BRAINERD/BAXTER
SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

Connecting the trip to school...with safety, health, community and choice.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following key people and entities participated in the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) plan efforts for this Safe Routes to School Policy Plan. Their creativity, energy, and commitment were critical to the success of this effort for the cities of Baxter and Brainerd.

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## A
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The Brainerd/Baxter Safe Routes to School Plan (SRTS) is intended to provide a framework on which to continue building a community in which more students have the opportunity to safely walk or bike to and from school.

Through this planning effort, it is hoped that additional opportunity for students to walk and bike to school will result in several benefits including, first and foremost, a safer, active transportation environment, improved physical and mental health, improved student concentration and study skills, a reduction in negative behavioral issues, as well as improvements to the local sidewalk and trail networks.

This document is a continuation of the ongoing planning process for Brainerd/Baxter. It was formally adopted by both cities and Brainerd Independent School District (ISD 181) on, [Dates] respectively. Brainerd and Baxter have used this planning process as an opportunity to evaluate and reinforce the existing transportation policies and to evaluate previous planning efforts to update and reinforces past decisions that remain relevant.

A major premise of this plan is to support other existing local planning mechanism and to lay out a logical straightforward plan to successfully implement the policies and projects identified herein.
INTRODUCTION

Safe Routes to School (SRTS), generally refers to programs that promote walking and biking to school to achieve a wide range of benefits for students, schools and communities. These benefits include reduced traffic near schools, improved pedestrian/bicycle access, safety, and increased physical activity among students, contributing to healthy lifestyles. By incorporating each of the Six “E”s” – Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Engineering, Evaluation, and Equity- SRTS addresses a wide variety of topics relevant to journeys to and from school within a municipality, district or school.

HISTORY

SRTS began as a European phenomenon thirty years ago and caught on in Canada, and then New York City in 1997. In the 1970’s, Denmark had Europe’s highest child pedestrian accident rate. Implementing the first Safe Routes to School program, planners in Denmark identified specific road dangers around the country’s schools and took steps to remedy the hazards. Since 1970, the child pedestrian crash rate has dropped by 80% in Denmark.

Inspired by such success and faced with rising childhood obesity and crash rates, the Bronx neighborhood in New York tested their own SRTS program. In 1998, Congress funded two pilot SRTS programs through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). NHTSA issued $50,000 each for SRTS pilot programs in Marin County, California, and Arlington, Massachusetts. Within a year after launching these pilot programs, grassroots SRTS efforts were launched in other parts of the country.

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

In 2012 funding changed under the new Federal Transportation Bill Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP21) and combined Safe Routes to School funding with other programs into what is now called the Transportation Alternatives category. This made funding more challenging however; commitments have been able to continue funding the SRTS program. Communities are using this funding to construct new bike lanes, pathways, and sidewalks, as well as to launch SRTS education, promotion and enforcement campaigns in K-8 schools. SRTS programs are built on collaborative partnerships among many stakeholders including educators, parents, students, elected officials, engineers, city planners, business and community leaders, health officials, as well as bicycle and pedestrian advocates.
NATIONAL TRENDS

In 1969, approximately half of all U.S. schoolchildren walked or bicycled to or from school and 87 percent of those living within one mile of school walked or bicycled. Parents report the primary barriers to their children aged 5-18 years walking to or from school as distance to school and traffic related danger. While distance to school is the most commonly reported barrier to walking and bicycling, private vehicles still account for half of school trips between ¼ and ½ mile—a distance easily covered on foot or bike.

To address these issues, comprehensive SRTS initiatives focus on strategies to improve behavioral issues, strategies to improve environmental issues and policy strategies to increase the percentage of children who walk and bike to school. The U.S. began researching children walking and bicycling to school in the 1970’s which resulted in the 1975 report “School Trip Safety and Urban Play Areas.”

HEALTH

Children today are simply not getting enough physical activity, contributing to growing rates of obesity and obesity-related health problems, such as diabetes. SRTS projects make it safer for more children to walk and bicycle to school, which will help address this obesity crisis among children by creating increases in physical activity.

Over the past 40 years, rates of obesity have soared among children of all ages in the United States, and approximately 25 million children and adolescents (more than 33% are now overweight or obese or at risk of becoming so).

1. Kids are less active today, and 23% of children get no free time physical activity at all.
2. The prevalence of obesity is so great that today’s generation of children may be the first in over 200 years to live less healthy and have a shorter lifespan than their parents.
3. Today, approximately one-quarter of health care costs in the United States are attributable to obesity, and health care costs just for childhood obesity are estimated at approximately $14 billion per year.
4. People living in auto-oriented suburbs drive more, walk less and are more obese than people living in walkable communities. For each hour of driving per day, obesity increases by 6%, but walking for transportation reduces the risk of obesity.
5. Walking one mile to and from school each day is two-thirds the recommended sixty minutes of physical activity a day. Children who walk to school have higher levels of physical activity.
SAFETY

SRTS projects focus on infrastructure improvements, student traffic education, and driver enforcement that improve safety for children, many of whom already walk or bicycle in unsafe conditions.

1. Pedestrians are more than twice as likely to be struck by a vehicle in locations without sidewalks.
2. In 2009, approximately 23,000 children ages 5-15 were injured and more than 250 killed while walking or bicycling in the United States.
3. From 2000-2006, 30% of traffic deaths for children ages 5-15 occurred while walking or bicycling.
4. The medical cost for treating children’s bicycle and pedestrian fatalities cost $839 million in 2009 and another $2.2 billion in lifetime lost wage costs.
5. A safety analysis by the California Department of Transportation estimated that the safety benefit of the SRTS was up to 49% decrease in the childhood bicycle and pedestrian collision rates.

ENVIRONMENT

Not only has childhood health and safety suffered because of increased driving, but the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reports that transportation is the fastest-growing source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the United States. Greenhouse gases are components of the atmosphere that contribute to the greenhouse effect and global warming. Passenger vehicles account for approximately half of all U.S. transportation sector’s greenhouse gas emissions.

In fact, according to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), transportation energy use is expected to increase 48 percent between 2003 and 2005, despite modest improvements in the efficiency of vehicle engines. This projected rise in energy consumption closely mirrors the expected growth in transportation GHG emissions and bodes poorly for future environmental integrity.

Unfortunately, children are particularly vulnerable to air pollution because they breath faster than adults and inhale more air per pound of body weight. Outside of almost any elementary school at arrival and dismissal time one is likely to witness parents and caregivers converging in their vehicles around the school.

According to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA):

“Mobile sources, both on-road vehicles and off-road vehicles and equipment are significant contributors to air pollution in Minnesota. EPA’s 2008 emissions inventory shows that on- and off-road mobile sources account for approximately half of the total amount of NOX, SO2, PM2.5 and VOC’s emitted in Minnesota, and contribute significantly to the formation of ground level ozone. Transportation accounts for roughly 25% of greenhouse gas emissions in Minnesota.

Reducing the incidence of parents driving their kids to school and increasing the number of students walking, bicycling, or using other active modes of transportation not only improves childhood physical health, but is a relatively simple way to improve the air quality surrounding schools and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
LAND USE PATTERNS

Parents who drive their children to school are reacting, in part, to decades of auto-oriented land use planning that has neglected pedestrians and bicyclists as users of the transportation system. In many areas, auto-oriented development has hindered the creation of walkable communities. These new developments lack sidewalks or bicycle facilities and are located too far from popular destinations to make bicycling or walking practical.

Through the 1960’s many schools were in the center of communities, and this proximity to residential areas contributed to high rates of walking and bicycling to school. Beginning in the 1970’s, rather than renovating existing schools or building schools within existing residential communities, most new schools were built on the edges of communities where the land costs were lower. Peripheral schools mean fewer kids live close enough to realistically walk or ride a bicycle to school.

In addition, the recent trend in school construction and management has been to build and operate a large school instead of several small schools, according to a report by the Center for Urban and Regional Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

These patterns have led to numerous school closings and consolidations. Between 1940 and 2003, the number of public school districts decreased from 117,108 to 14,465, and the number of public and private elementary and secondary schools went from over 226,000 to approximately 95,000 in 2003. On the other hand, during this time due to overall population growth, the number of students attending elementary and secondary schools grew from 28 million to 54.5 million, according to the U.S. Department of Education (DOE).

Not surprisingly, the average number of students per elementary and secondary school has increased over five-fold, and according to the U.S. DOE. The result is that modern schools often accommodate many more students than in the past and in effect have become “mega schools”. Larger schools translate into more students traveling to the same place at the same time- and mostly by automobile. Thus, school site automobile congestion and accompanying poor air quality surrounding schools have become major concerns in communities not just in Minnesota, but nationwide. This congestion has made it increasingly difficult for children who do live close to school to walk or bike to school safely.

Not only are schools larger and more congested, but fewer schools, located farther away from where students live, combined with larger enrollment populations, translate into school attendance areas that are geographically larger than in the past. These expanded catchment areas require students to travel farther making it difficult, if not impossible for children to walk or bicycle to school. In fact, over sixty-one percent of parents do not allow their children to walk or bike to school because of distance.

Greater distances to school also translate into higher busing costs. In 2005, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, bus transportation was frequently the second largest budget item for school districts after salaries. With land use practices that discourage children from walking and bicycling to school, it is not surprising that in the last thirty years the proportion of children walking and bicycling to school has dropped dramatically.
TRANSPORTATION COSTS

Schools often make cutbacks in bus routes to save money, meaning that more children will be walking and bicycling in potentially unsafe conditions, or more parents will drive their children, which increases traffic congestions and air quality concerns.

1. Approximately 55% of children are bused, and we spend $21.5 billion nationally each year on school bus transportation, an average of $854 per child transported per year.

2. Eliminating one bus route, based on average per-pupil expenditure and average number of pupils per bus, would save a school district approximately $45,000 per year.

3. Nationwide, approximately 22% of made busing reductions during the 2010-2011 school year were due to fuel price increases.
The vision identified by the SRTS planning team is to increase opportunity for all students to walk or bike to and from school safely by identifying and addressing the issues and barriers that currently exist. Therefore, the local planning team hopes to accomplish three main goals through the SRTS planning process.

**OUR OBJECTIVES**

**02 VISION**

Determine the current environment surrounding walking and biking to school i.e. how many students district-wide are walking and biking to school?

Assess issues and barriers to walking and biking to school.

Develop strategies that lead to an environment more conducive to safe walking and biking to school.
THE SIX “E” APPROACH

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

**ENGINEERING**

Engineering strategies including planning and implementing physical improvements that make it safer and more attractive to walk and bicycle to school. Engaging planners and engineers is crucial to successfully implementing safety improvements. It’s also important to reach out to the community to educate neighbors about the benefits and importance of any proposed improvements. Example of engineering strategies may include:
1. Adding traffic calming crosswalks, sidewalks, bicycle lanes or other infrastructure that improves safety for walking and bicycling.
2. Installing bike racks at schools.
3. Completing a school walking and bicycling audit.

**ENCOURAGEMENT**

Using events and activities to promote walking, bicycling, public transportation, and physical activity. Encouragement activities can include new partnerships with faith-based groups, civil rights and neighborhood coalitions, and tenants' organizations, as they build activities like walking school buses, walk to school events, bicycling incentives, and art and active transportation events. Addressing equity in encouragement means ensuring that encouragement activities are available to low-income students and students of color, as well as designing them to overcome the variety of obstacles to walking and bicycling.

**EVALUATION**

Evaluation is very important to a successful SRTS initiative and should be considered from the very beginning of planning. Ask yourself, how do we define success for our efforts and how can we measure or document our progress? Evaluation will likely include a combination of quantitative information, such as counts of how many children are walking and bicycling, and more qualitative information, such as success stories from families who have chosen to walk and bicycle more. Example evaluation strategies may include:
1. A school walking and bicycling audit and a school travel plan that includes specific goals.
2. Bicycle and pedestrian counts that show bicycling and walking rates over time.
3. Data about vehicle crashes near the school, traffic speeds or traffic volumes.

**EDUCATION**

Education about SRTS helps build support among kids, parents, teachers and community members. To craft education messages, first identify your goals and audiences. Do people need to know more about the benefits of walking or bicycling? Would maps of routes to the school help more people walk or bicycle?
1. SRTS maps that show suggested routes to walk and bicycle to school.
2. School bicycle rodeo that teaches safe bicycling skills.
3. Curriculum focused on the benefits of walking and bicycling.

**ENFORCEMENT**

Enforcement strategies help reduce unsafe behaviors by drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists and encourage all road users to obey traffic laws and share the road safely. Enforcement can be expensive, so it is best used strategically in conjunction with the other strategies. Example enforcement strategies may include:
1. Partnership with law enforcement to target problem intersections for enforcement.
2. Educational "sting operations" to teach motorists about laws regarding yielding to pedestrians.
3. Installation of digital speed signs that display travel speed of passing vehicles.

**EQUITY**

Work to support safe, active, and healthy opportunities for children and adults in low-income communities, communities of color, and beyond. Incorporate equity concerns throughout the other E’s to understand and address obstacles, create access, and ensure safe and equitable outcomes.
Region Five Development Commission, working in cooperation with the Cities of Baxter and Brainerd, and Independent School District (ISD) 181, have developed this SRTS plan by collecting and analyzing information, identifying community needs and priorities, and developing recommendations to set forth and accomplish these goals.

**METHODOLOGY**

The charge of the planning team was to provide oversight of the overall planning process as well as to provide vital input regarding issues and barriers to safety of students walking or bicycling to and from school; to identify areas of concern as well as to set forth a vision that will guide future transportation planning related to SRTS.

**PLANNING TEAM**

After being awarded the Technical Assistance grant from the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) in 2016, the Brainerd and Baxter city councils, respectively, and the Independent School District (ISD) 181 board in coordination with the Region Five Development Commission began developing a planning team that would represent a diverse cross section of the community.

The planning team was designed to both articulate the needs of the community as they relate to SRTS as well as develop strategies and recommendations going forward.

The planning team was comprised of several key stakeholders from diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise including elected officials, educators, members of law enforcement, as well as local transportation planners.
MEETINGS

After developing the SRTS planning team, and hosting public informational kickoff meetings, the planning team held a series of working sessions that were open to the public to determine issues and barriers as they relate to SRTS.

- July 29th 2016, Core Team Meeting
- September 28th 2016, Kick Off
- October 11th 2016, Planning Team Meeting
- December 6th 2016, MnDOT/BCBS and Department of Health Workshop
- January 16th 2017, Planning Team Meeting
- January 27th 2017, Planning Team Meeting
- February 9th 2017, Planning Team Meeting
- March 6th 2017, Planning Team Meeting
- April 17th 2017, Planning Team Meeting
- June 27th 2017, Planning Team Meeting

SITE ASSESSMENTS

- October 14th – Forestview Site Assessment
- October 17th – Garfield Site Assessment
- October 17th – Baxter Site Assessment
- October 26th – Lowell Site Assessment
- November 7th and 14th – Harrison Site Assessment
- November 8th – Riverside Site Assessment

PARENT & STUDENT SURVEY

Concurrently with the work sessions the planning team oversaw the administration of both the parent and student surveys to gain additional input into the planning process. The surveys that were used were designed by the National Center for SRTS.

The student survey was conducted in class over a series of three concurrent school days and had a near 100% response rate from students. The parent survey which was conducted online also yielded a high response rate. The input from both surveys provided crucial information regarding issues and barriers to walking and biking to and from school.
COMMUNITY WALKING AUDIT
The planning team conducted walking audits around each of the five school sites to further determine issues and barriers as well as to begin thinking about potential solutions to improve student’s ability to safely walk or bike to and from school.

The input from the walk audit proved invaluable to the planning team in determining where issues and barriers exist and in determining potential solutions.

ASSESSMENT OF ISSUES
Based on the expertise of the members of the planning team, input from both the parent and student surveys, the walking audit, as well as numerous discussions held both at the public informational meetings and the working sessions, the planning team assessed issues and barriers. The assessment of issues and barriers was meant to inform the decision-making process by bringing together all the information gathered from the surveys, walking audit and public meetings and working sessions.

OBSERVATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS
After assessing the issues and barriers the planning team developed a list of observations and recommendations intended to address the SRTS needs present at the various school sites. The observations and recommendations were developed according to the nationally recognized six “E” approach.
COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

The Region Five Development Commission working in cooperation with the cities of Baxter and Brainerd as well as the Independent school district 181 to develop this SRTS plan. The plan was developed by collecting and analyzing information, identifying community-based needs and priorities based on the issues and barriers identified at each school site.

CITIES OF BRAINERD & BAXTER

The communities of Brainerd and Baxter serve as the gateway communities to the Brainerd Lakes Area. You will find strong business neighborhoods in both cities. Brainerd holds historic significance in the region with a revitalized downtown and the regional beacon, the historic water tower. Baxter is a fast-growing community along the western border of Brainerd that boasts many large retail stores. Both cities offer great shopping options with many one-of-a-kind finds and up-north flair.

A green space gem shared by the two cities is the 500-acre Northland Arboretum at the trailhead to the Paul Bunyan State Trail. The Paul Bunyan Trail travels more than 75 miles from Baxter with picturesque views of area lakes. You can hike, bike, walk or ski through the more than 500 acres of the Northland Arboretum. Many arts and cultural events and festivals are hosted in Brainerd, such as the annual Arts in the Park each summer in Gregory Park in the heart of Brainerd. And the galleries of more than 30 artists can be found in the Franklin Arts Center, a renovated, former junior high school.

While walking the downtown Brainerd streets, you will be able to discover the many unique retail shops in the newly revitalized core of the city. In 2009, the city completed a nearly $2 million improvement project in the six-block downtown area that resulted in improvements to the face of the the city while retaining its historic appeal.

After taking in one of the many cultural, recreational or shopping opportunities in Brainerd and Baxter, check out one of our many dining establishments- seek a familiar name or a one-of-a-kind gem.
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT #181

Brainerd Public Schools, in partnership with the community, will ensure all students achieve their individual potential by providing the highest-quality programs and resources to prepare learners for an ever-changing global society. The district enrolls 6,334 students. 51.35% are male and 48.65% are female. 3,477 are enrolled in 6 elementary schools. 1,983 are enrolled at Forestview Middle school. 1,874 are enrolled in 2 high schools. Additionally, 42.97% of students are eligible for free/reduced lunch.

STATE HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (SHIP) - CROW WING ENERGIZED

SHIP is working to create healthier communities across Minnesota by expanding opportunities for active living, healthy eating and tobacco-free living.

Good health is created where we live, work, learn and play. Schools, businesses, apartment owners/managers, farmers, community groups, senior organizations, hospitals, clinics, planning entities, Chambers of Commerce, faith communities, and many more partners are creating better health together through SHIP across Minnesota. Crow Wing Energized is a united approach to improve health and wellness in our community by making healthy choices essential. We are looking for collaborative solutions with multiple community stakeholders focused on efforts that can create the greatest community good with our available resources.

CROW WING COUNTY

The natural beauty of lakes and woods helps explain Crow Wing’s growth in recent years. Our quality of life is enhanced by excellent schools and healthcare and affordable and abundant housing. While tourism is a strong segment of our economy, healthcare, high tech, and manufacturing are also growing segments.
05 EXISTING CONDITIONS & ISSUE IDENTIFICATIONS

The planning team utilized several input mechanisms to gather information on which to base their observations. This section discusses each of the input mechanisms used. These input mechanisms include, students Survey, Parent Survey, Community Walk Audit, Infrastructure Assessment, Brainstorming sessions at Planning team and public meetings.

STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS

The National Center for SRTS has developed a national survey to determine a baseline of information relating to the modes of transportation that students take to and from school. The student survey is a survey designed to be administered by educators in class on three consecutive days of a given school week (ideally on a Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday) to avoid Mondays and Fridays which often have statistical anomalies associated with their records.

FORESTVIEW MIDDLE SCHOOL

Local Planning Team Observations
- Front of school, parents will double up on pickup lines putting kids in harm’s way.
- Parents pick up/drop off in areas where kids will cross traffic in the lots to get to parents.
- From bike trail to school – minimal traffic – safe routes and protected as the students leave the school.
- Traffic does not flow smoothly or efficiently – students at risk, staff cars and adults at risk.
- Due to traffic, back up and flow, drivers can’t see where and when students are crossing.
- Bike parking not covered.
- Turn lanes difficult to see into parking areas.
- Bike racks available, close to an entrance, behind school.
- Students not safe in parking lot areas.
- Sidewalks are patched and maintained on regular basis.
- Traffic can get very backed up so people get anxious and are in more of a hurry.
- Students get dropped off in parking lot therefore creating issues with walking between cars.

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<th>Weather</th>
<th>Student Tally</th>
<th>Walk</th>
<th>Bike</th>
<th>School Bus</th>
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GARFIELD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Local Planning Team Observations
• Students not safe when unloading behind driver’s seat and not when parents drop off on side streets.
• Crossing guards on all 4 corners.
• Difficult on corners during winter – sidewalks not always maintained.
• Drop off/pick-up areas is shared street with 11th Ave.
• The corner of L & 11th needs street light.
• 32 slots for bikes – (10-12 bikers).
• Narrowing of corners can be a hazard.
• Students not protected in winter when snow stacks up and students are between snow and cars.
• 11th Ave Widen.

SRTS student arrival and departure tally results: The week of November 28th, 2016.

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<th>Bike</th>
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HARRISON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Local Planning Team Observations

• Oak Street busy, traffic does not always stop for flag holders.
• Students passing between busses to get to parent’s cars on street.
• Cars doubling up on 13th Street.
• School could have better lighting.
• Bike parking not covered.
• Bell rings at 2:45, busses gone by 2:57.
• Kids who get picked up wait inside the school – parents park and pick up kids from inside.
• Busses wait out front.
• Cars/pickups aren’t allowed to park across the street during this time (posted).
• While busses wait – engines are off.
• School patrol with teacher present – however only until 2:55 as the patrol kids get on the bus.
• Bike parking is located inside the fenced area but not covered, near garbage dumpster.

SRTS student arrival and departure tally results: The week of November 28th, 2016.

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LOWELL ELEMENTARY

Local Planning Team Observations
- Cars dropping students off at main entrance from both sides and middle of the street.
- Dropping off students from wrong side of car.
- Too many cars are parking in front of school leaving no place to drop off students.
- Feeder streets do not have sidewalks.
- Street in front of school is quite congested during drop off times.
- Students frequently walking in the street between cars.
- School property not well lit.
- Bike parking structure can’t be seen from within the building.
- Bike parking not covered.
- Occasional cars drop off students in bus drop off areas.
- Students have sidewalks around entire building.
- Being on a busy city block, many approaching areas to our school do not have sidewalks.
- Cars/traffic drives around entire school block.
- Sidewalks are kept clean but in MAJOR need of repairs. South entrance and east sidewalks are in the most dire need.
- Flows well on south/east/north side. West (front) is congested from 7:45-8:15 and 2:30-3:00.
- Sheds on property obstruct view of pedestrians and bikers around entrances of school building.
- South end has street lights.
- 2 bike racks
- Major need of sidewalks off school property. Especially on the west and G street and North of H street also east of H – no sidewalks.
- Some parents are dropping kids off behind busses.
- Observed police drive by.
- Observed school patrol.
- Parents parking in middle of street.
- Need to enforce no parking on street during drop off time.
- Improve the flow.

SRTS student arrival and departure tally results: The week of November 14th, 2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Weather</th>
<th>Student Tally</th>
<th>Walk</th>
<th>Bike</th>
<th>School Bus</th>
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RIVERSIDE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Local Planning Team Observations
• Decrease the walking boundary/bus boundary – to ensure more kids can be bussed (would decrease the number of parents picking up therefore decreasing the congestion at pick up time.
• Put up flashing lights at 4 way stop for walkers.
• Block off “danger zones” – keep kids walking but not allowed to walk in certain areas – rail road tracks, busy highways. If needed have adult supervision at those locations.
• No covered bike parking.
• Overall flow of traffic during pick up is odd.

SRTS student arrival and departure tally results: The week of November 14th, 2016.

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<th>Weather</th>
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BAXTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Local Planning Team Observations
• Good coverage from highway – kids getting picked up – in parking lot but away from traffic.
• Students have safe routes while on school grounds yet off school grounds not safe – major highway.
• They let the walkers out a little late.
• They’d like a bridge to cross the highway.

SRTS student arrival and departure tally results: The week of November 14th, 2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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BRAINERD HIGH SCHOOL & SOUTH CAMPUS

Local Planning Team Observations
• Busses come in 2 waves, had a lot of cars mixed in with busses and crosswalks.
• Bus blocks the walkway – crossway main entry way to island. Crossing guard? Both sides of island? – students exiting/enter busses are not protected from other vehicles.
• Students go around busses – parents and employees.
• East sidewalks need repair.
• Traffic does not move smoothly or efficiently – lots of blind spots.
• Busses stacked up in parking spots at angle \ blocking view of entrances.
• Students don’t use sidewalks.
• Students must walk between vehicles.
• Students not protected from other vehicles when entering/exiting busses.
• High traffic areas in front of school.
• Cars can impede vision of walkers and bikers.
• South 5th street bike rack should be closer to door.
• Kids that use the stop lights to cross have an audible signal as well.
• Cars drive fast on 5th – not everyone willing to wait to let people cross.
• 5th Street cars backed up while kids walk across to Pine.
• Sidewalk on one side of pine (one-way street).
• Observed woman slam on brakes for person walking.
• South campus use crossing guards between BHS and south campus – police presence at location.
• Could be more strategic in dismissal time of EA; s – have those who leave at different times park in certain areas as not to add to congestion of departures of kids/cars/busses.
• Senior lot - busses do not use space.
• Nice sidewalks on north side, but no designated bike lanes.
• Flow of traffic exiting the parking lot seems manageable.
• Plenty of lighting in lot.
• PIT Parking lot – kids walk wherever.
• Sidewalks/stairs can get slippery in winter.
PARENT SURVEY RESULTS

In addition to the student survey, the National Center for SRTS has also developed a parent survey designed to determine the main reasons why students are not walking or biking to school. The parent survey comprised of 16 questions to determine the many factors that come to bear upon the decisions that walking and biking or not walking and biking to school. In administering the parent survey, the SRTS planning team with assistance from school staff administered the survey which was completed by their parents.

A total of 642 parent surveys were completed and received. A brief synopsis of the results is below:

In keeping with national trends, the typical mode of arrival and departure from school from respondents showed that the family vehicle is the primary mode, followed closely by riding the school bus. Two notable exceptions to this trend were Baxter and Riverside elementary schools, where busing outpaced the family vehicle as the primary mode of transportation.

When asked to report on issues that affect the decision to not allow a child to walk or bike to/from school, parents responded that distance was the primary concern. Distance was followed by amount of traffic along route, as well as the speed of traffic along the route. Additional issues included violence or crime, the safety of intersections and crossings, as well as weather or climate.

The results for each of schools can be found in appendix B.

COMMUNITY WALK AUDIT & SITE ASSESSMENT

Another means used by the planning team to determine issues and barriers regarding SRTS is the community walk audit. Walk audits can be particularly useful to determine where issues and barriers exist. An audit is an unbiased examination/evaluation of the walking and biking environment. The general purpose of an audit is to identify concerns for pedestrians and bicyclists related to the safety, access, comfort, and convenience of the environment. In addition, to identifying problem areas, an audit can be used to identify potential alternatives or solutions (such as engineering treatments, policy changes, or education and enforcement measures). Audits can be performed before, during or after the construction of a project.

Audits involve a review of all the data for a location or travel corridor analyzed by a multi-disciplinary team independent of the site or project being audited. Informal audits can be performed by any individual or community group. A multi-disciplinary team will often allow a fresh look at traffic conditions at a location or along a corridor.

It should be noted that the planning team thought it important to conduct at least one walk audit at one of the school sites during extremely cold and adverse weather to accurately simulate the issues and barriers facing students walking or biking to school. It should also be noted that this plan does not recommend or encourage students to walk or bike to school during severe winter weather such as extreme cold but rather, it encourages more students to walk or bike to school when and where it is safe to do so. Furthermore, the walk audits are a way of determining if and where issues and barriers to walking or biking to schools exist. It is the purpose of this plan to address these issues and remove these barriers where they exist.

In addition, planning team members were encouraged to also consider each route through different lenses such as the perspective of a small child, who may or may not be tall enough to see over parked cars. Another lens through which the planning team considered each route was the perspective of someone with physical disabilities. For example, are sidewalks compliant with the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)? Do sidewalks slope laterally to accommodate the slope of a driveway or does the sidewalk remain flat and the driveway apron begin to slope beyond the sidewalk as it should?
With limited time and resources, the planning team understands that they will not be able to address all concerns on all the roadways on which students wish to walk or bike, however by addressing logical termini throughout a systematized process designed to address as many needs as possible, the planning team sought to identify as many issues and barriers to walking and biking as possible.

One final caveat before delving into the walk audit observations, is the issue of limited resources. In a perfect world, each street would be newly paved with state of the art electronic signage, all motorists would obey all traffic laws and all pedestrians would have as many route options as could be imagined with sidewalks on every street. All the sidewalks would be self-heating and snow and ice would melt away on its own making shoveling an obsolete activity.

Of course this does not accurately reflect the current reality in which transportation construction and materials costs are rising alongside the level of traffic and congestion. To further complicate matters other stressors such as Federal and State Transportation funding constraints limit the ability of local units of government to maintain their transportation systems much less expand them to meet the increased needs of their residents. Rising transportation costs, ever increasing transportation system demands, and falling levels of transportation funding is a scenario that is playing out in communities across the nation.

It is important to remember that even within the world of transportation, several user groups view transportation needs in many ways and planners and local officials are faced with very difficult tradeoffs regarding how to prioritize the growing list of needs. Therefore, plans such as this help to inform decision makers on areas of greater priority. There are several routes that the planning team reviewed that do not warrant any physical improvement due to low volume of traffic conditions or width of roadway etc. It is not practical or even a wise use of public funds to recommend sidewalks on all streets.

**WALK AUDIT OBSERVATIONS**

**Garfield Elementary School**
- 86 students currently living in the walk/bike zone
- 375 responses on tally
  - 26 Walk
  - 169 Get a ride to school
  - 197 Ride the bus

**Riverside Elementary School**
- 83 students in walk/bike zone
- 565 responses on tally
  - 6 Walk
  - 205 Get a ride to school
  - ?? Ride the bus

**Baxter Elementary School**
- 63 students in walk/bike zone
- 285 responses on tally
  - 10 Walk
  - 172 Get a ride to school
  - 105 Ride the bus

**Lowell Elementary School**
- 158 students in walk/bike zone
- 277 responses on tally
  - 24 Walk
  - 174 Get a ride to school
  - 85 Ride the bus

**Harrison Elementary School**
- 73 students in walk/bike zone
- 251 responses on tally
  - 16 Walk/bike
  - 89 Get a ride to school
  - 120 Ride the bus

**Forestview Middle School**
- 45 students in walk/bike zone
- 1715 responses on tally
  - 10 Walk/bike
  - 690 Get a ride to school
  - 963 Ride the bus

**Brainerd High School**
- 114 students in walk/bike zone
Based upon the input mechanisms discussed in the previous section on Observations, the planning team developed a series of strategies and actions steps using the SMART goals approach.

SMART goal setting brings structure and trackability into your goals and objectives. Instead of vague resolutions, SMART goal setting creates verifiable trajectories towards a certain objective, with clear milestones and an estimation of the goal’s attainability. Every goal or objective, from intermediary step to overarching objective, can be made S.M.A.R.T. and as such, brought closer to reality. This ensures goals are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time based.
ENGINEERING STRATEGIES BY SCHOOL SITES

ST - Short Term | LR - Long Range | O - Ongoing

GARFIELD ELEMENTARY

- Seek to update and enhance all necessary crosswalks with appropriate traffic calming measures. LR
- Consider sidewalk projects at:
  - E-I 10th Ave NE (LR)
  - I-N 8th Ave NE (LR)
- Solution for off street parking (O)
- Trail connection from NW 4th St corridor to Laurel Street (LR)
- Seek to update and enhance all necessary crosswalks with appropriate traffic calming measures (LR).

LOWELL ELEMENTARY

- Seek to update and enhance all necessary crosswalks with appropriate traffic calming measures.
- Consider sidewalk projects at:
  - 1st-3rd Ave NE (LR).
  - 1st Ave NE (LR).
  - 4th Ave NE (LR).
  - 2nd Ave NE (LR).
  - 1-6th Ave NE (LR).
  - 3rd-8th Ave NE (LR).
  - 1st-3rd NE Ave NE (LR).
  - Washington (LR).
  - 4th Ave NE (LR).
- Address drop off/pick up (ST)

HARRISON ELEMENTARY

Seek to update and enhance all necessary crosswalks with appropriate traffic calming measures including:
- Consider sidewalk projects at:
  - Pine-Norwood on 16th Street SE (LR).
  - Pine-Norwood on 14th Street SE (LR).
  - 16th-17th Street SE on Pine Street (LR).
  - Oak-Norwood on 17th Street SE (LR).
  - Pine-Oak on 15th Street SE (LR).
  - Rosewood-Pine on 15th Street SE (LR).

RIVERSIDE ELEMENTARY

- Address the bus ride length (O).
- Consider new design for drop off and pick up (ST).
- Utilize Crossing guards (Older students or adults) (ST).
- Seek to update and enhance all necessary crosswalks with appropriate traffic calming measures (LR).
- Consider sidewalk projects at:
  - Street Trail Connection (LR).

BAXTER ELEMENTARY

- Seek to update and enhance all necessary crosswalks with appropriate traffic calming measures. LR
- Consider sidewalk projects at:
  - E-I 10th Ave NE (LR)
  - I-N 8th Ave NE (LR)
- Solution for off street parking (O)
- Trail connection from NW 4th St corridor to Laurel Street (LR)
- Seek to update and enhance all necessary crosswalks with appropriate traffic calming measures (LR).

FORESTVIEW

- Address pickup/drop off locations (ST).
- Seek to update and enhance all necessary crosswalks with appropriate traffic calming measures (LR).

BRAINTERD HIGH SCHOOL

- Possible adjustment in dismissal time of EA’s to address traffic congestion (ST).
- High traffic area in front of school – fast moving traffic (ST).
- Seek to update and enhance all necessary crosswalks with appropriate traffic calming measures (LR).
- Consider sidewalk projects at:
  - S 9th – SE 12th Street on Norwood Street (LR).
  - Quince St. from S 8th St. to SE 13th Street (LR).
**ACTION PLAN**  
*ST - Short Term | LR - Long Range | O - Ongoing*

**ENGINEERING PROJECTS**
For all sites, bring all noncompliant sidewalks into compliance and alignment with ADA requirements and local ADA plan (O).

**EDUCATION INITIATIVES**

- Incorporate "Walk!-Bike!-Fun!" curriculum into current classrooms P.E. curriculum in order to educate students about the benefits of walking or biking to school (ST).
- Continue partnering with the Minnesota Bicycle Alliance to provide educational workshops or other education programs on an annual basis such as League Cycling Instructor (LCI) training or Bicycle Friendly Community (BFC) or Business (BFB) applications/designations (ST).
- Inquire to Minnesota Bicycle Alliance about hosting a bike safety 101 course (short term) (ST).
- Collaborate with Crow Wing Energized (SHIP) to promote and participate in bike/walk to school day and week in the spring and fall (ST).
- Partner with local bicycle clubs and other local partners to hold an annual Bike Rodeo (Ambulance, police department etc.) (ST).
- Teach safe walking and biking to kids at a level appropriate for their age (ST).
- Teach pedestrian and bicycle safety at diver’s education courses. Consider including education programs in Drivers education association (ST).
- Continue to be appraised of Safe Routes to School Infrastructure solicitations (annually) (ST).

**ENCOURAGEMENT**

- Established bus pick up locations vs. picking every child up (ST).
- Develop on-site management plans that include designated drop-off/pick-up locations (zones), adult monitors, and student safety patrols. Reevaluate these plans annually for effectiveness and relevancy. Businesses, volunteers, city, school, background checks (ST).
- Hold a Walk to School Day event annually (ST).
- Organize & promote a community bike ride (ST).
- Develop a punch card incentive/prize program for kids who walk or bike to school (ST).
- Have a remote drop-off one day a month for all students (ST).
- Introduce "Walking Wednesdays (short term) and on every Wednesday, children have a special activity focused around walking (ST).
- Establish bus pick up areas in the city limits. This will allow the transportation of students to be more efficient, cause less wear and tear on buses, aid in less fuel being used, and will encourage children to walk to a bus stop or to school (ST).
- Establish bus pick up areas in the city limits. This will allow the transportation of students to be more efficient, cause less wear and tear on buses, aid in less fuel being used, and will encourage children to walk to a bus stop or to school (ST).

**ENFORCEMENT**

- Consider increased enforcement in regards to yielding to pedestrians (ST).
- Consider a special enforcement campaign for traffic violations particularly as they relate to pedestrian and bicycle safety (Pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorized vehicles) (ST).

**EQUITY**

- Organize a before or after school walking/biking/running club (ST).
- Consider partnering with charitable organizations such as Kinship in order to provide bicycles to children from disadvantaged or low-income families (ST).
The SRTS planning team will consider reviewing the strategies and action plan annually to determine each strategy’s continued relevance for changing conditions within the community. In addition, the planning team should also consider reviewing state and federal policies and best practices to ensure they are addressing current and expected conditions. Finally, the planning team should also review the issues and barriers to identify any new hindrances to students walking and biking to and from school.

Continued public involvement is critical to the successful implementation of the strategies identified in this plan. The planning team should consider promoting their annual review meeting to the public/community and seek as much community input as possible.

One way to successfully engage the public would be to couple the SRTS plan review meeting with an event such as walk to school day, a bike rodeo, or some other fun event. By doing this the planning team would provide a fun event to promote walking and biking and garner valuable input from parents, students, community members and planners alike.
LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A, School Boundary Map
Appendix B, Parent Survey Results
Appendix C, Student Tally Forms
Appendix D, Walk Audit Observations