

NORTHEAST IOWA

Regional Safe Routes to School Plan



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Today, more than **4,566** schools and communities in all corners of the United States are working to create opportunities for children to safely walk and bicycle to school.

-National Safe Routes to School Program Report

Chapter 1 Introduction

Safe Routes to School Program Background

The following section provides an overview of the National Safe Routes to School program and highlights a number of national and regional perspectives on issues related to health, the environment, and community development trends.

National Safe Routes to School Program

The national Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program was established in August 2005 in Section 1404 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equality Act - A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). This federal transportation legislation designated \$612 million in transportation funds for SRTS programs nationwide from 2005 through 2009. Since the beginning of the SRTS program in Iowa in 2005, the state has received over \$6 million for SRTS infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects. Northeast Iowa has received \$328,000 for infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects.

The national Safe Routes to School Program strives to make it safe for walking and biking where it is not currently safe and to encourage more kids to walk and bike to and from school. The national SRTS Program has three main goals:

1. To enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school;
2. To make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age; and
3. To facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools.¹

The national SRTS program uses a multi-strategy approach called the 5E's (Evaluation, Engineering, Education, Enforcement and Encouragement), to promote safe travel to and from school. The Regional Recommendations in Chapter 4 for the 5-counties in Northeast Iowa correspond to this 5E approach.



Elementary students in Northeast Iowa are able to cross the street safely with the aid of volunteer crossing guards. Crossing guards serve a number of roles within the 5E's by *enforcing* school policies and *educating* and *encouraging* safe driving and pedestrian behavior.

The 5E's

Evaluation: Evaluation can and should be the first step and implemented in every step of a SRTS program. First, to determine the existing conditions (i.e. parent/student attitudes and behaviors and infrastructure conditions) and second, to determine the effectiveness of the program and assure that resources are directed toward efforts that show the greatest likelihood of success.

Engineering: Engineering strategies include designing, implementing, operating, and maintaining traffic control devices. Safe routes are created by improving sidewalks and pathways, street crossings, signage and traffic calming devices in school zones and throughout a community.

Education: Education activities target students, parents, and community members. These strategies include teaching pedestrian and bicycle safety skills, and educating the public about the benefits of walking and biking to school and how to safely drive near pedestrians and bicyclists. Safety education is an essential element of any safe routes to school program.

Enforcement: The two main goals of Enforcement strategies are to deter unsafe behavior of drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists, and to encourage all road users to obey traffic laws and share the road safely. Enforcement involves a network of community members, including law enforcement, working together to promote safe walking, bicycling and driving.

Encouragement: Encouragement activities go hand in hand with Educational activities. They include encouraging children to walk and bike to school safely and to be more physically active. As stated on the National Center for Safe Routes to School website, "Encouragement strategies are about having fun. They generate excitement and interest in walking and bicycling"².

Why Safe Routes to School Matters

Environmental and Educational Impact

The U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration conducted a study in 1969, which found that 42% of students surveyed walked or biked to school and 87% of students that lived within 1 mile of school walked or biked³. By 2001, national results showed that only 16% of students walked or biked to school⁴. On a local level, the results from Northeast Iowa show that during the 2008-2009 school year 16% of students walked or biked to school and 44% of students living within 1 mile of school walked or biked.

Walking and biking to school not only helps reduce traffic congestion near schools thereby improving air quality in the immediate vicinity, but also positively affects student's physical fitness which has been strongly linked to higher academic achievement⁵. The link between physical fitness and school attendance, student attentiveness, and many other factors continues to be studied⁶.

Public Health

Today, 12.5 million children are overweight in the United States and many studies suggest that obese children are at least twice as likely to become obese adults^{7, 8}. The U.S. Office of the Surgeon General estimates that 300,000 deaths per year may be attributed to obesity⁹. The economic cost of obesity and diabetes in the United States in 2007 was estimated to be \$147 billion¹⁰. Persons who are overweight or obese are at an increased risk for many health issues including heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, certain types of cancer, stroke, arthritis, breathing problems, and psychological disorders, such as depression¹⁰.

Northeast Iowa is no exception to the national trends of obesity and the associated health risks. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has been helping states conduct a survey called the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), which is a point in time household telephone survey of residents age 18 and older. Between 2000 and 2007 over 900 BRFSS surveys were conducted in the 5-county Project Area. Figures 1 thru 4 on the following pages show some of the results from the survey specifically relating to diabetes and obesity.



Consider This: if 100 children at one school walk or bicycle instead of being driven every day for one school year, they will keep nearly 35,000 pounds of pollutants out of the air, and will collectively generate 12,000 hours of physical activity.

-National SRTS Task Force Report, July 2008

Figure 1. Incidence trends of diabetes in Iowa

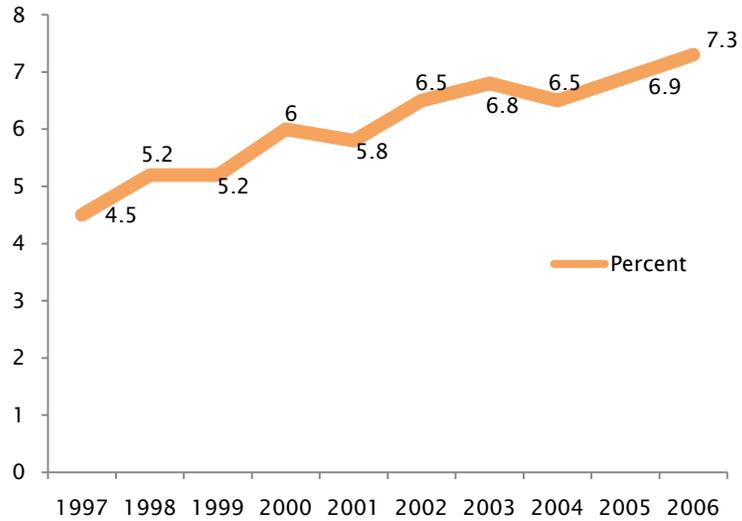
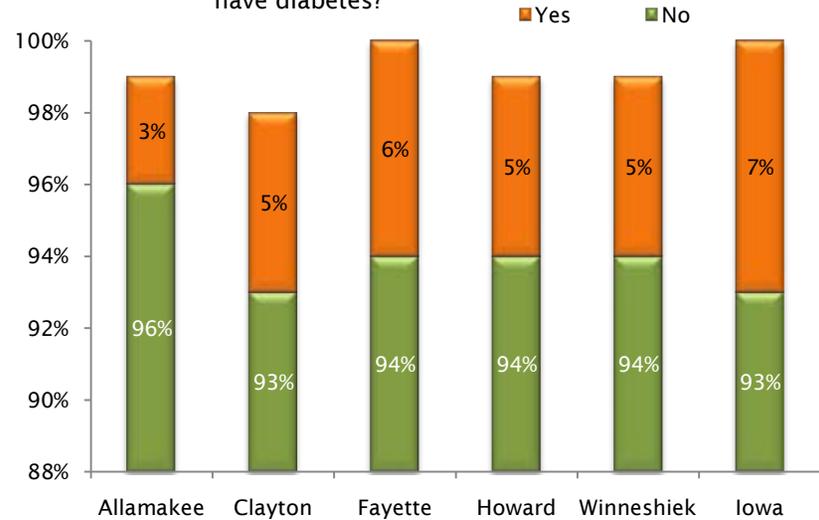


Figure 1.
In Iowa, the percentage of people diagnosed with diabetes has steadily increased since 1997.

Figure 2.
According to the BRFSS survey, Fayette County has the highest percentage (6%) of individuals who have been told by their doctor that they have diabetes.

Figure 2. "Have you ever been told by a doctor that you have diabetes?"



Source: Iowa BRFSS

Figure 3.
 In northeast Iowa, 69 to 78% of people surveyed said that they get 30 minutes of exercise at least 3 days per week.

Figure 3. During the last month did you participate in physical activity?

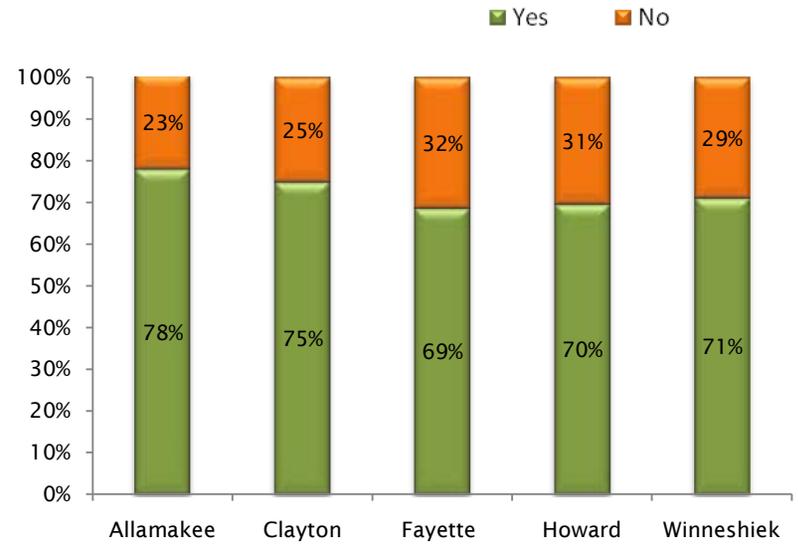


Figure 4. Self reported Body Mass Index (BMI) for Northeast Iowa. OW = Over Weight

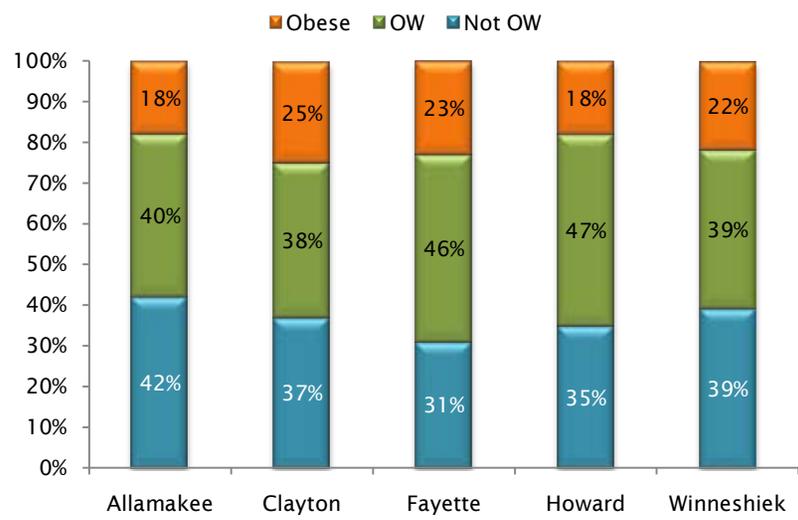


Figure 4.
 The BRFSS survey found that in Northeast Iowa between 58-69% of adults are overweight.

Source: Iowa BRFSS

Did you know?

- The economic cost of obesity and diabetes in the United States in 2007 was estimated to be \$147 billion¹¹.
- It is recommended that adults get at least 150 minutes/week (30 minutes 5 days/week) of moderate physical activity¹² and that adolescents get at least 60 minutes of activity per day.
- Lack of physical activity is a major contributor to overweight and obese children and adolescents. The CDC reported that nationally 62% of children ages 9 to 13 years do not participate in any organized physical activity and 23 % do not engage in any free-time physical activity outside of school hours¹³.
- The US Office of the Surgeon General cites research showing that parents have a strong influence on their children's activity levels. "If children see their caregivers enjoying healthy foods and being physically active, they are more likely to do the same"¹⁴.
- SRTS programs encourage students to be more physically active on their way to and from school. Based on the health information from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), children in Northeast Iowa would benefit from SRTS programs to promote long term healthy lifestyle habits.



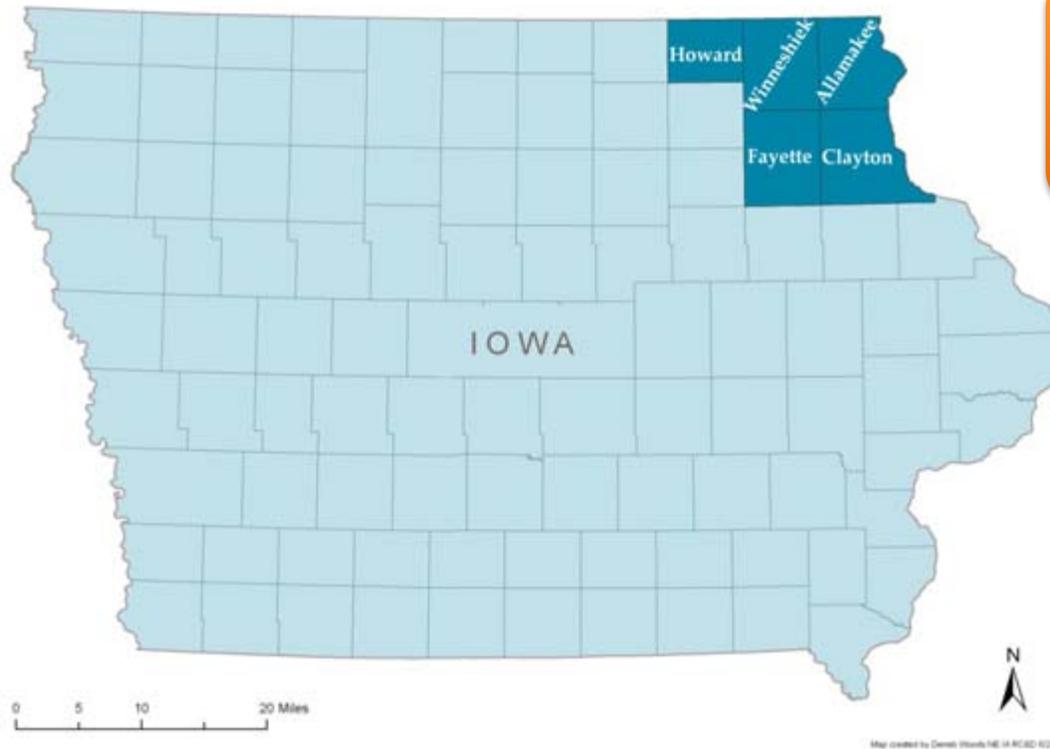
"If children see their caregivers enjoying healthy foods and being physically active, they are more likely to do the same"¹⁴.

Northeast Iowa SRTS Project Demographics and Background

Demographics

The Northeast Iowa SRTS *Project Area* is defined as Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, and Winneshiek counties in the farthest northeast corner of Iowa (Map 1). The 2008 population estimate for the 5 counties was 84,983 people. The total land area is 2,673 sq. miles, which averages out to approximately 26 people per square mile. The largest community within the Project Area had a population of 7,906 people in 2008. The landscape is dominated by rolling hills and agricultural fields with many small streams and rivers distinctive to the Driftless region. Within the Project Area there are 18 school districts, 13 of which participated in the project, and 55 schools, 34 of which participated in the project. The number of students per school averaged out to be 178 with a range from 40 to 340 students.

Map 1. SRTS Project Area



Map 1.
Within the Project Area there are 18 school districts, 13 of which participated in the SRTS project, and 55 schools, 34 of which participated in the SRTS project.

Background

Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development, Inc. (NE IA RC&D) applied for funding from Iowa's Department of Transportation Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program in 2007 and was awarded a planning and information gathering grant in early 2008. This funding was used to conduct the *Northeast Iowa Regional Safe Routes to School: Initiative for Healthier Students* project. The drive behind this regional SRTS project was born from an increased interest in healthier communities that grew out of the Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Planning Initiative (NE IA FFI). The NE IA FFI is one of nine Food and Fitness Planning Initiatives in the nation that was approved by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Through the NE IA FFI hundreds of residents are working together to develop a regional plan for healthier communities, which will include recommendations from this SRTS project.

The goal of this SRTS project was to complete a study and develop a regional SRTS plan for Northeast Iowa. The implementation of this project helped raise awareness about the benefits of a SRTS program, improved the participating schools and communities understanding of what can be done to increase the number of students who walk or bike to school, and built local and regional understanding and support for policy and infrastructure changes or improvements that will encourage safe routes to school.

In order to gather baseline data, NE IA RC&D partnered with 34 schools with approximately 6,500 students to complete the Safe Routes to School *Student Travel Tally* and *Parent Survey*. These two surveys, created by the National Center for Safe Routes to School, helped identify the current behaviors and attitudes of parents and students towards walking and biking to/from school, plus helped to identify issues which affect a parent's decision to allow or not allow their child to walk or bike to school. Each participating school completed one round of surveying during the 2008-2009 school year. In addition, a *School Policy Survey* was conducted to determine existing policies and an *Existing Infrastructure Audit* provided each community with valuable sidewalk location information.

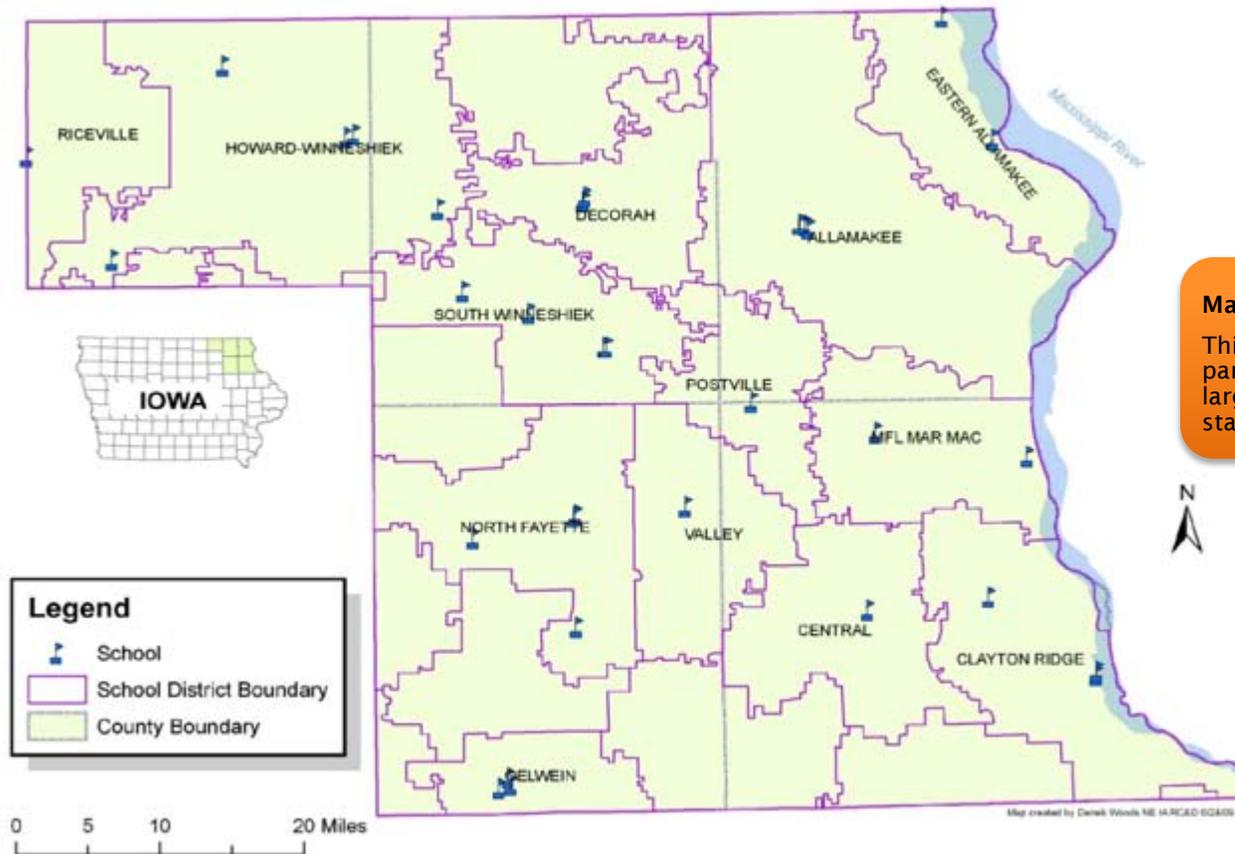


The *Northeast Iowa Regional Safe Routes to School: Initiative for Healthier Students* project collected the following from 34 schools in 5 counties:

- **4,706** *Student Travel Tally* surveys with trip-to-school information.
- **3,221** *Parent Surveys* which included parents' opinions on walking and bicycling to school.

Participating Schools

Within the 5 county Project Area, all 55 schools were invited of which 34 chose to participate in the regional SRTS project. Although Chickasaw county was subsequently included in the Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative, this inclusion occurred after the completion of the regional SRTS project. Interest in participation varied by school as well as the level of participation in the surveys. School administration and parent or volunteer champions were the key players in whether or not a school participated and at what level. The table on the following page lists the 34 participating schools.



Map 2.

Thirteen of the eighteen school districts participated in the project, including the largest school district by area in the state: Howard-Winneshek School District.

Table 1. Northeast Iowa Regional SRTS Participating Schools

School Name by County	Towns	Grade	Students	School District
Allamakee County				
Allamakee Junior High	Waukon	7 th -8 th	267	Allamakee CSD
East Campus Elem. School	Waukon	3 rd -6 th	279	Allamakee CSD
West Campus Elem. School	Waukon	K-2 nd	222	Allamakee CSD
Lansing Middle School	Lansing	4 th -8 th	175	Allamakee CSD
New Albin Elem.	New Albin	K-3 rd	113	E. Allamakee CSD
St. Patrick School	Waukon	K-8 th	143	NCEA
Torah Education Program	Postville	K-8 th	112	Postville CSD
Clayton County				
Central Elem. School	Elkader	K-6 th	257	Central CSD
Clayton Ridge Middle School	Garnavillo	5 th -8 th	179	Guttenberg CSD
Clayton Ridge Elem. School	Guttenberg	K-4 th	207	Guttenberg CSD
MFL Marmac Middle School	McGregor	4 th -8 th	328	MFL Marmac CSD
MFL Marmac Elem. School	Monona	K-3 rd	263	MFL Marmac CSD
St. Mary's Grade School	Guttenberg	K-8 th	139	NCEA
Fayette County				
Sacred Heart Elem. School	Oelwein	K-6 th	165	NCEA
North Fayette Middle School	West Union	6 th -8 th	263	N. Fayette CSD
West Union Elem. School	West Union	K, 1 st , 3 rd , 4 th	183	N. Fayette CSD
Fayette Elem. School	Fayette	K-1 st , 5 th	113	N. Fayette CSD
Hawkeye Elem. School	Hawkeye	K-2 nd	98	N. Fayette CSD
Wings Park Elem. School	Oelwein	3 rd -5 th	265	Oelwein CSD
Valley Elem. School	Elgin	K-6 th	272	Valley CSD

Table 1.

Participating schools in the Northeast Iowa Regional SRTS project are listed here by county including enrollment numbers and school location.



School Name by County	Towns	Grade	Students	School District
Howard County				
Crestwood Jr. High School	Cresco	7 th -8 th	227	Howard-Winn CSD
Crestwood Elem. School	Cresco	K-6 th	340	Howard-Winn CSD
Elma Elem. School	Elma	K-6 th	62	Howard-Winn CSD
Lime Springs Elem. School	Lime Springs	K-6 th	114	Howard-Winn CSD
Ridgeway Elem. School	Ridgeway	K-6 th	111	Howard-Winn CSD
Notre Dame Elem. School	Cresco	K-6 th	228	NCEA
Riceville Elem. School	Riceville	K-8 th	251	Riceville CSD
Winneshiek County				
DeSales School	Ossian	PK-8 th	95	NCEA
Decorah Middle School	Decorah	5 th -8 th	433	Decorah CSD
John Cline Elem. School	Decorah	K-2 nd	362	Decorah CSD
Carrie Lee Elem. School	Decorah	3 rd -4 th	212	Decorah CSD
CFS Catholic School	Calmar	PK, 4 th -8 th	70	NCEA
CFS Catholic School	Spillville	K-3 rd	40	NCEA
S. Winneshiek Middle School	Ossian	6 th -8 th	119	S. Winn CSD
S. Winneshiek Elem. School	Ossian	K-5 th	200	S. Winn CSD
TOTAL			6907	

Enrollment numbers from 2007. CSD - Community School District
NCEA - National Catholic Educational Association



“Rarely are we given a chance to improve the lives of an entire generation. Today, we have that opportunity.”

-Congressman James L. Oberstar

Chapter 2 Survey Data

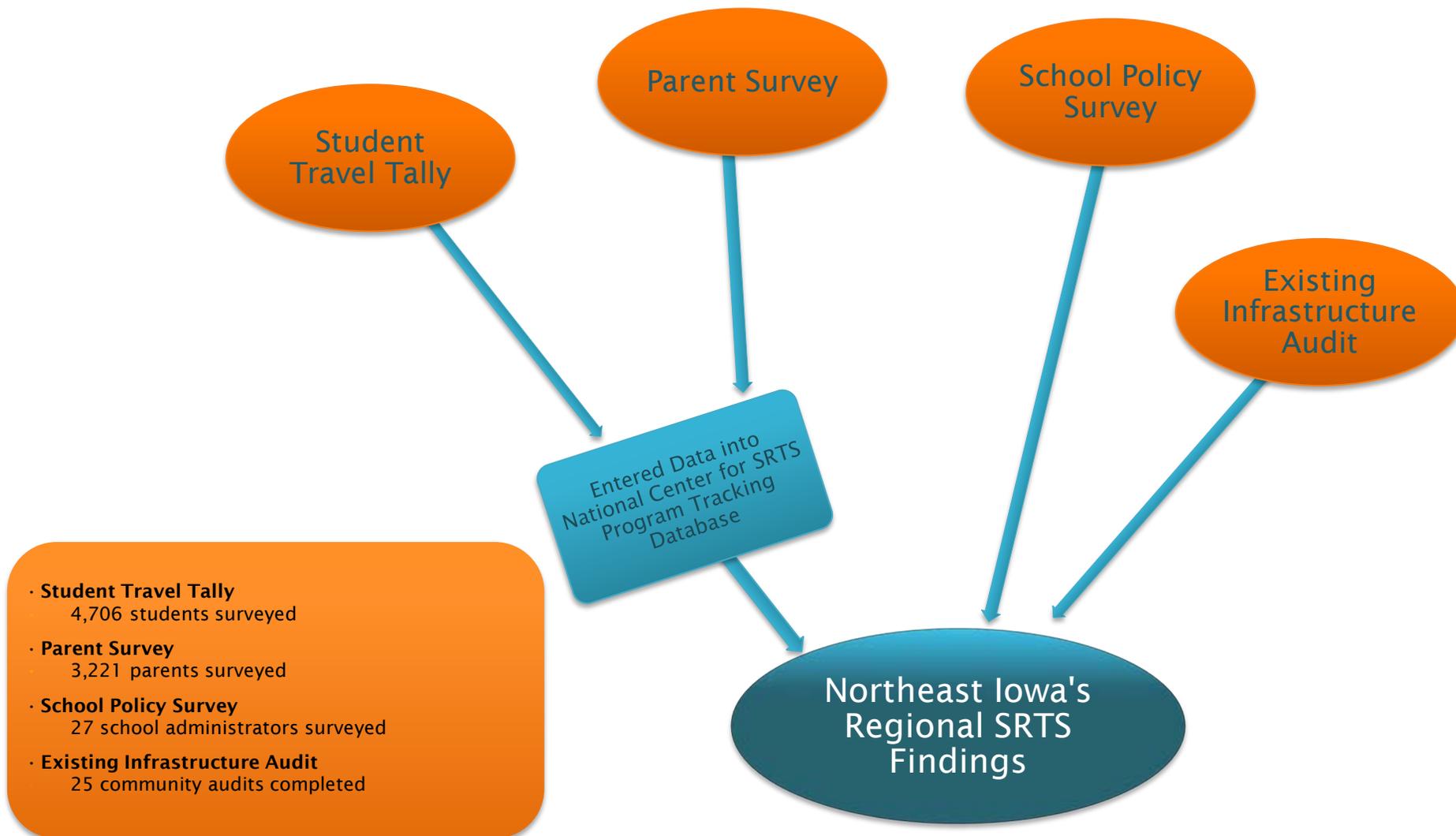
Survey Results

Within this chapter you will find the regional results from the surveys conducted during the 2008/2009 school year as part of the Northeast Iowa Regional SRTS project. Each participating school completed Student Travel Tally and Parent Surveys which were developed by the National Center for SRTS. These surveys were entered into the National Center’s Program Tracking Database and were compiled into reports in the form of tables, pie charts and graphs. The National Center’s database provided the opportunity to compare Northeast Iowa’s data with other data gathered from across the nation.

Two additional surveys were developed by Northeast Iowa RC&D; the School Policy Survey and Existing Infrastructure Audit. The School Policy Survey was developed to document the current policies in place at each participating school. The survey responses revealed whether school policies encourage or discourage walking or biking to/from school, and provided insight into changes that may encourage more walking or biking to/from school.

The Existing Infrastructure Audit inventoried current sidewalk locations within two miles of a participating school. This information did not exist in an electronic format prior to this project, and the data gathered not only included sidewalk location information but also ramp and crosswalk location, signage, and in some cases condition of the sidewalk.

These four surveys/audits provided baseline data which helped illustrate the existing attitudes, behaviors, policies and infrastructure with regard to how and why students are traveling to and from school in Northeast Iowa.



Student Travel Tally

The Student Travel Tally measured how students travel to and from school. The following two diagrams were developed from the **Student Travel Tally** results. Figure 5 is a comparison of student travel modes in the morning (orange) versus the afternoon (green). Figure 6, found on the following page, is a pie graph illustrating the combined average of morning and afternoon modes of transportation.

School survey results and the Regional SRTS Final Report, which contains the regional survey results can be found at www.northeastiowarcd.org. These survey results are available to the public and can be used in local, district-wide, and regional SRTS planning efforts.

Regional Student Travel Tally Summary

Survey Data Collected: Fall 2008 – Spring 2009

Data Collection Phase: Pre (before program began)

Number of Classrooms: 336

Number of Students Surveyed: 4,706

Figure 5. School arrival and departure travel modes of transportation reported by students

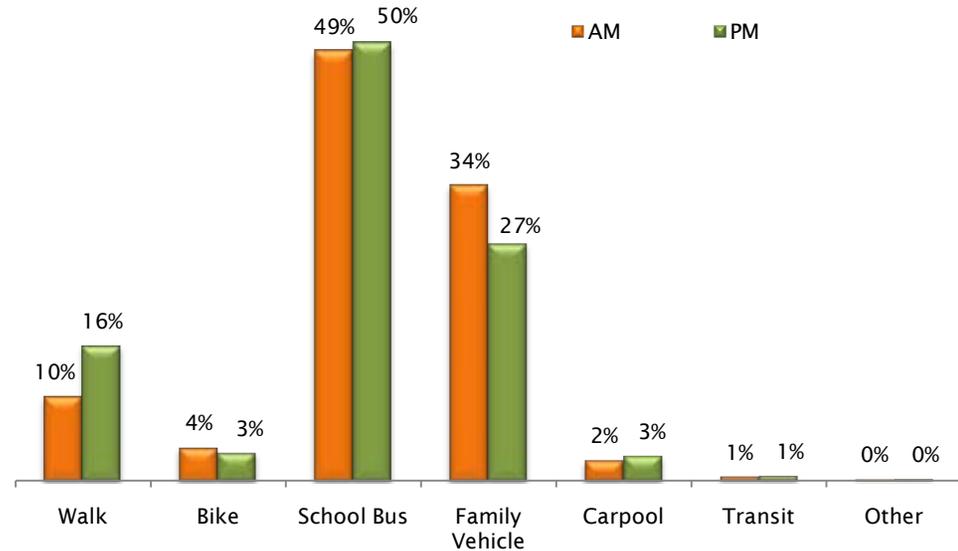


Figure 5. Travel Mode Results:

- The majority of students travel to/from school using motorized transportation
- In the morning more students ride in a family vehicle or ride a bike compared to the afternoon
- A greater percentage of students walk, take the bus, or carpool in the afternoon than in the morning.

Figure 6. How do students travel to and from school in Northeast Iowa?

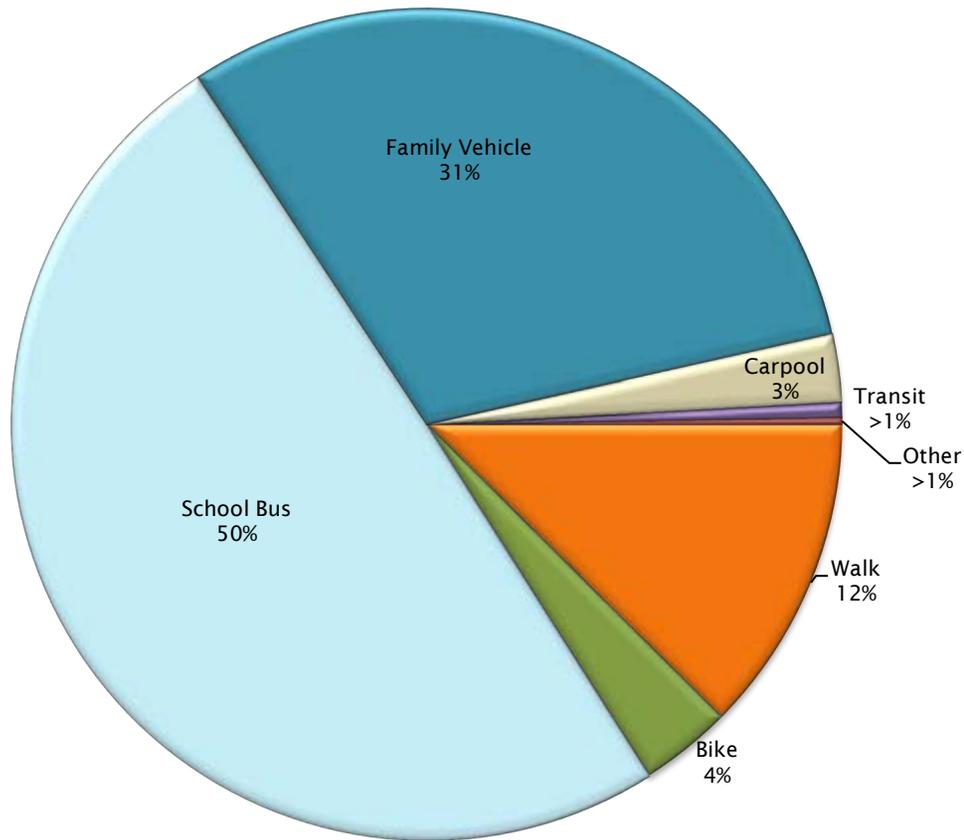


Figure 6. “How do students travel to and from school in Northeast Iowa?”

- 81% of students reported that they use motorized transportation to/from school
- 16% of students in Northeast Iowa walk or bike to/from school
- A small percentage of students ride in a carpool, use transit, or use "other modes of transportation to/from school.

Parent Survey

The Parent Survey was conducted to determine the factors affecting parents' decisions to allow their children to walk or bike to school and the presence of key safety-related conditions along routes to school.

The following section contains the regional results from the **Parent Survey**. Individual school results can be found at www.northeastiowarcd.org. The regional results were compiled from each school's individual report. These results can be used in local, district-wide, and regional SRTS planning efforts.

Regional Parent Survey Summary

Reported Enrollment: 6,571

Survey Data Collected: Fall 2008-Spring 2009

Data Collection Phase: Pre (before program began)

Number of Surveys Distributed: 5,983

Number of Surveys in Report: 3,221

Figure 7. Parent estimate of distance their child lives from the school they attend.

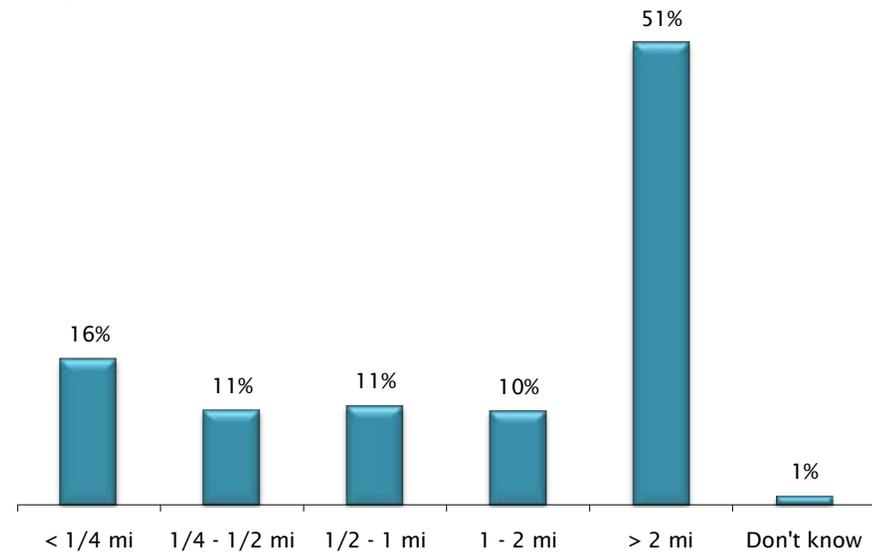


Figure 7.

The majority (51%) of respondents live more than 2 miles from the school their child attends. The second largest group of respondents (16%) lives less than ¼ miles from the school that their child attends.



Figure 8. Average number of students who travel to and from school using various travel modes, separated by distance between home and school

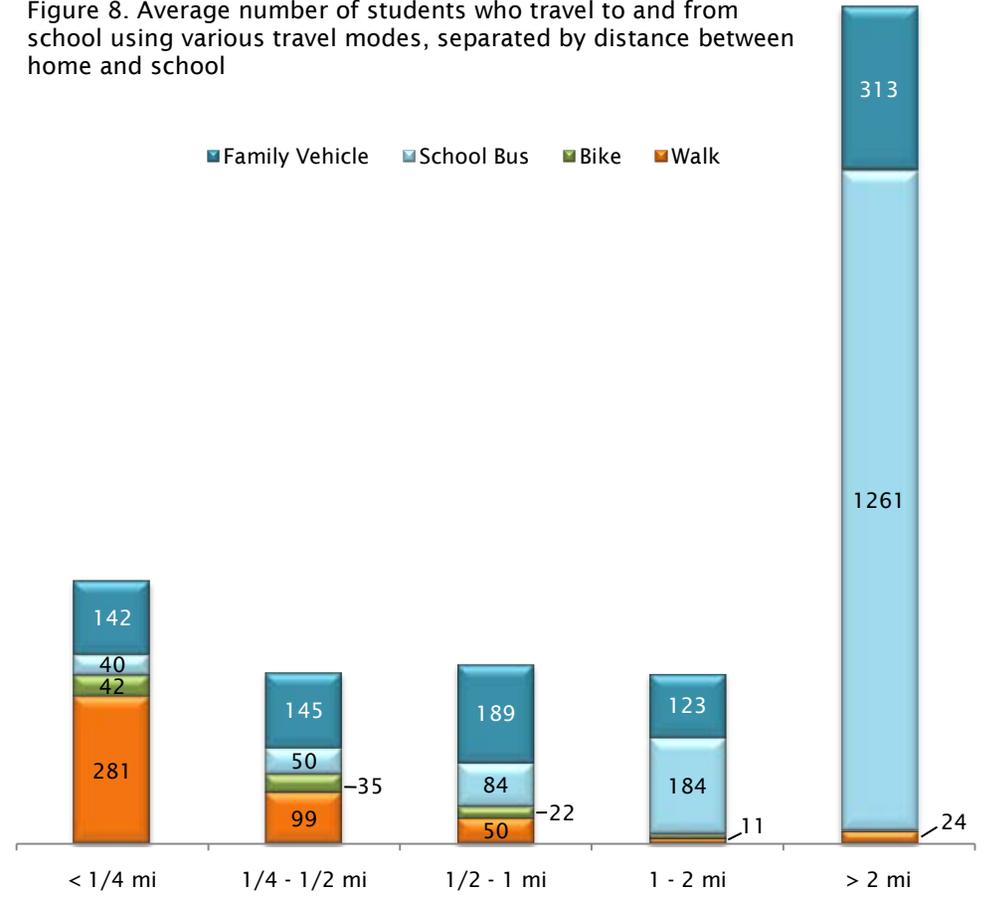


Figure 8.
As distance increases between home and school the travel mode shifts from walking towards the use of motorized transportation.

Figure 9. Number of children who have asked their parent/guardian for permission to walk or bike to/from school separated by distance they live from school.

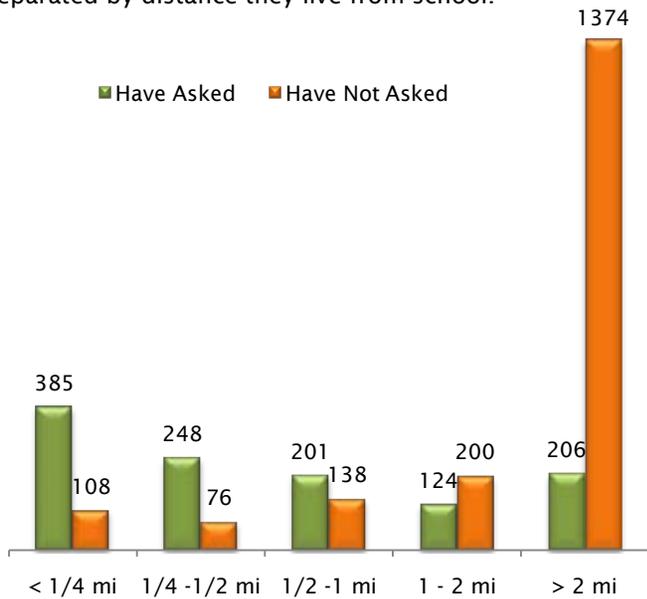
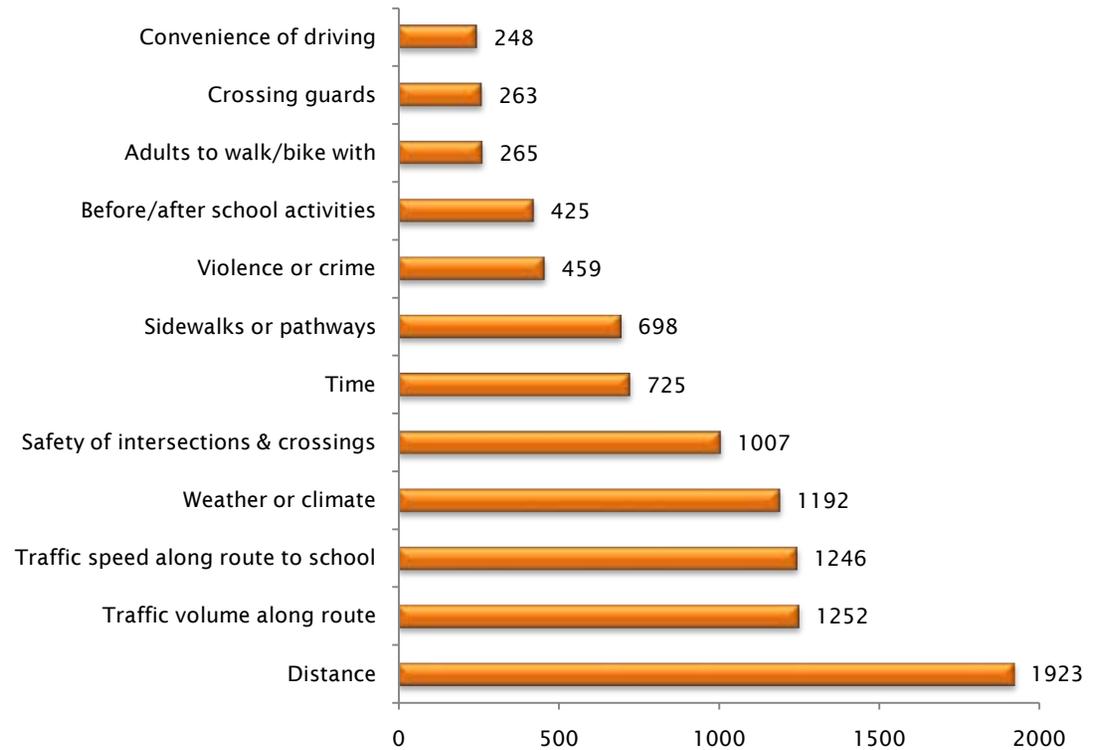


Figure 10.

Aside from distance, traffic volume, traffic speed, weather and safety of intersections all ranked highly as issues influencing a parent's decision to *not* allow their child to walk or bike to/from school.



Figure 10. Issues which affect a parent's decision to *not* allow their child to walk or bike to/from school. *Please note*, each respondent could select more than one issue.



Figures 11-13.
 These pie graphs provide an illustration of the perceptions held by parents who completed the Parent Survey. Additional comments and feedback from parents can be found in each individual school report.

Figure 11. Number of parents who feel their child's school encourages or discourages walking and biking to school.

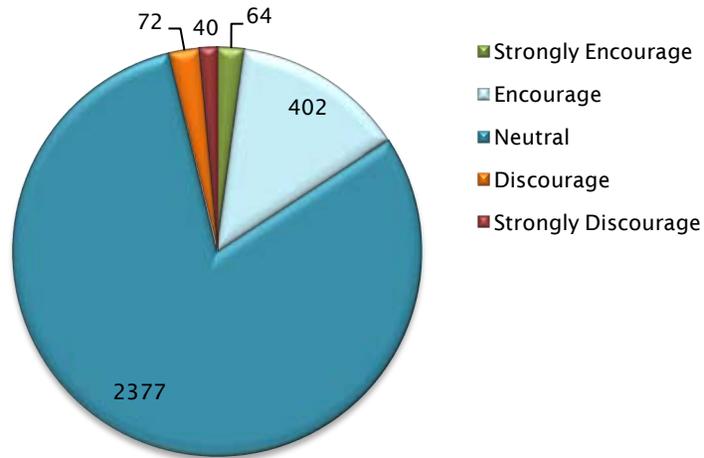


Figure 12. Number of parents reporting how healthy walking and biking to/from school is for their child.

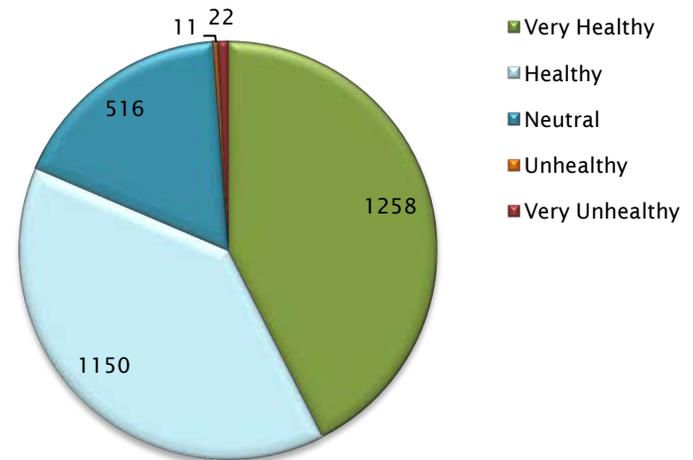
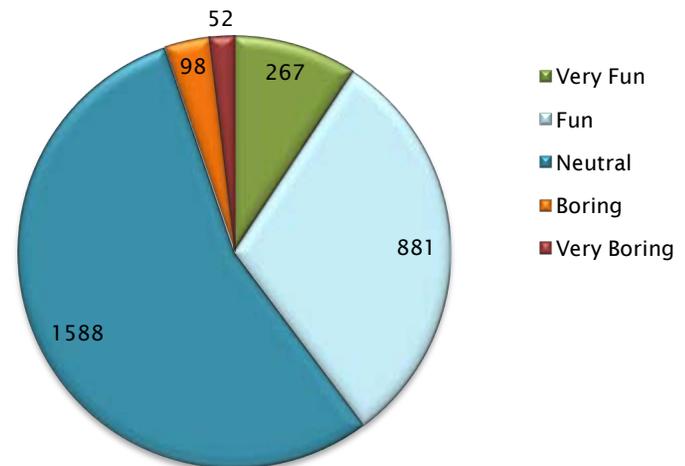


Figure 13. Number of parents reporting the level of fun walking and biking to/from school is for their child.



School Policy Survey

NE IA RC&D created a School Policy Survey with 10 questions to be completed by each school's administration. The survey helped to identify current busing policy, school policy related to walking and biking to school, current school encouragement or incentive programs, barriers preventing students from walking and biking, and needs for change.

As a result of the increased awareness across the region and the intense focus on fitness, several schools are in the process of reviewing their current policies and have begun discussing policy changes. Example walking and biking policies can be found in Appendix III.

The School Policy Survey questions and findings are included in this section. School administration representing all 34 schools participating in this project completed 27 surveys. In some cases, a superintendent submitted one policy survey for an entire school district or a principal submitted one policy survey for a school building housing more than one school (i.e. elementary and middle) thus accounting for the difference in numbers. Results from each school's Policy Survey can be found at www.northeastiowarcd.org.

School Policy Survey Summary

Survey Data Collected: Fall 2008-Spring 2009

Data Collection Phase: Pre (before program began)

Number of Surveys Distributed: 27

Number of Surveys in Report: 27



School Policy Survey Results:

Results from each individual school's Policy Survey can be found at www.northeastiowarcd.org



School dismissal



Bicycle racks

School Policy Survey Questions

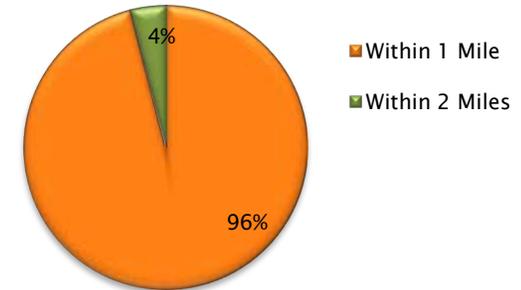
- Has your school considered eliminating busing within 1 to 2 miles?
- What infrastructure would your community need to eliminate busing within 1 to 2 miles?
- Does your community/school have a Walking School Bus or Bicycle Train program?
- Does your community have crossing guards?
- Does your school include bicycle and/or walking safety education in its curriculum?
- Has your school considered providing incentives for students who walk or bike to school?
- Are bicycle racks available on school grounds?
- Is there anything in your school's wellness policy related to students traveling to and from school?
- Have you considered moving vehicular pick up/drop off further away from the school?
- What do you see as the greatest barrier to students walking or biking to your school?

Question 1.

Within what radius of your school do buses pick up/drop off students? 1 or 2 miles?

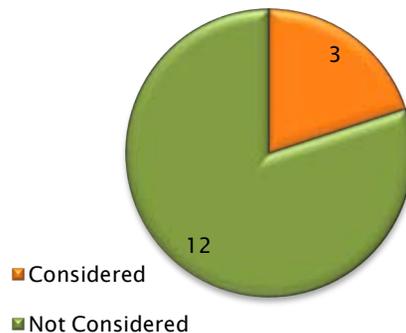
Findings:

It is important to note that in the rural communities involved in this study a 1 mile radius encompasses the city limits and surrounding area of most communities. The majority of schools that bus within 1 mile of a school only bus outside the city limits or bus only preschool age children or those deemed to live in dangerous locations. Each school modifies its policy depending on where students live and their age.



Question 1a.

Has your school considered eliminating busing within 1 or 2 miles of the school?



Findings:

15 out of 27 schools responded to this question

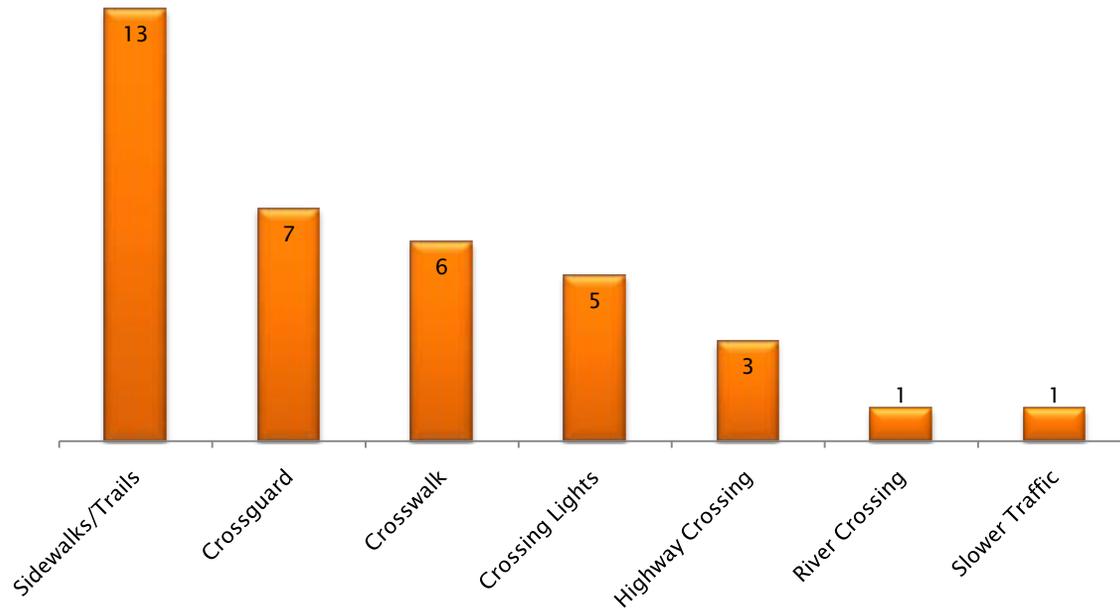
- 20% (3 respondents) indicated that they **have** considered this option
- 80% (12 respondents) indicated that they **have not** considered eliminating busing within 1 or 2 miles

Question 2.

What infrastructure would your community need in order for your school to eliminate busing within 1 or 2 miles of the school? (ie: sidewalks, crosswalks, crossing lights, crossing guards, trails, etc.)

Findings:

19 out of 27 schools responded to this question (many schools responded with more than one need). As seen below, nearly all the responses to this question indicate the need for improved or additional infrastructure.



Question 3.

Does your school have a Walking School Bus or Bicycle Train Program?

Findings:

At the time of the survey no school had a Walking School Bus or a Bicycle Train Program in place.

Question 4.

Does your community have crossing guards? If so, how many crossing guards and within what distance of the school?

Findings:

Responses to Question 4 indicate that more schools **do not** currently have crossing guards (15 respondents) than those that **do** have crossing guards (12 respondents). Ten out of the twelve schools reported they only had crossing guards within a block of the school. Crossing guards included students, adult volunteers, and/or teachers.

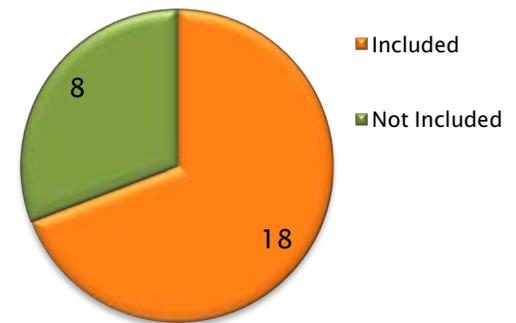


Question 5.

Does your school include pedestrian and/or bicycle safety education in its curriculum? If so, what grade level is this education provided to?

Findings:

All but one school administrator responded to Question 5. The majority (18 respondents) indicated that pedestrian and/or bicycle safety education **is** included in school curriculum and 8 responded that it **is not** included. The grade level for safety education varies by school; some provide education to students in all grades. Two schools indicated that students received pedestrian and/or bicycle safety education information through their health and PE classes.



Question 6.

Has your school considered providing incentives for students who walk or bike to school?

Findings:

At the time of the survey, no school was providing incentives for students who walk or bike to school.

Question 7.

Are bicycle racks available on school grounds?

Findings:

The majority of school administrators (24 respondents) indicated that bicycle racks **are** available on school grounds and 3 responded that they are **not**.



Question 8.

Is there anything in your school's wellness policy related to students getting to and from school? If yes, please describe. If no, have you considered adding or changing any related policy?

Findings:

In response to Question 8 only one school's wellness policy included wording related to how students travel to and from school. In response to the second part of the question regarding policy additions or changes, there were 4 schools that indicated they were actively or had interest in changing or adding to their current wellness policy.

Question 9.

Have you considered moving vehicular pick up/drop off further away from the school?

Findings:

The vast majority of schools (23 out of 26) which responded to Question 9 indicated that moving vehicular pick up/drop off further from the school had not been considered and may not ever be considered.

Question 10.

What do you see as the greatest barrier(s) to students walking or biking to your school?

Findings:

The comments (below) from principals and superintendents show the perceived barriers that are preventing students from walking and biking to and from school. These comments cover a few common threads including safety, a need for new and/or improved infrastructure, and a need for increased motivation for parents and students.

Greatest Barrier Responses:

- “Parents that give kids rides to school”
- “Lazy kids? Parents don't expect them to walk”
- “Heavy traffic prevents students from biking to school”
- “Extremely rural area with students from outlying communities attending our learning center.”
- “Mindset and safety”
- “Mindset-kids don't want to walk or bike!”
- “Parental preference”
- “We actually have quite a number walking and riding their bikes. Car pick-up and drop-off occurs in inclement weather, and also for students who live many blocks from school but are still within the city limits.”
- “Two state highways and safety of intersections”
- “Bullying”
- “Infrastructure development and financial support to secure trail/sidewalk implementation. Lack of ambition by students and not enough encouragement, trust, and support by parents.”
- “Railroad tracks and diagonal parking are dangerous”
- “Students live too far away”
- “We bus over 1/2 of our students from 8 miles away”
- “*Safety* is our largest barrier due to the unique location of our entire PK-12 facility: one mile from two communities, on a country road with limited shoulders and high traffic volumes where the speed limit is 55 mph. There are currently no sidewalks or trails that provide a safe area for pedestrians or bicyclists to travel to school.”
- “A lot of rural students and consolidated school districts”
- “The district has three elementary schools and one middle school building-where do you start?”
- “Crossing a 4-lane road”
- “Lack of sidewalks, trails, parental support”
- “Safety of route”
- “Busy streets and lack of sidewalks, trails, crossing areas, crossing guards”
- “Congested ramp area, bullying issues, neighboring sidewalks aren't maintained, lack of students actually practicing bicycle safety rules”
- “Very rural district, very few walk, most are driven or bussed to school”

Existing Infrastructure Audit

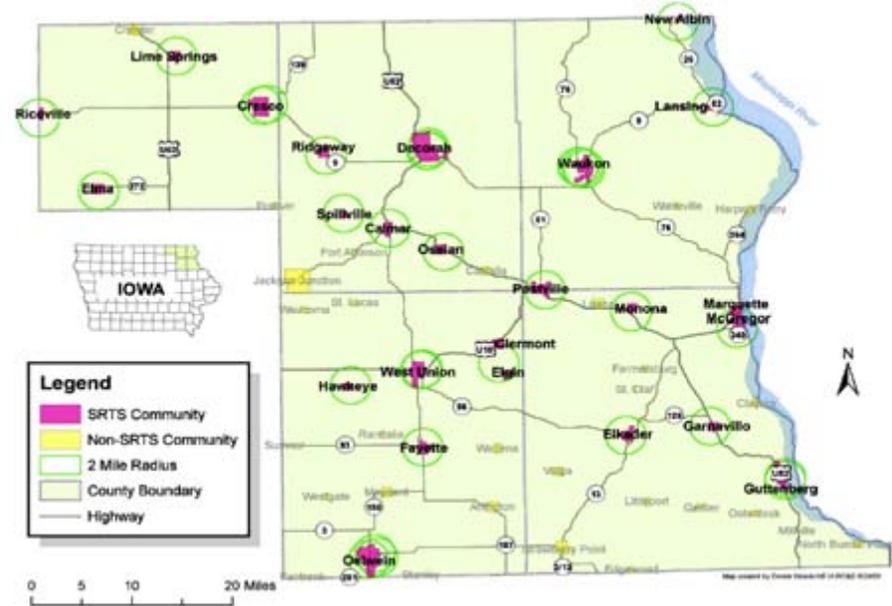
SRTS funding must be used for activities/improvements within 2 miles of a school. Therefore, a 2-mile radius was drawn around each school participating in the project and the existing community infrastructure was mapped within those 2 miles. The 2-mile radius encompassed the whole community in all cases and in some cases more than one community.

NE IA RC&D staff and volunteer community members used GPS units and paper maps to inventory the location of existing sidewalk and related infrastructure.

Electronic versions of the maps can be found at www.northeastiowarcd.org along with each school's survey results. A paper copy of an individual community's infrastructure map is available upon request. These maps are intended to help the communities identify and prioritize infrastructure needs and can be used to help plan SRTS activities including designating routes to school.

Regional Existing Infrastructure Audit Summary
Data Collection Phase: Pre (before program began)
Number of Communities Audited: 25

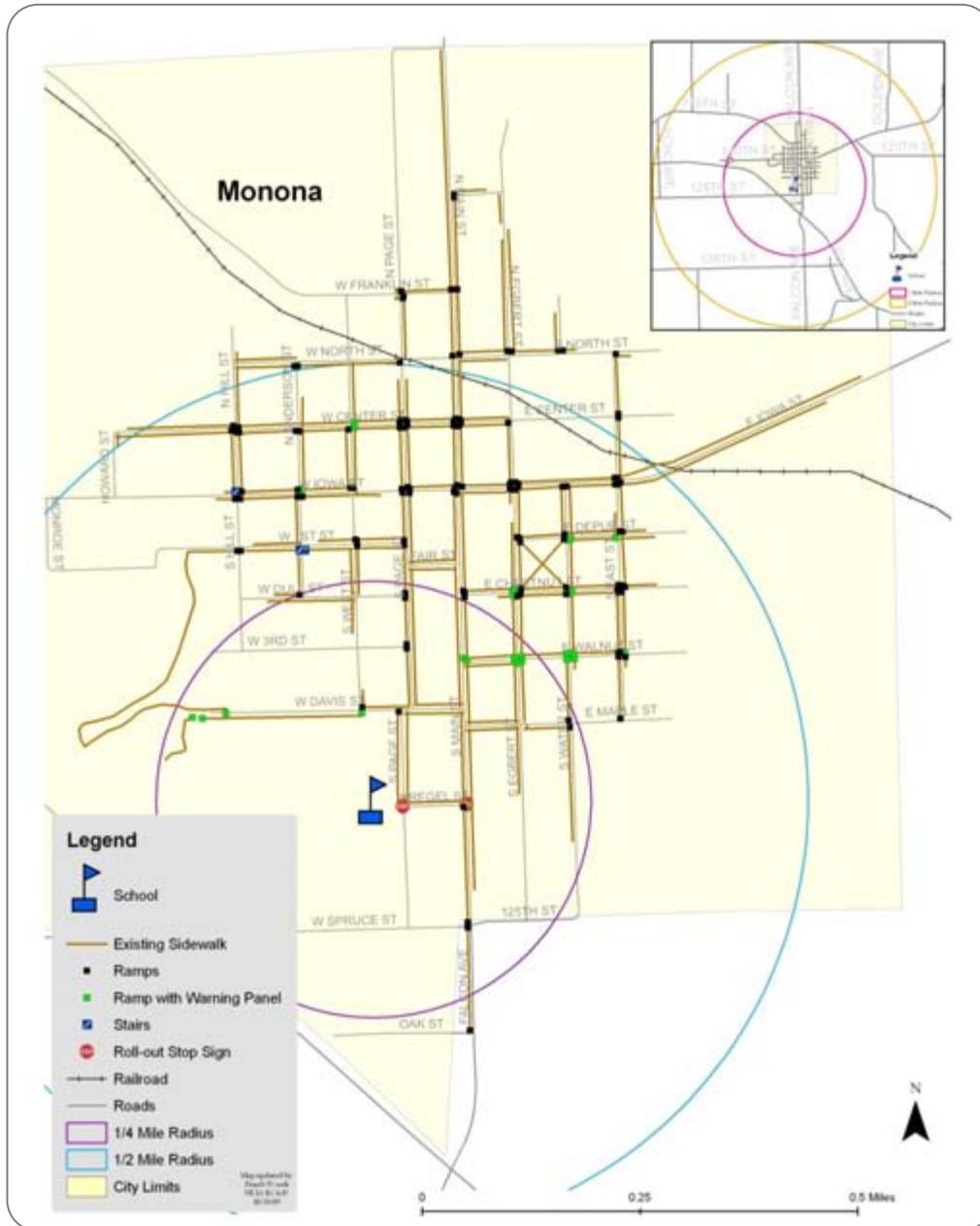
Map 3. Participating Communities in the Northeast Iowa SRTS Project Area



Map 3.

Infrastructure audits/mapping occurred in a total of 25 communities within the 5 county Project Area. Participating communities are highlighted in pink and listed in bold with the 2-mile radius around each school indicated by a green circle.

Map 4. Existing Infrastructure Audit Map Example



Map 4.

At left is an example of the type of map provided to a community or school to aid in planning SRTS activities.

The circles on the map indicate distance from the school in 1/4, 1/2, 1 and 2 mile increments.

The brown lines show where the existing sidewalks are located and the black and green squares mark ramp locations.



“We have everything we need, right now, to help our kids lead healthy lives. Rarely in the history of this country have we encountered a problem of such magnitude and consequence that is so eminently solvable. So let’s move!”

-Michelle Obama,
Let's Move launch announcement

Chapter 3

Existing Conditions and Barriers

Based on the existing infrastructure audits, parent attitudinal surveys and surveys of school administrators, a number of existing barriers to walking and biking have been identified. These barriers are presented in summary form in this chapter and may not apply to all communities or schools in the region. Some of the barriers identified are based on perception and require only a change in attitude to address, whereas others may require extensive infrastructure investment to remedy. The top 5 barriers identified through this study were distance to the school, safety concerns at intersections and street crossings, traffic issues involving motor vehicle speed and motor vehicle volume and incomplete/unsafe sidewalks. Secondary issues identified were inclement weather, fear for child safety, time spent walking to school, lack of funding to address problems, low interest level in walking/biking, convenience of driving, no safe bike route present, ordinances or school policies that discourage walking and no organized initiative to promote the idea in a given community. Recommendations for addressing these barriers are presented in Chapter 4.

Barriers

Distance from home to school: Northeast Iowa is characterized by rural school districts that cover large areas. The continued population loss in rural Iowa over time accompanied with economic necessity has resulted in additional consolidation of schools over the past decade, increasing the distance some students have to travel to school. Survey results indicated that over 50% of all students in Northeast Iowa live more than 2 miles from the school that they attend. The most commonly identified reason that parents gave for not allowing their child to walk or bike to school in Northeast Iowa was distance. Over 70% of Northeast Iowa parents whose children did not walk or bike to school indicated distance as a major factor in their decision to not allow their children to walk, which is above the national average of 62%. Distance issues are not easily solved, but recommendations such as remote drop-off/pick-up sites coupled with walking school buses provide walking options for students who live more than 2 miles from school. It also should be noted that over 25% of all students in Northeast Iowa live within ½-mile of the school they attend.

Safety of intersections and road crossings: Crossing streets and intersections place children walking to school on the same roadway as motor vehicles creating a potentially dangerous situation. In communities in Northeast Iowa, there are often many uncontrolled (no stoplights or four-way stop signs) intersections without well marked crosswalks. Children crossing at these points often are required to dash across the street between passing motor vehicles. Concern over the safety of their children crossing roads and intersections was the most often cited reason for parents who lived within two miles of school for not allowing their child to walk or bike to school. Combined with traffic issues involving speed and volume, traffic danger was listed by 46% of parents in Northeast Iowa as a major reason they do not allow their child to walk/bike to school, compared to 55% nationally. Over 54% of those parents surveyed indicated that they would let their child walk or bike to school if the safety of intersections or road crossings was improved.

Over 70% of Northeast Iowa parents whose children did not walk or bike to school indicated **distance** as a major factor in their decision to not allow their children to walk, which is above the national average of 62%.

Motor vehicle traffic safety issues – Traffic speed: Almost every community in Northeast Iowa has at least one major state or US Highway route through their town. Major state or US Highways bisecting communities create a barrier between residential areas and the schools. Speed limits along these roads are often above the recommended 25 mph for roads along safe routes to school. Traffic speed along highways and secondary roads in Northeast Iowa also creates dangerous conditions for children who live outside of city limits, but within 2 miles of the school, who would like to walk/bike to school. Similar to intersection safety, 48% of parents who do not allow their children to walk to school said that reducing traffic speed along their child’s route would change their decision to allow their child to walk/bike to school.



Almost every community in Northeast Iowa has at least one major state or US Highway route through their town. Speed limits along these roads are often above the recommended 25 mph for roads along safe routes to school.

Motor vehicle traffic safety issues – Congestion around school: Severe traffic congestion around schools from buses, personal vehicles dropping students off, school staff vehicles and children walking/biking is common before and after school. Traffic congestion can create unsafe intersections, adds to air pollution from vehicle exhaust and can create confusion for motorists leading to unsafe driving behavior.

Motor vehicle traffic safety issues – High traffic volume: As mentioned before many communities in Northeast Iowa have major highways bisecting their communities. Traffic volume on these roads, as well as other secondary roads, is extremely high, particularly during the before school hours when children would most likely be present. Even when traffic calming measures to reduce speed are in place, high traffic volume adds significantly to the challenge and safety of intersections and road

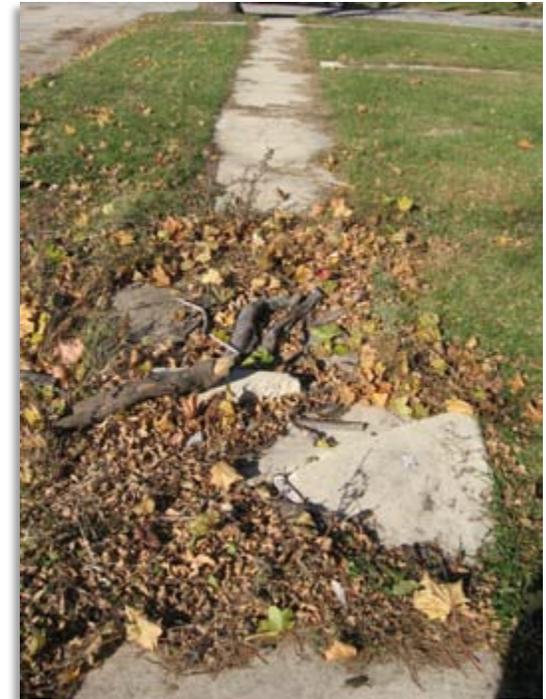
crossings. Motor vehicle drivers are often impatient or distracted and generally unaware of pedestrians, a problem that is compounded by high traffic volume during busy before or after work travel times. More than 47% of parents who do not currently allow their child to walk/bike to school indicated that reducing traffic volume along the route would impact their decision.

Sidewalks in poor condition or not maintained: Sidewalks with large cracks, uneven slabs and rough surfaces can cause safety hazards for children walking and particularly biking to school. Sidewalks that have large drop-offs across driveways or curbs also present obstacles for safe walking/biking. In addition, sidewalks that are not cleared of snow and ice in the winter months pose significant danger of slips and falls. Large snow banks could pose visibility problems at intersections and road crossings as well.

Incomplete sidewalk or trail system: Designating a safe route to school is extremely challenging when gaps in sidewalk coverage exist or when trail systems may exist, but do not extend all of the way to the school. Many of the communities inventoried in Northeast Iowa contained residential areas that had no existing sidewalk or trail connection to a potential safe route to school. Several of the schools are also located in rural areas where sidewalks simply do not exist and no trail system is available for students to walk or bike to school, leaving only the shoulder of the road as an option, which is

highly discouraged for use by students walking or biking.

Weather: Inclement weather during winter months and the threat of constantly changing weather conditions impacts the decisions of parents in Northeast Iowa when considering whether to allow their child to walk/bike to school. When surveyed, 44% of parents who do not allow their child to walk/bike to/from school cited weather as an influential factor. While temperatures below a certain point pose dangerous conditions for children exposed for any extended period of time, the weather for much of the school year, even many of the winter months is suitable for comfortable walking/biking



Sidewalks with large cracks, uneven slabs and rough surfaces can cause safety hazards for children walking and particularly biking to school.



Many of the communities inventoried in Northeast Iowa contained residential areas that had no existing sidewalk or trail connection to a potential safe route to school.

to school with proper clothing. Elementary students are already required to wear this clothing in order to play outside during recess and lunch breaks. Nothing can be done to change the weather, but with proper planning the barrier to walking/biking to school presented by the weather can be minimized.

Time: A somewhat common theme from parents who were surveyed in Northeast Iowa was that it would take too long for their child to walk or bike to school. This theme was most commonly listed by parents whose children live more than 2 miles from school or for younger students who live over a mile from school. For students living less than one mile from school, time should not be a major concern other than possibly needing to make slight adjustments in wake up times or morning routines to get students who will be walking out the door a few minutes earlier.

Crime or danger to children: Nearly 17% of parents surveyed in Northeast Iowa identified crime or other related danger as a major reason for not allowing their child to walk or bike to school. The main concerns expressed were potential abduction, violence from strangers and attacks by dogs. While the potential for danger and crime exists, the perception of danger often exceeds the actual threat of danger itself. Northeast Iowa is perceived as a very safe place to live and raise children in relation to larger cities. Nationwide 38% of parents indicated crime or danger as major reasons for not allowing their child to walk or bike to school. Crime statistics would most likely show that incidences of stranger or adult violence on children walking to school are extremely low in Northeast Iowa, yet the perceived threat is a major attitude barrier to address when planning for maximum participation in safe routes to school programs. A number of recommendations are identified in Chapter 4 to help further reduce the real threat of crime or violence and hopefully ease the perceptions of threat as well.

Unsafe bicycle routes: Sidewalks that may be adequate for walking to school may not be safe for bicycle traffic due to being too narrow, having large curb drop-offs without ramps, or having significant walking traffic on the sidewalk that makes shared use hazardous. Several communities in Northeast Iowa also prohibit bicycle use on certain sidewalks. In these instances, creating/designating a walkable route to school does not ensure that a bikeable route is developed. Extra steps need to be taken in these cases to ensure both biking and walking are encouraged activities.

Restrictive city ordinances: Several communities in the Project Area have ordinances or policies that do not encourage walking and/or biking to school. As was mentioned above, prohibiting bicycles on sidewalks forces them to share the road with motor vehicles increasing the danger,



Several communities in Northeast Iowa prohibit bicycle use on certain sidewalks. This policy forces bicyclists to share the road with motor vehicles which increases the level of danger, especially for younger more inexperienced riders.

especially for younger more inexperienced riders. City ordinances that do not require neighborhoods or residential areas to build sidewalks also go a long way to discouraging walking/biking to school and inhibit the cohesiveness of safe routes to school. Other examples include; lack of enforcement for unkempt sidewalks or properties, not pursuing traffic calming measures along designated safe routes to school and/or lax enforcement of traffic violations in and around school zones.

Lack of bike racks: Schools that do not have functional bicycle racks or enough bicycle racks at useable locations effectively discourage students from biking to school. Parents often pay a lot of money for their children's bicycle and want to be sure there is a safe place to lock the bike up during the school day. Several of the schools surveyed indicated that they did not have bike racks, had bike racks that were always full, or had bike racks in poor condition.

Low level of initiative from parents or children: The increase in childhood obesity in the United States as detailed in Chapter 1 has been partially driven by home lifestyles and choices that do not promote childhood exercise. These same lifestyles would not likely view walking or biking to school as a valuable or viable option. Overcoming negative attitudes toward walking or biking to school based on low interest in promoting physical activity at home is a significant attitudinal barrier to overcome. Educating parents and providing encouragement options for the children may provide the attitude change necessary to increase participation in walking/biking to school.

Railroad crossings: Several communities in Northeast Iowa have railroads that need to be crossed by students along their route to school. Intersections and crossings across railroads are not pedestrian friendly in most cases and can cause significant risk to children. Railroad crossings are also difficult to navigate on bicycle and can be a crash hazard.



Pictured above is an example of a pedestrian friendly railroad crossing in Northeast Iowa. In most cases, intersections and crossings across railroads are not pedestrian friendly and can cause significant risk to children.

School policy discourages walking/biking: Several schools in the region have policies that do not encourage or outwardly discourage walking/biking to and from school. Several of the schools' policies are based on student safety, but others are not based on safety and could be changed, for example adopting a policy of no busing within 1-mile from school where adequate sidewalks exist. This step would encourage walking/biking and save school costs.

Insufficient funding available to implement changes: Schools today are facing ever increasing budget shortfalls and reductions, which on the surface drastically restrict the amount of funds available to implement many significant safe routes to school initiatives. To add to the challenges faced by schools in Northeast Iowa, the Iowa Safe Routes to School Program has not favored grant awards for rural infrastructure such as trails, despite strong project applications submitted in the past. On a positive note, many of the recommendations offered in this document are no cost or low cost opportunities that can be implemented without significant resources. Appendix IV also details potential funding partners to assist with obtaining monetary support for safe routes to school initiatives.



Many parents indicated that it is simply more convenient for them to drive their children to and/or from school in their personal vehicle than to have them walk or bike.

Convenience of driving: Many parents indicated that it is simply more convenient for them to drive their children to and/or from school in their personal vehicle than to have them walk or bike. High school students also identified that driving to school was “cooler” than walking or biking. Changing attitudes and habits can be difficult, but education on the health benefits, cost savings from reduced fuel usage and increase in attentiveness and learning spurred by exercise before school are positive incentives to encourage more parents to allow their children to walk/bike to school.

Lack of committee drive to organize the effort: Organizing and implementing a successful safe routes to school initiative involves a significant time commitment from one or more people on a SRTS committee. A successful program requires investment in partnership development, planning, and problem solving. The most successful safe routes to school stories typically have one or more “champions” that push the cause past the initial obstacles and planning stage.

Taking a Closer Look: Design Charrettes

NE IA RC&D partnered with the Iowa Bicycle Coalition (IBC) to conduct **five Safe Routes to School “Design Charrettes” or planning workshops, one in each county within the Project Area.** The goal of the workshops was to increase awareness and understanding about the national SRTS program and develop a local community plan for action using SRTS strategies. In addition, the workshops were meant to help community members gain a better understanding of barriers and issues within their school, school district, and the region as a whole. One school from each county was selected to host the workshop based on a number of factors including the level of participation of students, parents, teachers, administration and volunteers. A broad range of groups were invited to each workshop,



Any sustained and successful SRTS efforts must have broad support and input from a range of community members. A complete list of recommended SRTS Committee members can be found in Appendix II and on the National Center for SRTS’s website: www.saferoutesinfo.org/getting_started



The goal of the workshops was to increase awareness and understanding about the national SRTS program and develop a local community plan using SRTS strategies.

including law enforcement, city planning/government, local biking/walking advocates, engaged parents and students, the school transportation coordinator, teachers, and other school and community decision makers. Any sustained and successful SRTS efforts must have broad support and input from a range of community members. A complete list of recommended SRTS Committee members can be found in Appendix II.

The workshops were held in April 2009 in 5 Northeast Iowa communities; Elma, Guttenberg, Oelwein, Ossian and Waukon. A diversity of sectors were represented including city planning departments, school administration, teachers, parents, students, school transportation directors, local trail groups, community betterment groups, and interested community members. The four-hour long workshop included observing a school dismissal noting positive and negative activities, an interactive power point presentation to learn more about the national SRTS program, and developing next steps. Infrastructure maps of each community were also available to aid in the planning process. The IBC provided many take-home materials to workshop attendees including a free pedestrian and bicycle safety curriculum and other SRTS education and encouragement information.



Large scale maps created from the Existing Infrastructure Audits were provided to workshop attendees to aid in the planning process during the Design Charrettes. These maps were used to identify and designate walking and/or biking routes.

Table 2. Barriers and corresponding solutions identified by local community members during the SRTS Design Charrettes.

Attitude of Parents/Convenience	· Perception vs. reality – how long does it really take? · Complete a study comparing motorized vs. non-motorized transportation to/from school.
Attitude of Students	· Implement incentive programs. i.e. Mileage Club, Golden Sneaker Award, prizes (helmets, water bottles, gift cards, etc)
Deteriorated Sidewalks or No Sidewalks	· Inventory existing sidewalks. Secure funding to improve and/or install new sidewalks.
Distance	· Designate a remote drop-off and pick-up point with a walking school bus.
In-Town/“Hazard” Busing	· Develop a walking school bus, designate walking routes, ensure safe crossings with crossing guards, clearly marked crosswalks, and/or crossing lights
Speed and Volume of Traffic	· Utilize pedestrian signs, crossing guards and pavement markings to alert drivers, slow speeds by narrowing the roadway, install a buffer zone between the sidewalk and roadway
Stranger Danger	· Increased law enforcement visibility during pick up and drop off times, walk and/or bike in a group or with an adult, establish walking and/or biking routes
Student Safety	· Implement effective walking and biking education curriculum on a yearly basis.



Chapter 4 Recommendations

Regional Recommendations

This chapter takes into account the barriers, obstacles and issues addressed by parents, students, school officials and infrastructure audits conducted through the Northeast Iowa Regional SRTS project and makes recommendations for best addressing those obstacles. The recommendations in this chapter are focused on solutions or ideas that could be implemented regionwide to encourage, promote and develop safe walking and biking to schools and increase the number of schools and students participating in activities to promote walking/biking to school. The recommendations in this chapter are divided into the 5 E's for Safe Routes to School.

The 5 E's are 1) Evaluation, 2) Engineering, 3) Education, 4) Enforcement, and 5) Encouragement. For a complete description of the 5 E's, please see page 6 of this plan. In addition, recommendations for necessary policy changes are also included in this section. Please note that some of these recommendations may or may not be applicable to an individual community or school and that this list does not necessarily address all potential barriers or identify all recommendations available. Each individual school or community should develop a specific Safe Routes to School Plan that addresses the conditions and barriers present and the recommendations most likely to result in increased safety and increased participation in walking/biking to school. The individual SRTS committees should then develop an action plan to detail how their school or community will implement the selected recommendations to accomplish their goals (See Appendix I). It is important to note that all aspects of the plan need to be implemented for ultimate success. For example, education programs and encouragement programs are fantastic, but if the necessary infrastructure is not in place, safety and logistical problems are certain to arise. Conversely, a community can invest large amounts of money on improving infrastructure and safety controls, but if the school policies discourage walking or biking to school, the money will not have been well spent.

Did you know?

Children on a walking school bus walk about 2 miles per hour.

- *AmericaWalks.org*

It takes about 5 to 10 minutes for children to walk $\frac{1}{4}$ mile or bicycle an entire mile.

- *National Center for SRTS*

Evaluation

Conduct pre-project survey: In order to adequately gauge the success of the project, pre-project surveys or tallies need to be collected to determine a baseline of how students are currently traveling to and from school.

Conduct student tallies in the classrooms: Teachers should conduct a quick tally of student travel mode to school on an occasional basis set by the safe routes committee. Quick tally results can be collected while taking attendance and will not take away from class time. The tally will help to keep walking and biking to school on the students' minds and provide updates for the committee on progress being made towards their goals. Several pre-designed tally sheets are available from the National Center for Safe Routes to School Program.

Conduct annual review of goals and accomplishments: Safe route to school committees should meet at least annually to review the project's goals, progress towards the goals, additional barriers encountered and development of the upcoming year's action plan.



Student Tallies: Travel mode tally results can be collected quickly while taking classroom attendance. The tally will help to keep walking and biking to school on the students' minds and provide updates for the school's SRTS committee. Pre-designed tally sheets are available at the National Center for SRTS website:
www.saferoutesinfo.org/resources

Engineering

The engineering recommendations focus on establishing functional walking or biking routes that eliminate or reduce safety concerns from vehicular traffic.

1. Creating a safe route infrastructure

Create a complete off-street sidewalk network: In most communities in Northeast Iowa, existing sidewalks will be heavily utilized in creating designated safe routes to school. Any gaps in sidewalk coverage along the route or leading from residential areas to the route should be filled in to allow for complete access. An inventory of sidewalk condition should be reviewed in order to make sure unsafe sidewalks are repaired and sidewalks are in compliance with American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) standards. To improve access for all and safety for students traveling by bicycle, curbs should meet universal accessibility standards along the designated safe route.

Build a multi-purpose trail that will function as a safe route to school: Multi-purpose recreational trails have increased in popularity in Northeast Iowa in the past decade and many communities, as well as regional partnerships, are in the process of exploring trail building opportunities. Tying safe routes to school into the trail plans is an ideal way to improve safety and opportunity for students to walk/bike to school, particularly in more rural school locations or in communities with inconsistent sidewalk coverage between residential areas and the school. Building paved trails is the most functional for school routes, but is expensive and may be cost prohibitive in some cases.

Increase crosswalk visibility: Create highly visible crosswalks along designated school routes to improve student safety when crossing street intersections. The most visible crosswalks should be at least 10 feet wide and painted in the ladder or piano design. Crosswalks should be re-painted occasionally to ensure maximum visibility. Busy crosswalks that are not controlled by stoplights or 4-way stops along the travel route should be marked with overhead signage and/or in road elevated reflectors to bring further attention to the crosswalk.



Increased Visibility:
Pictured above is an advance warning preparing drivers for potential pedestrian/bicycle crossing. Pictured below is an example of a highly visible, wide crosswalk painted in the piano design.



Divert route away from heaviest traffic areas: In conjunction with policy changes for creating safe drop-off and pick-up processes, safe routes should be planned to avoid highest traffic and/or speed areas where possible. Avoiding intersections with high-speed roadways is a major issue for developing safe routes in many communities in Northeast Iowa. If necessary, crossings on high-speed roadways should only be located where appropriate traffic signals are present.

Implement bicycle lanes on roads where bicycles are prohibited on adjacent sidewalks: In some areas, sidewalks are too narrow to safely handle pedestrian and bicycle traffic together. In cases where bicyclists are not allowed on sidewalks, lanes should be painted and properly marked on the street to create separation between vehicles and bicyclists. In cases where parallel parking is allowed on the street or roadway, bicycle “sharrows” or shared roadway markings should be painted between the parking lane and travel lane to remind parked drivers to use caution when opening doors and to make bicyclists more visible to moving vehicular traffic.

Utilize sidewalk stenciling to mark designated safe route: Using creative sidewalk stencil markings along the designated safe route(s) encourages students to travel along the designated route and also increases community awareness and buy-in to the safe routes to school program. Sidewalk stencils can also help to remind motorists they are driving near a school route.

Complete a signage inventory and update missing signs: Proper signage of school routes, speed zones, intersections and special traffic regulations in school zones can significantly improve motorists’ awareness and compliance with traffic rules, thereby increasing safety. A committee should work with the school and local city or county officials to improve signage along the school route and replace any missing signs.



Bicycle Lanes/Shared Roadway Signs:

Pictured above is an example of a “sharrow” symbol. In cases where parallel parking is allowed on the street or roadway, bicycle “sharrows” or shared roadway markings should be painted between the parking lane and travel lane to remind parked drivers to use caution when opening doors and to make bicyclists more visible to moving vehicular traffic.



Install Bicycle Racks:
Bicycle racks are available in all shapes, sizes and colors and can also be custom created. Adequate bicycle racks can serve to highlight or promote biking to school when placed in prominent locations.



Install lighting along designated route: Pedestrian scale lighting that directs lights to the sidewalk rather than to the roadway helps to create a safer and more welcoming walking environment. It can also help to address the issue of waning daylight during the winter months or for students who participate in before or after school activities and may have to walk/bike in low light conditions.

Install adequate bicycle racks to promote biking to school: If existing bike racks are not sufficient to provide space for bicycles, new racks need to be installed. New bike racks are more durable, functional and longer lasting and can serve to highlight or promote biking to school when placed in prominent locations.

2. Reducing vehicular traffic concerns:

Incorporate raised intersections: Installing raised intersections and/or crosswalks in conjunction with visibly painted crosswalks helps to both reduce vehicle speed at the intersection and highlight the intersection to motorists to increase awareness of potential pedestrians.

Install speed bumps: Install speed bumps or humps to slow vehicular traffic speed through areas with heavy student walking/biking or in school zones.

Restrict turning movements: Create pick-up/drop off areas or school zone restrictions that only allow right turns out of or into school property to help alleviate congestion and improve safety.

Incorporate median islands at intersections: Elevated medians between the two lanes of traffic near intersections highlight pedestrian crossings, provide a safe zone for pedestrians when crossing and can encourage students to cross at the designated intersection.

Develop effective remote pick-up/drop-off zones: In order to promote remote drop-offs to improve safety near the school and promote walking by students who live more than 2 miles from school, convenient remote drop off areas need to be developed. In many communities, potential drop-off areas may already be in place and only need to be marked and signed. Effective areas should have adequate parking, barriers or markings to separate vehicle and pedestrian traffic and be properly signed to expedite transfer times and avoid confusion.

Enact partial day road closures: Closing certain roads in school zones or restricting traffic by utilizing moveable barriers during certain times of the day (i.e. pick-up and drop-off) can reduce congestion and improve safety near the school.

Reducing Vehicular Traffic Concerns: Pictured below and right is a school loading zone which restricts vehicular interaction with bus pick up/drop off.



E ducation

Educate from the top down: In order to maximize the effective implementation of a safe routes to school plan, it is crucial to gain the support of those in charge of setting school policy and making spending decisions for the school, city and county. Educating those people on the benefits of a safe routes to school program and including them in the planning process is the most effective way to gain support.



Send Parents Informational Materials: Educational materials mailed to parents highlighting the benefits of walking/biking on health, academic performance and attentiveness can be effective tools in swaying parental opinions to allow their children to walk /bike.

Invite a local police officer to come to class to talk about pedestrian safety: Children in Northeast Iowa typically have an admiration for police officers and will be an attentive audience to an officer speaking about proper and safe behavior when walking/biking to school.

Send parents informational materials to educate them on the benefits of walking/biking to school: In many cases, particularly with younger students, the decision to walk or bike to school is made by the parents. Students may be excited to walk to school, but do not see it as an option because mom or dad always drives them to school. Educational materials mailed to parents highlighting the benefits of walking and biking on health, academic performance and attentiveness can be effective tools in swaying parental opinions to allow their children to walk or bike. Information detailing the safety infrastructure and/or system in place can also alleviate parental fears regarding safety. In addition, timely information regarding school policy as it relates to walking and biking, as well as school zone regulations for motor vehicles can help to avoid confusion and promote a sense of community pride for the safe routes to school program.



NE IA Food & Fitness Initiative, Riceville School Bike Rodeo

Invite Local Police Officers to School: Children in NE Iowa typically have an admiration for police officers and will be an attentive audience to an officer speaking about proper and safe behavior when walking/biking to school.

Invite successful program personnel to speak: It may be very beneficial to invite committee members from a successful safe routes to school project to come and speak to parents, committee members, volunteers and/or planning staff about successes in their program and equally as important, what obstacles they faced or things they would do differently. Knowledge from groups with first hand experience can be both motivating and time saving.

Utilize local media outlets to promote the program: Saturate the local print, radio and television media outlets with information about your project. This will raise awareness of the effort, increase interest amongst the community, make motorists more conscious of safe routes and driving safely, and promote overall buy-in of the project. It also has the potential to attract partners that may not have been previously solicited.

Host bicycle rodeos or bicycle safety classes: Bicycle rodeo events combine the teaching of safe riding techniques and strategies with fun events for children such as, riding bicycles through obstacle courses, getting to sit and/or ride in a police car and other games and contests.

Educate motorists traveling near school zones: Make sure that proper signage is posted to remind motorists of school zone or designated safe route travel restrictions. Enlist volunteers to distribute brochures to motorists at stops in and around school zones providing information on safe driving and utilize media outlets to remind motorists to be aware of students walking and biking to school.

Host Bicycle Rodeos/Bicycle Safety Classes:

One community in Northeast Iowa hosted its first Bicycle Rodeo during the 2008-2009 school year. The students participated in SRTS activities including obstacle courses, "How Slow Can You Go?" bicycle races and coloring. Bike checks from a local bike-shop owner and helmets in school colors were provided free of cost to each student.



Enforcement

Create a safe house network: Parents or community members can volunteer their house as a safe house or refuge for any students who feel threatened or in danger along their walking/biking route to school.

Hire crossing guards or enlist volunteer corner captains: Hire crossing guards to assist students in safely crossing the street as they walk or bike to school. Enlist volunteer adults to stand on various corners along the designated safe route to school to help ensure that students are following biking and walking etiquette and also provide a security presence for students by putting more eyes on the street.

Enforce building, sidewalk and property maintenance laws and ordinances: Sidewalk, building and property maintenance laws that support a safer, friendlier walking environment must be enforced. For example, overgrown vegetation, namely at corners, can obscure the visibility of a pedestrian to a motorists and vice versa. In addition, sidewalks in disrepair can become a tripping hazard. A small committee can be tasked with inventorying the applicable laws and codes and ultimately fixing these problem spots.

Highlight school safety zones: Create a well identified school zone that clearly highlights the presence of school children and school related activities in the surrounding area. Proper school zone highlighting will clearly identify and sign reduced speed limits within the school zone, crosswalks and special traffic rules pertaining to the school zone. The school should also work with local law enforcement to make sure that extra enforcement and/or monitoring of school zones occurs during arrival and dismissal times. Schools should also make sure to provide adequate information to parents to inform them of school zone rules and special traffic regulations to prevent the need for enforcement action.



Crossing Guards and Corner Captains: Crossing guards and corner captains help ensure student safety by alerting motorists when pedestrians/bicyclists are crossing and by enforcing proper walking/biking etiquette.

Reduce speed limits along school route: Reducing the speed limit along the designated safe route to school to 25 mph drastically reduces the potential for accidents between vehicles and pedestrians. Reduced speed limits along travel routes also alleviates some parental concerns regarding safety of their children when walking/biking to school. There are several national community based programs currently developed to help implement this strategy including the “Keep Kids Alive – Drive 25” campaign.

Increase law enforcement in school zones and along safe routes to school: Work with local law enforcement agencies to increase the presence of law enforcement agents along designated safe routes to school and in and around school zones during student use times. The increased presence will deter unsafe behaviors by motorists, reduce the

threat of crime along the route and promote safe behaviors by parents and children walking and biking to school. When human resources are limited, parking unmanned police cars or placing speed trailers along the route can be effective in accomplishing the goals of increased law enforcement presence. Partner with law enforcement agencies early in the safe routes to school process to encourage inclusion and participation with project ideas.



Increase Law Enforcement:

Work with local law enforcement agencies to increase their presence along designated safe routes to school and in and around school zones during student use times.

Did you know?

Speeding extends the distance necessary to stop a vehicle.
 *20mph – stopping distance is 69 ft
 *30mph – stopping distance is 123 ft
 *40mph – stopping distance is 189 ft
 which may not be enough distance and time to avoid hitting an object or person in the road.

A pedestrian hit by a car traveling:
 *40mph has a 20% chance of survival
 *30mph has a 60% chance of survival
 *20mph has a 95% chance of survival
 - National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Encouragement



Plan a “Walk to School Day”: Pictured above, one of the many Northeast Iowa communities that held a “Walk to School Day” event which included a walking school bus from a remote student drop-off site for vehicles and buses.

Establish early out for walkers and bikers: Create staggered dismissal times for students based on their mode of travel. Adjusting dismissal times by 5 minutes allows students who walk and/or bike to school to avoid congestion issues with school bus loading and personal vehicle pick-up, which can improve safety during these times. Being able to get out of school a few minutes early can serve as extra motivation for students to walk or bike to school.

Plan a “walk to school” day: Plan and promote a walk to school day to kick-off the safe routes to school program in the community. Encourage all students to walk or bike to school on that day, including remote drop-off for buses, to highlight the program. Invite media personnel to cover the event to increase visibility and community support through buy-in. Encourage parents to walk with their children on these days and include high profile participants (school principals, superintendents, police officers, local celebrities, etc.) in the walk to increase awareness.

Create a rewards program for students who walk or bike: There are a number of different rewards methods currently being used around the country to encourage students to walk and/or bike to school, including a Mileage Club program and classroom or school competitions.

Develop walking school buses: Walking school buses encourage students to walk to school in groups and typically have an adult chaperone or “bus driver” along with the group to increase safety and promote good behavior. Walking school buses promote social interaction, exercise and school spirit. Walking school buses are particularly effective in conjunction with remote drop-off locations where school buses or personal vehicles are unloading students at one specific location away from the school zone. There, students can gather and accompany one or more “walking school bus drivers” along the designated route to school.

Partnership

Creating effective partnerships is crucial to achieving a successful safe routes to school program. Including potential project partners in the beginning of the process helps create a sense of ownership in the project and can help head off problems before they arise. See Appendix II for a list of potential SRTS partners.

Policy

The recommendations outlined in this chapter are all dependent on school policy that promotes and encourages walking/biking to and from school. One of the greatest barriers to successful safe routes to school programs is not necessarily distance, infrastructure or traffic, but rather school policy that discourages students from walking and/or biking. Maintaining student safety is obviously a top priority, but incorporating the previously listed recommendations with school policies and local ordinances that support safe walking and biking to school will result in maximum success of safe routes to school programs. See Appendix III for example walking and bicycling policies.

Champion

Through the process of developing this plan, it was clear that the most successful Safe Routes to School efforts had a “Champion” or several “Champions” that worked diligently to build partnerships, complete tasks and encourage sound planning. These Champions also made sure to educate themselves and others, engaging with and learning from community, state and national leaders that were just as passionate about Safe Routes to School. They were also key to whether or not a school was engaged and followed through to develop Safe Routes to School Program and new policy and they motivate community members and peers. The continued passion, dedication and vision of these Champions will be crucial to the success of Safe Routes to School Projects in Northeast Iowa but this phenomenon is not unique to Northeast Iowa. The National Center for Safe Routes to School also believes in Champions but provides an important caution for us all, Champions cannot do it alone. They note, “Communities with flourishing SRTS programs have attributed their success in part to a program champion — someone who has enthusiasm and time to provide leadership for the group and keep things moving. However, a champion cannot do it alone, he or she will need support. Building the next generation of leaders along the way will assure that the program continues. This is particularly important when the champion is a parent who is likely to move on when their child transitions to another school.”



Partnership:

Pictured above is an example of a well represented SRTS planning committee including the Chief of Police, a community leader, the school superintendent, a parent, the mayor, a special needs instructor and an active community member.

Appendices

Appendix I. Developing a Safe Routes to School Action Plan

The National Center for Safe Routes to School has identified a 7-step process that individual communities/schools can utilize for organizing and implementing a successful Safe Routes to School program. The 7 steps are:

1. **Bring together the right people:** Identify people who want to make walking and bicycling to school safe and appealing for children. Sharing concerns, interests and knowledge among a variety of community members with diverse expertise can enable groups to tackle many issues.
2. **Hold a kick off meeting and set a vision:** A goal of the first meeting is to create a vision and generate next steps for the group members.
3. **Gather information and identify issues:** Collecting information can help to identify needed program elements and provide a means to measure the impact of the program later.
4. **Identify solutions:** Solutions to identified issues will include a combination of education, encouragement, engineering and enforcement strategies. Safety is the first consideration.
5. **Make a plan:** It doesn't need to be lengthy. Include encouragement, enforcement, education and engineering strategies. Create a time-line for the plan.
6. **Get the plan and people moving:** Hold a kick-off event starting with a fun activity. Participate in International Walk to School Day or celebrate a Walking Wednesday.
7. **Evaluate, adjust and keep moving:** To sustain the program, consider building additional program champions and letting people know about your successes.

For more detailed resources and information about developing a Safe Routes to School Plan and Action Plan, visit http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/getting_started/

Appendix II. Potential SRTS Partners

Schools:

- Principal and other administrators
- Parents and students, including those with disabilities
- Teachers (Physical education/health teachers are a good place to start)
- PTA/PTO representative
- School nurse
- School district transportation director
- School improvement team or site council member
- Adult school crossing guards
- Special education teacher

Community:

- Community members
- Neighborhood or community association members
- Local businesses
- Local pedestrian, bicycle and safety advocates
- Groups representing people with disabilities

Local Government:

- Mayor's office or council members
- Transportation or traffic engineer
- Local planner
- Public health professional
- Public works representative
- Law enforcement officer
- State or local pedestrian and bicycle coordinator

Appendix III. Sample Bicycling & Walking Policies

POLICY

[District Name] School Bicycle Policy

Bicycling is among the best ways to promote student well being. The District supports bicycling as transportation as long as students live within bicycling distance and there are adequate facilities. Bicycling provides physical activity, decreases congestion and resulting pollution and provides skills and healthy habits that will last a life-time. Parents are discouraged from driving children to and from school, particularly since motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among school-age children. The District supports students' participation in Safe Routes to School programs.

The District regards the riding of bicycles to school by students as an assumption of responsibility by students and their parents – a responsibility in the care of property, in the observation of safety rules, and in the display of courtesy and consideration towards others. The District assumes no liability for injuries occurring outside school property.

The District strongly recommends that students and their parents follow recommended bicycling safety guidelines and always use their common sense and good judgment. School employees and parents/caregivers are role models for all children, and older children should be models for younger children. Role models have a responsibility to follow the laws and rules for safe walking, bicycling and driving to ensure the safety of all road users (pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists). All students under 17 must wear a helmet when riding a bicycle. All bicyclists, including employees and parents/caregivers should wear a properly fitted helmet when riding.

3rd grade and below:

Children in 3rd grade and below should be accompanied by an adult when bicycling to or from school, as well as complying with the other conditions below. Parents are strongly cautioned to exercise great care and supervise carefully if children of this age wish to bicycle to school. Children in 3rd grade and below are unlikely to have the developmental and judgment skills for unsupervised bicycling.

4th grade and above:

The District [or the city police, or parks and recreation program, or local clinic or hospital, etc.] provides bicycle education in grade _____ (ideally end of 3rd, beginning of 4th grade) to teach traffic skills and rules as well as improved judgment in individual and group bicycling. The District recommends that every child take this training or a similar bicycle safety course before riding in traffic.

Students who ride bicycles to and from school must have written consent from a parent or legal guardian and agree to the conditions listed below. The District expects parents and guardians to make students aware of these rules and conditions and the safety reasons supporting them.

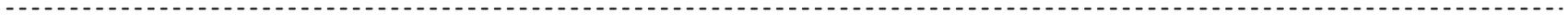
Students should follow state law and safety guidelines for bicyclists: (Insert your local ordinances and state laws if applicable)

1. According to N.J. state law, anyone under 17 that rides a bicycle must wear a helmet at all times (N.J. state law Title 39:4-10.1). Any student without a helmet will have their bicycle confiscated by the Building Administrator until a parent or guardian picks it up. Noncompliance with this rule will result in disciplinary action.
2. In New Jersey, bicycles are defined as vehicles under the state motor vehicle code contained in NJSA Title 39:4. Parents and students should be aware of these state bicycling laws and follow them at all times. Riders must follow the rules of the road including but not limited to:
 - a. Obeying all traffic lights and signals (N.J. state law Title 39:4-14.1, 39:4-14.2, 39:4-10.11),
 - b. Using hand signals before making turns,
 - c. Only one rider per seat – never let a friend ride on the handlebars or wheel pegs (N.J. state law Title 39:4-12),
 - d. Stopping and looking left, right, then left again before leaving driveways or entering any street,
 - e. Riding with traffic (N.J. state law Title 39:4-14.2, 39:4-10.11). Don't ride too close to parked cars – doors can open suddenly,
 - f. Riding where drivers can see you and don't swerve between cars,
 - g. Equipping the bicycle with a bell or other audible device that can be heard at least 100 feet away, but not a siren or whistle (N.J. state law Title 39:4-11), and
 - h. If you must ride at dawn, dusk or after dark, use headlights and tail lights – white in the front and red in back (N.J. state law Title 39:4-10).
3. Bicycles ridden to school should be roadworthy and regularly maintained. Students should test tires for air before riding and make sure brakes work (N.J. state law Title 39:4-11.1).

While at school, students must comply with these rules:

4. Bicycles may not be ridden on school grounds during arrival and dismissal; they must be walked.
5. Bicycles must be parked in the racks provided. Students must bring and use bicycle locks.
6. Helmets must be stored in locker, backpack or attached to bicycle.
7. Students are not to interfere with any bikes, helmets or other equipment (steal, unlock quick releases, bounce helmets, etc.).

The School District/Board or its subsidiaries are not liable for any equipment or property damage.



Name of Student _____ Grade _____

____ I/We have read and understood this policy and give our permission for our child (named above) to ride his/her bicycle to school and understand our obligations under New Jersey's Bicycle Helmet Law.

Name of Parent or Guardian

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

Model Bicycling to School Policy, Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center
<http://policy.rutgers.edu/vtc/srts/publications.php>

POLICY

[District Name] School Walking Policy

Walking is among the best ways to promote student well-being. The District supports walking as transportation as long as students live within walking distance and there are adequate facilities. Walking provides physical activity, decreases congestion and pollution, and provides pedestrian skills and healthy habits that will last a lifetime. Parents are discouraged from driving children to school, particularly since motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among school-age children. The District supports students' participation in Safe Routes to School programs.

The District regards walking to school by students as an assumption of responsibility by students and their parents – a responsibility in the care of property, in the observation of safety rules, and in the display of courtesy and consideration towards others. The District assumes no liability for injuries occurring outside school property.

The District strongly recommends that students and their parents follow recommended walking safety guidelines and always use their common sense and good judgment. If crossing guards are available, students and parents should cross where crossing guards are located. Students should use crosswalks. A crosswalk is an extension of the road, sidewalk, curb or edge of the shoulder at an intersection. Crosswalks may be either marked with painted stripes or unmarked. School employees and parents/caregivers are role models for children, and older children should be models for younger children. Role models have a responsibility to follow the laws and rules for safe walking, bicycling and driving to ensure the safety of all road users - pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.

3rd grade and below:

It is recommended that students in the third grade and below walk with adult supervision. Students who walk to school should use sidewalks, paths and/or trails. Students should cross where crossing guards are located and within painted crosswalks where present. All pedestrians should cross streets only at corners or within painted crosswalks, after looking both ways.

4th grade and above:

It is recommended that students walk in groups or with adult supervision. If crossing guards are available, students and parents should cross where crossing guards are located. Students should cross within painted crosswalks where present. All pedestrians should cross streets only at corners or within painted crosswalks, after looking both ways.

The District expects parents and guardians to make students aware of the following safety tips: (Insert local ordinances or state laws if applicable)

1. If there is a crosswalk, use it.
2. Before crossing, look left, right, and left again to make sure the road is clear. Continue looking while you cross and listen for traffic.
3. Do not cross the street from between parked cars.
4. If you are walking at dawn, dusk or after dark, wear light-colored or reflective clothing.

Name of Student _____ Grade _____

____ I/We have read and understood this policy and give our permission for our child (named above) to walk to and from school.

Name of Parent or Guardian

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

Model Walking to School Policy, Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center
<http://policy.rutgers.edu/vtc/srts/publications.php>

Appendix IV. Funding Resource Guide

Public/Private Funding and Technical Assistance

The following information about public and private organizations will provide project funding ideas for planning and/or infrastructure projects related to development of safe routes to schools. It is intended to be a starting point for Safe Routes to School committees and other partners that are interested in understanding the mission of regional agencies and non-profits as well as the scope of state and federal funding sources and how to maximize those partnerships. Most grants will only pay a portion of project costs and therefore require a “match” or additional funding from either the applicant or a qualifying organization. Federal grants typically allow local or state match but will not allow other federal funding to be used as the required match. Likewise, state grants usually require non-state match. Private funders do not usually prohibit match sources. Local match for any project demonstrates commitment and support for the project and increases the likelihood that outside funders will award grants.

The information provided in this appendix is not intended to be all inclusive and it does not include the specific names of local governmental entities, businesses and non-profit organizations that may be primary sources of funding for individual projects.

The same project practices that result in success for other types of community endeavors apply to safe routes to school projects. Therefore, the most successful fundraising and grant writing will occur for projects that engage multiple partners from the onset. This will be particularly evident after reviewing the information provided in this appendix. You will note that many grants are only available to specific applicants. The qualifying applicant must be supportive of your project and this is typically more likely to be true if the qualifying applicant has been involved in the project at some level as early in the process as possible. It should also be noted that funding sources and grant requirements can fluctuate greatly from one grant cycle to the next, making the information available in this table limited and time sensitive. Project leaders should update and expand information periodically by visiting websites and keeping communication lines open with regional and state non-profit and agency partners.

I. Grants

County and Community Foundations – These local organizations typically have a Board of Directors made up of volunteer community members. They develop local priorities and review/award grants. Most have limited funds and many limit individual grant awards. Funding cycles vary but are typically annual. Eligible applicants are typically non-profits, schools and other public interest groups that have secured a qualifying fiscal agent. These applications can be detailed and, even though they award limited funding, these local foundations can be more critical of application errors than state and federal funders offering a hundred times more funding. However, at the time of this publication, several foundations in Northeast Iowa have identified community fitness as one of their top priorities. Applicants should follow directions closely and take every opportunity to communicate with or learn from the foundation members.

Regional Enhancement Grant & Statewide Transportation Enhancement Grants – *Transportation Enhancement* is a program that offers Federal funding opportunities to expand transportation choices and enhance the transportation experience through projects related to surface transportation. Pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and safety and education activities are eligible for funding through this program.

Funding for Transportation Enhancement projects is administered by the State Department of Transportation in each State, but often apportioned to local governments for project selection and funding. Projects require a 20 – 30 percent match in funding. For more information, visit www.enhancements.org. In Iowa the Iowa DOT administers these funds with assistance from the regional planning affiliates, which in Northeast Iowa is Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission (UERPC).

Federal enhancement funding comes down to the state and then is divided into two pools of money. The first pool of funding is distributed through several regions across the state. Each region controls its own funding distribution with assistance from their Council of Governments or COG. Northeast Iowa's COG is Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission (UERPC). The regional funds for Northeast Iowa are administered by this entity as part of their duty to develop and implement a regional transportation plan. Although regional grant funds are only available to a limited number of applicants, they can provide significant funding for infrastructure projects that provide safe routes to school, including trails. In Northeast Iowa, County Conservation Board Directors and community representatives serve on a Transportation Enhancement Committee that accepts/reviews/awards Regional Transportation grants from applicants annually each spring. Successful regional grants must have regional significance, must be included in the Regional Transportation Enhancement Plan and may be submitted by a County Conservation Board or one of the two largest communities in the region, Decorah or Oelwein. Applications must have the approval of their county team, which will be led by the County Conservation Board Director, in order to be prioritized and awarded funding by the regional Transportation Enhancement Committee. These funds are typically awarded several years before project implementation so applicants should be forward thinking.

The second pool of federal enhancement funding administered by the Iowa DOT is for projects that have statewide significance. The Iowa DOT accepts Statewide Transportation Enhancement grant applications annually each fall. Applications are reviewed and grants are awarded at the state level but must reflect regional planning efforts that occur in tandem with regional transportation enhancement planning through Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission. Statewide transportation enhancement applications can be submitted by governmental agencies such as cities or counties. Although regional and statewide enhancement grants are similar and are relatively simple applications, both have complex implementation standards and procedures enforced by the Iowa DOT that discourage small requests.

State Recreational Trails and Federal Recreational Trails Grants – Just like the enhancement grants, these grants are easy to confuse with each other but applicants should recognize that they are two separate funding sources. Although both are controlled by the state, one provides federal grant dollars and the other provides state grant dollars for projects. Neither requires coordination with regional partners or inclusion of projects in the Regional Transportation Plan but applications benefit from regional coordination and planning. The Federal Recreational Trails Program (RTP) is an assistance program of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Federal transportation funds benefit recreation by making funds available to the States to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both non-motorized and motorized recreational trail uses. Each State administers its own program. State RTP Administrators can provide guidance on State policies and project eligibility requirements. For more information on the Federal RTP, visit <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/rectrails/index.htm>.

Iowa Safe Routes To School – This grant, application deadline each October 1, is administered by the Iowa DOT and can be used to fund improvements to public infrastructure that will improve conditions for biking or walking to school *within 2 miles* of an elementary or middle school. They will also provide funding for planning efforts for an individual school or a community of schools as well as funding for programs that encourage biking or walking to school and enforcement or evaluation efforts. Although the grant application process is relatively simple, planning for this grant is important so be sure to read through all the grant guidelines well before application deadlines. This funder has not favored grant awards for rural infrastructure such as trails even when those trails provide the only safe route to rural schools. Unlike most grants, there is no match required for this grant, which is currently available annually. Details about this funding source can be found at <http://www.iowadot.gov/saferoutes/>. In August, 2005, the Federal-aid SRTS Program was created by Section 1404 of the federal transportation bill, the *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users Act* (SAFETEA-LU). Housed in the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Office of Safety, the SRTS Program is funded at \$612 million over five Federal fiscal years (FY 2005–2009). FHWA apportions SRTS funding annually to each State in conjunction with Federal-aid highway apportionments. There are two categories of local funding through which to pursue SRTS funds: capital improvement projects and operating budgets:

II. SRTS 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 local budget. During the planning process, 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.

III. SRTS 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 biking 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 painting crosswalks or installing signage, or more costly projects such as installing curb ramps.

More information on the Federal Safe Routes to School Program, including FHWA Program Guidance, can be found at <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/saferoutes/index.htm>.

Wellmark Foundation – This private foundation targets specific areas of interest annually. Their grant application can be complex but they provide helpful training for interested applicants. They have several grant deadlines throughout the year including smaller grants for new projects and larger grants for more developed initiatives. Additional information about this funding source can be found at http://www.wellmark.com/foundation/apply/apply_for_funding.htm

Harkin Wellness Grant – This grant was developed at the federal level by its namesake, Senator Tom Harkin, to help communities achieve greater health through planning, programs and infrastructure development. Several Northeast Iowa applicants have been awarded this grant for infrastructure, planning and education projects. Harkin wellness grants are intended to be used to help communities lower health care costs by promoting prevention and wellness. They come from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) through the Iowa Department of Public Health Office for Healthier Communities. They promote healthier lifestyles by giving communities the opportunity to develop creative approaches to promote disease prevention and wellness. Additional Iowa Department of Public Health initiatives can be found at their web site <http://www.idph.state.ia.us/IdphGBP/IdphGBP.aspx>. They may include:

- Prevention through Mentoring
- Regional Environmental Health Collaborative Implementing Quality Improvement in Public Health: Improving Obesity Prevention Outcomes

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation - This private funder has a multitude of funding opportunities including some that may help schools and communities conduct research or develop safer routes to schools. Each has its own intricacies and characteristics but this foundation provides information, e-updates and other Internet communication for interested parties. Details can be found at: <http://www.activelivingresearch.org/grantsearch> or <http://www.healthyeatingresearch.org/content/view/47/101/>

The following is a list of additional potential state and federal funding sources taken from the Safe Routes to School Toolkit, published by National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. (Some edits provide additional local information):

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement - The Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program provides funding to the Iowa DOT to invest in projects that reduce air pollutants from transportation-related sources. Pedestrian and bicycle facilities are included as measures to reduce vehicle use or improve traffic flow. Funding is available for areas that do not meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (non-attainment areas) as well as former non-attainment areas that are now in compliance (maintenance areas). For more information, contact Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission.

Highway Safety Improvement Program - The Highway Safety Improvement Program provides funding to Iowa for projects that correct or improve a hazardous road location or feature or otherwise address a highway safety problem. The legislation lists examples of many projects eligible for this funding, including improvements for pedestrian and bicycle safety, and installation and maintenance of signs at pedestrian and bicycle crossings and school zones. A State may be eligible to use up to 10 percent of its Highway Safety Improvement Funds for other safety projects, such as education and encouragement programs. For more information, contact Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission.

Title 23, Section 402 Funds -Sections 2001 and 2002 of SAFETEA-LU reauthorize the State and Community Highway Safety formula grant program (Section 402 of chapter 4 of Title 23) to support state highway safety programs designed to reduce traffic crashes and resulting deaths, injuries, and property damage. A state may use these grant funds only for highway safety purposes; at least 40 percent of these funds are to be expended by political subdivisions of the state. The program is administered by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. For more information, visit <http://www.nhtsa.gov>

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identifies environmental health and healthy living (including overweight and obesity, and physical activity and exercise) in its many areas of interest. In fact, to support the national goal of better health through physical activity, CDC's Nutrition and Physical Activity Program has developed Kids Walk-to-School. This community-based program aims to increase opportunities for daily physical activity by encouraging children to walk to and from school in groups accompanied by adults, while simultaneously advocating the creation of supportive pedestrian and bicycle environments.

The CDC awards grants and contracts to help accomplish its mission to promote health and quality of life by preventing and controlling disease, injury, and disability. For more information, visit <http://www.cdc.gov>

The Environmental Protection Agency - Because of the potential impact on transportation modes, vehicle emissions and air quality, Safe Routes to School programs may look to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as a potential source of funding. The Grants Program sponsored by EPA's Environmental Education Division, Office of Children's Health Protection and Environmental Education, supports environmental education projects that enhance the public's awareness, knowledge, and skills to help people make informed decisions that affect environmental quality. EPA awards grants each year based on funding appropriated by Congress. More than 75 percent of the grants awarded by this program receive less than \$15,000. For more information and information on current grant opportunities, visit <http://www.epa.gov/ogd/grants/information.htm>

IV. Private Sector Funding

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.

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."

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 biking 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.

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