the most direct route between destinations. In most cases, routes will have fewer vehicular conflicts since the pedestrian does not have to use an arterial street to get from one local street to another.

**Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB):** User-activated amber LEDs that supplement warning signs at un-signalized intersections or midblock crosswalks. They can be activated by pedestrians manually by a push button or passively by a pedestrian detection system. Cost is approximately \$10,000 to \$15,000 for purchase and installation of two units (one on either side of a street). This includes solar panels for powering the units, pad lighting, indication units (for both sides of street) with RRFBs in the back and front of each unit, signage on both approaches, all posts, and either passive infrared detection or push buttons with audio instructions. Costs would be proportionately higher for additional units placed on a median island, etc.

RRFB



**Reverse Angle Parking:** Improves visibility so motorists are able to see oncoming traffic and bicyclists when leaving a parking space. It also creates a safer environment for pedestrians and children when exiting a vehicle, as doors open in a way that directs them toward the sidewalk rather than the street. Additionally, it improves loading and unloading conditions as the trunk is located adjacent to the sidewalk rather than the street.

Reverse Angle Parking



**Road Diet:** The reconfiguring of a roadway to reduce the number of travel lanes or the effective width to improve safety or provide space for other users. In a study conducted for MnDOT, it was found that the highest urban corridor accident rates are found on four-lane undivided roads. The collision rate was 35 percent higher than on urban three-lane roads.

Four Lanes w/o center turn lanes



center turn lanes, bike lanes, ped refuge island at bus stop



**Sharrow or Shared Roadway:** Marked and signed roads where cyclists and motor vehicles share the roadway. Sharrows are a bicycle-friendly solution when road widths do not accommodate a bicycle lane. Unlike bicycle lanes, sharrows do not designate a particular part of the road for the exclusive use of bicyclists. They are simply a marking to guide bicyclists to the best place to ride and help motorists expect to see and share the lane with bicyclists.

Sharrow





### Speed Humps



**Speed Humps:** Round, raised areas placed across the roadway. They are good for locations where very low speeds are desired.

**Speed Tables and Raised Crosswalks:** Flat-topped speed humps often constructed with brick or other textured materials on the flat section. Raised crosswalks are speed tables with crosswalk markings and signage. They raise the level of the crossing, making pedestrians and the crosswalk area more visible to motorists.

### Raised Crosswalk



**Traffic Circles:** Raised islands placed in the center of intersections around which traffic circulates. They are good for calming intersections, especially within neighborhoods where large vehicle traffic is not a major concern, but speeds, volumes and safety are problems.

**Woonerf or Living Street:** Popular in the Netherlands, these are streets where pedestrians and cyclists have legal priority over motorists. The techniques of shared spaces, traffic calming and low speed limits are intended to improve pedestrian, bicycle and automobile safety.

### Traffic Circle





## EVALUATION

Evaluation is an important component of all Safe Routes to School programs. SRTS planning efforts begin and end with evaluation. The two most common types of evaluation for Safe Routes to School, and those required by MnDOT of all SRTS grantees, are the student travel tallies and parent surveys. These are excellent evaluation tools to assess how students are getting to and from school as well as parent attitudes regarding how their children get to and from school.



However, there are other evaluation tools that schools and communities can use in conjunction with the student travel tallies and parent surveys to get a more robust idea of how the community is stacking up in terms of not only Safe Routes to School, but broad-scale bicycle and pedestrian amenities as well. Three other areas to consider tracking are bicycle and pedestrian facilities, behavior and attitudes in the community, and broader measures of community performance.

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities are the easiest to measure and they provide a good sense of what exists in the community in terms of opportunities to walk and bike. Things to consider keeping track of in this category include, but are not limited to:

- Miles of: sidewalks, multi-use trails, bike lanes, sharrows, bike boulevards, etc.
- Number of bike racks, benches, waste receptacles, drinking fountains, informational kiosks, etc., or anything that supports a healthy bicyclist and pedestrian environment
- Number of improved intersections
- Number of traffic calming measures installed
- Number of road construction/reconstruction projects that have included bicycle and pedestrian needs
- Number of recommendations in the Plan that have been implemented
- Number of crosswalks painted or repainted

Tracking behavior and attitudes can be a bit more difficult and less scientific; however, it is important to know if improvements made have impacted community members. Measurements to track behavior and attitudes include, but are not limited to:

- Deaths and injuries by mode
- Crashes by mode and type
- Mode shift: tracking bike and walk trips over time
- Percentage of children walking and bicycling to school (student travel tallies)
- Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) or Single Occupancy Vehicle (SOV) trip reduction
- Incorporation of multi-modal level of service into transportation plans versus only automobile level of service
- Bicycle and pedestrian counts throughout the city

- Number of participants at SRTS and bike/walk events
- Number of participants at bicycle and pedestrian education classes
- Surveys and survey responses
- Groups participating in the maintenance of trails
- Volunteer hours for all bicycle and pedestrian activities
- Bicycle organization membership

Finally, while broader community performance measures may be harder to quantify and collect, they show that bicycling and walking have had wide reaching positive impacts on the community. Broader community performance measures could include, but are not limited to:

- Air quality improvement, specifically around the school (ground-level ozone, particulate matter, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide)
- Health indicators (obesity, chronic disease, diabetes, physical activity)
- Economic impact of bicycling and walking and SRTS events (new jobs created/businesses opening in proximity of multi-modal streets or trails, dollars spent from walk/bike or SRTS events, etc.)

## EDUCATION



Education is a key component to Safe Routes to School programs for not only students, but also the entire community. There are a number of formal and informal educational opportunities related to SRTS and walking and bicycling in general. The list below is simply meant to offer ideas; it is in no way exhaustive of all educational activities that could be a part of a successful SRTS program. More educational ideas are provided in Appendix K in the Safe Routes to School Matrix designed by MnDOT's Safe Routes to School consultant, Alta Planning and Design.

**Bicycle Rodeos:** Events that offer bicycle skills and safety stations for children, and sometimes parents, to visit (i.e. obstacle course, bicycle safety check, helmet fitting, instruction about the rules of the road, etc.). Bicycle rodeos can be held as part of a larger event or on their own and either during or outside the school day. Adult volunteers can administer rodeos or they may be offered through the local police or fire department.

**Bike Mechanic Training:** Learning bike repair skills encourages students and families to bicycle to school and empowers students to take charge of their own transportation. A bicycle mechanic training can be made available to students as a one-time basics lesson or as a multi-session course. This training can be offered after school or on weekends and can be combined with an earn-a-bike program, bike rodeo, or bicycle safety/skills trainings.

**Classroom Lessons:** Safe Routes to School classroom lessons address walking and/or bicycling and other related topics, while also meeting state or district curriculum standards. Lessons

can be taught as part of many subjects, including math, science, social studies, health and physical education.

**Family Biking Class:** Family biking classes are great tools for educating and encouraging families to ride bicycles. Education trainings can cover safety checks, skills instruction, basic bike maintenance, how to carry kids by bicycle, cargo bike demonstrations, bike rodeos, and/or guided bike rides.

**Walk and Bike to School Route Map:** Route maps show signs, signals, crosswalks, sidewalks, paths, crossing guard locations, and hazardous locations around a school. They identify the best way to walk or bike to school. Liability concerns are sometimes cited as reasons not to publish maps; while no route will be completely free of safety concerns, a well-defined route should provide the greatest physical separation between students and traffic, expose students to the lowest traffic speeds, and use the fewest and safest crossings.

Other educational ideas include presentations to community groups and City Council about Safe Routes to School and bicycle and pedestrian issues, incorporating bicycle education into driver's education classes, bicycle safety trainings for trainers, and many more.

## ENCOURAGEMENT

Encouragement programs keep students and community members excited about Safe Routes to School and walking and bicycling in general. Encouragement events and programs can also induce students who would not otherwise walk or bicycle to school. The list below offers several ideas of encouragement events. More ideas can be found in Appendix K and other online SRTS resources covered in Chapter 5.



**Bike Train:** A bike train is very similar to a walking school bus. Groups of students, accompanied by one or more adults, bicycle together on a pre-planned route to school. Routes can originate from a particular neighborhood, or in order to include children who live too far to bicycle the whole way, begin from a park, parking lot, or other meeting place. Bike trains help address parent's safety concerns, while providing a chance for students and their families to socialize and be active.

**International Walk and Bike to School Day:** The event takes place each year in October and encourages students and their families to try walking or bicycling to school. Parents and other adults accompany students, and staging areas can be designated along the route to school where groups can gather and walk or bike together. These events are often promoted through press releases, backpack, folder, electronic mail, newsletter articles, or posters. Students can earn incentives for participating if there is a celebration at school following the morning event. These events can be held for more than one day.

**Park and Walk:** This program is designed to encourage families to park several blocks from school and walk the rest of the way to school. Not all students are able to walk or bicycle the whole distance to school; they may live too far away or their route may include hazardous traffic situations. This program allows students who are unable to walk or bike to school a chance to participate in SRTS programs. It also helps reduce traffic congestion at the school.

**Poster, T-Shirt, or Video Contest:** These types of activities are great for engaging middle and high school students in SRTS efforts. Students can get creative for a cause by designing and producing posters, t-shirts, videos or other materials that communicate about active transportation. A contest like this can be combined with any type of campaign, like a school safety or anti-idling campaign.

**Trip/Mileage Tracking Program:** A trip or mileage tracking program can be implemented as an opt-in club, a classroom activity, or a collaborative school-wide event. Students track trips or mileage by walking, bicycling, transit, and/or carpools with some type of goal or culminating celebration or reward. Students can work toward a certain milestone to earn a prize or raffle entry, or they can track their individual or group progress as miles across their town, the State of Minnesota, or the United States.

## ENFORCEMENT



It is important to continue to work with the Benson Police Department to ensure officers are aware of Safe Routes to School efforts and that they are up-to-date on laws regarding bicyclist and pedestrians. However there are many community enforcement approaches that can aid in successful enforcement of Benson's Safe Routes to School program. These community enforcement approaches come from [www.walkinginfo.org](http://www.walkinginfo.org), which provides numerous resources for Safe Routes to School programs.

**Neighborhood Speed Watch:** In this approach, a radar speed unit is loaned to residents who are trained by law enforcement officials on how to collect speed data and vehicle descriptions. Residents send the information to the police who obtain the motorists' address from the recorded license plate numbers. Then the vehicle owner will be sent a letter asking for voluntary compliance. This measure often has limited long-term effectiveness in changing the problem, but can be useful in other ways. It can educate neighbors about the issue; for example, most speeders live in the neighborhood, and help boost support for long-term solutions such as traffic calming.

**Slow Down Yard Sign Campaigns:** Allow residents of neighborhoods with speeding problems to participate in reminding drivers to slow down. Neighborhood leaders, safety advocates and law enforcement officials work in partnership to identify problem areas, recruit residents to post yard signs, organize distribution of yard signs, garner media attention, and evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign. Slow down yard sign campaigns may be conducted along with

other speed enforcement efforts such as pace car campaigns and the use of speed radar trailers.

**Pace Car Campaigns:** Neighborhood pace car programs aim to make neighborhoods safer for pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers. Resident pace car drivers agree to drive courteously, at or below the speed limit and follow other traffic laws. Programs usually require interested residents to register as a pace car driver, sign a pledge to abide by the rules, and display a sticker or sign on their vehicle.

**Neighborhood Fight Back Programs:** Collaborative efforts between local governments and concerned residents to address crime, blight, and other issues negatively impacting their neighborhoods. Though traditionally used to address illegal drug activity, traffic and pedestrian safety may be one area of concern. The local government provides multi-agency support over a limited period of time to concentrate enforcement activities in specific neighborhoods.

**Radar Speed Trailers and Active Speed Monitors:** Fixed motorist feedback signs or movable radar speed trailers can be used as part of a community education program. Radar trailers are moved to different locations and are occasionally supplemented with motor officer enforcement for those motorists who do not believe that there is any reason to pay attention to the speed trailers. Some radar speed trailers can record speed data and traffic counts by 15-minute or hourly intervals throughout the day, which will help in targeting future police enforcement. As with neighborhood speed watch programs, these have limited long-term effectiveness in changing the problem, but can be useful in educating people and helping to boost support for long-term solutions.



**Adult School Crossing Guards:** Play a key role in promoting safer driver and pedestrian behaviors at crosswalks near schools. They help children safely cross the street and remind drivers of the presence of pedestrians. A guard helps children develop the skills to cross streets safely at all times. Adult school crossing guards can be parent volunteers, school staff or paid personnel. Annual classroom and field training for adult school crossing guards, as well as special uniforms or equipment to increase visibility are recommended, and in some locations, required. The presence of guards can lead to more parents feeling comfortable about their child walking or bicycling to school.



## Chapter 5 | Action Plan

This chapter presents possible solutions to alleviate, improve, or mitigate existing concerns related to walking and bicycling to school with the overall goal of increasing the number of students who walk and bicycle to school. The recommendations in this chapter have been developed around “The 5 E’s” of Safe Routes to School—Education, Encouragement, Engineering, Enforcement and Evaluation in terms of policy change, programs and projects. A successful SRTS Program must incorporate components from each of “The 5 E’s” to thoroughly address all aspects of a Safe Routes to School Program and bicycle and pedestrian planning in general.

Implementation of this Safe Routes to School Plan will require the utilization of existing resources in new and innovative ways as well as seeking out outside funding specifically for Safe Routes to School.

It will not be feasible to address all of the recommendations included in this plan right away, or all at one time. This plan identifies short-term and long-range needs and recommendations to make Benson a more walkable and bikeable community, not only for students, but all residents over time. Therefore, the plan lists projects or programs currently identified through the SRTS planning process with an estimated project timeline. The plan also identifies general project and program priorities for those projects and priorities that have not yet been identified.

### POLICY, PROGRAM AND PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Engineering:

1. Identify and fill in missing sidewalk gaps in the community. There are multiple segments along identified suggested routes to school as well as other areas of the city, where sidewalk infrastructure is missing. Another common problem is damaged sidewalks. A sidewalk inventory throughout the city should be done to better assess sidewalk needs. Priority should be given to identified routes to school.
2. Improve crossing conditions throughout the city: HAWK signals or RRFB could be used at several intersections including, but not limited to the following:
  - a. The existing crosswalk where Nevada Avenue splits from MN State Highway 29. It would replace the signs and lights that are not pedestrian activated on 13<sup>th</sup> Street North (also MN State Highway 9) and Montana or Elizabeth Avenue by the middle and high schools;
  - b. At 14<sup>th</sup> Street South (also



- US Highway 12 and MN Highway 29) and Wisconsin Avenue, which is a location of a hazardous group bus stop; and
- c. At 13<sup>th</sup> Street North (also MN State Highway 9) and Idaho Avenue, which leads from the schools to residential neighborhoods and the library is on this corner.

Other intersection improvements should also be considered throughout the city.

3. Calming traffic on all state and US highways that cut through the city:
  - a. Look into conducting a speed study to get school zone speed signs posted
  - b. Post a speed trailer that tells drivers their speed
  - c. Other ways to change driving behavior include physical changes to the roadway or surrounding environment such as:
    - i. Narrowing the feel of the roadway by adding a bike lane, planting boulevard trees to provide enclosure on the street, or adding permanent or seasonal curb extensions or bump outs at crosswalks/intersections

#### *Education and Encouragement:*

4. Develop a walk and bike to school route map that can be distributed to students and parents and shows suggested routes to school—the suggested routes to school should have sidewalks, be low traffic volume streets, have controlled intersections or other features that make them more suitable for children walking and biking to school than other nearby routes.
  - a. Once the routes have been identified, a map should be printed and distributed and students should be encouraged to use those routes. Perhaps in the future, the routes can be dressed up with public art, be home to several geo caching sites, or have other fun features that make students want to take those routes.
5. Develop a school safety campaign: this is an effective way to build awareness around students walking and bicycling to school and to encourage safe driving behavior among parents and passersby. A school traffic safety campaign can use media at or near schools, such as posters, business window stickers, yard signs, and/or street banners to remind drivers to slow down and use caution around schools. This type of campaign can also address other specific hazards or behaviors, such as walking or bicycling to school, school bus safety and/or parent drop-off and pick-up behavior.

6. Develop a safety poster contest: the classroom teachers would be the lead and all classes in grades k-6 could participate. The students of the winning posters from each grade would get a prize. The posters could then be put on display around the school and



around the community in local business storefront windows, at the library, and other places around the community. This could be done in the spring in conjunction with the bike rodeo or also done in the fall in conjunction with Halloween safety talks given by the school resource officer.

7. Continue and expand the mileage club that exists at the elementary school This could also be tied into walking and biking Thursdays. Incentive prizes would be given to students—these could be small prizes given to all students who participate or larger prizes for students who log the most miles each week, month or over the whole year, or some combination of these. Each classroom could also keep track of their miles to see how far they've gone (ie. they walked or biked all the way to Florida) and then each class could compete against each other.

8. Walking school bus or bike train: develop a formal or informal walking school bus or bike train program so that small children can be accompanied by adults or older children while they walk or bike to school. If a formal program is used, parents, teachers or other supervisors of the walking school bus or bike train will be needed and the lead of the program will need to spend time to determine what kids/families are interested in the program to determine routes and stops. If an informal program is used, the lead of the program could be much more informal and simply leave the organizing of the walking school bus or bike train to the families that want to utilize the walking school bus or bike train. There is potential to ask senior citizens and retired community members to assist with this activity. This could be a long-term strategy as it may be difficult to implement right away.



9. Formal bicycle and pedestrian education: incorporate bicycle and pedestrian safety into the physical education curriculum. Once MnDOT releases their bicycle and pedestrian safety curriculum, the school can use that as a base curriculum.

10. Institute a weekly walk/bike to school day: This day will be Thursdays. Include a remote drop off location (at the high school) so that students that live outside the city limits can also participate.



11. Continue to host a bike rodeo with the Benson



police department. The bike rodeo teaches students valuable bicycle safety skills and empowers them to ride on their own. The bike rodeo could be held in conjunction with another event, such as Family Fun Night, part of walk and bike to school day/week/month, and/or part of the safety campaign.

### Enforcement:

12. Target enforcement of traffic laws at identified crossings for improvement.
13. Target enforcement of traffic laws on identified state and U.S. Highways.



Additionally, the SRTS Team, the school, City and Benson community should consider other creative community enforcement approaches such as the neighborhood speed watch or pace car campaigns identified in Chapter 4. These approaches further engage the community in SRTS efforts and take enforcement into their own hands. They are effective in helping communities or neighborhoods further evaluate an issue such as speeding. For example, the speeding culprits may mostly be neighborhood residents. Then the neighborhood can assess better ways to effectively address the problem. These community enforcement approaches can also be useful in educating the community and building support for long-term solutions.

An evaluation of a slow-down sign campaign by the Safe Community Coalition of Madison and Dane County concluded that the signs are noticed and people do slow down when the signs are up, especially when speed boards are used to show drivers their approaching speed.

[www.walkinginfo.org](http://www.walkinginfo.org)

### Evaluation:

14. Continue to Conduct student travel tallies
15. Continue to conduct parent surveys: this could happen once every other year

Additionally, the SRTS Team, the school, City and Benson community should consider tracking bicycle and pedestrian facilities, behavior and attitudes and broader community performance measures as identified in Chapter 4. It is not necessary, or perhaps practical, to begin tracking all of these measures at once, however the more the community can track and measure, the better it will be at telling its story and potentially securing grant funding. Evaluation is essential to a Safe Routes to School program and it should be

conducted in some fashion at least once per year, every year.

#### *Other Recommendations:*

There are other recommendations that do not fit as nicely into the “Five E” areas, but are still important. Those recommendations are presented here.

16. Continue to meet as a SRTS Team
17. Apply for future SRTS funding through the state and FHWA
18. Utilize currently funded SRTS non-infrastructure implementation dollars to implement one program and one event in the next year and to strengthen the SRTS program in Benson.

The following page depicts all of the recommendations in an easy to read Implementation Matrix. It details the target audience, timeline and person(s) responsible for each project, policy or program recommendation.



Figure 5.X Implementation Matrix

Benson SRTS Implementation Matrix										
	Project/Program	Target Audience	Estimated Project Timeline						Project Responsibility	
			Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Ongoing	Champion	Partner
Engineering										
1	Identify & Fill in Missing Sidewalk Sections	Students & Community	X	X	X	X	X	X	City of Benson	SRTS Team
2	Improve Identified Crossings	Students & Community			X	X	X	X	City of Benson	SRTS Team
3	Calm Traffic on Identified State & U.S. Highways	Students & Community			X	X	X	X	MnDOT & City of Benson	SRTS Team
Education & Encouragement										
4	Develop & Distribute a Walk/Bike to School Map	Students & Parents	X	X	X	X	X	X	SRTS Team	
5	Develop a School Safety Campaign	Students & Community	X	X	X	X	X	X	SRTS Team	Schools
6	Safety Poster Contest	Students & Community	X	X	X	X	X	X	Schools	
7	Mileage Club	Students	X	X	X	X	X	X	Schools	
8	Walking School Bus/ Bike Train	Students			X	X	X	X	Parents	
9	Formal Bicycle & Pedestrian Education	Students		X	X	X	X	X	Schools	
10	Institute a Weekly Walk/Bike to School Day	Students	X	X	X	X	X	X	Schools	
11	Bike Rodeo	Students	X	X	X	X	X	X	Benson PD	Schools
Enforcement										
11	Enforce Traffic Laws at Identified Crossings for Improvement	Drivers	X	X	X	X	X	X	Benson PD	
12	Enforce Traffic Laws on Identified State & U.S. Highways	Drivers	X	X	X	X	X	X	Benson PD	
Evaluation										
13	Conduct Student Travel Tallies	Students, School, MnDOT & National SRTS Clearinghouse	X	X	X	X	X	X	Schools	Students
14	Conduct Parent Surveys	Students, School, MnDOT & National SRTS Clearinghouse	X	X	X	X	X	X	Schools	Students

Additionally, it should be noted that future implementations will likely surface as this plan is utilized for implementation and carrying out Benson’s SRTS program. Therefore, the following general guidelines for project and program priorities may be helpful in determining the best use of time, resources and energy to devote to new SRTS ideas. These general priorities guided the prioritization of the projects that made it to the implementation matrix and that were previously identified.

Project and Program Priorities	
Projects	Programs
Projects that have a high number of users (current and/or potential)	Programs that promote bicycling and pedestrian safety
Projects that address safety concerns	Programs that have the potential to promote walking and bicycling to users beyond students
Projects that provide important connections and create greater bicycle and pedestrian access throughout the city	Programs that have demonstrated community support
Projects that are located on identified suggested routes to school	Programs that have limited cost compared to impact or reach
Projects that have demonstrated community support	Programs that have the best potential for grant or non-school or city funding
Projects that have the best potential for grant or non-school or city funding	Programs that reach all students, not only those who live within the walk/bike area
Projects that are feasible, politically, economically and practically	
Projects that have a high impact and lower costs	

## POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES AND PARTNERS

There are a variety of ways to fund the implementation aspects of Benson’s Safe Routes to School program. Having this Safe Routes to School Plan in place allows Benson access to more funding opportunities than would be available without having gone through the Safe Routes to School Planning process. There are a variety of public and private funding sources that can help pay for Safe Routes to School improvements in the Benson community. This section of the Plan lists those potential funding sources, partners that the Benson community may wish to turn to for help with implementation of the Plan and other helpful resources for ideas and inspiration as the Benson SRTS program launches.

The funding sources are broken out into public grant funding, local public sources and how to budget for SRTS programs and then all other sources including private sources locally as well as nationally.

The following page, Figure X, shows a table of many of the available public grant funding sources known at this time to support Safe Routes to School efforts. This list is constantly changing, so keep in contact with the Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission for the latest on public grant funding sources.

Figure 5.X Public Grant Funding

Grant/Program Name		Description	Local Match	Contact Information
1	Minnesota Safe Routes to School Program	The MN Legislature authorized \$500,000 in funds for the 2013-2014 biennium to be used for non-infrastructure SRTS activities.	Unknown at this time	MnDOT & local RDCs lindsey.knutson@umvrdc.org
2	Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)	SRTS planning, infrastructure and non-infrastructure activities are now eligible under TAP. TAP also funds bicycle and pedestrian facility improvements that address transportation needs.	20%	MnDOT & local RDCs lindsey.knutson@umvrdc.org
3	Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)	This program can fund bicycle and pedestrian improvements that will achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries. It can be used on all public roads including non-state owned public roads and roads on tribal lands.	20%	MnDOT & local RDCs lindsey.knutson@umvrdc.org
4	Federal Recreational Trails Program	Funds motorized and non-motorized trail projects; maintenance/restoration of existing recreational trails; development/rehabilitation of recreational trail linkages; environmental awareness and safety education programs relating to the use of recreational trails; and redesign/relocation of trails to benefit/minimize the impact to the natural environment.	25%	MN DNR traci.vibo@state.mn.us
5	Local Trail Connections Program	Eligible projects include acquisition and development of trail facilities. Projects must result in a trail linkage that is immediately available for use by the general public.	25%	MN DNR traci.vibo@state.mn.us
6	Trail Legacy Grant Program	Eligible projects include acquisition, development, improvement, and restoration of park and trail facilities of regional or statewide significance.	0%	MN DNR audrey.mularie@state.mn.us
7	Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP)	SHIP funds projects and programs that are aimed at active living, healthy eating and tobacco-free living. SRTS activities have been funded in the past. The RFPs for SHIP grants are currently open and funding for implementation may be available July 2014.	Unknown at this time	MDH & Local County Health Boards natasha@countryside.co.swift.mn.us

## Local Funding:

Though some communities have implemented complex local government financing tools such as sales tax funding or bonds to fund SRTS programs, the easiest and most common way to access local funding is to identify existing pots of money that are currently flowing to transportation, safety or health issues and tap into them.

There are two categories of local funding through which to pursue SRTS funds: capital improvement projects and operating budgets.

**Capital Improvement Projects:** Capital improvement projects (CIPs) are new infrastructure projects implemented using public funds. These projects are identified through a capital improvement planning process which is tied to the local budget. During the planning process, the local government identifies and prioritizes capital improvements such as new roads and sidewalks, and then allocates funding for construction at least one year before the project is implemented.

Because CIPs may take a couple of years to complete, CIPs tend to have multi-year budgets. However, most CIPs have the capacity to make changes and fund newly identified projects and pressing needs. A local transportation planner or engineer serving on a SRTS taskforce or committee could assist in identifying infrastructure projects and including them in the capital improvement planning process.

**Operating Budgets:** Local operating budgets may provide avenues for non-infrastructure programs and infrastructure maintenance and repair. Transportation budgets may include funding for pedestrian and bicycle programs or school zone improvements. Police or Public safety budgets may include funding for traffic law enforcement or school crossing guards. Public school budgets may include opportunities for safety education or walking and bicycling encouragement programs. Recreation budgets may include funding for after school programs. Including a representative from these departments on a SRTS taskforce or committee allows complementary sources of funding to be more easily identified.

Most local operating budgets include funding for general maintenance and repair of infrastructure. Depending on the size of the budget, these funds can be used for inexpensive projects such as striping crosswalks or installing signage, or more costly projects such as installing curb ramps.

### Other Funding Sources:

Often, local Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs can solicit funding from non-governmental resources within their own communities. The multiple benefits of SRTS programs, including the safety, health, environment and community impacts, often align with the interests of the local community.

The following is a list of potential private funding sources taken from the Safe Routes to School Toolkit, published by National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA):

- **Corporations and businesses:** Contact local corporations and businesses to ask if they will support your program with cash, prizes, and/or donations such as printing services. It's good to ask your parent leaders where they work; they often can help you get a "foot in the door." When contacting a company, ask for information about their "community giving programs."
- **Foundations:** There are institutions throughout the country that provide funding to non-profit organizations. The Foundation Center is an excellent source of potential funding sources. Narrow your funding possibilities by first searching for geographic region of giving. Look under categories for transportation, health, environment, and community building.
- **Individuals:** Statistically, individuals give more money than corporations and foundations combined. You can begin a local fund drive by working within your existing network of team leaders, and outreaching to the larger community.
- **Events:** Many programs have raised funds by holding special events. Use the SRTS theme to attract funding. Hold a walkathon or a bicycling event. You also can choose more traditional fundraising efforts, such as bake sales, concerts, talent shows, etc.
- **Parent teacher associations (PTAs) and school districts:** Many PTAs have funds to distribute to school programs and often schools have safety funding. Contact your local PTA and the School District to see if there is a method for applying for a grant.
- **RWJF Grants:** One of the largest foundations in the country, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation offers grants that address public health issues such as childhood obesity and asthma. More information about the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation can be found on their website: [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org).
- **People for Bikes:** People for Bikes is a bicycling advocacy group. They give out a variety of community grants to increase the numbers of people who ride bikes. More information about People for Bikes and their community grants can be found on their website: <http://www.peopleforbikes.org/pages/community-grants>.



- **Target:** Target gives grants to schools and communities in areas related to education, the arts, public safety and more. For more information about Target's giving, visit their grants page on their website: <https://corporate.target.com/corporate-responsibility/grants>.
- **Walmart:** Walmart gives a variety of grant funds to schools and communities for a variety of topics. For more information about Walmart's giving, visit their grants page on their website: <http://foundation.walmart.com/apply-for-grants/>.
- **National Center for Safe Routes to School:** funds a local \$1,000 mini-grant program that supports the goal of Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs, which is to enable and encourage children to safely walk and bicycle to school. SRTS programs are implemented nationwide by parents, schools, community leaders, and local, state, and tribal governments.

Mini-grants may fund activities ranging from the nuts and bolts that help start or sustain a program to new ideas that explore the range of benefits of safe walking and bicycling. The National Center invites student and adult leaders to consider their school's needs and interests and to propose solutions that are also part of a broader safe walking/bicycling to school effort.

Beyond grant or funding sources, there are many free resources to help parents, educators, planners, city officials and communities develop and sustain successful Safe Routes to School programs. Some of these resources offer ideas for education and encouragement events, others offer case studies on what other communities have done and others provide more technical information about different bicycle and pedestrian treatments that are most effective. Following is a list of some, but certainly not all Safe Routes to School resources with information, ideas and inspiration.

#### Other Resources:

**National Center for Safe Routes to School:** Established in May 2006, the National Center for Safe Routes to School assists states and communities in enabling and encouraging children to safely walk and bicycle to school. The National Center serves as the information clearinghouse for the federal Safe Routes to School program. The organization also provides technical support and resources and coordinates online registration efforts for U.S. Walk to School Day and facilitates worldwide promotion and participation.

The National Center is part of the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center with funding from the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration. <sup>6</sup>

**Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center (PBIC):** Our mission is to improve the quality of life in communities through the increase of safe walking and bicycling as a viable means of transportation and physical activity. Through our comprehensive Web sites, we offer information and training to diverse audiences about health and safety, engineering, advocacy, education, enforcement, access, and mobility as it relates to pedestrians and bicyclists. <sup>7</sup>

**National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Safe Routes to School Toolkit:** the toolkit is designed to help schools and communities initiate and implement a Safe Routes to School Program. <sup>8</sup>

**National Walk/Bike to School Site:** this website is part of the National Center for Safe Routes to School and it has many ideas for creating a successful walk and/or bike to school day in your community. This is also the place to register of local walk and bike to school days for tracking purposes. <sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/bike/Safe-Routes-2002/overview.html>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/>

## Chapter 6 | Conclusion

Benson's Safe Routes to School Plan lays the groundwork for a successful Safe Routes to School program. It identifies projects and programs to address engineering, education, encouragement, enforcement and evaluation needs related to children walking or bicycling to school.

This plan is a living document, meant to guide the development of SRTS projects and programs by defining a broad vision and setting goals for Safe Routes to School as well as walking and bicycling throughout the Benson community for residents of all ages and abilities.

This plan was developed with stakeholder and public input through a thoughtful and data based process. It will put the Benson community in a better position to receive grant funding for not only Safe Routes to School funding, but also grant funding for other bicycle and pedestrian projects and programs that are needed in the community.

The implementation of the Benson Safe Routes to School Plan will provide Benson residents of all ages with increased transportation options and contribute to making Benson a more vibrant and livable community.

## Appendix

Appendix A: SRTS Team Meeting Agendas

Appendix B: SRTS Team Meeting Notes

Appendix C: Map of School District Boundary

Appendix D: Benson Community Amenities Map

Appendix E: Student Travel Tally Form

Appendix F: Student Travel Tally Results

Appendix G: Parent Survey Form

Appendix H: Parent Survey Results

Appendix I: Bike/Walk Audit Assessment Worksheets

Appendix J: Bike/Walk Audit Assessment Results

Appendix K: MnDOT & Alta Planning Program Matrix



## Appendix A: SRTS Team Meeting Agendas





# Benson Safe Routes to School Plan Meeting #1

Law Enforcement Center (LEC) Sheriff's Office  
Suite 4 - Basement of the Courthouse  
301 14<sup>th</sup> Street N. Benson, MN 56215

Tuesday, September 11, 2012  
9:00 am

20 minutes	Welcome and introductions
20 minutes	Overview of the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) planning effort including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The purpose and benefits of SRTS</li><li>• Timeline of the SRTS planning process</li><li>• Goals of the SRTS Plan</li><li>• Role of the SRTS Team</li></ul>
20 minutes	Review of the SRTS planning assistance grant application—especially to go over the goals identified in the application
30-40 minutes	Discussion of local issues and concerns
20-30 minutes	Develop a vision statement to guide our planning process
30 minutes	Assign specific tasks to the SRTS Team members (for example, teachers may be responsible for the student walking and biking surveys)
20 minutes	Set the meeting schedule for the next three meetings and discuss next steps
	Adjourn



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## **Benson Safe Routes to School Plan Meeting #2**

### **Developing Action Steps**

**Location: Benson Public Library, Benson**

**Date: Wednesday, March 27, 2013**

**Time: 9:00 am**

5 minutes	Welcome and introductions
75 minutes	<div>Presentation<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Overview of the walking audit and observation of dismissal</li><li>• Overview of the Regional SRTS Workshop and mini Mark Fenton Presentation (5 E's of bicycle and pedestrian planning, developing projects, programs and policies to support SRTS)</li><li>• Review of the data collected for Benson<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Student Tallies</li><li>✓ Parent Survey Data</li><li>✓ Traffic Volumes (AADT)</li></ul></li></ul></div>
65 minutes	<div>Discussion and brainstorming of solutions and action steps<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 5 E's Worksheet/dot exercise</li></ul></div>
10 minutes	Review vision statement and goals
20 minutes	Determine suggested routes to school?
5 minutes	Wrap-up/next steps
	Adjourn



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## **Benson Safe Routes to School Plan Meeting #3**

### **Finalizing Action Steps & Planning Process**

**Location: Teacher Workroom at Northside Elementary**

**Date: Tuesday, July 9, 2013**

**Time: 9:00 – 10:30 am**

#### Review of Regional SRTS Coordinator Grant Award

- What does this mean for your community and schools?
  - Help implementing one program
  - Help implementing one event
  - Money to spend on incentive prizes for the students (\$1,500)
  - Money to spend on printing and marketing of implementation (\$500)
  - Money to spend on school patrol/crossing guard training (\$1,500)
  - Money to spend on school patrol/crossing guard equipment (\$1,000)

#### Determine specific project details for top implementation ideas (project worksheet)

- Who is the target audience
- What behavior or issue are you trying to address with this implementation idea
- Who takes the lead on this idea
- Who are potential partners
- What supplies are needed
- How often will this program occur (one time, ongoing, daily, weekly, monthly, yearly)

#### Review remaining SRTS planning process timeline

- July – August UMRDC staff will draft the SRTS Plan document
- September Draft Plan will be available to SRTS Team and the public
- September/Fall – does the team want to hold an open house for the public to review and comment on the draft plan? The open house could coincide with another school event
- Fall 2013 UMRDC staff will finalize the plan
- Fall 2013 we will begin with the implementation of the plan – UMRDC staff can help with the implementation of one event and one program.



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## Appendix B: SRTS Team Meeting Notes



## Benson SRTS Kick-Off Meeting #1 Notes

### Current Conditions

- There are several areas throughout the community where crossings are difficult – from the High School to Northside Elementary, across all Trunk Highways (US 12, MN 29 and MN 9), across the railroad tracks and other areas throughout town.
- We need to include those students using public transportation to get to school in this SRTS Plan—many students rely on the city bus to get to and from school and there is little supervision
- Not many students walk or bike to school currently
- There are one or two hazardous bus stops currently within the city limits (one near Subway and the other?)—school buses do not pick up students within the city limits (except at those locations)
- The drop-off and pick-up areas are problematic. The situation has improved at the Jr. High after changes were made a couple years ago. The loading/unloading of students is done on the street and many students arrive to and leave school via a parent's vehicle
- Currently, there are several crossing guards at each of the marked crosswalks—anywhere else? The crossing guards are trained once a year
- Sidewalks are not present throughout the entire city—this makes walking and biking to school for children difficult and prevents parents from letting children do so
- Benson currently holds a walk to school event at the end of the year
- Benson currently has a mileage club where students are rewarded for being physically active
- Benson currently holds a bike rodeo to teach students about bicycle safety
- Students often arrive to school too early and it is often dark when students arrive to and leave from school
- There are several surges of traffic in Benson throughout the day that could pose a danger for children walking and biking to school (for example the noon lunch rush and at 4:30 when Case IH lets out)
- There are dog issues throughout town
- There are many uncontrolled intersections throughout the city
- Bike stealing has been an issue

### Vision Statement and Goal Ideas—yet to be more developed:

- The vision statement should focus on the safety of children getting to and from school. SRTS focuses on students walking and biking, but there should be a safety focus for students using public transit too
- Goals or objectives should be measurable—we should include a percentage to the increase of students walking and biking to school
- The goals should follow the E's: engineering, education, enforcement, encouragement and evaluation
- Education should be for students, parents and the entire community



- A measure of our goals and the success of our plan will be if they are implemented in MnDOT's 2-17 "Benson Project"
- Increase the number of staff and parents walking or biking to school
- Identify funding sources for recommendations made in the plan

## Benson SRTS Meeting #2 Notes

Meeting began at approximately 9am

In attendance: Brad Johnson, Clint Schiller, Kristy Johnson, Jill Gunderson, Kristin Woizeschke, Nancy Dossdall, Wanda Ness, Paul Larson, Lindsey Knutson & J. Sigdahl

- Reviewed the walking audit and observation of dismissal at Northside Elementary
- Reviewed the data collected from the parent surveys
- Watched a mini presentation from Mark Fenton's workshop.
- A matrix was handed out that was developed by MnDOT consultants covering Enforcement, Engineering, Encouragement and Education
- Everyone selected 2 favorites from each category along with 8 secondary choices – these were all posted. Discussion & review was made.
- Family Fun Night – include bike rodeo. Tentatively scheduled for Friday, May 3.  
Ideas: bike maintenance/helmets/lights/drawings/reflectors/give away – 2 bikes/  
Have maps & routes available  
Possible bike donation through Prairie Five  
Check on Walmart grant  
Advertise for all citizens not just students
- Reinforce positive side w/parents & kids
- Possible walk/bike the week after the rodeo
- Reviewed goals & objectives

The group reviewed project, program and event ideas that have been discussed previously and that were included in the project matrix worksheet from Alta Planning (the consulting firm working on the Metro SRTS Plans) and came up with the following ideas. Then the team went through a dot exercise to prioritize all of the project ideas. So the colors behind each idea reflect our voting with the dots and the most popular activities: Red-first choice/Blue –second favorite –each \* represents one vote

- Education:
  - Earn a bike program \*
  - Bike rodeo – 7 x's
  - Walk & bike to school route map \*\*\*\*\* \*
  - Idling reduction \*\*\*\*
  - Classroom/phy ed education on bike safety. Lead into bike rodeo & family fun night \*  
\*\*\*\*\*
  - Family biking class \*\* \*\*
  - Bike course w/signs
- Encouragement:
  - Family Fun Night bike rodeo
  - Park & Walk \*\*\*\*
  - International walk & bike to school day \*
  - Trip/mileage tracking program \*\*
  - Walk/bike to school days
  - Ongoing walk & bike to school days \*\*\*\*\*

- Mileage club \*
- Bike rodeo course
- Association with parent expo or conferences \*\*
- Leave early \*\*
- Engineering:
  - More crosswalks
  - No parking zones
  - More school crossing signs
  - Stop signs & yield signs \*\*\*\*
  - Bike trails
  - Park and walk to school
  - Walk and bike routes & maps
  - More sidewalks 4 x's \*\*\*\* \*
  - Better intersections
  - Better controlled intersections \*\*
- Enforcement:
  - School safety patrols & crossing guards \*\*\*\*\*
  - School safety campaign \*\*\*\*\* \*
  - Law enforcement & crossing guards \*
  - Bike rodeo \*
  - In classroom and/or after school \*
  - Lower speed zones in 600 block of 13<sup>th</sup> Street N & 1800 block of Nevada Ave. \*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*

## Vision Statement

*Benson is a community where students can and do walk and bike to school safely because the physical and social environment promotes walking and biking.*

## Goals

Goals are general, broad statements that express the overall focus of this Safe Routes to School Plan. Goal statements answer the question, “What do we want to achieve?”

1. Provide safe and adequate routes to and from school.
2. Increase the number of bicycle and pedestrian facilities so that more students are able to walk or bicycle to school safely.
3. Educate parents, students and community members about safe driving, walking and biking practices.
4. Increase the enforcement of existing traffic controls around the schools.
5. Increase the number of children walking and biking to school and thereby decrease the prevalence of family vehicles at the school site during arrival and dismissal times.
6. Reduce conflicts between pedestrians and motor vehicles along identified routes, crossings and drop-off points through engineering solutions such as bicycle and pedestrian facilities, signage or intersection designs and treatments as well as educational solutions such as bicycle and pedestrian education and safe driving campaigns.

## Objectives

Objectives are specific, measurable activities that answer the question, “How will I meet my goal?”

Objectives for Goal #1: Provide safe and adequate routes to and from school.

- 1.1 To identify the primary routes students use, or could use if they existed, to access local schools.
- 1.2 To make specific recommendations that will improve safe pedestrian and bicycle access to Benson schools.
- 1.3 To make specific recommendations regarding students using transit to get to or from school in a safer manner.

Objectives for Goal #2: Increase the number of bicycle and pedestrian facilities so that more students are able to walk or bicycle to school safely.

- 2.1 To make specific recommendations regarding bicycle and pedestrian facilities on identified primary routes to school that will make getting to and from school via foot or bicycle safer and more enjoyable.
- 2.2 To identify costs, where possible and potential funding sources for proposed recommendations.

Objectives for Goal #3: Educate parents, students and community members about safe driving, walking and bicycling practices.

- 3.1 To build awareness in the community about bicycle and pedestrian laws through events, community education, enforcement, marketing materials and other efforts.
- 3.2 To educate students about Minnesota bicycle and pedestrian rules and helpful safety pointers through classroom curriculum, Bike Rodeo events, and other efforts.

Objectives for Goal #4: Increase the enforcement of existing traffic controls around the schools.

- 4.1 Any suggestions for Objectives to go with increased enforcement?

Objectives for Goal #5: Increase the number of children walking and bicycling to school, thereby decreasing the prevalence of family vehicles at the school during arrival and dismissal times.

- 5.1 To make walking and biking to school part of a normal routine through education and encouragement activities taught in the classroom and throughout the community.

Objectives for Goal # 6: Reduce conflicts between pedestrians and motor vehicles along identified routes, crossings and drop-off/pick-up points.

- 6.1 To educate students about Minnesota bicycle and pedestrian rules and helpful safety pointers.
- 6.2 To make walking and biking to school part of a normal routine through education and encouragement activities taught in the classroom and throughout the community.
- 6.3 To develop effective off-site loading zone locations at each school in order to mitigate traffic conflicts and increase the incidence of walking and biking.

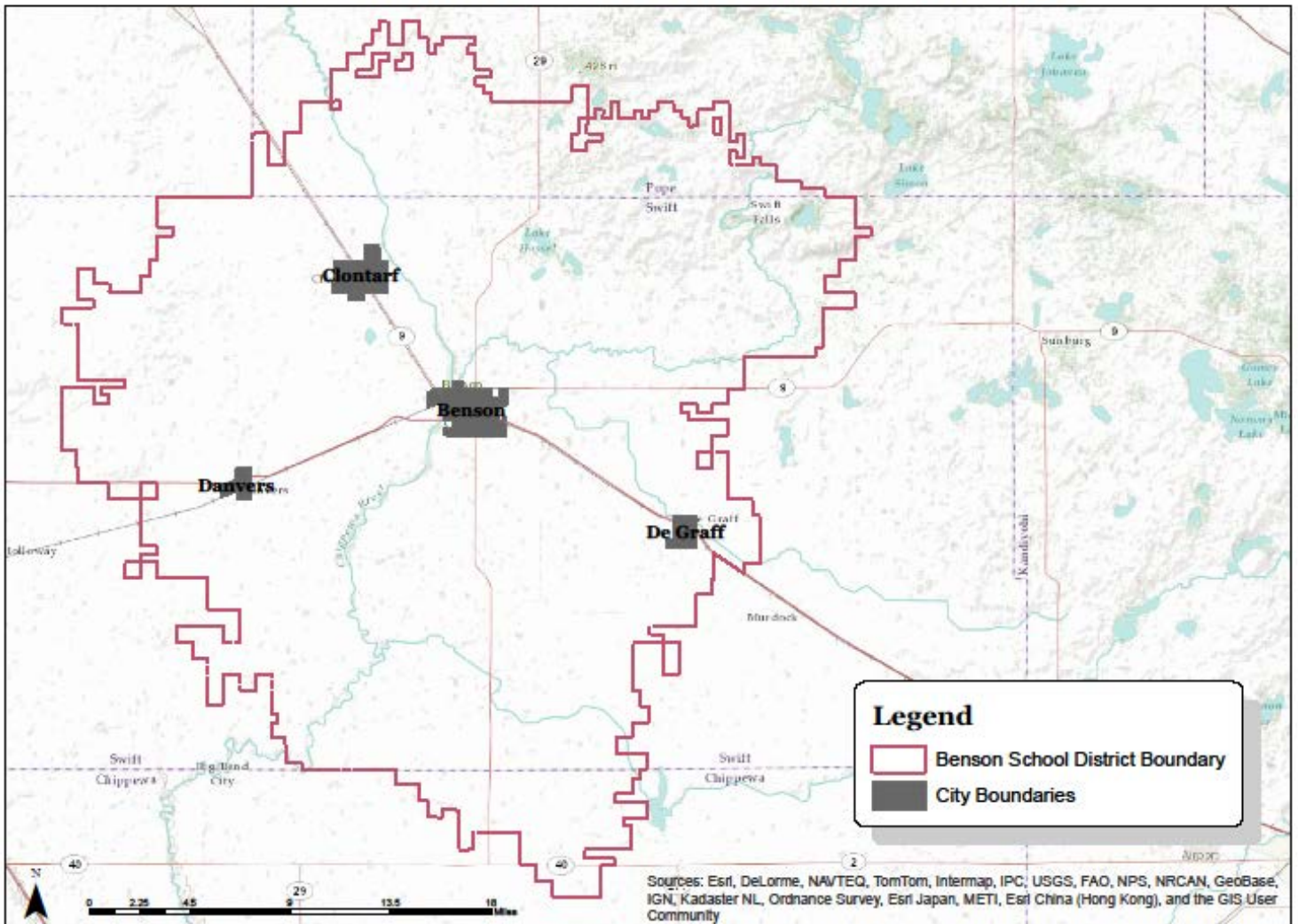
- 6.4 To work cooperatively with local units of government such as the police department, city officials and traffic authorities to enhance the safety and effectiveness of the pedestrian network.
- 6.5 To perform regular maintenance of marked crosswalks with epoxy markings if identified as in-need along identified school routes.
- 6.6 To incorporate Safe Routes to School principles and ideas into other city plans and whenever possible, to incorporate Safe Routes to School projects into planned projects...i.e. MnDOT 2017 road construction project



## Appendix C: Map of School District Boundary



## Benson School District Enrollment Boundary



## Appendix D: Benson Community Amenities Map







## Appendix E: Student Travel Tally Form





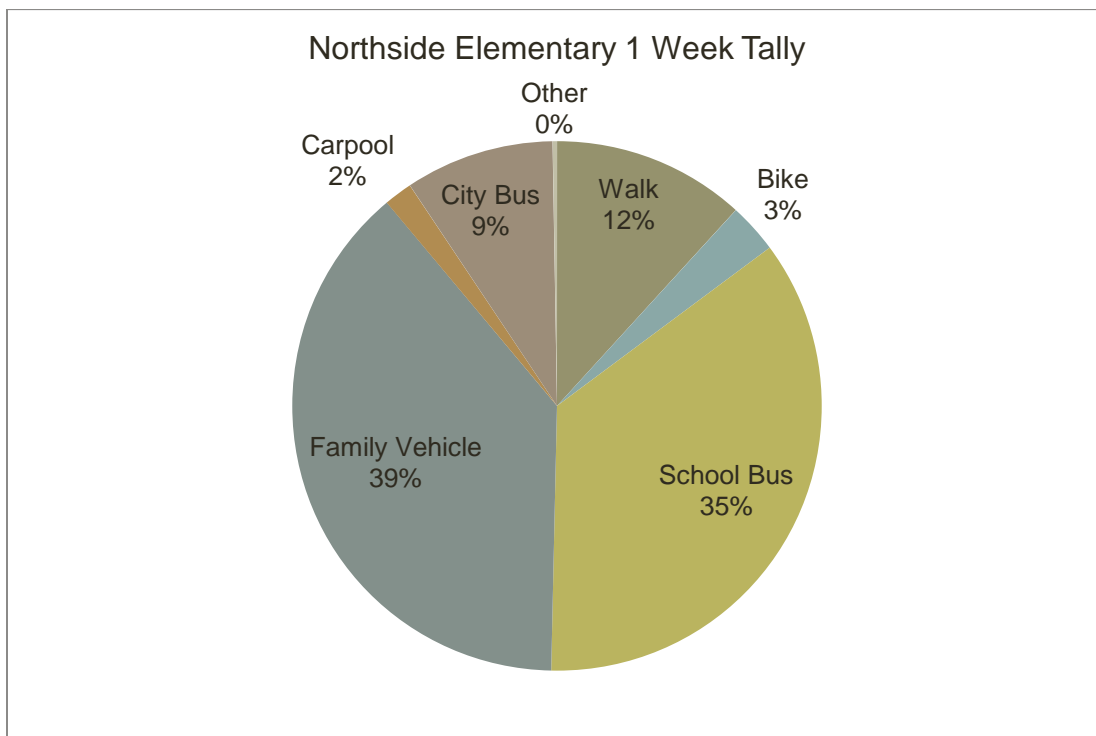
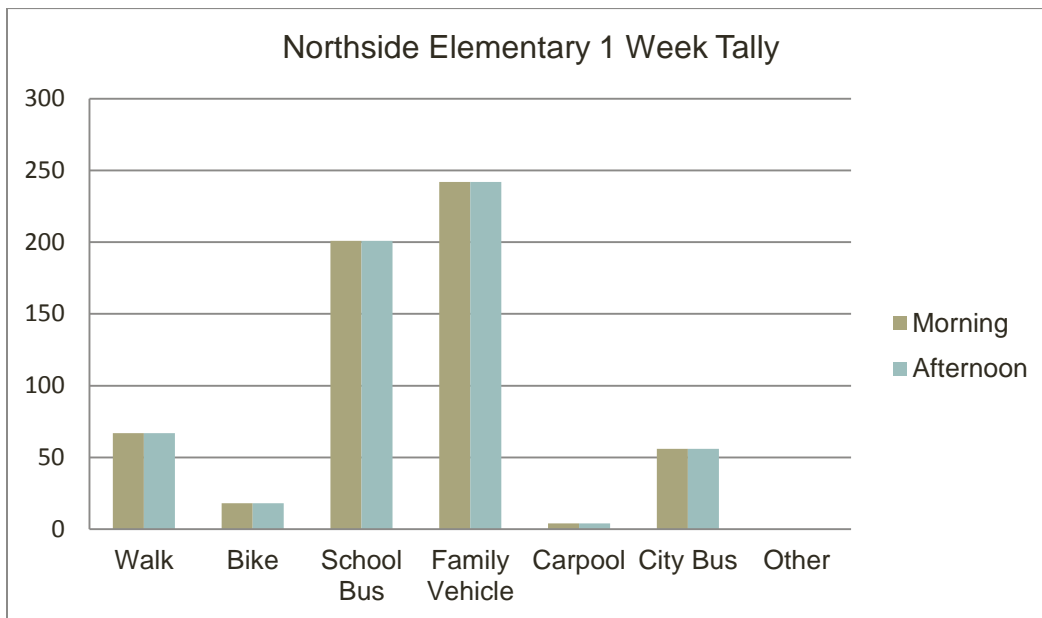
# Safe Routes to School Students Arrival and Departure Tally Sheet

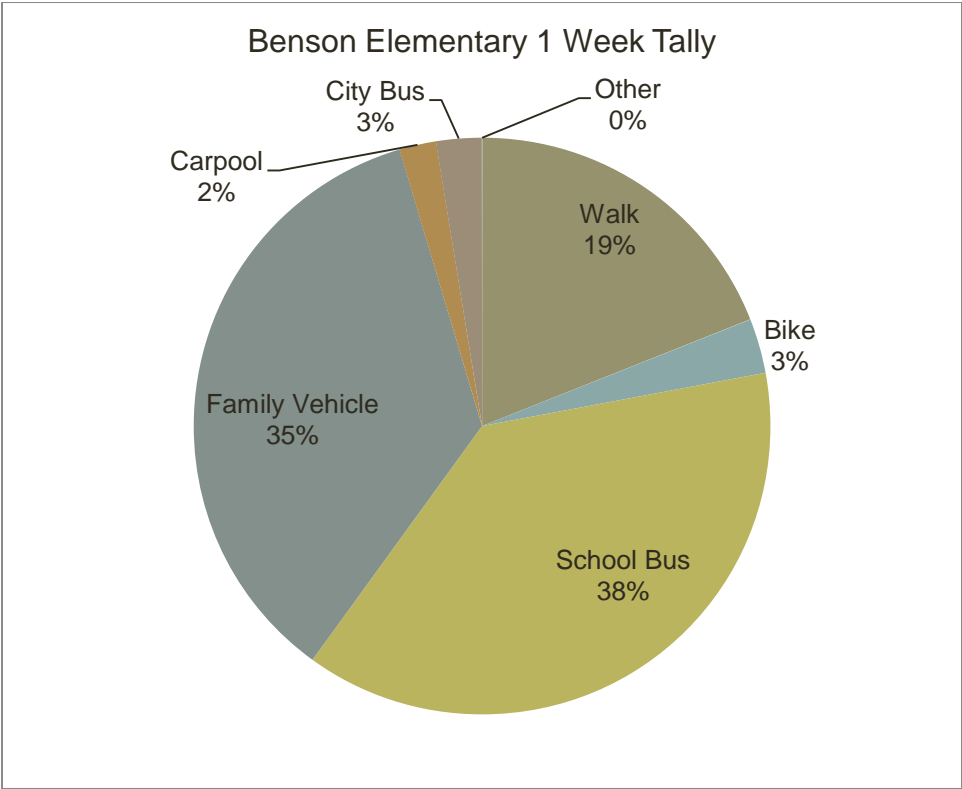
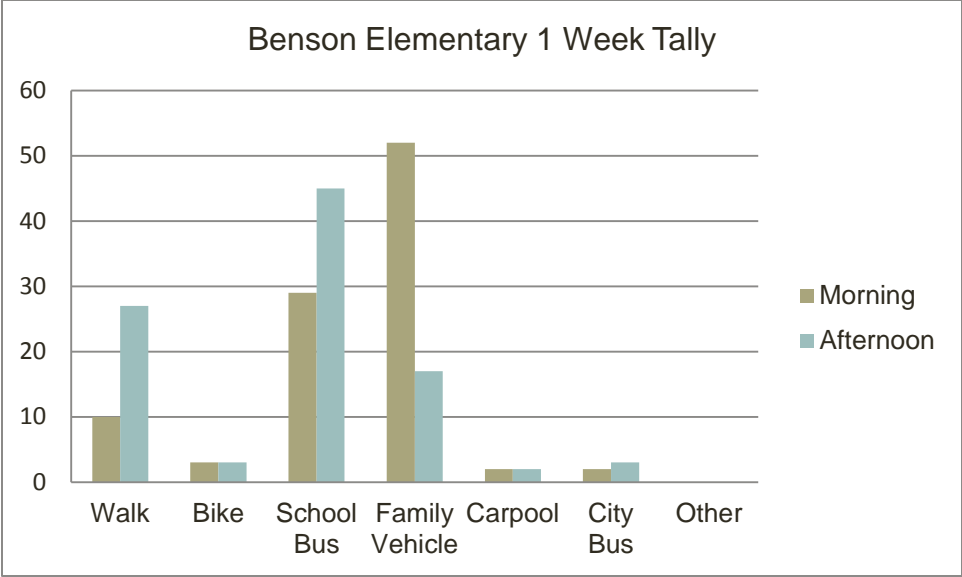
+ CAPITAL LETTERS ONLY – BLUE OR BLACK INK ONLY +															
School Name:					Teacher's First Name:					Teacher's Last Name:					
Grade: (PK,K,1,2,3...)		Monday's Date (Week count was conducted)				Number of Students Enrolled in Class:									
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px; display: inline-block;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px; display: inline-block;"></div>		<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px; display: inline-block;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px; display: inline-block;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px; display: inline-block;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px; display: inline-block;"></div>				<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px; display: inline-block;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px; display: inline-block;"></div>									
0 2		M M D D Y Y Y Y				1 5									
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please conduct these counts on <b>two</b> of the following three days <b>Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday.</b> (Three days would provide better data if counted)</li> <li>• Please do not conduct these counts on <b>Mondays or Fridays.</b></li> <li>• Before asking your students to raise their hands, please read through all possible answer choices so they will know their choices. Each student may only answer once.</li> <li>• Ask your students as a group the question "How did you arrive at school today?"</li> <li>• Then, reread each answer choice and record the number of students that raised their hands for each. <b>Place just one character or number in each box.</b></li> <li>• Follow the same procedure for the question "How do you plan to leave for home after school?"</li> <li>• You can conduct the counts once per day but during the count please ask students both the school arrival and departure questions.</li> <li>• Please conduct this count regardless of weather conditions (i.e., ask these questions on rainy days, too).</li> </ul>															
<b>Step 1.</b> Fill in the weather conditions and number of students in each class					<b>Step 2.</b> <b>AM</b> – "How did you arrive at school today?" Record the number of hands for each answer. <b>PM</b> – "How do you plan to leave for home after school?" Record the number of hands for each answer.										
<b>Key</b>		S = sunny R = rainy O = overcast SN = snow	Student Tally  Number in class when count made	Walk	Bike	School Bus	Family Vehicle	Carpool	Transit	Other					
		Only with children from your family					Riding with children from other families			City bus, subway, etc.			Skate-board, scooter, etc.		
Sample AM		S N	2 0	2	3	8	3		3	1					
Sample PM		R	1 9	3	3	8	1	2	2						
Tues. AM															
Tues. PM															
Wed. AM															
Wed. PM															
Thurs. AM															
Thurs. PM															
Please list any disruptions to these counts or any unusual travel conditions to/from the school on the days of the tally.															
+ +															

## Appendix F: Student Travel Tally Results



## Benson Student Travel Tally Results, Fall 2012





## Appendix G: Parent Survey Form





## Parent Survey About Walking and Biking to School

### Dear Parent or Caregiver,

Your child's school wants to learn your thoughts about children walking and biking to school. This survey will take about 5 - 10 minutes to complete. We ask that each family complete only one survey per school your children attend. If more than one child from a school brings a survey home, please fill out the survey for the child with the next birthday from today's date.

After you have completed this survey, send it back to the school with your child or give it to the teacher. Your responses will be kept confidential and neither your name nor your child's name will be associated with any results.

**Thank you for participating in this survey!**

+	<b>CAPITAL LETTERS ONLY – BLUE OR BLACK INK ONLY</b>	+
---	--	---

School Name:

--

1. What is the grade of the child who brought home this survey?   Grade (PK,K,1,2,3...)

2. Is the child who brought home this survey male or female? ☐ Male ☐ Female

3. How many children do you have in Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade?

4. What is the street intersection nearest your home? (Provide the names of two intersecting streets)

	and	
--	-----	--

Place a clear 'X' inside box. If you make a mistake, fill the entire box, and then mark the correct box.

5. How far does your child live from school?

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than ¼ mile    | <input type="checkbox"/> ½ mile up to 1 mile  | <input type="checkbox"/> More than 2 miles |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ¼ mile up to ½ mile | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 mile up to 2 miles | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know        |

Place a clear 'X' inside box. If you make a mistake, fill the entire box, and then mark the correct box.

6. On most days, how does your child arrive and leave for school? (Select one choice per column, mark box with X)

#### Arrive at school

- ☐ Walk
- ☐ Bike
- ☐ School Bus
- ☐ Family vehicle (only children in your family)
- ☐ Carpool (Children from other families)
- ☐ Transit (city bus, subway, etc.)
- ☐ Other (skateboard, scooter, inline skates, etc.)

#### Leave from school

- ☐ Walk
- ☐ Bike
- ☐ School Bus
- ☐ Family vehicle (only children in your family)
- ☐ Carpool (Children from other families)
- ☐ Transit (city bus, subway, etc.)
- ☐ Other (skateboard, scooter, inline skates, etc.)

Place a clear 'X' inside box. If you make a mistake, fill the entire box, and then mark the correct box.

7. How long does it normally take your child to get to/from school? (Select one choice per column, mark box with X)

#### Travel time to school

- ☐ Less than 5 minutes
- ☐ 5 – 10 minutes
- ☐ 11 – 20 minutes
- ☐ More than 20 minutes
- ☐ Don't know / Not sure

#### Travel time from school

- ☐ Less than 5 minutes
- ☐ 5 – 10 minutes
- ☐ 11 – 20 minutes
- ☐ More than 20 minutes
- ☐ Don't know / Not sure

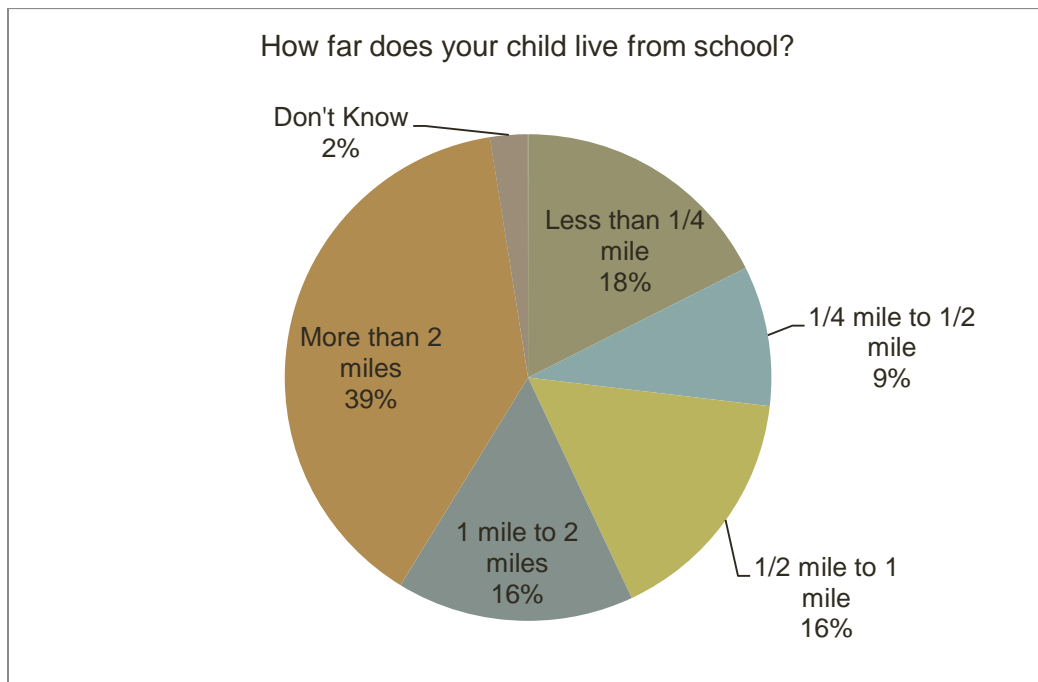
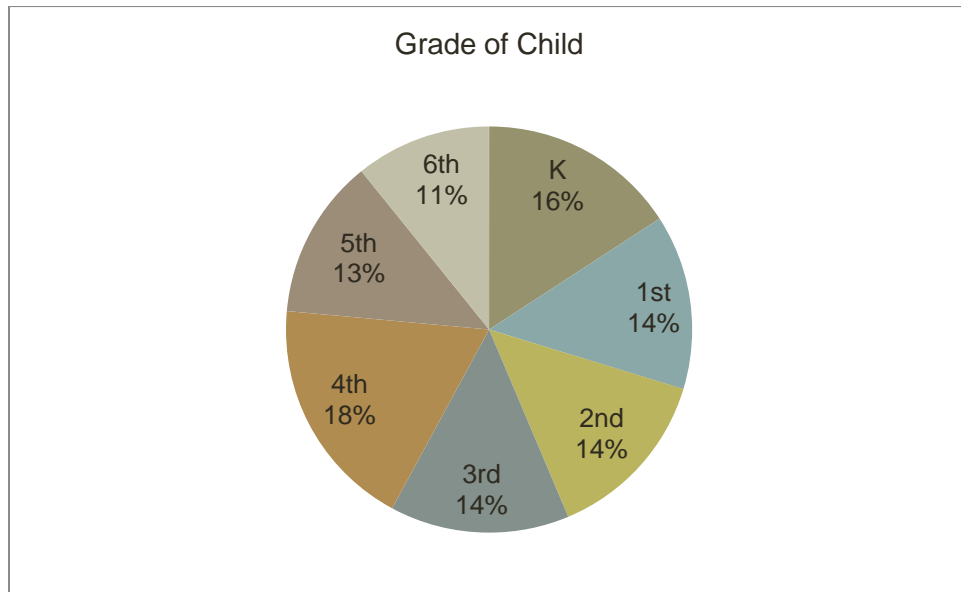
+		+
---	--	---

+		+
<p><b>8. Has your child asked you for permission to walk or bike to/from school in the last year?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>		
<p><b>9. At what grade would you allow your child to walk or bike to/from school without an adult?</b>          (Select a grade between PK,K,1,2,3,...) <input style="width: 30px; height: 20px; border: 1px solid black;" type="text"/> grade (or) <input type="checkbox"/> I would not feel comfortable at any grade</p>		
<b>Place a clear 'X' inside box. If you make a mistake, fill the entire box, and then mark the correct box</b>		
<p><b>10. What of the following issues affected your decision to allow, or not allow, your child to walk or bike to/from school? (Select ALL that apply)</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Distance.....</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Convenience of driving.....</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Time.....</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Child's before or after-school activities.....</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Speed of traffic along route.....</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Amount of traffic along route.....</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Adults to walk or bike with.....</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Sidewalks or pathways.....</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Safety of intersections and crossings.....</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Crossing guards.....</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Violence or crime.....</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Weather or climate.....</p>	<p><b>11. Would you probably let your child walk or bike to/from school if this problem were changed or improved? (Select one choice per line, mark box with X)</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> My child already walks or bikes to/from school</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure</p>	
<b>Place a clear 'X' inside box. If you make a mistake, fill the entire box, and then mark the correct box</b>		
<p><b>12. In your opinion, how much does your child's school encourage or discourage walking and biking to/from school?</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Encourages <input type="checkbox"/> Encourages <input type="checkbox"/> Neither <input type="checkbox"/> Discourages <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Discourages</p>		
<p><b>13. How much fun is walking or biking to/from school for your child?</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Very Fun <input type="checkbox"/> Fun <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Boring <input type="checkbox"/> Very Boring</p>		
<p><b>14. How healthy is walking or biking to/from school for your child?</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Very Healthy <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Unhealthy <input type="checkbox"/> Very Unhealthy</p>		
<b>Place a clear 'X' inside box. If you make a mistake, fill the entire box, and then mark the correct box</b>		
<p><b>15. What is the highest grade or year of school you completed?</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Grades 1 through 8 (Elementary) <input type="checkbox"/> College 1 to 3 years (Some college or technical school)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Grades 9 through 11 (Some high school) <input type="checkbox"/> College 4 years or more (College graduate)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Grade 12 or GED (High school graduate) <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer</p>		
<p><b>16. Please provide any additional comments below.</b></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px; margin-top: 5px;"></div>		

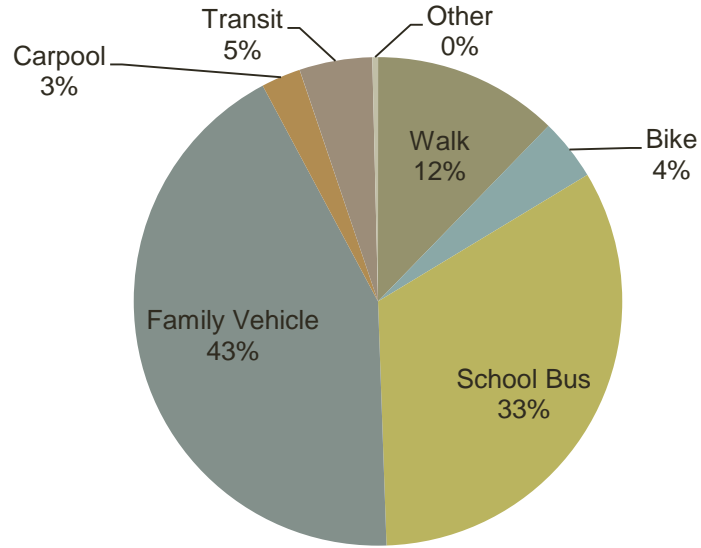
## Appendix H: Parent Survey Results



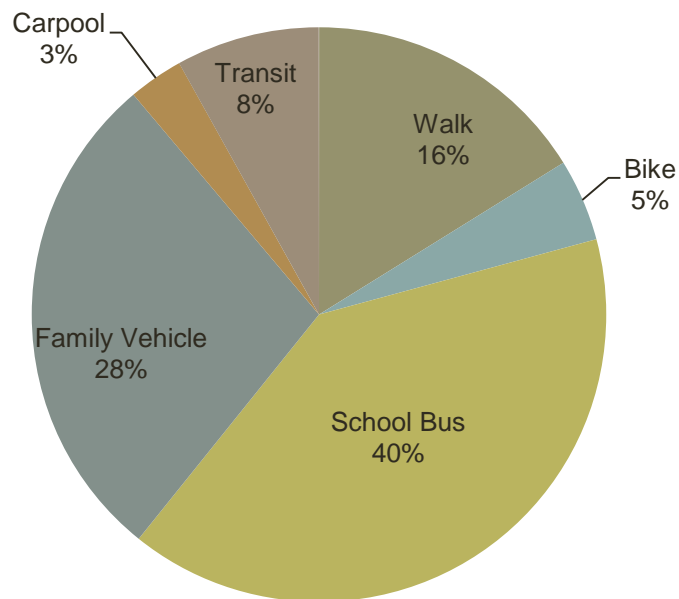
## Benson SRTS Parent Survey Results Fall, 2012



On most days, how does your child arrive to school?

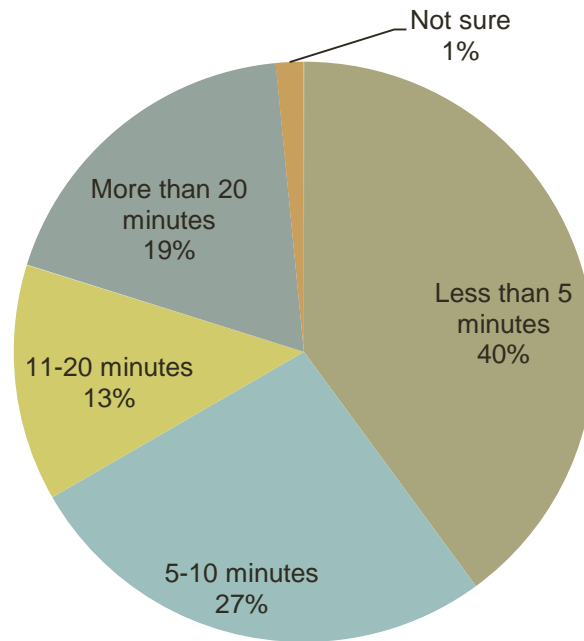


On most days, how does your child leave from school?

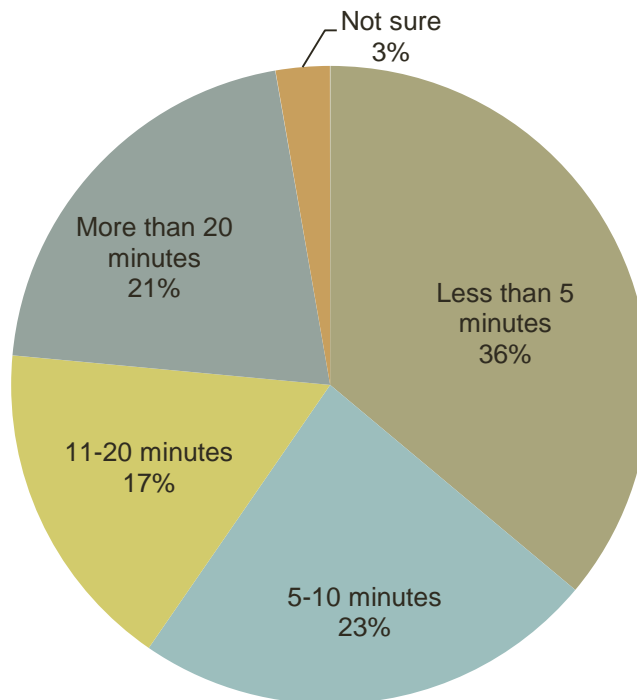




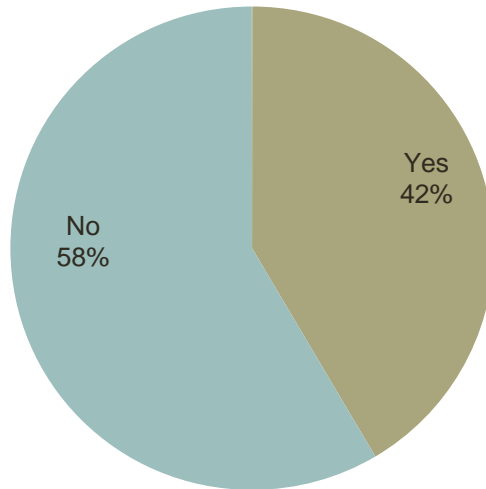
How long does it normally take your child to get to school?



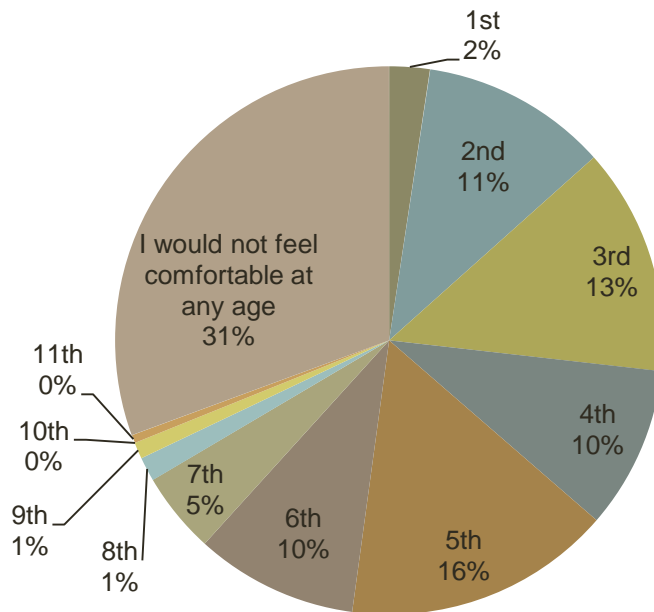
How long does it normally take your child to get home from school?



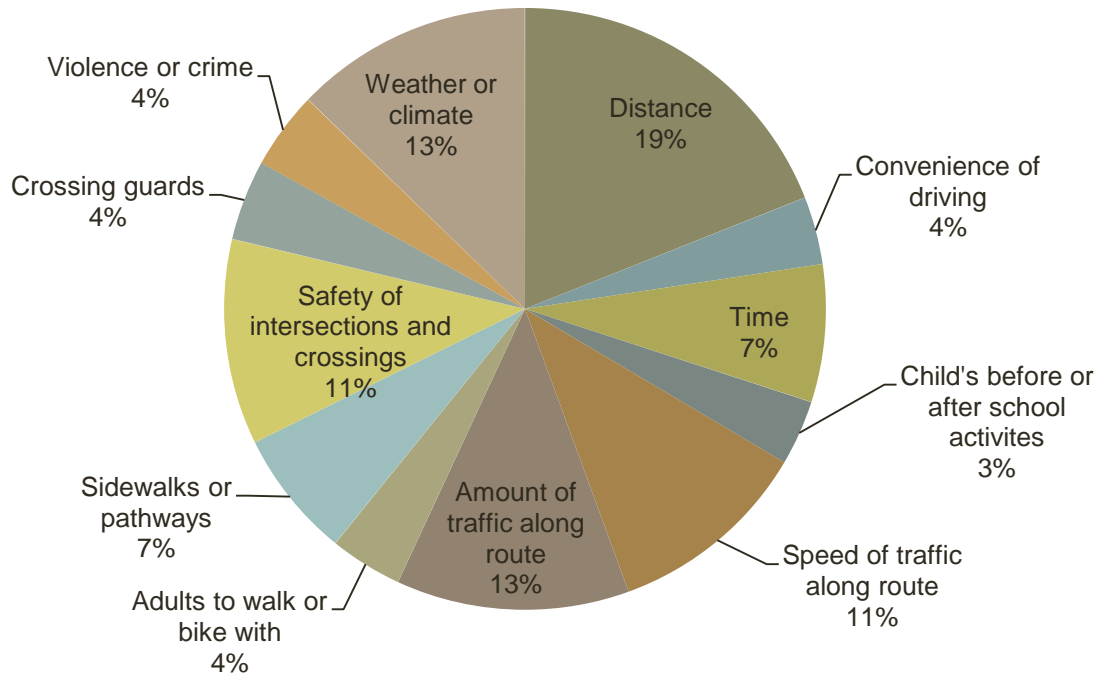
Has your child asked for your permission to walk or bike to/from school in the last year?



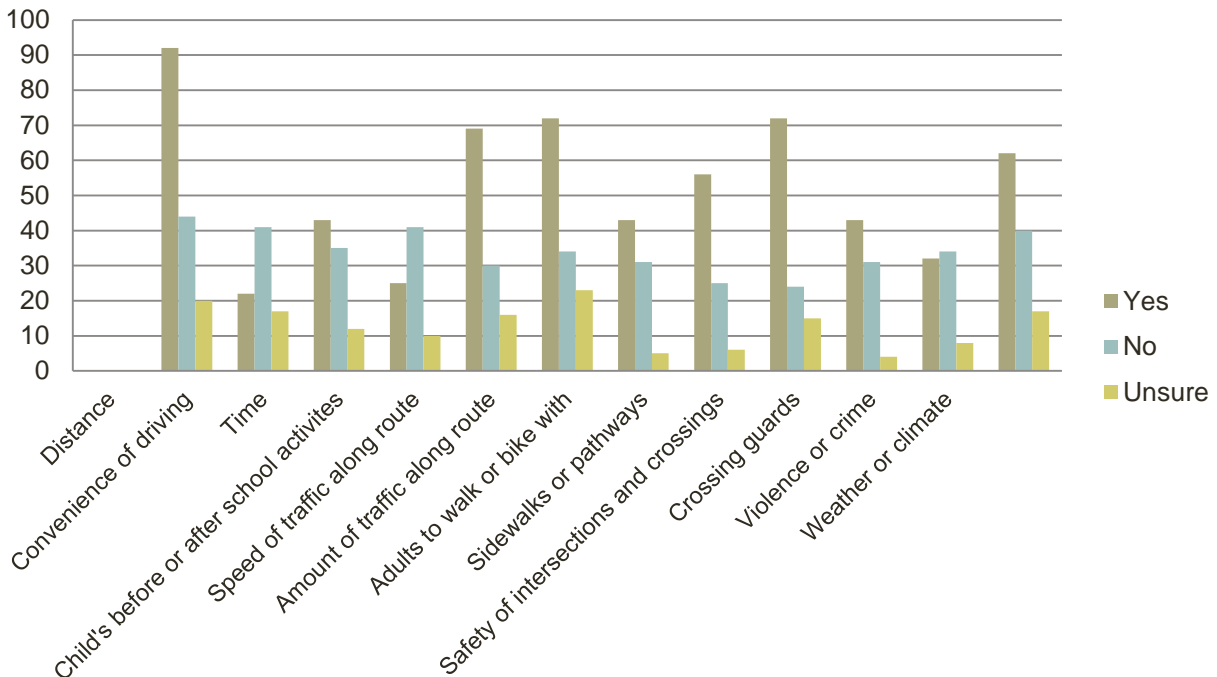
At what age would you allow your child to walk or bike to/from school without an adult?



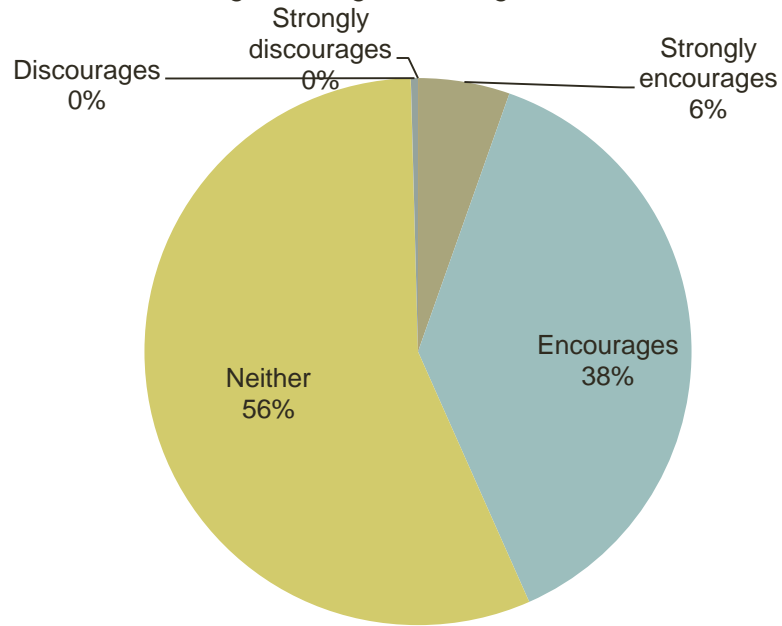
What of the following issues affect your decision to allow or not allow your child to walk or bike to/from school?



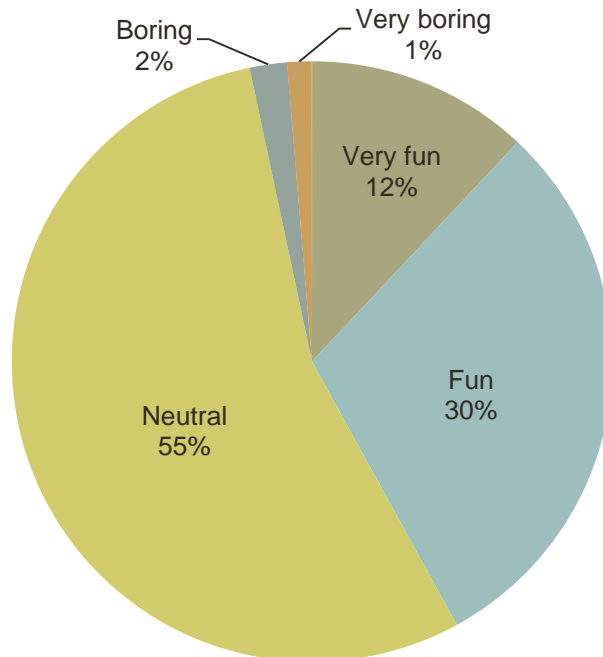
Would you probably let your child walk or bike to/from school if this problem were changed or improved?

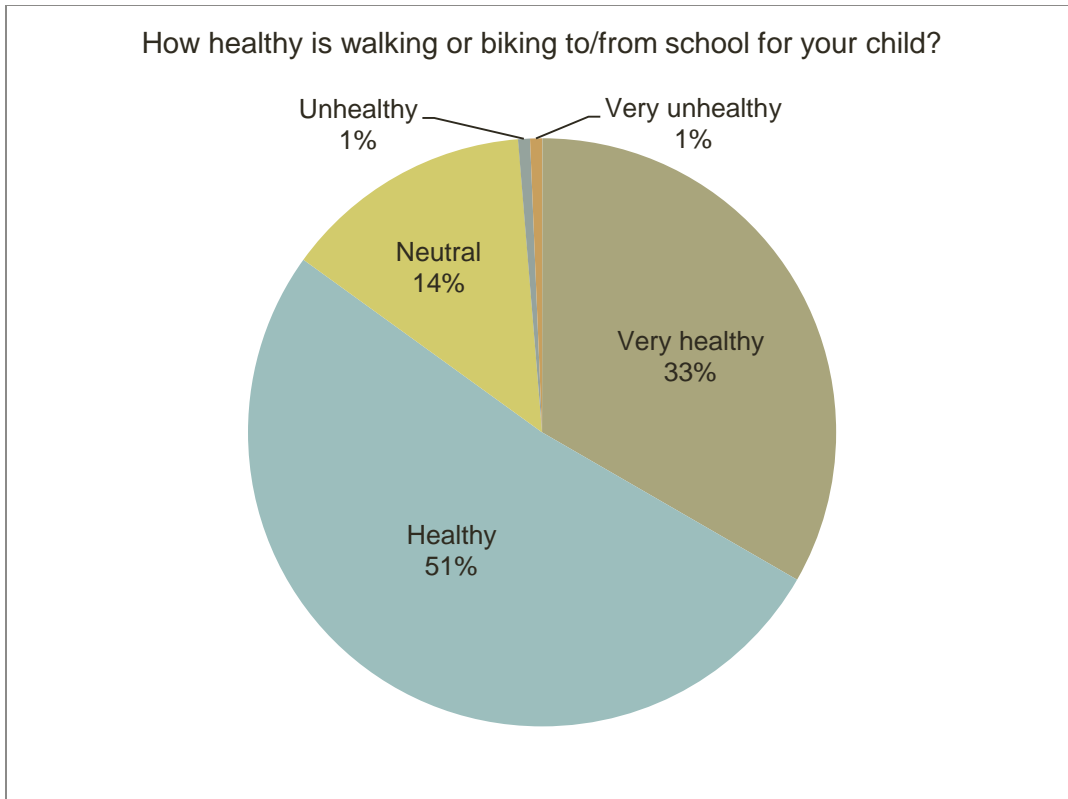


In your opinion, how much does your child's school encourage or discourage walking and biking to/from school?



How much fun is walking or biking to/from school for your child?





Parent Survey Comments:

- My kids ride to school with their dad who works at high school. We live 5 miles from school, so much of this does NOT apply to us. My younger daughter buses to/from school between buildings only.
- My child's safety is very important to me, as well as other children walking/biking. Crossing guards are very much needed in the morning and after school to help kids cross safely.
- Backpack is too heavy to walk far. Crossing the highway is dangerous.
- We live 5 miles out of town.
- My child rides a school bus. Survey does not really apply for him.
- We have to stop at daycare before school since I work at school it doesn't make sense to have her walk.
- We live too far away for my child to walk or bike to/from school.
- It's not safe.
- My children don't walk/bike because of where we live (rural). However, on occasion they do walk from the high school to my office and enjoy having this opportunity. They walk the same routes always when they do and they cross with the crossing guard at the highest traffic area.
- I feel much safer with her riding a city bus because it picks her up and drops her off right at the house, so I don't have to worry how far she has to walk and what kids will tease her.
- Walking would be greatly facilitated in Benson if there were more sidewalks and stop/yield signs. Also for bikers, more biking paths would be a great benefit.



- I worry most about something happening to my child due to the distance. Also my children are very active so I don't feel they need to bike/walk to school for the exercise. I know schools are trying to help kids be more healthy, but it NEEDS to start at home.
- We live out of city limits on a busy county road.
- We live close to school, but crossing guards leave early so they are not there when my child goes to school. Talked to principal regarding this, but they wouldn't do anything about it.
- Can't really give input, due to the fact that we just moved to the Benson area.
- We live in the country, 5 miles from town. 3 miles of that's gravel. I wouldn't recommend any of my kids to bike to school.
- If we lived in town I would walk with my kids to school every day, but we live 3.5 miles out on a state highway, so my kids will never walk to school.
- Our kids walk down our driveway in the mornings and up the driveway in the afternoon after being dropped off by the bus.
- My child walks to daycare after school which is three blocks away from the school.
- Cool survey—biking is great—safety is a priority.
- I really wish we did have a bike or walking path along highway 9.
- We live 10+ miles from town on/near a busy highway. Biking is not an option.
- My child walks to my worksite after school. It is healthy, but the weight of the backpack poses other health concerns.
- We live in Clontarf, so walking is not an option. If we lived in Benson I would strongly encourage it.
- My children would need to cross two major highways and ride bike/walk along one during the busiest times of the day.
- I do not feel this survey applies to our family since we live in the country 14 miles from the school.
- Wouldn't allow children to walk or bike, mainly due to distance, but even if in town, too many drugs inside and outside of schools.
- Need clear, precise, marked path for students to walk from HS to NS.
- My children avoid the bus whenever possible.
- I walk my kids to and from school, or have an adult friend.
- I walk my kids to and from school or have an adult friend walk with them.
- My child has walked to school a couple of times with other children. I wouldn't let him walk alone at this age.
- We live in Danvers. Would not walk or bike from Danvers. But takes city bus because too far to walk to school bus stop from day care.
- I worry most about something happening to my child due to the distance. Also, my children are very active so I don't feel they need to walk/bike to school for the exercise. I know schools are trying to help kids be more healthy but it NEEDS to start at home.
- It is nice to see the police at the school every morning, just so people slow down and watch for the kids.
- There are no stop signs or yield signs in the intersections my kids need to use.

- I think we should focus more on in school exercise and stretching activities.
- Ty lives out in the country and rides the bus or goes to town with his mom or me!
- I would be more comfortable letting her go alone if there were supervision at the intersection.
- My child is 6, that's why I won't let him go alone now.
- We live in the country—5 miles from town, 3 miles of that is gravel. I wouldn't recommend any of my kids to bike to school.
- I worry most about something happening to my children due to the distance. Also my children are very active so I don't feel they need to bike/walk to school for exercise.
- Fun to bike, boring to walk.
- When I requested a bike rack on the west side of the school, my request was granted. I was impressed with how accommodating the school was.
- We live 13 miles out of town so it's really not an option at this time.
- We live in the country, so may never let him/her walk/ride bike to school. We work during day and will probably always drop them off at school.
- My children avoid the bus whenever possible.
- Nathan has Down Syndrome and has no fear of danger, or perception of how to stay safe.
- A sidewalk along west side of school would help a ton! (20<sup>th</sup> St. N.)
- My children would need to cross two major highways and ride bike/walk along one during the busiest time of the day.
- We live across the tracks by the hospital and it is very busy with traffic. A lot safer to take the bus.
- Too much drug use in the community and in the schools, would not allow my children to be unsupervised at all in Benson, not even my high school kids.
- Children live out of town.
- Safety is a big concern for our family.
- I would rather encourage more physical activity in school than the few minutes to walk home.
- Living in MN, weather definitely plays a role. Once there is snow it is hard to cut across the playground from the N. and you end up on a road.

## Appendix I: Bike/Walk Audit Assessment Worksheets



## Walking Audit Form

School:  
Date:  
Weather:

Items to have along during audit:

- Clipboard and a pen/pencil
- Camera
- Map showing school zone

---

### Observations during drop-off / pickup

*Walkers / Bikers*

Include a description of where students are accessing campus.

*Bus System*

Show circulation on a map.  
Note where public transit stops are located.

*Car Loop / Lot*

Show circulation on a map.  
Note any cones, signs, etc. that are being used to control traffic.

*Crossing Guards / Patrols*

Note exact locations and mark on a map.

Observations were obtained during:

- ☐ Arrival ( \_\_: \_\_ AM - \_\_: \_\_ AM)  
☐ Dismissal ( \_\_: \_\_ PM - \_\_: \_\_ PM)

## **Observations from walking assessment**

### **School Infrastructure**

#### *Bike Racks*

In addition to location, note number of spaces and type of rack.

#### *Pedestrian Paths*

Note the surface type and find out if they are plowed in the winter.

### **Community Infrastructure (In school zone)**

#### *Sidewalks*

Note if there are any obvious issues such as major obstacles or deterioration of the surface.

#### *Bike Routes*

Are there bike lanes or other types of bicycle facilities?

#### *Streets*

Include traffic signs, speed control, signals and markings.

### *Intersections*

Provide detailed information on **crosswalks** (marked and what type?), **curb ramps** (do they exist and are they up to ADA standards), **traffic control** and **pavement markings**. Also, note crossing distances.

### *Traffic*

Note traffic patterns and driver behavior.

### **Community Infrastructure (around school zone)**

Note other community resources such as **parks** and **community centers** near the school. Also, note adjacent businesses that attract children such as convenience stores. Additionally, assess **other intersections or conflict areas** that have been identified outside of the school zone.

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Some general questions to ask during the walking audit:

*Do I have room to walk (are there sidewalks and paths)?*  
*Is it easy to cross streets?*  
*Do drivers behave well?*  
*Is the walk generally pleasant?*



## Appendix J: Bike/Walk Audit Assessment Results



## Walking Audit Form

School: Benson Elementary (grades 5+6)  
Date: 11/7/12  
Weather: Sunny, Chilly

Items to have along during audit:

- Clipboard and a pen/pencil
- Camera
- Map showing school zone

### Observations during drop-off / pickup

*Walkers / Bikers* access campus from all sides.

Include a description of where students are accessing campus.

### *Bus System*

Buses park in the loop at the front of the school.

Show circulation on a map.  
Note where public transit stops are located.

### *Car Loop / Lot*

Some park in the large parking lot at the front of the school, some drop off at the back of the school, and some on the street in front of the school (to the south).

Show circulation on a map.  
Note any cones, signs, etc. that are being used to control traffic.

### *Crossing Guards / Patrols*

There is one at 16th and MN Hwy 29 (and flashing crosswalk sign) and ~~one~~ one on the east side of the school along MN Hwy 9.

Note exact locations and mark on a map.

Observations were obtained during:

- ☐ Arrival (\_\_:\_\_ AM - \_\_:\_\_ AM)  
☒ Dismissal (2:50 PM - 3:15 PM)

## Observations from walking assessment

### **School Infrastructure**

#### *Bike Racks*

In addition to location, note number of spaces and type of rack.

#### *Pedestrian Paths*

Several bike/walk trails throughout the city. Sidewalks exist along many, but not all city streets.

Note the surface type and find out if they are plowed in the winter.

### **Community Infrastructure (in school zone)**

#### *Sidewalks*

Some deterioration of sidewalks and sidewalks are not present along all city streets.

Note if there are any obvious issues such as major obstacles or deterioration of the surface.

#### *Bike Routes*

Several ~~more~~ signed bike routes do exist throughout the city - along 18th St. However these were determined a while ago ~~and~~ and may need to be reassessed.

Are there bike lanes or other types of bicycle facilities?

#### *Streets*

Three major Highways (MN 9, MN 29, + US 12) divide the city of Benson. Several traffic signals exist downtown. Speeds can be higher (although marked 30 mph) on the highways that dissect the city.

Include traffic signs, speed control, signals and markings.

## Walking Audit Form

School: *Northside Elementary (Benson K-4)* Items to have along during audit:  
Date: *11/7/12*

- Clipboard and a pen/pencil
- Camera
- Map showing school zone

Weather: *Sunny, Chilly*

### Observations during drop-off / pickup

*Walkers / Bikers access campus from mostly the south east.*

Include a description of where students are accessing campus.

#### Bus System

*Buses park along the east side of the school in a bus driveway area.*

Show circulation on a map. Note where public transit stops are located.

#### Car Loop / Lot

*Cars line up along Montana Ave. on the south side of the school or park in a parking lot along 18th St. on the east side of the school.*

Show circulation on a map. Note any cones, signs, etc. that are being used to control traffic.

#### Crossing Guards / Patrols

*none.*

Note exact locations and mark on a map.

Observations were obtained during:

- ☐ Arrival (\_\_:\_\_ AM - \_\_:\_\_ AM)  
☒ Dismissal (*2:50* PM - *3:15* PM)

## **Observations from walking assessment**

### **School Infrastructure**

#### ***Bike Racks***

*At the front of the school on both the east and west ends.*

In addition to location, note number of spaces and type of rack.

#### ***Pedestrian Paths***

*some concrete sidewalks (but not on all streets leading up to the school).  
some bituminous multi-use trails, but they are a couple blocks from the school.*

Note the surface type and find out if they are plowed in the winter.

#### **Community Infrastructure (in school zone)**

#### ***Sidewalks***

*some deterioration of sidewalks.  
sidewalks not present along all streets.*

Note if there are any obvious issues such as major obstacles or deterioration of the surface.

#### ***Bike Routes***

*Some designated bike routes - along 18th St. But these were identified many years ago and should be re-assessed.*

Are there bike lanes or other types of bicycle facilities?

#### ***Streets***

*same comment as for Benson Elementary*

Include traffic signs, speed control, signals and markings.

### Intersections

same comments as  
Benson Elementary

Provide detailed information on **crosswalks** (marked and what type?), **curb ramps** (do they exist and are they up to ADA standards), **traffic control** and **pavement markings**. Also, note crossing distances.

### Traffic

Note traffic patterns and driver behavior.

### Community Infrastructure (around school zone)

Note other community resources such as **parks** and **community centers** near the school. Also, note adjacent businesses that attract children such as convenience stores. Additionally, assess **other intersections or conflict areas** that have been identified outside of the school zone.

Some general questions to ask during the walking audit:

*Do I have room to walk (are there sidewalks and paths)?*

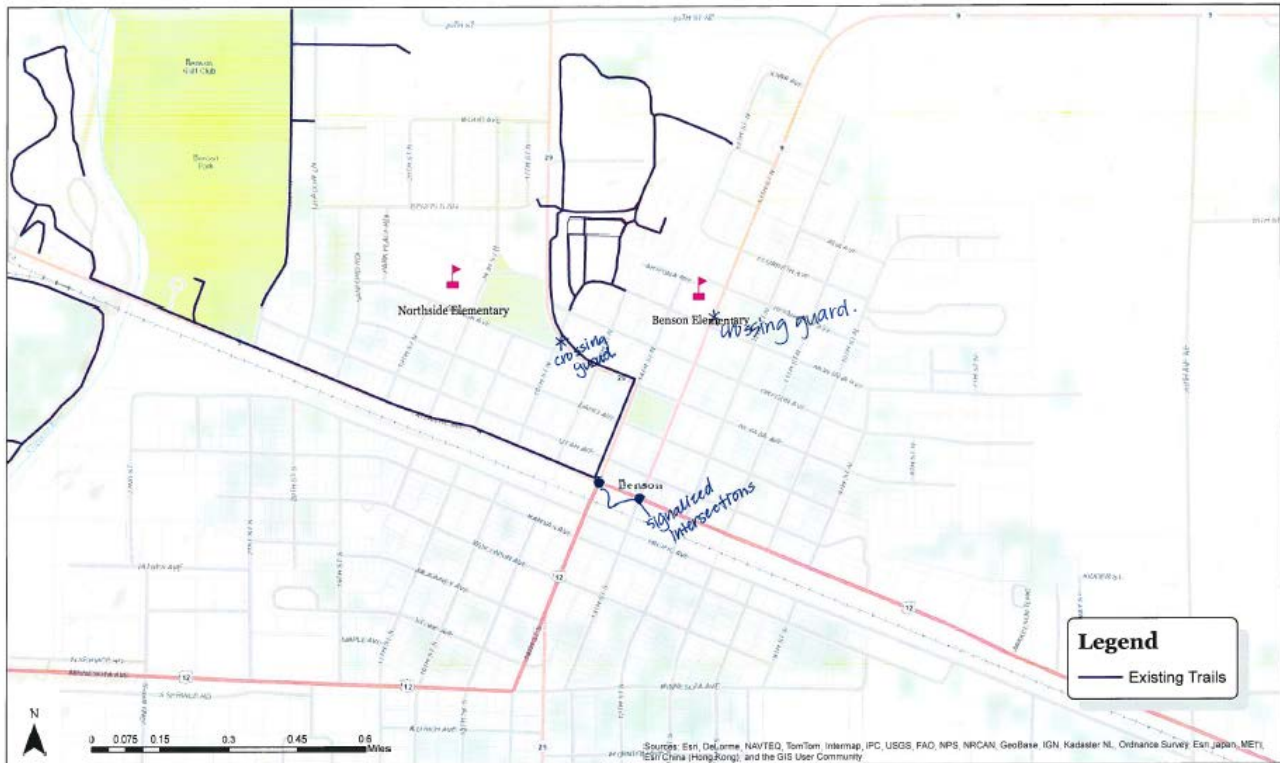
*Is it easy to cross streets?*

*Do drivers behave well?*

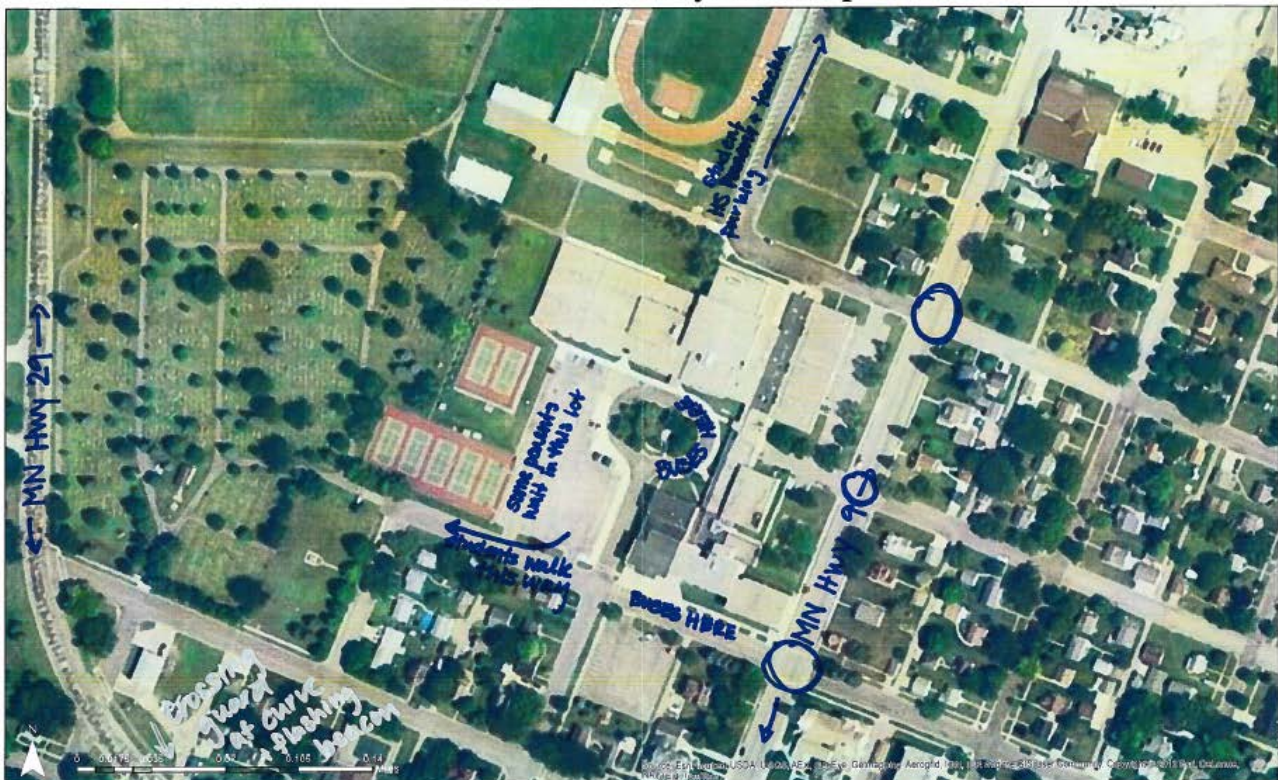
*Is the walk generally pleasant?*



## Benson, MN SRTS Map



## Benson Elementary SRTS Map (grades 5+6)



# Northside Elementary SRTS Map (K-4)





## Appendix K: MnDOT & Alta Planning Program Matrix



Education Programs Safe Routes to School Matrix							
Program Name	Description	Topics	Format	Target Audience	Primary Outcomes	Secondary Outcomes	Resource Notes
<b>Assemblies/ Game Shows</b>	Assemblies grab students' attention through fun, interactive activities, such as games, skills, or demonstrations. Safe Routes to School assemblies often cover pedestrian and/or bicycle safety but can also address bicycling skills, the environment, health, and other topics. A game show covering safety questions makes a good format for a smaller group such as a single classroom.	Bicycling; Walking; Bus/Transit; Driving/Carpool; Safety; Skills; Incentives; Environment; Health	Assembly; Event; Contest/Competition; Curriculum/Classroom Activity	Elementary; Middle School; High School; Teachers/Faculty/Staff; Parents; District; Neighbors	Increased Walking, Bicycling, Transit Use, and Carpooling; Improved Walking/Bicycling and Driving Safety Behavior; Health and Environmental Connections; Youth Empowerment	Increased Walking, Bicycling, Transit Use, and Carpooling; Improved Walking/Bicycling and Driving Safety Behavior; Health and Environmental Connections; Youth Empowerment	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> Parent, teacher, or administrator <b>Potential Partners:</b> Teachers/administrators/staff; PTA/parents; school district; public health/local gov't; local law enforcement; local groups/advocates/volunteers; League of American Bicyclists instructors; older students <b>Resources Needed:</b> Time for preparation/rehearsal; script/presentation; props; A/V equipment; class time; assembly venue
<b>Bicycle Rodeo</b>	Bicycle Rodeos are events that offer bicycle skills and safety stations for children - and sometimes parents - to visit (e.g., obstacle course, bicycle safety check, helmet fitting, instruction about the rules of the road, etc.). Bicycle rodeos can be held as part of a larger event or on their own, and either during the school day or outside of school. Adult volunteers can administer rodeos, or they may be offered through the local police or fire department.	Bicycling; Safety; Skills; Incentives; Family	Assembly; Event; Skills Training/Hands On Training; Information for Parents	Elementary; Middle School; Parents	Improved Walking/Bicycling Safety Behavior; Youth Empowerment	Increased Bicycling; Health and Environmental Connections	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> PTA/parents, local law enforcement, or bicycling group/enthusiast <b>Potential Partners:</b> Teachers/administrators/staff; PTA/parents; school district; public health/local gov't; local law enforcement; local groups/advocates/volunteers; League of American Bicyclists instructors; local bike shop/business; older students <b>Resources Needed:</b> Station content and materials; bicycles and safety gear; cones, street signs, and chalk; basic supplies; adult volunteers; planning/coordination time
<b>Bike Mechanic Training</b>	Learning bike repair skills encourages students and families to bicycle to school and empowers students to take charge of their own transportation. A bicycle mechanic training can be made available to students as a one-time basics lesson or as a multi-session course. This training can be offered after school or on weekends, and can be combined with an earn-a-bike program, bike rodeo, or bicycle safety/skills trainings.	Bicycling; Safety; Skills	Skills Training/Hands On Training	Middle School; High School	Increased Bicycling; Youth Empowerment	Improved Walking/Bicycling Safety Behavior; Health and Environmental Connections; Vocational Skills	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> PTA or local group/volunteer/business <b>Potential Partners:</b> Teachers/administrators/staff; PTA/parents; school district; local groups/advocates/volunteers; League of American Bicyclists instructors; local bike shop/business <b>Resources Needed:</b> Curriculum; instructor(s); bicycle repair tools and equipment; venue for classes; time for planning/coordination
<b>Classroom Lessons</b>	Safe Routes to School classroom lessons address walking and/or bicycling and other related topics while also meeting state or district curriculum standards. Lessons can be taught as part of many subjects, including math, science, social studies, health, and physical education.	Bicycling; Walking; Bus/Transit; Driving/Carpool; Safety; Skills; Environment; Health	Curriculum/Classroom Activity	Elementary; Middle School; High School; Teachers/Faculty/Staff	Increased Walking, Bicycling, Transit Use, and Carpooling; Improved Walking/Bicycling Safety Behavior; Health and Environmental Connections; Youth Empowerment	Increased Walking, Bicycling, Transit Use, and Carpooling; Improved Walking/Bicycling Safety Behavior; Health and Environmental Connections; Youth Empowerment	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> Teacher/administrator <b>Potential Partners:</b> School district; PTA/parents; public health/local gov't; local groups/advocates/volunteers <b>Resources Needed:</b> Curriculum; preparation time; class time; any visuals, worksheets, or instruction materials
<b>Earn-A-Bike Program</b>	Over a number of sessions, students learn the basics of bike repair and maintenance, bicycle safety, and related topics while refurbishing an abandoned or donated bike. At the end of the program, students earn the bikes they learned to repair.	Bicycling; Safety; Skills; Incentives; Environment; Health	Incentive Program; Skills Training/Hands On Training	Middle School; High School	Increased Bicycling; Improved Walking/Bicycling Safety Behavior; Youth Empowerment	Health and Environmental Connections; Vocational Skills	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> PTA or local group/volunteer <b>Potential Partners:</b> Teachers/administrators/staff; PTA/parents; school district; local groups/advocates/volunteers; League of American Bicyclists instructors; local bike shop/business <b>Resources Needed:</b> Curriculum; instructor(s); bicycles, helmets, and safety gear; bike repair tools; time for planning/coordination; storage space
<b>Family Biking Class</b>	Family Biking Classes are great tools for educating and encouraging families to ride bicycles. Education trainings can cover safety checks, skills instruction, basic bike maintenance, how to carry kids by bicycle, cargo bike demonstrations, bike rodeos, and/or guided bike rides.	Bicycling; Safety; Skills; Incentives; Environment; Health; Family	Event; Skills Training/Hands On Training; Information for Parents	Elementary; Parents	Increased Bicycling; Improved Walking/Bicycling Safety Behavior	Health and Environmental Connections	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> Parents/PTA or bicycling group/unithust <b>Potential Partners:</b> Teachers/administrators/staff; PTA/parents; school district; public health/local gov't; local groups/advocates/volunteers; League of American Bicyclists instructors; local bike shop/business <b>Resources Needed:</b> Curriculum; instructor; materials/handouts; bicycles/gear for demonstration and training; preparation time; venue for classes



Education Programs Safe Routes to School Matrix							
Program Name	Description	Topics	Format	Target Audience	Primary Outcomes	Secondary Outcomes	Resource Notes
<b>Family Biking Guide</b>	This guide is a how-to manual on family biking, including cargo bikes and gear, safety considerations, tips for picking a route, ideas for rides, etc. The guide can be distributed as part of an event or training or to interested parents at school.	Bicycling; Safety; Skills; Environment; Health; Family	Information for Parents	Elementary; Parents	Increased Bicycling; Improved Walking/Bicycling Safety Behavior	Health and Environmental Connections	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> Parents/PTA or local groups/gov't. <b>Potential Partners:</b> Teachers/administrators/staff; PTA/parents; school district; public health/local gov't; local law enforcement; local groups/advocates/volunteers; League of American Bicyclists instructors; local business <b>Resources Needed:</b> Time to prepare guide and distribution strategy; platform for posting online or funds for printing copies
<b>Idling Reduction Campaign</b>	Car exhaust not only pollutes, it also disproportionately affects the health of exposed children. An anti-idling campaign debunks myths about idling your car and encourages drivers to spare the air by turning off their engines when waiting for student dismissal. The campaign can include street signs, a marketing campaign led by students, and informational materials for parents. Materials may be produced in school, but the campaign will likely take place during pick-up/drop-off or outside of school.	Bus/Transit; Driving/Carpool; Safety; Environment; Health; Family	Campaign; Information for Parents	Elementary; Middle School; High School; Parents; District	Improved Driving Safety Behavior; Health Connections; Environmental Connections	Youth Empowerment	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> Parents/PTA, local groups/government, or student group <b>Potential Partners:</b> School district; teachers/administrators/staff; PTA/parents; public health/local gov't; students <b>Resources Needed:</b> Preparation time; informational materials/signs
<b>In-School Bicycle Safety Education</b>	Bicycle safety training is most appropriate beginning in or after the third grade. It helps children understand that they have the same responsibility as motorists to obey traffic laws. In-school curriculum often includes three parts: in-class lessons, mock-street scenarios or skills practice, and on-street riding. Various existing curricula are available online from a number of sources at no cost, or schools may choose to develop one on their own.	Bicycling; Safety; Skills	Assembly; Skills Training/Hands On Training; Curriculum/Classroom Activity	Elementary; Middle School	Improved Walking/Bicycling Safety Behavior; Youth Empowerment	Increased Bicycling; Health and Environmental Connections	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> Teacher/administrator <b>Potential Partners:</b> PTA/parents; school district; public health/local gov't; local law enforcement; local groups/advocates/volunteers; League of American Bicyclists instructors <b>Resources Needed:</b> Curriculum; class time; time for instructor training/preparation, if needed; bicycles, helmets, and safety gear; cones, street signs, and chalk; basic supplies; chaperones
<b>In-School Pedestrian Safety Education</b>	Pedestrian safety education aims to ensure that every child understands basic traffic laws and safety rules. It teaches students basic traffic safety, sign identification, and decision-making tools. Training is typically recommended for first- and second-graders and teaches lessons such as "look left, right, and left again". Curriculum often includes three parts: in-class lessons, mock street scenarios, and on-street practice. Various existing curricula are available online at no cost, or schools may choose to develop one on their own.	Walking; Safety; Skills	Assembly; Skills Training/Hands On Training; Curriculum/Classroom Activity	Elementary	Improved Walking/Bicycling Safety Behavior; Youth Empowerment	Increased Walking; Health and Environmental Connections	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> Teacher/administrator <b>Potential Partners:</b> PTA/parents; school district; public health/local gov't; local law enforcement; local groups/advocates/volunteers; older students <b>Resources Needed:</b> Curriculum; class time; time for instructor training/preparation, if needed; mock street and street signs; basic supplies; one or more adult chaperones
<b>Mock City</b>	A mock city provides a safe environment in which students can learn pedestrian, bicycle, or general traffic safety. A course is built or set up and students walk, bike, or "drive" through to learn appropriate behaviors in various street situations. A mock city requires a lot of work or a partnership with an organization that already has the equipment. This program can take place in or out of school, and is a memorable experience for students.	Bicycling; Walking; Bus/Transit; Driving/Carpool; Safety; Skills	Assembly; Event; Skills Training/Hands On Training	Elementary	Improved Walking/Bicycling Safety Behavior; Youth Empowerment	Increased Walking, Bicycling, Transit Use, and Carpooling; Improved Driving Safety Behavior	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> Local law enforcement <b>Potential Partners:</b> School district; teachers/administrators/staff; PTA/parents; public health/local gov't; local groups/advocates/volunteers; older students <b>Resources Needed:</b> Mock city and curriculum
<b>Parent Workshop</b>	Since parents are usually the ones deciding whether their children walk or bike to school, a workshop designed for them can provide the tools, resources, and support needed to begin walking or biking for transportation. Topics could include starting a walking school bus, carpool matching, launching a safety campaign, how to be a responsible driver, or organizing an event, such as Walk and Bike to School Day.	Bicycling; Walking; Bus/Transit; Driving/Carpool; Safety; Skills; Incentives; Environment; Health; Family	Event; Skills Training/Hands On Training; Information for Parents	Elementary; Middle School; High School; Parents	Increased Walking, Bicycling, Transit Use, and Carpooling; Improved Walking/Bicycling and Driving Safety Behavior; Health and Environmental Connections	Increased Walking, Bicycling, Transit Use, and Carpooling; Improved Walking/Bicycling and Driving Safety Behavior; Health and Environmental Connections	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> Parents/PTA or local groups/gov't. <b>Potential Partners:</b> Teachers/administrators/staff; PTA/parents; school district; public health/local gov't; local law enforcement; local groups/advocates/volunteers; League of American Bicyclists instructors <b>Resources Needed:</b> Presentation/agenda; instructor; materials/handouts; time for preparation and scheduling
<b>Walk and Bike to School Route Map</b>	Route maps show signs, signals, crosswalks, sidewalks, paths, crossing guard locations, and hazardous locations around a school. They identify the best way to walk or bike to school. Liability concerns are sometimes cited as reasons not to publish maps; while no route will be completely free of safety concerns, a well-defined route should provide the greatest physical separation between students and traffic, expose students to the lowest traffic speeds, and use the fewest and safest crossings.	Bicycling; Walking; Bus/Transit; Driving/Carpool; Safety; Family	Information for Parents	Elementary; Middle School; High School; Parents	Improved Walking/Bicycling Safety Behavior	Increased Walking, Bicycling, Transit Use, and Carpooling	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> Public health/local government <b>Potential Partners:</b> School district; teachers/administrators/staff; PTA/parents; local groups/advocates/volunteers; local law enforcement <b>Resources Needed:</b> Time and technology to prepare map; funds for printing; platform for posting online; approval to distribute

For downloadable pdf of activity matrix, click [here](#).

Encouragement Programs Safe Routes to School Matrix							
Program Name	Description	Topics	Format	Target Audience	Primary Outcomes	Secondary Outcomes	Resource Notes
<b>After-School Club</b>	An after-school club can take many forms and address many different themes, including bike repair, sport cycling, environmental issues (green teams), community/civic engagement, etc.	Bicycling; Walking; Safety; Skills; Environment; Health	Skills Training/ Hands On Training; Campaign	Elementary; Middle School; High School	Increased Walking, Bicycling, Transit Use and Carpooling; Improved Walking/Bicycling and Driving Safety Behavior; Health and Environmental Connections; Youth Empowerment	Increased Walking, Bicycling, Transit Use and Carpooling; Improved Walking/Bicycling and Driving Safety Behavior; Health and Environmental Connections; Youth Empowerment	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> Teacher/parent, local groups/advocates/volunteers <b>Potential Partners:</b> Teachers/administrators/staff; PTA/parents; school district; local groups/advocates/volunteers <b>Resources Needed:</b> Materials/supplies/equipment as needed; planning/instruction time
<b>Bike Train</b>	A Bike Train is very similar to a Walking School Bus: groups of students accompanied by one or more adults bicycle together on a pre-planned route to school. Routes can originate from a particular neighborhood or, in order to include children who live too far to bicycle the whole way, begin from a park, parking lot, or other meeting place. Bike trains help address parents' safety concerns while providing a chance for students and their families to socialize and be active.	Bicycling; Safety; Skills; Incentives; Environment; Health; Family	Event; School Journey/ Pick-up and Drop-off	Elementary; Middle School; Parents	Increased Bicycling	Improved Walking/Bicycling Safety Behavior; Health and Environmental Connections	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> PTA/parents <b>Potential Partners:</b> Teachers/administrators/staff; PTA/parents; school district; public health/local gov't; local law enforcement; local groups/advocates/volunteers; local businesses/celebrities <b>Resources Needed:</b> Coordination/recruitment time; promotional materials, such as flyers/posters; supplies/materials, if needed
<b>Competition/Challenge</b>	Competitions and contests reward students by tracking the number of times they walk, bike, carpool or take transit to school. Contests can be individual, classroom competitions, school wide, or between schools. Students and classrooms can compete for prizes and bragging rights. Inexpensive incentives - such as shoelaces, stickers, bike helmets, or class parties - can be used as rewards for participation. Examples include a Golden Sneaker Award classroom competition or a Walk and Bike to School Day challenge. See also: Trip/Mileage Tracking Program	Bicycling; Walking; Bus/Transit; Driving/Carpool; Incentives; Environment; Health; Family	Event; Contest/Competition	Elementary; Middle School; High School	Increased Walking, Bicycling, Transit Use and Carpooling; Youth Empowerment	Health and Environmental Connections	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> Faculty/staff or PTA <b>Potential Partners:</b> Teachers/administrators/staff; PTA/parents; school district; local groups/advocates/volunteers; older students; local business <b>Resources Needed:</b> Coordination time; promotional materials, such as flyers/posters; program materials, such as posters for tracking; rewards or prizes
<b>Family Bike Ride</b>	A family bike ride will generally take place in the evening or on a weekend, and is designed to give students and their family members an opportunity for safely giving bicycling a try and socializing with other families. Rides often have themes, always have a pre-planned route and designated route leader, and offer safety checks and basic skills reinforcement.	Bicycling; Safety; Skills; Environment; Health; Family	Event	Elementary; Middle School; Parents	Increased Bicycling; Improved Walking/Bicycling Safety Behavior	Health and Environmental Connections	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> Parent or local group/volunteer <b>Potential Partners:</b> Teachers/administrators/staff; PTA/parents; public health/local gov't; local groups/advocates/volunteers <b>Resources Needed:</b> Planning/coordination time; ride leader and volunteers; promotional materials; bicycles, safety gear, and basic repair tools
<b>International Walk and Bike to School Day</b>	Walk and Bike to School Day is an international event that attracts millions of participants in over 30 countries in October. The event encourages students and their families to try walking or bicycling to school. Parents and other adults accompany students, and staging areas can be designated along the route to school where groups can gather and walk or bike together. These events are often promoted through press releases, backpack/folder/electronic mail, newsletter articles, and posters. Students can earn incentives for participating or there is a celebration at school following the morning event. These events can be held for more than a day; see Ongoing Walk and Bike to School Days.	Bicycling; Walking; Incentives; Environment; Health; Family	Event; School Journey/ Pick-up and Drop-off	Elementary; Middle School	Increased Walking and Bicycling; Youth Empowerment	Improved Walking/Bicycling Safety Behavior; Health and Environmental Connections	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> PTA/parents or local groups/volunteers <b>Potential Partners:</b> Teachers/administrators/staff; PTA/parents; school district; public health/local gov't; local law enforcement; local groups/advocates/volunteers; older students; local business; local celebrities <b>Resources Needed:</b> Coordination time; promotional materials, such as flyers/posters; program materials; rewards or prizes
<b>Ongoing Walk and Bike to School Days</b>	Ongoing walk and bike to school days are organized events encouraging students to walk or bicycle to school. These events can be held monthly, weekly, or even on an ongoing basis, depending on organization capacity, the level of support, and school interest. Like Walk and Bike to School Day, incentives or celebrations recognize students' efforts. See International Walk and Bike to School Day for more information.	Bicycling; Walking; Incentives; Environment; Health; Family	Event; School Journey/ Pick-up and Drop-off	Elementary; Middle School	Increased Walking and Bicycling; Youth Empowerment	Improved Walking/Bicycling Safety Behavior; Health and Environmental Connections	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> PTA/parents or local groups/volunteers <b>Potential Partners:</b> Teachers/administrators/staff; PTA/parents; school district; public health/local gov't; local law enforcement; local groups/advocates/volunteers; older students; local business; local celebrities <b>Resources Needed:</b> Coordination time; promotional materials, such as flyers/posters; program materials; rewards or prizes



Encouragement Programs Safe Routes to School Matrix							
Program Name	Description	Topics	Format	Target Audience	Primary Outcomes	Secondary Outcomes	Resource Notes
<b>Park and Walk</b>	This program is designed to encourage families to park several blocks from school and walk the rest of the way to school. Not all students are able to walk or bike the whole distance to school; they may live too far away or their route may include hazardous traffic situations. This program allows students who are unable to walk or bike to school a chance to participate in Safe Routes to School programs. It also helps reduce traffic congestion at the school.	Walking; Bus/Transit; Driving/Carpool; Safety; Skills; Incentives; Environment; Health; Family	Event; School Journey/ Pick-up and Drop-off	Elementary; Middle School; Parents	Increased Walking	Improved Walking/Bicycling Safety Behavior; Health and Environmental Connections	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> PTA/parents <b>Potential Partners:</b> Teachers/administrators/staff; PTA/parents; school district; local law enforcement; local groups/advocates/volunteers; local businesses/celebrities <b>Resources Needed:</b> Coordination/recruitment time; promotional materials, such as flyers/posters; supplies/materials, if needed
<b>Poster, T-Shirt, or Video Contest</b>	These types of activities are great for engaging middle and high school students in Safe Routes to School efforts. Students can get creative for a cause by designing and producing posters, t-shirts, videos, or other materials that communicate about active transportation. A contest like this can be combined with any type of campaign, like a school safety campaign or anti-idling campaign.	Bicycling; Walking; Bus/Transit; Driving/Carpool; Safety; Skills; Incentives; Environment; Health	Contest/Competition; Campaign; Information for Parents	Elementary; Middle School; High School	Increased Walking, Bicycling, Transit Use and Carpooling; Improved Walking/Bicycling and Driving Safety Behavior; Health and Environmental Connections; Youth Empowerment	Increased Walking, Bicycling, Transit Use and Carpooling; Improved Walking/Bicycling and Driving Safety Behavior; Health and Environmental Connections; Youth Empowerment	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> Teacher/parent <b>Potential Partners:</b> Teachers/administrators/staff; PTA/parents; school district; public health/local gov't; local law enforcement; local business; students <b>Resources Needed:</b> Materials/equipment as needed; promotional materials; oversight time; class time (if desired); funds for production/printing
<b>Trip/ Mileage Tracking Program</b>	A trip or mileage tracking program can be implemented as an opt-in club, a classroom activity, or a collaborative school-wide event. Students track trips or mileage made by walking, bicycling, transit, and/or carpool with some type of goal or culminating celebration or reward. Students can work towards a certain milestone to earn a prize or raffle entry, or they can track their individual or group progress as miles across their town, the state of Minnesota, or the United States. Example programs include Pollution Punchcards or Walk Across America. See also: Competition/Challenge	Bicycling; Walking; Bus/Transit; Driving/Carpool; Incentives; Environment; Health; Family	Event; Incentive Program	Elementary; Middle School; High School	Increased Walking, Bicycling, Transit Use and Carpooling; Youth Empowerment	Health and Environmental Connections	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> Faculty/staff or PTA <b>Potential Partners:</b> Teachers/administrators/staff; PTA/parents; school district; local groups/advocates/volunteers; older students; local business <b>Resources Needed:</b> Coordination time; promotional materials, such as flyers/posters; program materials, such as punchcards or classroom posters for tracking; rewards or prizes
<b>Walk/Bike Field Trip</b>	A field trip made by foot or by bicycle gives students a supportive environment in which to practice their pedestrian safety or bicycling skills and showcases the many benefits of walking and bicycling for transportation, including health and physical activity, pollution reduction, and cost savings. The destination of the field trip may vary, or the field trip could be the ride itself.	Bicycling; Safety; Skills; Environment; Health	Event	Elementary; Middle School; High School; Teachers/Faculty/Staff; Parents	Increased Bicycling; Improved Walking/Bicycling Safety Behavior; Youth Empowerment	Health and Environmental Connections	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> Teacher/parent <b>Potential Partners:</b> Teachers/administrators/staff; PTA/parents; school district; public health/local gov't; local groups/advocates/volunteers <b>Resources Needed:</b> Coordination time; bicycles, helmets, and safety gear; permission slips; basic repair tools; adult chaperones
<b>Walking School Bus</b>	A Walking School Bus is a group of children walking to school with one or more adults. Parents can take turns leading the bus, which follows the same route every time and picks up children from their homes or designated bus stops at designated times. Ideally, buses run every day or on a regular schedule so families can count on it, but they often begin as a one-time pilot event. A Walking School Bus can be as informal as a few parents alternating to walk their children to school, but often it is a well-organized, PTA-led effort to encourage walking to school.	Walking; Driving/Carpool; Safety; Skills; Incentives; Environment; Health; Family	Event; School Journey/ Pick-up and Drop-off	Elementary; Middle School; Parents	Increased Walking	Improved Walking/Bicycling Safety Behavior; Health and Environmental Connections	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> PTA/parents <b>Potential Partners:</b> Teachers/administrators/staff; PTA/parents; school district; public health/local gov't; local law enforcement; local groups/advocates/volunteers; local businesses/celebrities <b>Resources Needed:</b> Coordination/recruitment time; promotional materials, such as flyers/posters; supplies/materials, if needed



Enforcement Programs Safe Routes to School Matrix							
Program Name	Description	Topics	Format	Target Audience	Primary Outcomes	Secondary Outcomes	Resource Notes
<b>Automated Enforcement</b>	Some types of enforcement do not require the presence of a law enforcement officer and are automated. Photo detection, radar trailers, or speed feedback signs are examples of automated enforcement.	Bicycling; Walking; Bus/Transit; Driving/Carpool; Safety; Family	Campaign; Information for Parents	Elementary; Middle School; High School; Parents; Neighbors	Improved Driving Safety Behavior	Increased Walking and Bicycling	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> Local law enforcement <b>Potential Partners:</b> School district; teachers/administrators/staff; public health/local gov't; PTA/parents; local groups/advocates/volunteers <b>Resources Needed:</b> Funding for police overtime (not always required, but can be helpful); equipment; promotional/educational materials (if desired)
<b>Crossing Guards</b>	Crossing guards are trained adults, paid or volunteer, who are legally empowered to stop traffic to assist students with crossing the street.	Bicycling; Walking; Bus/Transit; Driving/Carpool; Safety	Skills Training/ Hands On Training; School Journey/ Pick-up and Drop-off	Elementary; Middle School; Parents; Neighbors	Improved Walking/Bicycling Safety Behavior; Improved Driving Safety Behavior	Increased Walking and Bicycling	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> School district, school administration, local law enforcement, or PTA <b>Potential Partners:</b> School district; teachers/administrators/staff; PTA/parents; public health/local gov't; local law enforcement; local groups/advocates/volunteers <b>Resources Needed:</b> Training materials; funding to pay crossing guards; safety vests and stop signs
<b>Drop-off Student Valet Program</b>	In a valet program, students, teachers, or volunteers are trained to assist with drop-off and pick-up procedures to expedite and standardize the process. This allows students to get in and out of cars safely and quickly, discouraging parents from unsafe behaviors and reducing hazards for students arriving or leaving school.	Bicycling; Walking; Bus/Transit; Driving/Carpool; Safety; Family	Skills Training/ Hands On Training; School Journey/ Pick-up and Drop-off	Elementary; Middle School; Parents	Improved Driving Safety Behavior; Youth Empowerment	Improved Walking/Bicycling Safety Behavior; Environmental Connections	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> School district, school administration, or PTA <b>Potential Partners:</b> School district; teachers/administrators/staff; PTA/parents; public health/local gov't; local law enforcement; local groups/advocates/volunteers; older students <b>Resources Needed:</b> Training materials; supervision/oversight; safety vests
<b>Law Enforcement</b>	Enforcement tools are aimed at ensuring compliance with traffic and parking laws in school zones. Enforcement activities help to reduce common poor driving behavior, such as speeding, failing to yield to pedestrians, turning illegally, parking illegally, and other violations. Law enforcement actions include School Zone Speeding Enforcement and Crosswalk Stings. Other enforcement actions can be led by the school administration, such as parking lot citations.	Bicycling; Walking; Bus/Transit; Driving/Carpool; Safety; Family	Campaign; Information for Parents	Elementary; Middle School; High School; Parents; Neighbors	Improved Driving Safety Behavior	Increased Walking and Bicycling	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> Local law enforcement, school district, or administration <b>Potential Partners:</b> School district; teachers/administrators/staff; public health/local gov't; local law enforcement; PTA/parents; local groups/advocates/volunteers; local businesses <b>Resources Needed:</b> Funding for police overtime (not always required, but can be helpful); equipment; promotional/educational materials (if desired)
<b>School Safety Campaign</b>	A safety campaign is an effective way to build awareness around students walking and biking to school and to encourage safe driving behavior among parents and passersby. A School Traffic Safety Campaign can use media at or near schools - such as posters, business window stickers, yard signs, and/or street banners - to remind drivers to slow down and use caution in school zones. This type of campaign can also address other specific hazards or behaviors, such as walking or bicycling to school, school bus safety, and/or parent drop-off and pick-up behavior.	Bicycling; Walking; Bus/Transit; Driving/Carpool; Safety; Skills; Environment; Health; Family	Campaign; Information for Parents	Elementary; Middle School; High School; Parents; Neighbors	Improved Walking/Bicycling and Driving Safety Behavior; Youth Empowerment	Increased Walking, Bicycling, Transit Use and Carpooling; Health and Environmental Connections	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> School administration or PTA <b>Potential Partners:</b> School district; teachers/administrators/staff; PTA/parents; public health/local gov't; local law enforcement; local groups/advocates/volunteers; students; local businesses <b>Resources Needed:</b> Promotional materials and collateral; advertising (if desired); time to supervise/oversee student efforts
<b>School Safety Patrols</b>	School safety patrols are trained student volunteers responsible for enforcing drop-off and pick-up procedures and assisting with street crossing. They do not stop vehicular traffic, but rather look for openings and then direct students to cross. Student safety patrols increase safety for students and traffic flow efficiency for parents.	Bicycling; Walking; Bus/Transit; Driving/Carpool; Safety	Skills Training/ Hands On Training; School Journey/ Pick-up and Drop-off	Elementary; Middle School	Improved Walking/Bicycling Safety Behavior; Improved Driving Safety Behavior; Youth Empowerment	Increased Walking and Bicycling; Environmental Connections	<b>Potential Lead/Champion:</b> School district, school administration, or PTA <b>Potential Partners:</b> School district; teachers/administrators/staff; PTA/parents; public health/local gov't; local law enforcement; local groups/advocates/volunteers; older students <b>Resources Needed:</b> Training materials; supervision/oversight; safety vests