

Safe Routes to School

A plan to make walking and biking to school a safe, fun activity



SONNESYN ELEMENTARY

Robbinsdale Area Schools, New Hope, MN

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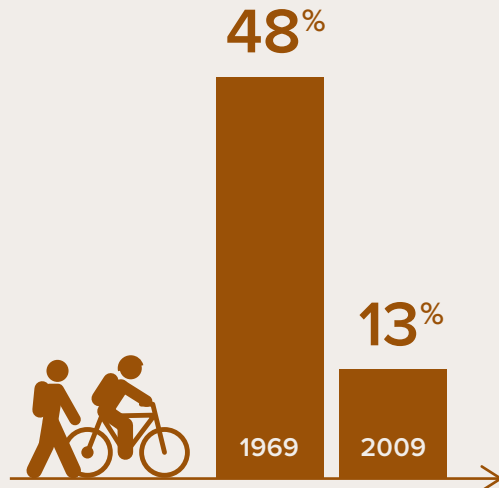
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01

INTRODUCTION + CONTEXT

Why Safe Routes to School?



THE PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN WALKING OR BIKING TO SCHOOL HAS DROPPED PRECIPITOUSLY WITHIN ONE GENERATION



MOST KIDS ARE NOT GETTING ENOUGH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



ROADS NEAR SCHOOLS ARE CONGESTED, DECREASING SAFETY AND AIR QUALITY FOR CHILDREN

KIDS WHO WALK OR BIKE TO SCHOOL:



Arrive alert and able to focus on school



Get most of the recommended 60 minutes of daily physical activity during the trip to and from school



Are more likely to be a healthy body weight



Demonstrate improved test scores and better school performance*



Are less likely to suffer from depression and anxiety

THE VICIOUS CYCLE OF INCREASED TRAFFIC LEADING TO REDUCED WALKING AND BICYCLING:



Fewer students walking & biking to school

More parents driving children to school

Rising concern about safety of walking & biking

Increased traffic at and around school

*More information, including primary sources, can be found at <http://guide.saferoutesinfo.org>



The Six Es

Safe Routes to School programs use a variety of strategies to make it easy, fun and safe for children to walk and bike to school. These strategies are often called the “Six Es.”



Education

Programs designed to teach children about traffic safety, bicycle and pedestrian skills, and traffic decision-making.



Encouragement

Programs that make it fun for kids to walk and bike, including incentive programs, regular events or classroom activities.



Engineering

Physical projects that are built to improve walking and bicycling conditions.



Enforcement

Law enforcement strategies aimed at improving driver behavior near schools and ensuring safe roads for all users.



Evaluation

Strategies to help understand program effectiveness, identify improvements, and ensure program sustainability.



Equity

Is an overarching concept that applies to all of the E's, ensuring that all residents have access to and can take advantage of the resources provided through the program.



Navigating this Plan

Below is a roadmap for navigating the way through this plan. Use it to find all the information you need for helping students be safer and more active!



Programs

Getting kids to walk and bike to school requires fun and engaging programs for schools and families. Turn to this section for recommended events, activities, and strategies that will get students moving.



Infrastructure

Ensuring the safety of students on their trips to and from school means upgrading the streets. See this section for suggestions to improve the safety, comfort and convenience of walking and biking, including paint, signage, and signals.



How to get involved

The more people who are involved with a local Safe Routes to School process, the more successful it will be! Use this section to find out how you can be a part of this important initiative.



Appendices

There is more information available than could fit in this plan. For additional resources, turn to this section.



The Vision

In the spring of 2016, the City of New Hope was awarded a Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) Safe Routes to School (SRTS) planning assistance grant to develop an SRTS Plan. In addition to Sonnesyn Elementary, Meadow Lake Elementary and Robbinsdale Spanish Immersion were selected to receive this planning assistance.

This plan was made possible by support from MnDOT and developed in coordination with the city and Robbinsdale Area Schools (ISD 281). It is the product of several meetings and visits to New Hope, plus discussions with city employees, teachers, school staff, students, and community members. The plan offers recommendations on how to make it easy, fun and safe for children to walk and bike to school.

The following pages offer both program and infrastructure suggestions - all of which fall under the 6 E's model described on page 6. All recommendations are intended to be on an approximate five-year timeline. While not all of these recommendations can be implemented immediately, it is important to achieve short-term successes while laying the groundwork for progress toward some of the larger and more complex projects.



APPENDIX

FURTHER READING

The main body of this plan is intended to be concise in an effort to provide the most pertinent information to the reader. There are several resources in the appendix section for those interested in learning more about SRTS, including specific roles for implementing SRTS, the SRTS planning process at a glance, existing conditions, and talking points to effectively communicate messages related to SRTS.



Sonnesyn Elementary in Context

Sonnesyn Elementary is located on the southside of the City of New Hope along the west side of Boone Avenue N. Highway 169 is located to the west and 36th Avenue N, a busy east-west artery, is located to the north. During the 2016-2017 school year, there were 580 students enrolled. The school draws students from Robbinsdale Area Schools, which is comprised of seven communities in the northwest suburbs of the Twin Cities and include Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Golden Valley, New Hope, Plymouth, and Robbinsdale.

The majority of parents report their children traveling to and from school by school bus (47%) or family vehicle (31.4%), a significant portion walk (11.8%), and few students bike (3.9%), carpool (3.9%), or travel by other modes (2%). These percentages vary by distance from school. More than one-third of students living within a half mile of school report walking (37.5%) or taking the school bus (37.5%), 18.8% report receiving a ride in a family vehicle, 6.3% carpool, none take transit, and none ride their bikes. As the distance from school increases to one mile or greater, no students walk, 2.9% of students carpool, and family vehicle trips increase to 38.2%, biking trips increase to 5.9%, and school bus trips increase to 52.3%.

Highway 169, 36th Avenue N, and Boone Avenue N are significant barriers to walking and biking to Sonnesyn Elementary. Between 2006 and 2015, six crashes involving vehicles and a bicyclist or pedestrian were reported within a one-half mile radius of the school. Eighty-eight percent parents reported the safety of intersections and crossings and 76% report speed and amount of traffic as factors that affected their decision to allow their children to walk or bike to school.



APPENDIX

FURTHER READING

The summary on this page takes information from a more detailed existing conditions report found in the appendix. There you'll find a report that talks about how students and parents report traveling to and from school, a map showing pedestrian and bicyclist-involved crashes, and a map of residences of students who attend Sonnesyn Elementary. This information helped planners and community stakeholders develop the best strategies for increasing safety and comfort for students walking and biking to school.



02

PROGRAMS



Introduction to Programs

The Safe Routes to School movement acknowledges that infrastructure changes are a necessary but insufficient condition for shifting school travel behavior. Programs are a necessary component of any successful SRTS plan.

While engineering improvements such as sidewalks, crosswalks, and bikeways are important, equally important are **education** programs to give children and families basic safety skills, **encouragement** programs to highlight walking and bicycling to school as fun and normal, **enforcement** against unsafe and illegal motorist behavior, and **evaluation** of the impact of investments and non-infrastructure efforts. Often, programs that help to get more kids walking and biking lead to increased public support for infrastructure projects - they can be an important first step towards building out the physical elements that make walking and biking safer and more comfortable. And relative to certain infrastructure projects, most programs are very low cost.



Existing Programs

Sonnesyn Elementary and the City of New Hope have actively been working towards providing safe and inviting spaces around the school campus for students. This foundation of encouraging student travel safety is valuable for expanding programs to encourage more students to walk and bike. Here are a few programs that already exist in New Hope:

- Bike rodeo held at different New Hope school each year
- New Hope Safe Kids Coalition: local law enforcement and health practitioners meet quarterly to discuss safety and health for children
- New Hope Safety Camp: three day summer camp to teach safe habits to children
- Walk and Bike to School Day
- Student crossing guards
- Informal Park and Walk at Sonnesyn Elementary
- Transportation safety communication sent home to parents from schools

Program Recommendations

The following programs were identified as priority programs by the local SRTS team for Sonnesyn Elementary during the SRTS planning process. These programs were selected to meet the interest and needs of the school community in the near term (one to five years).

Each recommended program shows the “E” it falls under, plus suggested lead, support, and priority.



APPENDIX

FURTHER READING

For a complete list of all potential programs and descriptions, see <http://mnd-otsrts.altaprojects.net/>

Recommended Programs List



PROGRAM	WHICH "E"?	PROGRAM LEADER	PROGRAM SUPPORT	PRIORITY
Bus Drop and Walk/ Park and Walk¹	Encouragement	School Staff	New Hope Police, Robbinsdale Area Schools	Short term (1-2 years)
Walk/Bike to School Day¹	Encouragement	Robbinsdale Area Schools	Parents, School Staff	
Law Enforcement²	Enforcement	New Hope Police	City of New Hope	
Student-Led Campaign³ - Video Production - Pop-ups	Education	New Hope Police, City of New Hope	Robbinsdale Area Schools	
Walking Route Maps⁴	Education / Encouragement	City of New Hope	Robbinsdale Area Schools	Medium term (2-4 years)
Walking School Bus	Encouragement	School Staff with Robbinsdale Area Schools	Parents, Neighbors, New Hope Police	
Walk! Bike! Fun! Curriculum⁵	Education	School Staff	Robbinsdale Area Schools	

REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL NOTES

1 Build off previous participation with Walk/Bike to School events. Coordinate with Meadow Lake and RSI as part of a "Walk and Bike to School Week." Partner with staff Wellness Campaign. See a potential remote dropoff site on the infrastructure map.

2 Build on coordination being done by Officer Nichole Korth to do observations and enforcement, and provide a consistent, visible presence over several weeks; recommended to do observations before and after potential infrastructure improvements to evaluate any improvements in driver behavior - coordinate with the City of New Hope

3 Coordinate with New Hope Police to work with high school video production class to make student-led safety patrol instructional videos for the school. Additional student-led activities may include "tactical urbanism" (pop-ups, or demonstration projects) to support infrastructure improvements at the crossings.

4 Walking route maps can be included in existing transportation communications sent to parents.

5 Look for upcoming regional trainings and coordinate with school staff and Robbinsdale Area Schools



EVALUATION

PARENT SURVEYS AND STUDENT TRAVEL TALLIES

There are two great tools to evaluate all the SRTS work in your community:

Parent Surveys: Recommended to be done once every 2-3 years. A hard copy survey or link to the survey can be sent to parents which asks their perceptions of walking and biking to school.

Student Travel Tally: Recommended to be done fall and spring of every year. These in-class tallies ask students how they travel to and from school.

More information on both the parent survey and the student travel tally can be found at <http://guide.saferoutesinfo.org/evaluation/>

Program Descriptions

The following descriptions provide more information about the recommended programs found in the table on the previous page.

Bus Drop and Walk/Park and Walk

This program is designed to give those who ride the bus or commute with a parent a chance to get physical exercise before school. School administration should choose a location a quarter to half mile away from school where drop off from buses and parent vehicles can occur on a single day. Not all students are able to walk or bike the whole distance to school; they may live too far away or their route may include hazardous traffic situations. This program allows students who are unable to walk or bike to school a chance to participate in Safe Routes to School programs.

Additional Resources

National Safe Routes to School Guide: http://guide.saferroutesinfo.org/encouragement/park_and_walk.cfm



Walk/Bike to School Day

Walk and Bike to School Day is an international event that attracts millions of participants in over 30 countries in the fall. The event encourages students and their families to try walking or bicycling to school. Parents and other adults accompany students, and staging areas can be designated along the route to school where groups can gather and walk or bike together. These events are often promoted through press releases, backpack/folder/electronic mail, newsletter articles, and posters. Students can earn incentives for participating or there is a celebration at school following the morning event. These events can be held for more than a day,

Additional Resources

MnDOT Walk and Bike to School Day: http://www.dot.state.mn.us/mnsaferoutes/programs/walk_to_school_day.html



Student-Led Campaign

Involving students in campaigns directed towards neighbors and parents can have a large impact on communicating the benefits of SRTS outside the school community. Elementary school students can partner with district high schools to produce videos, make posters, yard signs, and t-shirts that provide positive messaging about walking and biking to school, and educate parents about harmful vehicle idling during pick up and drop off. Art classes can even be involved in pop-up or demonstration infrastructure projects.

Additional Resources

Effective Messaging from SRTS National Partnership: http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/resource_files/effective_messaging_for_promoting_biking_and_walking.pdf





Walking Route Maps

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

Additional Resources

National Safe Routes to School Guide: http://guide.saferoutesinfo.org/engineering/school_route_maps.cfm

Walking School Bus

A Walking School Bus is a group of children walking to school with one or more adults. Parents can take turns leading the bus, which follows the same route every time and picks up children from their homes or designated bus stops at designated times. Ideally, buses run every day or on a regular schedule so families can count on it, but they often begin as a one-time pilot event. A Walking School Bus can be as informal as a few parents alternating to walk their children to school, but often it is a well-organized, PTA-led effort to encourage walking to school.

Additional Resources

http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/resource_files/step-by-step-walking-school-bus.pdf

Walk! Bike! Fun! Curriculum

Pedestrian safety education aims to ensure that every child understands basic traffic laws and safety rules. It teaches students basic traffic safety, sign identification, and decision-making tools. Training is typically recommended for first- and second-graders and teaches lessons such as "look left, right, and left again". Curriculum often includes three parts: in-class lessons, mock street scenarios, and on-street practice. Walk! Bike! Fun! includes lessons for both safe walking and biking, although the latter is recommended for students in fifth grade and older. This curriculum was developed by The Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota with support from the Minnesota Department of Transportation and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota. It teaches safe traffic behavior through classroom activities and on-the-streets skills practice.

Additional Resources

Minnesota Walk! Bike! Fun!: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/saferoutes/pdf/toolkit/walk-bike-fun-curriculum.pdf>







Introduction to Infrastructure

In addition to program recommendations, changes to the streetscape are essential to making walking and biking to school safer and more comfortable.

The initial field review and subsequent meetings yielded specific recommendations to address the key identified barriers to walking and bicycling at Sonnesyn Elementary.

This plan does not represent a comprehensive list of every project that could improve conditions for walking and cycling in the neighborhood, but rather the key conflict points and highest priority infrastructure improvements to improve walking and cycling access to the school. The recommendations range from simple striping changes and school signing to more significant changes to the streets, intersections and school infrastructure.

All engineering recommendations are shown on the Recommended Infrastructure Improvements Map on page 19 and described in the table on page 20. It should be noted that funding is limited and all recommendations made are planning-level concepts only. Additional engineering studies will be needed to confirm feasibility and final costs for projects.



WINTER MAINTENANCE

FURTHER READING

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In colder climates, it is important to consider how winter can affect the safety and comfort for youth walking and biking to school. See Appendix J for information related to winter maintenance that will allow kids to stay active and healthy year round.



APPENDIX

FURTHER READING

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For a complete list of infrastructure to increase bicyclist and pedestrian safety and comfort, turn to Appendix H. The toolkit found here will help you brainstorm additional improvements for New Hope.

EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE



View of Bassett Creek Regional Trail along Boone Ave N.






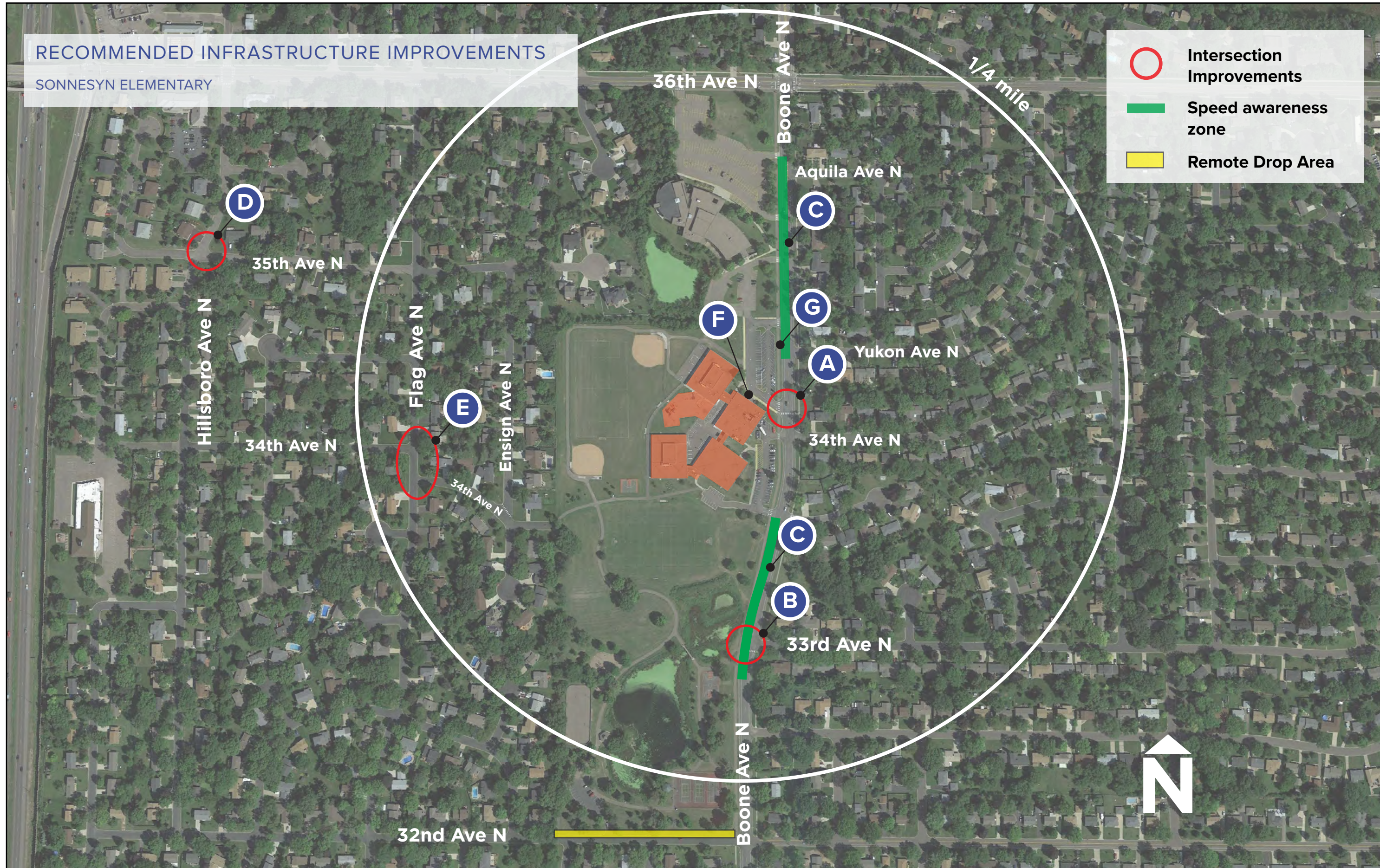
View of bus loop and parent pickup/drop off.



View of trails in Hidden Valley Park, behind Sonnesyn Elementary.

RECOMMENDED INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS
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-  Intersection Improvements
-  Speed awareness zone
-  Remote Drop Area



Infrastructure Recommendations

	LOCATION	PROBLEM/ISSUE	POTENTIAL SOLUTION/RECOMMENDATION	ANTICIPATED OUTCOME	LEAD	PRIORITY
A	Boone Ave N at school driveway entrance between Yukon and 34th Aves N	Long and uncomfortable crossings of Boone Ave and the school driveway; drivers not anticipating people crossing	install curb extensions at the driveway; take steps to enhance the demonstration curb extension into a more permanent design; widen high visibility crosswalks and install advanced stop bars (or yield lines); install ADA compliant curb ramps; consider RRFB at this location after curb extensions are created/enhanced	Increased safety, comfort and visibility of people walking; drivers better anticipate people crossing; encourage more people to walk by reducing the stress of people crossing in this location	City of New Hope with Robbinsdale Area Schools	High
B	Boone Ave N and 33rd Ave N	Wide road cross-section encourages drivers to move quickly when approaching and moving through the marked crossing location; drivers not anticipating people crossing	Install curb extensions and enhance the existing crosswalk with wider high visibility markings and advanced stop bars (or yield lines); Install ADA compliant ramps; consider a median crossing island; install curb extensions and/or crossing island first as a demonstration project; coordinate with plans for future bicycle facilities on Boone Ave	Drivers traveling at slower speeds and anticipating people desiring to cross at this location	City of New Hope	Medium
C	Boone Ave N north and south of school campus	Speed zone does not extend to neighboring public/community land uses with school-related activities north and south of the school and/or school crossings; drivers move quickly when approaching the school zone	Extend speed zone to south of 33rd Ave and north of Aquila Ave; coordinate with enhancements to the design of Boone Ave (reference locations A and B)	Promote traffic calming and more comfortable crossings of Boone Ave; increased comfort and safety of people walking and biking along Boone Ave; drivers moving at slower speeds and anticipating people crossing	City of New Hope	Low
D	Hillsboro Ave N and 35th Ave N	Drivers move quickly along through the intersection and don't anticipate people crossing; limited visibility of this intersection as drivers approach; high density of students must walk or bike through this intersection to reach the school	Reduce crossing distances of Hillsboro Ave by reducing corner radii and marking curb extensions; install traffic calming along Hillsboro Ave; install stop control	Drivers traveling at slower speeds and anticipating people crossing at this location; increased safety, comfort and visibility of people walking; encourage more people to walk and bike from this neighborhood	City of New Hope	High
E	Flag Ave N and 34th Ave N	Drivers do not expect to see people crossing Flag Ave; unclear route for walking and biking from the neighborhood to the existing trail where 34th Ave N meets the school campus	Mark crossing of Flag Ave; consider a pedestrian lane on Flag Ave between the two sections of 34th Ave as an interim or temporary pedestrian facility, or an advisory shoulder on Flag Ave	Drivers anticipate people crossing Flag Ave and walking along 34th Ave; people walking and biking have a more formalized route to school; encourage more people to walk and bike from this neighborhood	City of New Hope	Medium
F	On campus, near main building entry	Current bicycle parking does not invite use	Install bike parking per guidelines in the Appendix; consider proximity to main entrance, type of racks, number of racks, and the surface on which the racks are placed	Increased number of people biking to and from school	Robbinsdale Area Schools	Medium
G	Boone Ave N across from Yukon Ave N	Drivers park along the west Boone Ave near the school campus, increasing potential conflict with people walking and biking and decreasing visibility	Mark and sign no parking between the driveways along the west side of Boone Ave	Drivers do not park along Boone Ave adjacent to the school; increased visibility and comfort of people walking and biking	City of New Hope	Medium

RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS

Concept illustrations of selected improvement areas



Recommendation A. Boone Ave N at Sonnesyn Elementary exit/entrance. Current (top) and recommended (bottom). Installing permanent curb extensions, ADA compliant curb ramps, and RRFB will make crossing safer and more comfortable.





Using this Plan

At the heart of every successful Safe Routes to School comprehensive program is a coordinated effort by parent volunteers, school staff, local agency staff, law enforcement and community advocates, such as public health.

This plan provides an overview of Safe Routes to School with specific recommendations for a 6 E's approach to improve the safety and the health and wellness of students. The specific recommendations in this plan are intended to support improvements and programs over the next 5 years. These recommendations include both long- and short-term infrastructure improvements as well as programmatic recommendations.

It should be noted that not all of these projects and programs need to be implemented right away to improve the environment for walking and bicycling to school. The recommended projects and programs listed in this plan should be reviewed as part of the overall and ongoing Safe Routes to School strategy. Some projects will require more time, support, and funding than others. It is important to achieve short-term successes while laying the groundwork for progress toward some of the larger and more complex projects.



Who are You?

Successful programs are achieved through the coordinated efforts of parent volunteers, school staff, local agency staff, law enforcement and community advocates, such as public health. Each partner has a key role to play in contributing to a plan's success. The following paragraphs highlight the unique contributions of key partners in Safe Routes to School.

I AM A PARENT

Parents can use this report to understand the conditions at their children's school and to become familiar with the ways an SRTS program can work to make walking and bicycling safer. Concerned parents or city residents have a very important role in the Safe Routes to School process. Parent groups, both formal and informal, have the ability and the responsibility to help implement many of the educational and encouragement programs suggested in this plan. Parent groups can also be key to ongoing success by helping to fundraise for smaller projects and programs.

I AM A COMMUNITY MEMBER

Community residents, even if they don't currently have children enrolled in school, can play an important role in supporting implementation of the plan. They can use this report to better understand where there may be opportunities to participate in programming ini-

tiatives and infrastructure improvements. Community members, including seniors or retirees who may have more flexible schedules than parents with school-aged children, may volunteer in established programs or work with school staff or community partners to start new programs recommended in this plan.

I WORK FOR THE SCHOOL DISTRICT

School district staff can use this report to prioritize improvements identified on District property and develop programs that educate and encourage students and parents to seek alternatives to single family commutes to school.

District officials are perhaps the most stable of the stakeholders for a Safe Routes to School program and are in the best position to keep the program active over time. District staff can work with multiple schools, sharing information and bringing efficiencies to programs at each school working on Safe Routes.

I AM A SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR

School administrators have an important role in implementing the recommendations contained within this SRTS plan. For a plan to succeed, the impetus for change and improvement must be supported by the leadership of the school.



School administrators can help with making policy and procedural changes to projects that are within school grounds and by distributing informational materials to parents within school publications. Please read the SRTS Facts for School Communication in Appendix B.

I WORK FOR THE CITY OR COUNTY

City and County staff can use this report to identify citywide issues and opportunities related to walking and bicycling and to prioritize infrastructure improvements. City staff can also use this report to support Safe Routes to School funding and support opportunities such as:

- MnDOT Safe Routes to School (SRTS) grants
- Federal Safe Routes to School (SRTS) grants
- Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP)

For all infrastructure recommendations, a traffic study and more detailed engineering may be necessary to evaluate project feasibility, and additional public outreach should be conducted before final design and construction. For recommendations within the public right-of-way, the responsible agency will determine how (and if) to incorporate suggestions into local improvement plans and prioritize funding to best meet the needs of each school community.

I WORK FOR THE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Police department staff can use this report to understand issues related to walking and bicycling to school and to plan for and prioritize enforcement activities that may make it easier and safer for students to walk and bike to school. The Police Department will be instrumental to the success of the enforcement programs and policies recommended in this plan. The Police Department will also have a key role in working with school administrations in providing officers and assistance to some of the proposed education and encouragement programs.

I WORK IN PUBLIC HEALTH

Public health staff can use this report to identify specific opportunities to collaborate with schools and local governments to support safety improvements and encourage healthy behaviors in school children and their families.