

# Safe Routes to School: What you should know

## What is 'Safe Routes to School' ?

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) plans and policies aim to educate the public, make changes to the built environment, and encourage the community to change how they get to school or work. Such a focus on bicycle and pedestrian transportation has only increased in recent years. Perceived decreased safety, due to increasing numbers of children getting to school by car, has caused yet more parents and children to use cars – thus perpetuating the downward trend in active transportation.

## Did you know?

Nationwide, the number of children walking or biking to school has dropped from 50% in 1969 to under 15% today.



Kids playing in a New Ulm park, circa 1960

## SRTS and New Ulm

In June of 2015, New Ulm completed a planning process funded by an award from the Minnesota Department of Transportation. The plan was informed by parent surveys, student tallies, the Coalition for Active, Safe and Healthy Streets (CASHS), the Heart of New Ulm (HONU) leadership team, and public schools. Both strategies and action steps were determined by a subcommittee of the aforementioned groups.

**Vision:** The Safe Routes to School Program for the community of New Ulm will be a dynamic long term strategy which will address the growing trends of childhood obesity and inactivity by making walking and biking to and from school a safe, healthy, viable, and appealing option for children and their parents.

## Findings:

- Parent surveys mentioned the following concerns:
  - 43% of parents indicated **traffic speed**
  - 49% of parents indicated the **amount of traffic**
  - 47% of parents indicated **safety of crossings and intersections**
- **In all cases** the majority of parents indicated they would allow their children to walk to school if their concerns were changed/improved
- According to student tallies:
  - 59% of students are **driven to school** or drive themselves
  - 28% of all students in New Ulm schools **take the bus**
  - 9% of all students **walk or bike** to school



Hearts Beat Back: The Heart of New Ulm Project is a collaborative partnership of Allina Health, the Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation and the community of New Ulm.

## Action Plan

The following one year action plan was determined by the SRTS Team as high priority strategies that were reasonably attainable. The matrix below includes leads and partners to accomplish each strategy. Also identified are links to additional information, resources, and organizations.

### New Ulm One Year Action Plan 2015-2016

Strategy	Category	Strategy Lead	Partners	Actions in Year 1
Continue collaboration between schools and city staff regarding improving bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure	Engineering	School and City	CASHS and Schools	Continue to add CASHS meetings and SRTS subcommittee meetings to share information and strategize new improvements for walking and biking
Identify, map, and sign primary safe routes to each school	Education/Encouragement	CASHS and Schools	City	Seek map of all traffic signals, stop signs, yield signs, and crossings from city to use to help identify suggested walking routes
				Hold a meeting of key stakeholders on the SRTS team including the city engineer, superintendents, principals, and parents to help identify routes
				Finalize routes and work with graphic designer to create maps and possibly signage for safe routes
Identify areas of improvement for crossing on Broadway Street, Center Street, and 5th North Street	Engineering	City	CASHS and Schools	Based off of mapping safe routes, identify crossing improvements where routes cross Broadway Street, Center Street, and 5th North Street
Implement Walk! Bike! Fun! Safe Routes To School Curriculum through physical education classes	Education	Schools	CASHS	Send staff to Walk!Bike!Fun! Training in spring 2015
				Work with BikeMN to host a training for other staff to learn about curriculum in fall 2015
				Apply for bicycle fleet through MnDOT grant for implementation of bicycle portion of curriculum
Identify areas for traffic calming to reduce vehicle speeds	Engineering	City	Schools and CASHS	Evaluate the results of the use of temporary curb extension for the arrival and dismissal and determine other areas including 5th North Street near St. Anthony for possible replication of demonstration project
Create arrival and dismissal procedures for each school	Enforcement/Engineering	Schools	CASHS and City	Hold a meeting of key stakeholders including busing staff, school officials, and city engineers to brainstorm new arrival and dismissal procedures to separate bus traffic and parent traffic
				Seek approval of design and test out changes on a temporary basis
				Evaluate outcome and determine if any permanent changes should be made
Implementing the SRTS Plan and continuing to monitor progress	Evaluation	CASHS	Schools	Appoint a safe routes to school coordinator and continue safe routes to school meetings during implementation
			Schools and SHIP	Continue to monitor success of program through parent surveys and student travel tallies yearly