SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

A plan to make walking, biking, and rolling to school a safe, accessible, and fun aspect of physical and emotional health, for students and all members of the growing Farmington community

GREAT OAKS ACADEMY
FARMINGTON, MINNESOTA

Great Oaks Academy

JUNE 2024

Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge the participation of the following individuals and organizations in the development of this Safe Routes to School Plan.

SRTS LOCAL PLANNING TEAM

Paul McGlynn
Executive Director at Great Oaks Academy

Elizabeth Wohlers
Great Oaks parent

Tony Wippler
Planning Manager for City of Farmington

Gina Mitteco
Dakota County Transportation Department, Multimodal Projects

Kellee Omlid
City of Farmington, Parks and Recreation Director

Kjirsten Anderson
Dakota County Public Health

Suzanne Scotty
Ped Bike Coordinator at MnDOT

Joshua Storms
Livable Planner in Dakota County, SHIP Program

Tristan Trejo
Multimodal Planner for MnDOT's Metro District

Nate Siem
Farmington Police Department and Great Oaks parent

SRTS STAFF / CONSULTANTS

Kelly Corbin
MnDOT, Safe Routes to School Coordinator

Colin Harris
Alta Planning + Design

Erin Daly Davenport
Alta Planning + Design

Zoey Mauck
Alta Planning + Design

Brigitte Bjorklund
Zan Associates

Linda Spohr
Zan Associates

Majida Redzic
Zan Associates

Cora Holt
Zan Associates

MINNESOTA SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Table of Contents

01. WHY SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL? 6

02. INFRASTRUCTURE 14

03. PROGRAMS 22

04. WORKING FOR CHANGE 30

05. APPENDICES 36

ORGANIZATION OF THIS REPORT

This report is designed to support and be accessible to multiple groups of people involved with Safe Routes to School in Farmington, including students, caregivers, teachers, school administrators, City staff, elected officials, and county and state employees.

THE VISION

A plan to make walking, biking, and rolling to school a safe, accessible, and fun aspect of physical and emotional health, for students and all members of the growing Farmington community.

THE 6 Es

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs rely on six core strategies, called the "Six Es," to work toward their vision.

EQUITY – THE OVERARCHING E

Prioritizing positive outcomes for students from lower-income households; Black, Indigenous, and other students of color; students with disabilities; and other students who face disproportionate barriers to walking, biking, and rolling to school because of their group membership. This plan uses the term "priority populations" to refer to disproportionately impacted groups of students and other community members.

ENGAGEMENT

Working with students, families, school staff, and community members and organizations, especially those from priority populations, to identify needs, better understand barriers, and create solutions together for walking, biking, and rolling.

EVALUATION

Measuring how Safe Routes to School initiatives are implemented (process evaluation) and what their impacts are (outcome evaluation), especially how initiatives Engage with and support priority populations.

EDUCATION

Providing students and other community members, especially those from priority populations, with skills and knowledge about walking, biking, and rolling.

ENCOURAGEMENT

Normalizing a culture of walking, biking, and rolling through incentive programs, events, and activities that center priority populations.

ENGINEERING

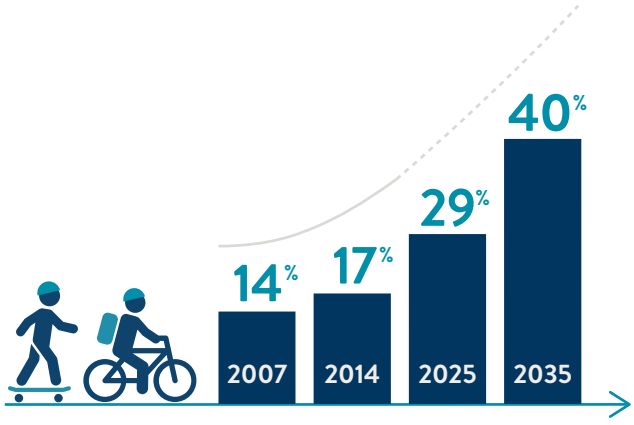
Developing Equity-focused changes to the built environment that support youth travel, designed and prioritized through community Engagement.


NOW
HIRING
SPEED
LIMIT
30

01. WHY SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL?

Why Safe Routes to School?

Today, less than 20% of K-8 students walk or bike to school, but as recently as 1970, nearly 50% of students walked or biked to school. Where schools and housing are located, how roads are designed, and how automobiles are regulated have all contributed to this decline. Through policy changes, infrastructure improvements, and programs, Safe Routes to School helps create physical and social environments that empower students, their families, and their communities to walk and bike more often. Communities that participate in Safe Routes to School also benefit from less air, noise, and water pollution; lower road maintenance costs; and more pleasant streetscapes for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers alike.



SRTS initiatives are contributing to more students and families walking and biking to school.

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
- Feel better about their physical health
- Are more likely to have good mental health
- Get most of their recommended daily physical activity just from traveling to and from school
- Have better school performance and test scores

A REINFORCING CYCLE OF WALKING AND BIKING TO SCHOOL

- More students walking and biking to school
- Greater focus on policies, infrastructure, and programs to support walking and biking
- Safer and easier routes to and from school
- Better air quality and more pleasant bike and pedestrian environments

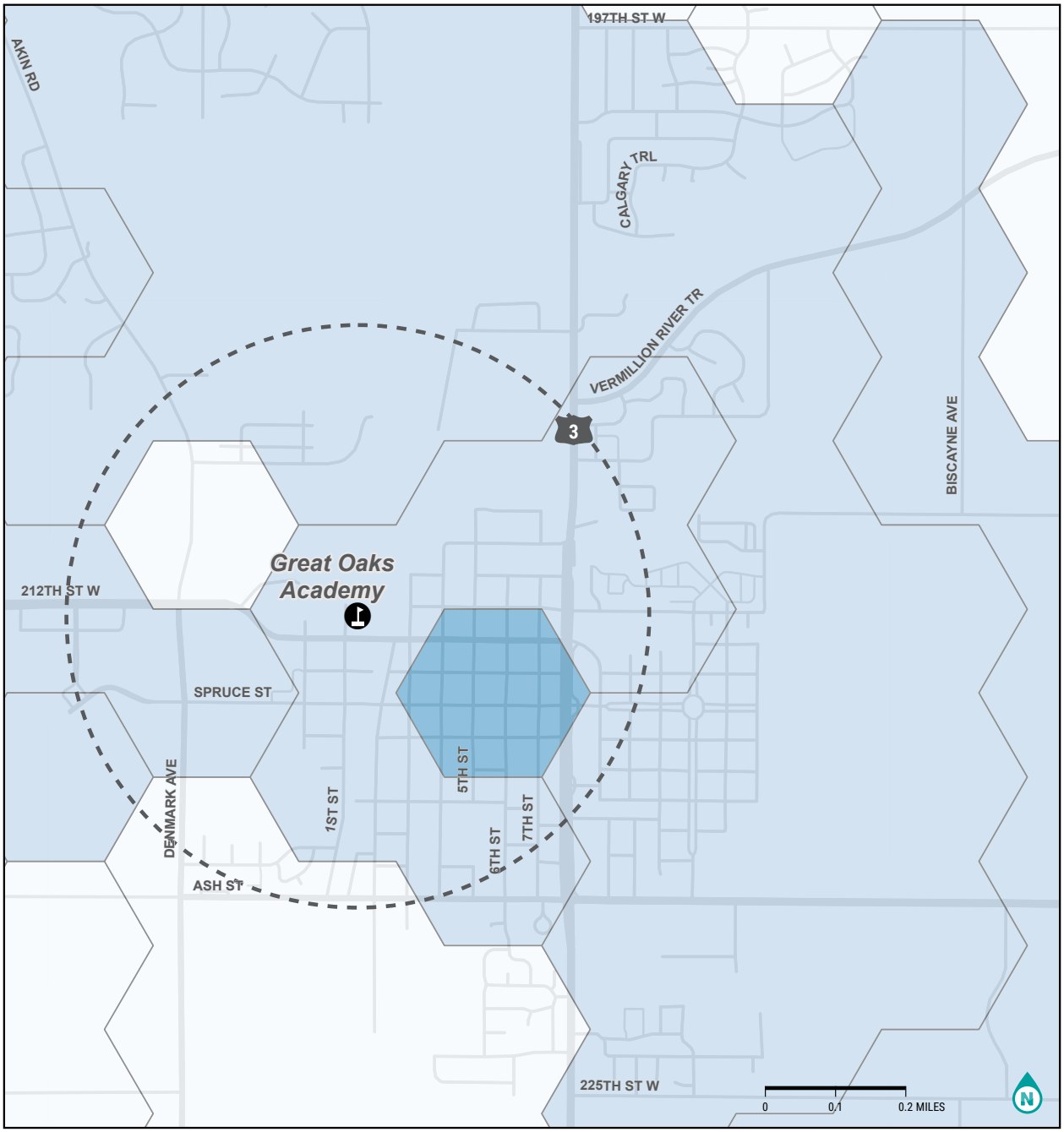
*More information, including primary sources, can be found at http://guide.saferoutesinfo.org.

Equity in SRTS

Disparities in access to resources such as high-quality jobs, schools, parks, healthcare, food, and a full range of transportation choices impact the health and well-being of communities. These differences are not random—they are the results of government policy and funding in the past and present, which has worked to the benefit of some and to the disadvantage of others.

Equity in Safe Routes to School is impacted by transportation system inequities—such as limited access to high-quality walking and biking infrastructure or the presence of highways or busy roads in lower-income neighborhoods and neighborhoods with more BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) individuals—as well as inequities in related systems. For example, racial wealth inequities and racial discrimination in housing mean that BIPOC or lower-income students may live further away from schools than their white peers and those from higher-income families.

Safe Routes to School works to address these inequities through programs, infrastructure, and policy improvements that help priority populations. Priority populations include individuals, groups, and communities who are more likely to rely on walking, biking, or transit for transportation; are more vulnerable to unsafe traffic conditions; or have suffered historic disinvestment in safe, comfortable, walking and biking infrastructure. By looking at demographic data, examining existing transportation services and policies, and speaking with members of the community, the Great Oaks Safe Routes to School team worked to develop recommendations that support equity in walking and biking to school. In Farmington, the equity map (next page) shows the highest concentration of priority equity areas within walking/biking distance of school.



FARMINGTON SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

15 minute walk (0.75 mile)

Active Transportation Equity Score

- 1 - 3 (lowest equity priority)
- 4 - 6
- 7 - 9
- 10 - 12
- 13 - 15 (highest equity priority)

GREAT OAKS ACADEMY

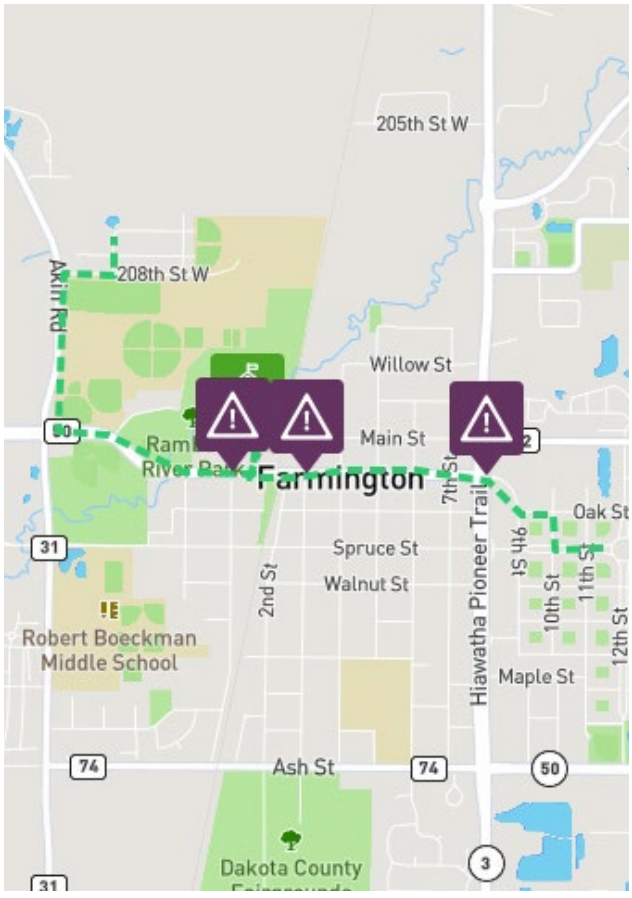
MINNESOTA SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

alta

Developing the Plan

The Great Oaks Academy SRTS plan was developed based on issues and opportunities identified through stakeholder and community engagement, data evaluation and a site visit including a walk audit and observation of student dismissal from school. Great Oaks' SRTS team met regularly through the planning process to give feedback at key milestones. The larger SRTS team and stakeholders including the City of Farmington, Dakota County and MnDOT participated in the Rapid Planning Workshop, Site Visit and Action Planning Workshop.

The following sections in this SRTS plan include findings from stakeholder engagement, data analysis, and observations during the site visit. More details including maps and an engagement summary are in the Appendices. Recommendations are organized into two sections: Infrastructure and Programs.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement included a survey for caregivers, an interactive engagement website, an in-person engagement event at the 2023 fall Harvest Festival and the Rapid Planning Workshop.

Key takeaways from engagement include:

- Many students who attend Great Oaks Academy live far away from school.
- Programs should consider ways to involve students who live far away.
- Distance to school and the railroad tracks were listed as primary infrastructure barriers.

Caregivers were asked what would help their child walk or bike more often. They identified the following, in order of most to least commonly chosen:

- A shorter distance to walk or bike
- Safer intersections/crossings
- An adult to walk or bike with
- Less traffic along route
- A group of students to walk or bike with

Great Oaks Academy

SITE CIRCULATION:

Pedestrians and Bicyclists: Walking/biking numbers are fairly low despite some students living in nearby neighborhoods, primarily due to safety concerns with crossing Elm St / CSAH 50.

If coming from the east, students must cross the railroad track before arriving at the school campus. There is a signalized intersection at the intersection of 3rd St that gets utilized as a way to cross Elm St / CSAH 50.

For those who walk or bike from the west, there is a sidewalk that connects to the shared use path along the north side of Elm St. The path is connected to trails in Rambling River Park accessible to students coming from neighborhoods to the north of the park.

Those coming from neighborhoods to the south must cross Elm St / CSAH 50 to get to the building. There are no marked crosswalks at the unsignalized intersections near the school. Some students cross the road at sporadic locations, while others use the signal at 3rd St and Elm St/CSAH 50.

School Buses: School bus drivers pick up and drop off students in front of the school entrance; school buses exit out of the main driveway onto Elm St.

Vehicles: Parents and caregivers pick up and drop off students in a line adjacent to the school entrance. Drivers enter the school campus via a driveway off of 1st St on the west side of the school; drivers exit from the main driveway on the east side of the school onto Elm St.

SCHOOL CONTEXT:*

Great Oaks Academy

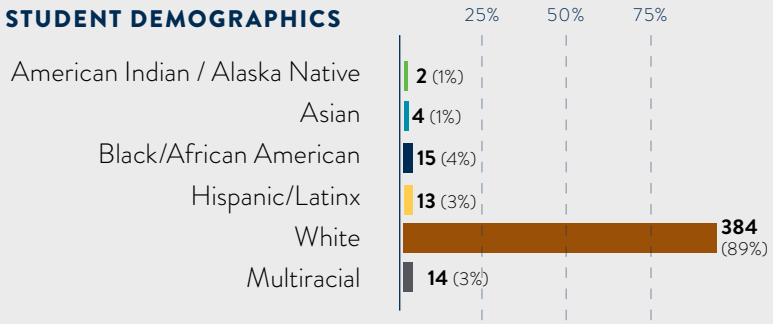
ENROLLMENT:

432

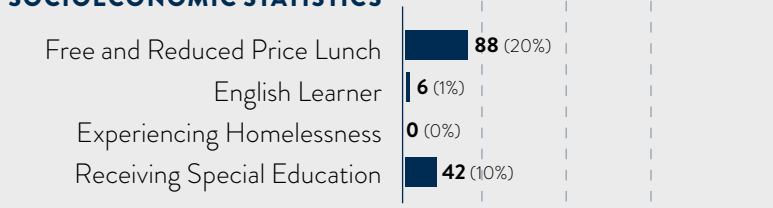
GRADES SERVED:

K-7

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



SOCIOECONOMIC STATISTICS



**Source: SY 2024 student enrollment data from the Minnesota Department of Education.*

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS:

- The Great Oaks student populations is predominantly White, with very small subsets of students who are American Indian / Alaska Native, Asian, Black, Hispanic/Latinx, or Multiracial.
- The school's population of free and reduced-price lunch-eligible students (88 students, or 20%) is small relative to the state of Minnesota (43.3%).
- The highest priority equity area is located to the southeast of the school (map, page 9). This area falls within the walkshed, so making improvements that will make walking easier for students will greatly benefit this area of high need.
- Only a few students regularly walk or bike to school.
- Great Oaks has five buses to transport students in Farmington and one (increasing to two in the 2024-2025 school year) for students in Lakeville. Students from other outlying communities are dropped off by parents/caregivers or carpool with peers. Bussing can be provided to any student who lives in Farmington.

This page intentionally left blank.

02. INFRASTRUCTURE

Introduction to Infrastructure

Physical changes to the streetscape are essential to making walking, biking, and rolling to school safer and more comfortable.

An in-person walk audit and discussions with the Safe Routes to School Team, school staff, caregivers, students, community members, and city and county staff informed opportunities to address key barriers to walking and biking around Great Oaks Academy.

Recommendations in the final plan are prioritized on the basis of community and stakeholder input, traffic and roadway conditions, cost, number of students impacted, and benefit to priority populations. This planning process was designed to address historical and contemporary inequities in who benefits from and who is burdened by transportation systems, and equity considerations accordingly will play a central role in the prioritization of infrastructure recommendations. Especially in the winter months, improved maintenance and lighting can contribute to improving equitable access to walking and biking routes, even where a sidewalk or path is present.

WINTER MAINTENANCE

For students and community members with disabilities, winter maintenance is key to being able to access sidewalks and trails during snowy months. This is also true for students and families who walk and roll as their primary means of transportation, either because they cannot afford or choose not to own a vehicle, or because other transportation options aren't accessible to them. Cities can adopt policies that prioritize winter

maintenance of existing infrastructure and make it easier for the most vulnerable users of our transportation system – including students – to get around in winter. These policies help to increase transparency and improve reliability for the active transportation network.

For example, they can:

- Adopt policies that prioritize snow clearing and removal on active transportation facilities.
- Prioritize clearing of routes that provide access to transit.
- Develop and share information publicly regarding sidewalk and shared use pathway snow clearing and removal practices.
- Hold a winter maintenance forum or conduct a survey around specific winter engagement concerns.
- Work with schools to establish volunteer groups of residents to clear sidewalks on priority routes to school.

LIGHTING AND VISIBILITY

Similarly, lighting for people walking and biking is important for both actual and perceived sense of safety and security. In winter climates like Minnesota, where darker days mean school arrival and dismissal can occur in the dark, lighting is especially important for mitigating safety concerns and encouraging active transportation throughout the year.

While lighting can sometimes be seen as a costly investment, it is an important step for ensuring equitable access to walking and biking routes. Lighting should be seen as a necessary component of bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements, not seen as a potential add-on or "nice to have."

Communities can consider:

- Creating a lighting plan for priority pedestrian routes to install trail or sidewalk lighting over time
- Partnerships with or requirements for private

development to provide lighting
- Incorporating high-visibility safety vests into crossing guard and walking school bus events
- Give-aways that help kids access winter gear such as clothing or bike lights

RECOMMENDATIONS OVERVIEW

This plan does not represent a comprehensive list of every project that could improve conditions for walking and biking. Rather, it identifies community priorities, key conflict areas, and potential improvements that emerged in the Great Oaks planning process. Recommendations range from simple signage changes to more significant alterations to streets and intersections.

A 2023 SRTS planning effort for nearby Boeckman Middle School identified additional walking and biking improvements around Farmington. A selection of recommendations listed in that plan are included in the following section as recommendations; however, the full Boeckman plan is an additional resource for community members and planning staff interested in walking and biking safety.

During stakeholder engagement, the following themes were identified by students and families around safe walking and biking to school:

- Many students and families live too far from school to walk or bike, and would like to see more walking and biking opportunities integrated into the school day.
- School community members would like to see better connections between school and downtown Farmington.
- The railroad tracks are perceived as a barrier for some families, along with drivers who don't look for people walking and biking.

This plan will also be complemented by upcoming Dakota County work. CSAH 50, the roadway adjacent to Great Oaks Academy and the focus for many plan recommendations, will undergo a mill-and-overlay in Summer 2024. The County is also considering a more detailed pedestrian crossing study along the CSAH 50 corridor to understand community needs and identify key opportunities for improvment. Accordingly, this Safe Routes to School Plan is a way to document key priorities from the school community that can help shape future corridor planning efforts.

Similarly, MnDOT is planning for the future of the Highway 3 corridor on the east side of downtown Farmington. Recommendations from their recent study include intersection concepts to improve safety and access for roadway users. As that planning process enters implementation, the project team should consider Great Oaks and other Farmington students as priority users of improved infrastructure.

The City of Farmington, Dakota County and MnDOT were important partners in developing this plan. However, recommendations identified in this plan are not necessarily endorsed by these agencies but are planning-level concepts that will require additional engineering design.

Cost estimates are not included here, but once project design is farther along, MnDOT's resource *Minnesota's Best Practices for Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety* provides helpful guidance, and can be accessed here: https://edocs-public.dot.state.mn.us/edocs_public/DMResultSet/download?docId=20072588

Infrastructure Recommendations

SCHOOL DRIVEWAY EXIT

RECOMMENDATION

Explore opportunities to increase the visibility of the driveway crossing and encourage drivers to stop behind the sidewalk. Consider marking the crosswalk, and eliminating the option to turn left out of the driveway (right-out only) by adding right-turn only signage.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT

Car drivers block the driveway crossing during dismissal, making walking to the east unsafe and stressful. The school currently messages to parents and caregivers that only right turns are allowed, however there may be other users of the shopping center that do not follow this guidance.

PRIORITY High ●○○

This location does not have many students crossing in its current condition. However, community members noted this as a key connection to downtown Farmington for students accessing before or after-school destinations. It is also a needed connection for accessing higher equity areas around downtown, and neighborhoods where many students currently live. Changes could also be implemented in a short-term manner and with relatively low cost.

WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

City of Farmington, with support from Great Oaks Academy

DIVISION ST & ELM ST (CSAH 50)

RECOMMENDATION

Consider utilizing quick-build projects for recommended elements such as curb extensions or median islands until permanent crossing infrastructure can be installed. As the County considers future pedestrian crossing opportunities along CSAH 50, this location should be strongly considered for improvements.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT

Community members noted that many people live too far from Great Oaks to walk or bike to school, but would like to see additional walking and biking opportunities during the school day. This location would be a useful crossing opportunity near the school to facilitate nearby walking and biking, as well as provide a connection for (current and future) students in the neighborhood.

PRIORITY Medium ○●○

This is an important route for connecting students to the surrounding neighborhood and Rambling River Park (including current and future trail amenities), with minimal crossing infrastructure currently.

WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

Dakota County

1ST ST & ELM ST (CSAH 50)

RECOMMENDATION

Consider visibility improvements for people walking and biking, such as reduced crossing distances through bumpouts or a median crossing island, adding high visibility crosswalk markings, or other traffic calming. As the County considers future pedestrian crossing opportunities, this location should be strongly considered for improvements.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT

Students use this intersection to connect with neighborhoods to the south; however, there are visibility concerns with drivers turning into the drop-off and pick-up line from this intersection.

PRIORITY High ●○○

This location is adjacent to campus, is currently used by students walking and biking to Great Oaks, and is an important connection for students traveling to and from Rambling River Park. Parents and caregivers identified this as a top priority crossing location.

WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

Dakota County

ELM ST (CSAH 50)

RECOMMENDATION

Consider designating a school speed zone with a reduced speed limit to increase safety on this section of Elm Street (CSAH 50) near the entrance of Great Oaks Academy.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT

Students report being uncomfortable moving along and crossing Elm Street (CSAH 50) due to the volume and speed of vehicles. There is an existing School Advance Crossing Sign Assembly, but no supporting infrastructure to clarify its meaning for drivers. Before designating a school speed zone, the school, City and County will need to create a school route plan (noted in the programming recommendations). A route plan shows that partners agree on preferred ways to access the school, and demonstrates the need for improved infrastructure at key locations. The plan helps partners understand current needs and prioritize future safety investments.

PRIORITY Medium ○●○

A school route plan can be created as a follow-up to this Safe Routes to School planning process, positioning partners to create a school speed zone. This effort is relatively low-cost and does not require changes to the pavement.

WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

Dakota County, with support from Greak Oaks and the City of Farmington

3RD ST & ELM ST (CSAH 50)

RECOMMENDATION

Explore treatments that improve visibility of people crossing Elm Street (CSAH 50), such as protected pedestrian phases, automatic pedestrian recall, and high-visibility crosswalk markings. As the County considers future pedestrian crossing opportunities along CSAH 50, this location should be strongly considered for improvements.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT

Stakeholders noted that students use this intersection to reach businesses and destinations around downtown, but that it does not feel friendly for people walking. Recent improvements added accessible curb ramps, but there are additional opportunities to improve pedestrian comfort and safety.

PRIORITY High ●○○

This is a key connection between the school, downtown Farmington, and the highest local equity area, currently used by students and families. While already a more supported crossing opportunity than other locations along CSAH 50 near the school, this location is still seen as a barrier.

WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

Dakota County, City of Farmington

ELM ST (CSAH 50) & HWY 3

RECOMMENDATION

Explore treatments that reduce crossing distances and provide direct, intuitive routes for people walking and biking. In the long term, consider treatments consistent with future intersection concepts (including a roundabout or elongated roundabout) identified in MnDOT's recent Highway 3 study.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT

Elm Street (CSAH 50) and Highway 3 is a very busy intersection, with long crossing distances across multiple lanes of traffic.

PRIORITY Low ○○●

This location is further from the school, but still important for students and families interested in biking and walking to Great Oaks. Due to the size and vehicle volumes at the intersection, improvements will likely be higher cost and part of a larger intersection upgrade.

WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

MnDOT, Dakota County, City of Farmington

03. PROGRAMS

Introduction to Programs

Programs are opportunities to increase awareness, understanding, and excitement around walking, biking, and rolling to school.

Programs are focused on educating students, families, and the broader community about walking and biking. Programs also help to build a culture that supports and normalizes walking and biking to school and other destinations. Because programs are low cost and can often be implemented quickly by an individual school or the school district, they represent an important Safe Routes to School strategy that complements longer-term strategies, including infrastructure improvements and policy changes.

Program Recommendations

EXISTING PROGRAMS

As a very new school, there are limited existing biking or walking programs at Great Oaks Academy. However, due to the school's involvement in the community and its location in relation to parks and shared use paths, there is great potential to establish new programs to encourage more students to walk and bike to school. Through feedback gathered for this SRTS Plan, students and families voiced support for walking and biking opportunities built into the school day.

Active or previously implemented programs include:

- Walking field trips to downtown Farmington and Rambling River Park and Playground

PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Conversations with school and district staff, caregivers, students, community members, and city and county staff led to the following potential program recommendations. Programs were identified to meet the needs, capacities, and interests of the community and were prioritized based on existing programs, input from local stakeholders, the extent to which the program would serve priority equity populations, and the readiness of the school to launch the program.

Potential Recommended Programs:

- Stop and Walk
- Walking School Bus and Bike Train
- Walk! Bike! Fun!
- Walk and Bike to School Day
- Play Street
- Farmington Bike Tour
- School Route Map

EQUITABLE IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Each of the recommended programs can be implemented to benefit priority populations. In some cases, programs are inherently beneficial, but other times they require intentional thought to make sure they are implemented equitably and reach students who could benefit the most from them.

When working to start a new or update an old program, school staff and partners should ask themselves:

- Who could benefit the most from this program?
- Are there any barriers to participating in this program, including cultural, social, or financial?
- Are there any school resources that can help reduce barriers to participation?
- Are there community partners who could help us spread the word about this program, or help make it more effective?

After an event, it is also important to think about what went well and what could be improved in the future. Helpful questions to consider include:

- Is this a one-off program, or is there a way to provide ongoing support for it?
- Were any student or family groups absent? Is there something that could help them participate in the future?
- What did students think of the event? Families? Staff?

Taking a few minutes before and after an event to check in on these questions can make a big difference in building a culture of walking and biking that is accessible to all students and families.

STOP AND WALK

During a Stop and Walk event (also called park and walk), bus drivers and caregivers drop students at a designated off-campus location and students walk to school from there. Remote drop-off events can help reduce congestion on campus and provide students who live further from school with an opportunity to walk.

When, where, and how will this be implemented?
School communications can encourage families driving to school to drop students at a central location. For example, at Rambling River Park where they can take paved trails, then the sidewalk along Elm Street to get to school.

Why is this relevant and recommended?
Walking through the park on the way to school provides students an opportunity to start their day with activity and spend time in green space. Using an alternate location for student dropoff would reduce the number of cars adding to congestion on campus.

How will this address transportation inequities?
This program will promote walking and will address transportation inequities if buses drop students off.

How will this be evaluated? Annual caregiver survey.

Who needs to be involved to make this happen?
Students, parents, and school staff.

What is the timeline for implementation?
Short term (1 year).

WALKING SCHOOL BUS AND BIKE TRAIN

A Walking School Bus or Bike Train is a group of children walking or bicycling to school with one or more adults. Parents, caregivers, or even older students can take turns leading the group, which follows the same route every time and picks up children from their homes or bus stops at designated times.

When, where, and how will this be implemented?
Parents or caregivers of students who already walk or bike to school can organize along their current route. School staff can share materials with families to help jump-start the initiative.

Why is this relevant and recommended?
These events build enthusiasm for walking and biking, and help parents and caregivers feel more confident in their student's safety getting to school.

How will this address transportation inequities?
These groups help parents or caregivers who have inflexible work schedules, such as shift work, feel confident that their student can get to school safely.

How will this be evaluated?
Student participation counts.

Who needs to be involved to make this happen?
Students, parents/caregivers, and school staff.

What is the timeline for implementation?
Medium term (2-3 years).

WALK! BIKE! FUN! CURRICULUM

Walk! Bike! Fun! is a two-part curriculum designed specifically to meet Minnesota education standards. The program helps students ages five to thirteen learn traffic rules and regulations, the potential hazards to traveling, and handling skills needed to bike and walk effectively, appropriately, and safely through their community.

When, where, and how will this be implemented?
Physical education or health teachers can integrate Walk! Bike! Fun! as a component in their annual curriculum for students of all ages.

Why is this relevant and recommended?
Walk! Bike! Fun! is tailored to meet physical education standards for students in Minnesota. Access to the bicycle and pedestrian trails in Rambling River Park provides a unique opportunity to extend the classroom beyond the school campus onto dedicated pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

How will this address transportation inequities?
In-school curriculum provides all students an opportunity to engage with walking and biking safety, regardless of the resources available to them outside of school.

How will this be evaluated?
Number of students with access to bike/walk education.

Who needs to be involved to make this happen?
School staff, Bike MN, students.

What is the timeline for implementation?
Medium term (2-3 years).

WALK AND BIKE TO SCHOOL DAYS

National Walk and Bike to School Days engage millions of students and families every October and May. Minnesota also celebrates Winter Walk to School Day in February. Additional education and encouragement programming can increase awareness, and expand participation. Events can also take place more frequently (e.g., Walking Wednesdays) if there's interest and capacity.

When, where, and how will this be implemented?
In October, February, and May to start, with adults and/or secondary school students leading walking groups along pre-identified routes. There could be an after-school ride around the community for those living too far from school to bike. The effort could be coordinated with other schools in Farmington. MnDOT provides materials and contests to promote the events.

Why is this relevant and recommended?
These events build enthusiasm for walking and biking, and help families try out new transportation options/routines.

How will this address transportation inequities?
Coordinated events can make walking/biking accessible to students disproportionately impacted by unsafe crossings.

How will this be evaluated? Student participation counts.

Who needs to be involved to make this happen?
School staff, students, parents, community partners.

What is the timeline for implementation?
Short term (1 year).

SCHOOL PLAY STREET

School play streets are temporary road closures that create a space for students, families and community members to play and socialize. They typically last a few hours, and can be implemented on a recurring basis throughout the school year.

When, where, and how will this be implemented?
Parents or school staff could organize a play street on 1st Street just west of the school, with support from school and City staff, as well as local residents.

Why is this relevant and recommended?
These events build enthusiasm for walking and biking, help families and community members connect, and extend the classroom beyond the school for outdoor learning opportunities.

How will this address transportation inequities?
Coordinated events provide all students an opportunity to engage with outdoor physical activity and community connections, regardless of the resources available to them outside of school.

How will this be evaluated?
Student and parent/caregiver participation counts.

Who needs to be involved to make this happen?
School staff, parents.

What is the timeline for implementation?
Medium to long term (2-5 years).

FARMINGTON BIKE TOUR

A great way to build excitement around biking is to have an event led by school and community leaders highlighting assets of the local area. A bike tour could be educational, share safe route ideas, or just be fun, with themes or costumes.

When, where, and how will this be implemented?
A bike tour could be held on a recurring basis or at important points in the school year, such as at the beginning of the school year or before summer break. Routes could highlight community destinations like the library, City building, local bakery, etc.

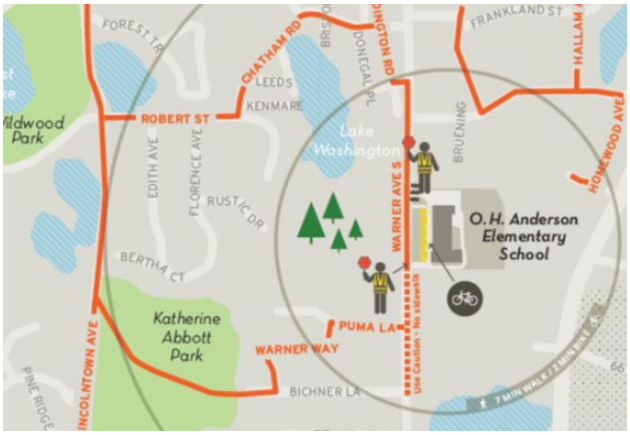
Why is this relevant and recommended? Organizing bike rides with respected adults from the community can help normalize biking and make it fun.

How will this address transportation inequities?
Partnering with nearby Boeckman or BikeMN to have a bike fleet available, these events could provide (fun) opportunities to ride and get more comfortable on a bike for students who do not have access to one outside of school.

How will this be evaluated?
Student participation counts.

Who needs to be involved to make this happen?
School staff, students, community members.

What is the timeline for implementation?
Short term (1 year).



SCHOOL ROUTE MAP / PLAN

Route maps show signs, signals, crosswalks, sidewalks, paths, and hazardous locations around a school. They identify the best way to walk or bike to school. 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. Wayfinding signage helps to make routes more visible to the surrounding community.

When, where, and how will this be implemented?
A route map can be created using the Powerpoint template provided to the Great Oaks SRTS team with this plan. The City, School, and County should be involved in gathering relevant input from students and families and crafting potential routes.

Why is this relevant and recommended?
A route map is a required first step for Dakota County to create a school speed zone, and can help the school communicate walking and biking opportunities, create a shared sense of responsibility among partners, and help prioritize locations for additional safety investments.

How will this address transportation inequities?
Maps help all students feel more confident knowing how to get around the community, regardless of the resources available to them outside of school.

How will this be evaluated? Annual caregiver survey.

Who needs to be involved to make this happen?
School staff, City of Farmington, Dakota County.

What is the timeline for implementation?
Short term (1 year).

This page intentionally left blank.

04. WORKING FOR CHANGE

Action Steps

This plan provides a critical foundation for creating a more equitable transportation system around Great Oaks Academy: a prioritized set of infrastructure and program recommendations. To make these recommendations a reality, all members of the Great Oaks community can play a role. The following text provides ideas for where to start.

PRIORITY SRTS INITIATIVES

- Improve crossing visibility at the Great Oaks Academy driveway on Elm Street (CSAH 50).
- Develop a school route plan, working with the City of Farmington and Dakota County to leverage it into a school speed zone.
- Implement short-term program initiatives to increase walking and biking opportunities during the school day.
- Coordinate with Dakota County on upcoming pedestrian safety efforts along Elm Street (CSAH 50).

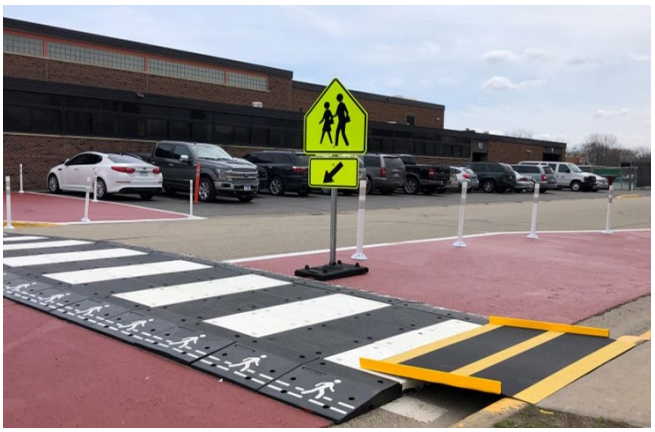
IMPLEMENTING INFRASTRUCTURE CHANGES

DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

Before investing in a long-term infrastructure change, cities and partners may implement a demonstration project to test out an idea. These temporary projects are quick, have a relatively low installation cost, and build support for a long-term permanent change. Demonstration projects can also help engineers and designers make sure that design details are worked out before any new concrete is installed, such as making sure school buses have enough room to turn.

Demonstration projects can also be paired with programming or educational events to encourage additional behavior change. For example, new curb extensions may be paired with a crossing guard to bring additional attention to tricky crossing locations. Or a school may organize a Walk or Bike to School Day after installing a demonstration project to encourage students and families to try out the new infrastructure.

This raised crosswalk connects to a school entrance and slows traffic on the adjacent road.



A demonstration project can include multiple components. The project shown here includes curb extensions and an on-street walking lane where there is currently a sidewalk gap.

DEMONSTRATION PROJECT EXAMPLES

Demonstration projects can take many forms, with a few examples shown here. In previous SRTS efforts, communities have installed a shared use path on the street where there are no sidewalks (top left), curb extensions at wide and uncomfortable intersections (top right and bottom), and a number of other creative solutions.

Demonstration projects are typically installed in the spring or fall to have enough time to observe their effects before winter arrives. In some cases, a community may be specifically interested in a component of winter maintenance and may design the project to stay in place through the winter.


STOP

TAKING COMMUNITY ACTION

A more equitable transportation system that prioritizes safe, comfortable, and fun opportunities to walk, bike, and roll benefits everyone. While this plan is focused on addressing connections to schools, many improvements will benefit people with no relationship to the schools because we all share the same streets, sidewalks, and trails. Likewise, many needed changes, such as reducing speed limits and normalizing walking and biking, extend far beyond the school system.

Your number one role as a community member is to advocate for changes that make walking, biking, and rolling safer, more comfortable, and more fun. Speak to elected officials, show up to community meetings, talk about walking and biking at school events and with school administrators, and organize and vote for candidates who support walking, biking, and public transit.

I AM A STUDENT, CAREGIVER, OR COMMUNITY MEMBER

Students, families, neighborhood associations, advocacy groups, and local businesses can have incredible influence when advocating for change in their school and broader community. This is true both as individuals, as well as when community members come together into groups, such as a Parent Teacher Organization or disability advocacy groups. For example, students, caregivers, and community members can support and lead SRTS initiatives including:

- Advocating for policy change and funding at City Hall
- Developing campaigns to generate enthusiasm and improve social conditions for SRTS
- Volunteering time to lead a Walking School Bus or organize a bike drive
- Fundraising for SRTS programs and small infrastructure projects

I AM A SCHOOL DISTRICT EMPLOYEE

School district staff bring an important perspective and voice to advocating for a more equitable transportation system. By describing the challenges and opportunities their students face around walking and biking, and by petitioning local elected officials for improvements, school district employees can support policy and infrastructure improvements that benefit their students and the broader community. Staff are also ideally positioned to implement the recommendations in this plan, whether it be a classroom-level curriculum or school district–wide policy around walking and biking.

I WORK FOR THE CITY OR COUNTY

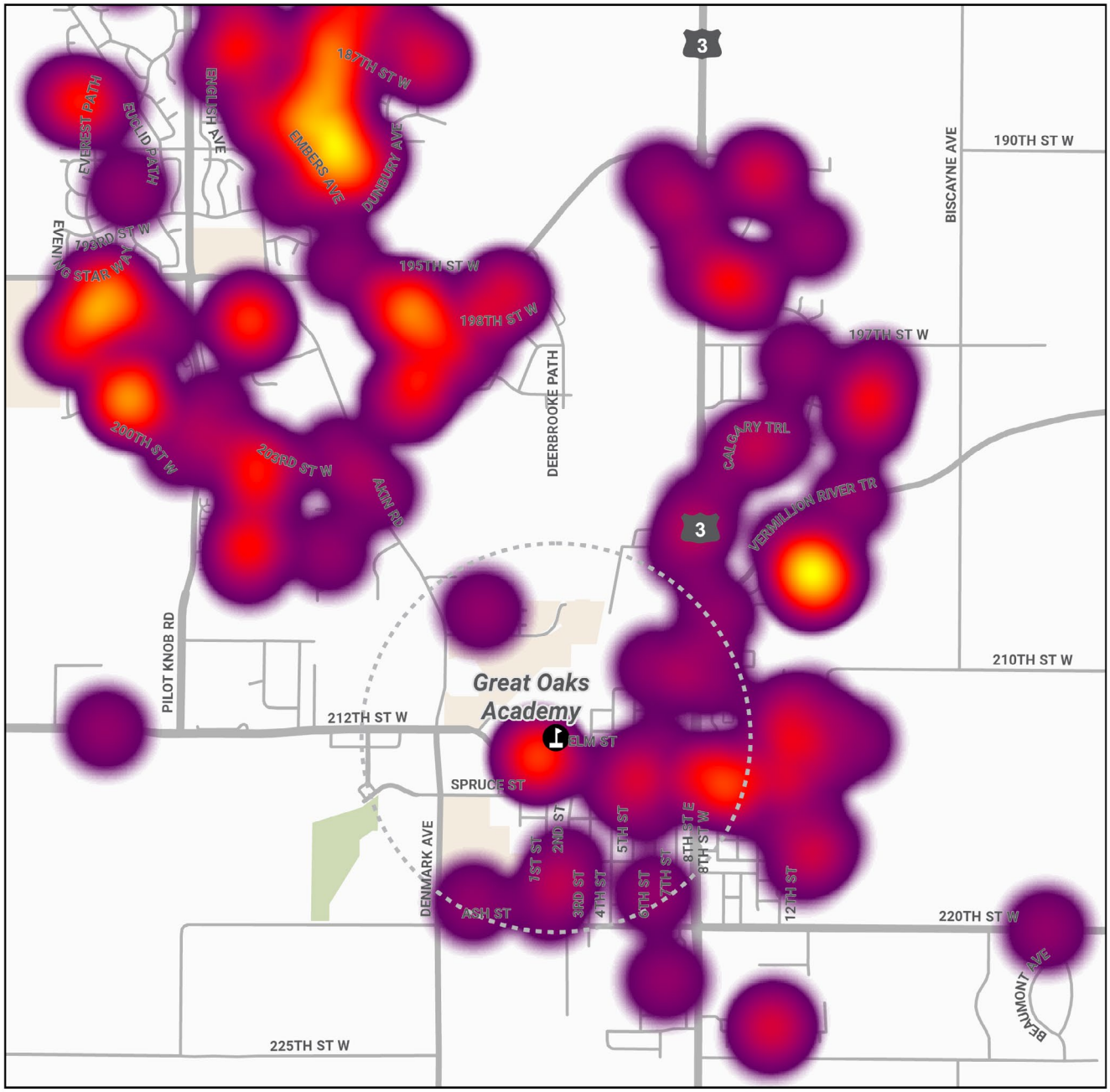
As members of the governments that own, regulate, and maintain the roads, city and county staff can be instrumental in reorienting transportation policies and infrastructure around walking and biking to schools and other destinations. City and county staff can leverage their expertise to identify, advocate for, and implement changes that contribute toward a more equitable transportation system. Key policies that staff can support include:

- Reducing lane widths and vehicular speed limits
- Reducing minimum parking requirements
- Revising land use regulations to promote denser and more integrated land uses that promote walkable and bikeable trips
- Prioritizing municipal maintenance and snow clearing of all pedestrian and bike facilities
- Requiring complete streets infrastructure as part of all road resurfacing and reconstruction projects

City staff can also use this report to support Safe Routes to School funding applications to programs such as MnDOT SRTS grants, federal infrastructure grants, and the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP).

05. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Great Oaks Local Student Distribution



FARMINGTON
SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

GREAT OAKS ACADEMY

15 minute walk (0.75 mile)

More Sparsely Populated

More Densely Populated

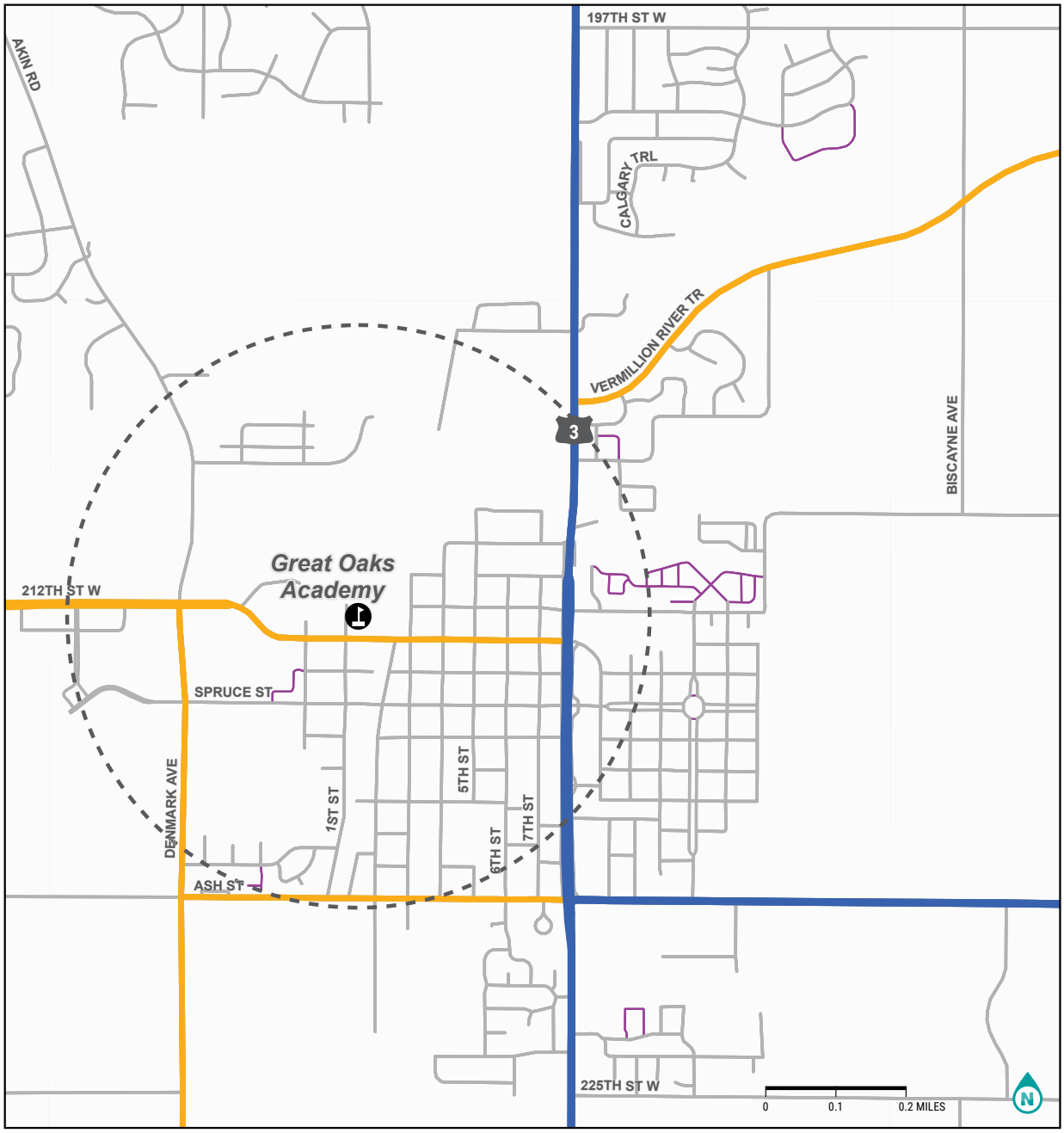
MINNESOTA SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

alta

0 0.1 0.2 MILES

Map produced with generalized data from Great Oaks Academy. Street addresses were rounded to the nearest 100 to get a generalized sense of where there is pontential for students to walk and bike from.

Appendix B: Road Ownership



FARMINGTON
SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

15 minute walk (0.75 mile)

HPMS Ownership

- State
- County
- Local
- Other

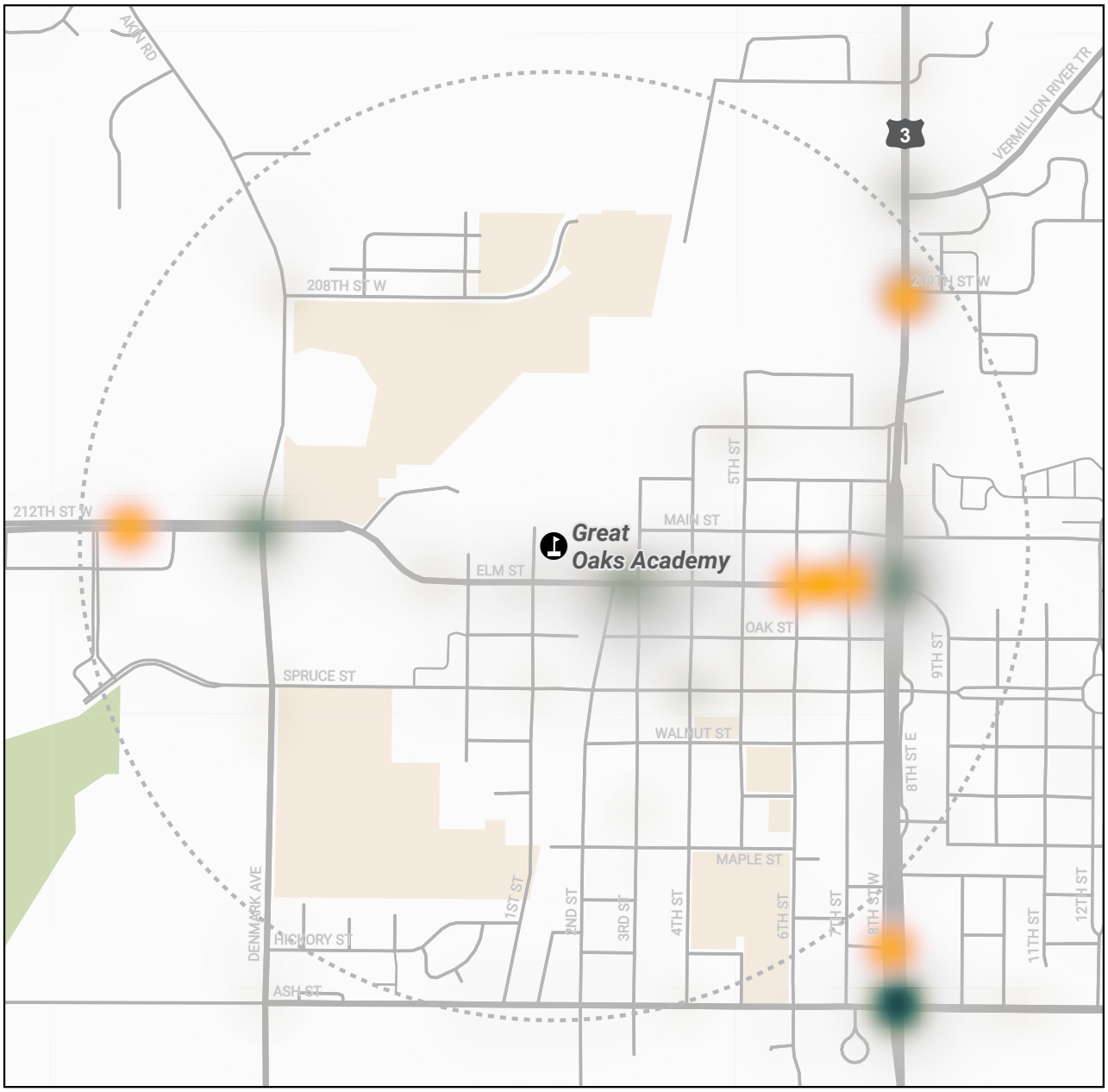
GREAT OAKS ACADEMY

MINNESOTA SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

alta

Refer to Appendix G for a description of the methods used to produce this map.

Appendix C: Crashes by Road User Vulnerability (2018 - 2022)

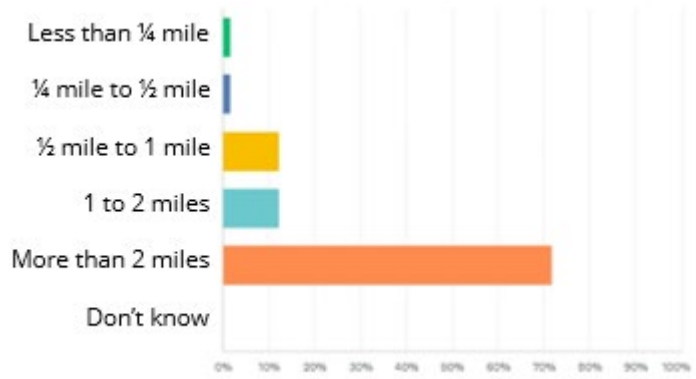


Refer to Appendix G for a description of the methods used to produce this map.

Appendix D: Caregiver Survey Results

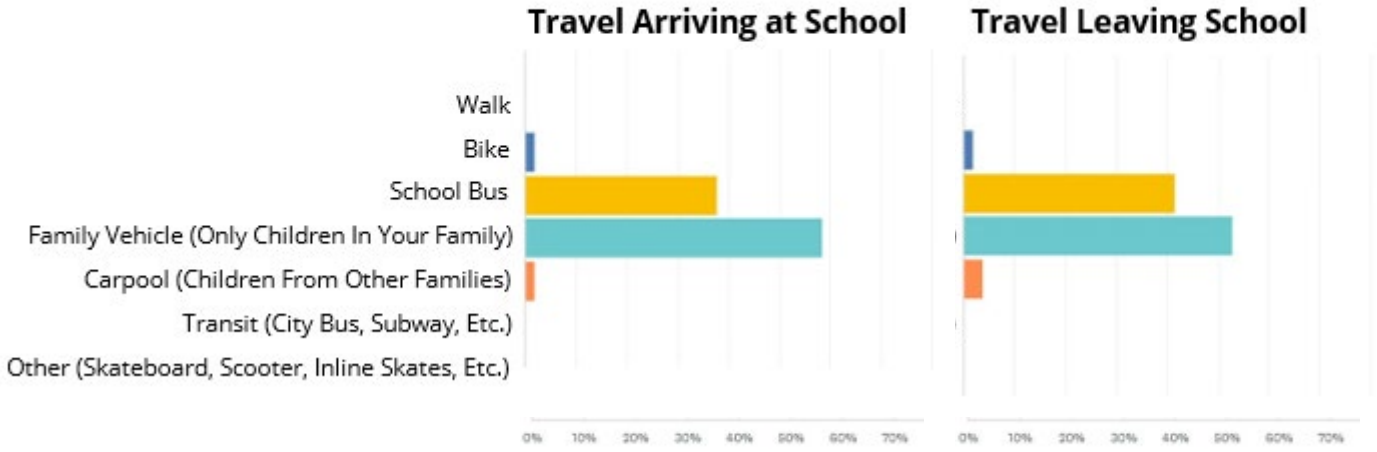
How far does your child live from school?

Answered: 57 Skipped: 11



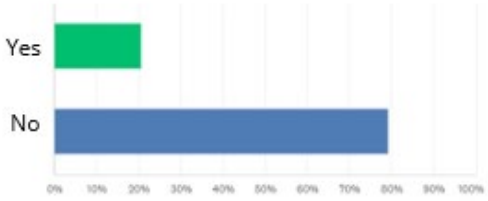
On most days, how does your child travel to and from school?

Answered: 55 Skipped: 13



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

Answered: 53 Skipped: 15



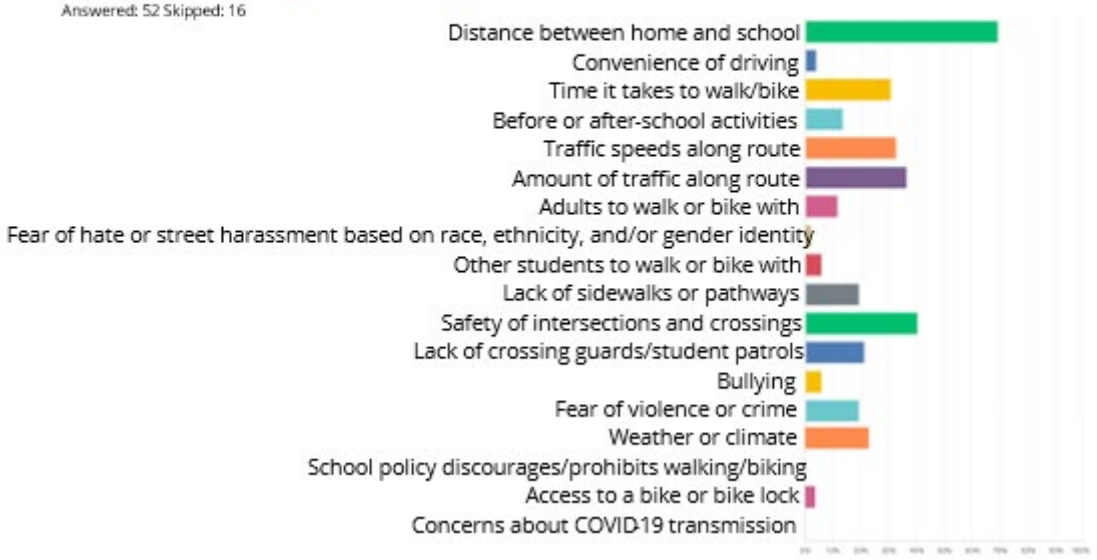
At what grade would you allow your child to walk or bike to/from school without an adult?

Answered: 50 Skipped: 18

- K – **1**
- 2nd - **1**
- 3rd - **3**
- 4th - **1**
- 5th – **8**
- 6th – **4**
- 7th – **7**
- 8th – **3**
- 9th – **5**
- 10th – **1**
- 12th – **1**
- I would not feel comfortable at any grade - **15**

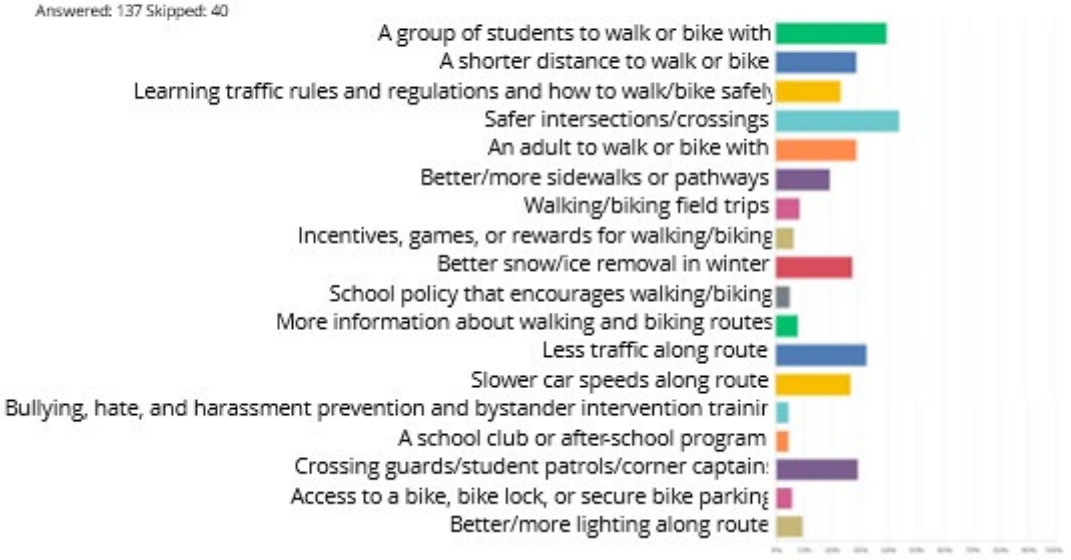
Which of the following issues prevent your child from walking or biking to/from school? (check all that apply)

Answered: 52 Skipped: 16



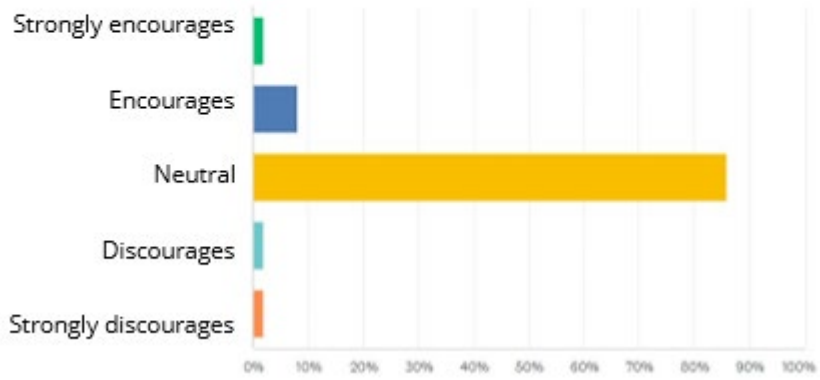
What would help your child walk or bike to/from/at school more often? (check all that apply)

Answered: 137 Skipped: 40



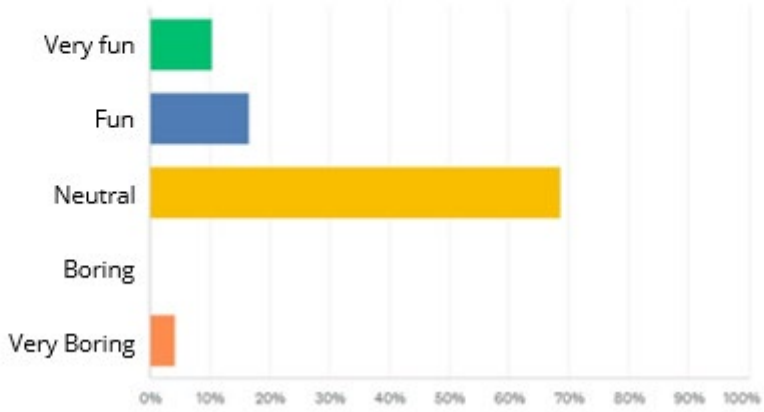
How much does your child's school encourage walking and biking to/from school?

Answered: 50 Skipped: 18



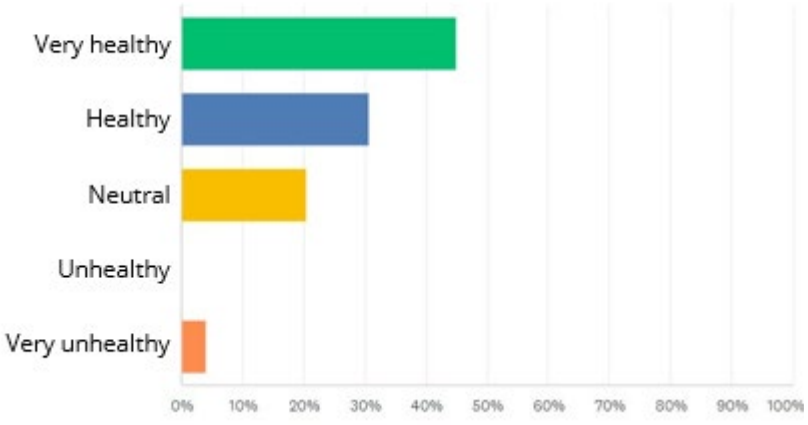
How much fun is walking or biking to/from school for your child?

Answered: 48 Skipped: 20



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

Answered: 49 Skipped: 19



Appendix E: Project Process and Timeline

Intro Call: SRTS staff and consultants meet with local SRTS team lead(s), review the timeline of the planning process, talk through the responsibilities of the different stakeholders, and identify short-term next steps, such as scheduling the kick-off meeting and finalizing stakeholders for the SRTS team, including local community members and staff from the school(s), city and county governments, and MnDOT.

Kick-off Meeting: the SRTS team, including SRTS staff and local and county participants, reviews the planning process and talks about high-level goals.

Engagement + Data Collection: SRTS staff and consultants work with the schools, non-profits, and the broader community to build awareness of the planning process, solicit input, and identify opportunities for programs and infrastructure improvements.

Rapid Planning Workshop: the SRTS team discusses past efforts around walking and biking in the community, identifies areas of need, and brainstorms possible resources, collaborations, and opportunities to implement new programs and infrastructure improvements.

Technical Meeting: SRTS staff speak with local, county, and MnDOT staff about existing studies, projects, and other opportunities and constraints relating to pedestrian and bicyclist infrastructure within the planning area.

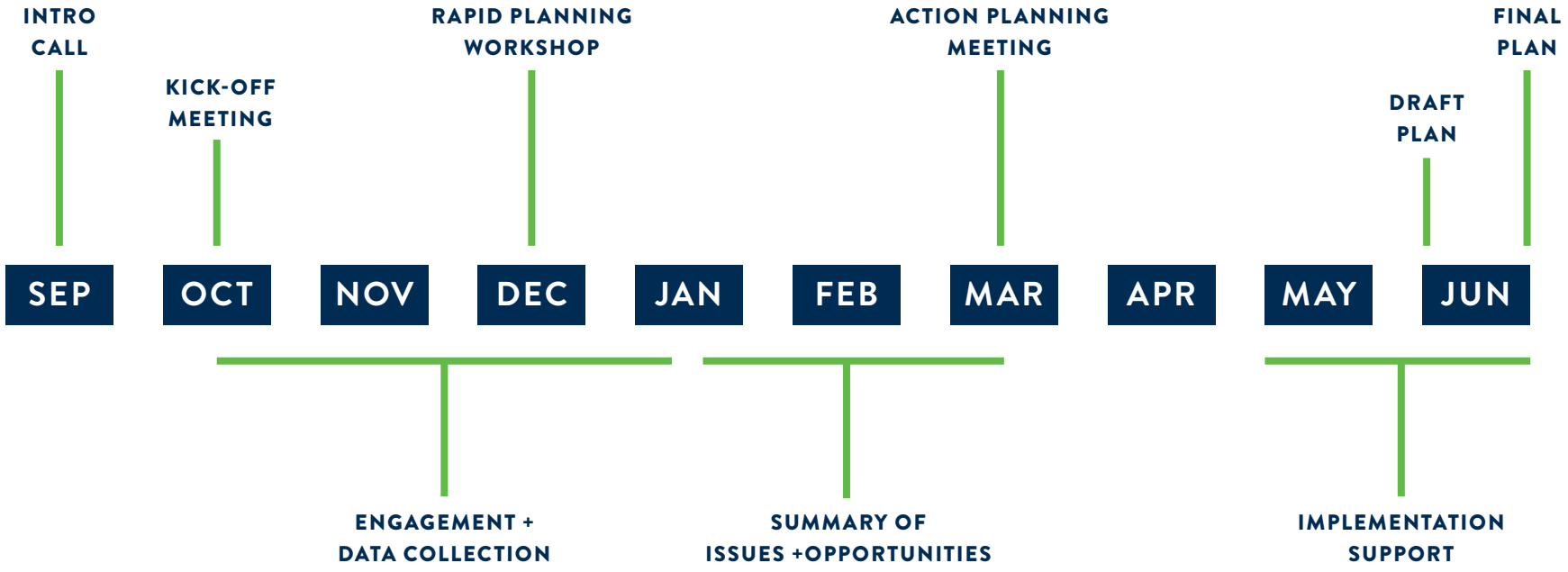
Summary of Issues + Opportunities: building on input from community engagement, data collection, the rapid planning workshop, and the technical meeting, SRTS staff and consultants compile identified program opportunities and locations where infrastructure improvements could support walking and biking to school.

Action Planning Meeting: the SRTS team reviews the summary of issues and opportunities and discusses possible actions to take in response to issues/ opportunities.

Draft Plan: the SRTS team reviews and provides feedback on a draft of the full plan.

Implementation Support: SRTS staff and consultants assist the community with short-term actions, such as designing a concept for a demonstration project to test improvements at a problematic intersection near the school.

Final Plan: the completed plan is published online and in print and is formally adopted to guide future SRTS efforts.



Appendix F: Engagement Summary

INTRODUCTION

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) staff provided community engagement support to collect ideas on walking and biking from the Great Oaks Academy community. SRTS staff assisted local Great Oaks Academy staff by using multiple strategies such as hosting an interactive engagement website, requesting feedback through caregiver and student surveys, an in-person engagement event, and a Rapid Planning Workshop.

The purpose of the engagement was to:

1. **Identify** walking and biking challenges
2. **Understand** where people would like to go
3. **Provide information** about walking and biking safety
4. **Build excitement** for the Great Oaks Academy Safe Routes to School plans.

These engagement strategies were chosen to make it easy for Great Oaks Academy communities to talk to staff and participate.

TABLE 1: ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

DATE	STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	COUNT
September 2023 - current	Interactive engagement website	Engagement website with survey and comment map available in both English and Spanish.	--
September 2023 - current	Interactive map	Interactive online map provided for residents to leave comments and match them to the exact locations.	9 comments
September 2023 - current	Caregiver survey	Survey to identify why families walk and bike and what would help make it safer to walk and bike. The survey was available online as well as in paper-pencil upon request and available in English, Spanish, Somali, and Chinese.	68 participants

DATE	STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	COUNT
October 27, 2023	Pop-up table	Tabling at the local Harvest Festival. Activities included a roll plot map of the school's neighborhood. Participants were encouraged to leave sticky notes on the map calling out problem areas and opportunities for walking and biking to school. The map also included a sticker survey with questions about walking, biking and demographics.	15 families
November 17, 2023	Equity scorecard	An equity analysis was completed with the project team during the Rapid Planning Workshop and used to guide engagement strategies.	17 participants, 4 students

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Many students who attend Great Oaks Academy live far away from school.
- Programs should consider ways to involve students who live far away.
- Distance to school and the railroad tracks were listed as primary infrastructure barriers.

IN-PERSON ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

On Friday, October 27, 2023, the project team attended Great Oaks Academy's fall harvest festival. The event had food and Halloween-themed activities, including a costume contest. Project staff brought a map of the area surrounding the school, and participants were encouraged to leave sticky notes on the map calling out problem areas and opportunities for walking and biking to school. The map also included a sticker survey with questions about walking, biking and demographics. Staff also directed people to the interactive engagement site via a project fact sheet.

Staff engaged with about 15 families at the event. Raw data from the engagement activity is included in the appendix, and takeaways are embedded throughout this summary.

EQUITY

At the Rapid Planning workshop, most community members described Farmington as a safe community. However, they also noted that many families attending Great Oaks Academy live far from campus. This distance poses a challenge to encourage students to walk and bike to and from school more. Another general theme was that pickup and drop off zones on campus are unsafe for pedestrians and bikers. They suggested adding signage to the parking lot to increase multimodal awareness.

Though the community is safe, many community members at the Rapid Planning Workshop wanted more safe places to bike in the community. They suggested partnering with bike clubs at the Farmington Senior Center and Boeckman Middle School (who developed their own SRTS plan in 2022-2023).

PROGRAMS

Many Great Oaks Elementary students enjoy walking and biking in their neighborhoods. Many families live far from school, which is a barrier to walking and biking to Great Oaks Academy. Some families are hesitant to let their students walk or bike to school alone due to fear of strangers.

BIKE TRAIN

During the Rapid Planning Workshop, a student suggested carpooling, but for bikes. This program involves a handful of caregivers and a group of students biking to school together. Students have a safer environment to learn hand signals, how to cross roads and how to bike in a large group. If meeting in a central location, a bike train could help students who live too far away feel safer about biking to and from school.

BUS PARK AND WALK OR BIKE RODEO

Programs such as a Bike Rodeo or a Park & Walk Train that occur in a central location could be a more convenient and efficient way to encourage more walking and biking safety and skills.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Many Great Oaks kids reported having a bike at home and enjoying walking and biking around their neighborhoods. However, many of them live too far away from the school for walking or biking to be feasible. Many take the bus or are driven to school, or a combination of the two. The community has said they would like to utilize more of the infrastructure of downtown Farmington.

DISTANCE TO SCHOOL

Most parents engaged at the event said that they live too far away from Great Oaks for walking or biking to school to be feasible. This was primarily relevant for families living in neighboring communities, but also some Farmington families. Being a private school, Great Oaks has a wider radius of residences that can attend the school.

Some parents reported having to drive their children to school because there are not bus options for neighboring communities; one said they live in Prior Lake and drive their child to a bus stop in Lakeville. One parent said they would like to see better bus options or programs like HopSkipDrive implemented to help with student transportation.

RAILROAD TRACKS

One participant mentioned that the railroad tracks west of the school pose a barrier for biking and walking to school for those who live in Farmington.

OTHER CONCERNS

One Farmington parent reported that in addition to the distance to school, they have a general insecurity about sending their child to school alone due to potentially dangerous strangers.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

EQUITY WORKSHOP NOTES

Fri. 11/17/2023 12:50 – 2:20 PM Session

EQUITY DISCUSSION:

What else is important to know about the community and your students?

- Nearby parks, no trail that goes from the park to school but there is a sidewalk.
- Our community utilizes Rambling River Park several times a year
- Not a lot of speeding on Elm St
- Our community is wide spread over several cities.
- Our community is very invested in safety of their children
- We have a train track that has frequent trains running through the city near the school.
- Is the community aware of the new school location ? thinking arrival and dismissal and the increase of traffic in that location
- There is a group of residents in the area of the school that are upset about the school being downtown.
- Very safe community
- People can get where they need to go
- Our community would like to utilize more of the infrastructure of downtown Farmington
- Bedroom community with little retail business.

Who are the key leaders and organizations in the community that could/should be engaged to support the project goals?

- Farmington Community Engagement Team with PD
- PTO
- Inactive Student Council- coming back soon!

What/where are the key places in the community to plan engagement based on place-based challenges and socio-demographics?

- Relay around the school
- Churches downtown
- Library downtown
- Bike auction in the summer- pick up bikes and then sold
- Partner with Boeckman Middle School-- Ann Kielas
- Parking lot concerns Elm+50
- Senior center- bike club on Mondays
- Walk! Bike! Fun! Curriculum, Bike MN can provide bike trailer free rental

WHAT ARE THE KEY MESSAGES FOR YOUR COMMUNITY TO ENCOURAGE BIKING AND WALKING? FOR CAREGIVERS? FOR STUDENTS?

- Safety in parking lots-- signage
- Encourage messaging and activities DURING the school day
- Walking is a priority for fitness at school
- Designated crossing south of school
- Train crossing safety
- Yellow lights on Elm St for traffic control. Concerns with backups
- Add biking and walking into dropoff/pickup communications plan

INTERACTIVE MAP

Map on following page.

MAP COMMENTS:

- [In reference to green line, 205th St W to Family Fresh Market] This route is about a mile.
- [In reference to green line, Family Fresh Market to Spruce St] Route to and from school
- [Intersection of Hwy 50 and 1st St] This is the intersection where drivers turn into the drop-off and pick-up line. Bikers or walkers need to be extremely vigilant at this intersection because drivers turning off of Elm St often do not notice pedestrians/bikers. Signs reminding drivers to watch for people crossing would be beneficial here.
- [Intersection of Hwy 50 and 3rd St] We ride bikes through this intersection to go from school to the library or shops on 3rd St sometimes. This intersection is tricky to cross. There is a traffic light with a "walk" signal for pedestrians. However, cars are almost always turning at this intersection and they often do not yield to (or even notice) bikers or walkers who are crossing in the crosswalk on the "walk" signal.
- [Intersection of Hwy 3 and Elm St] Busy intersection with a turn across traffic. Cars don't often see pedestrians walking despite the cross walk signs giving the go ahead.
- [Intersection of Arbor Ln and Prairie View Trail] Home
- [Intersection of 194th St W and Chippendale Ave W] Under highway crossing
- [Intersection of 184th St W and Upper 183rd St W] Starting point

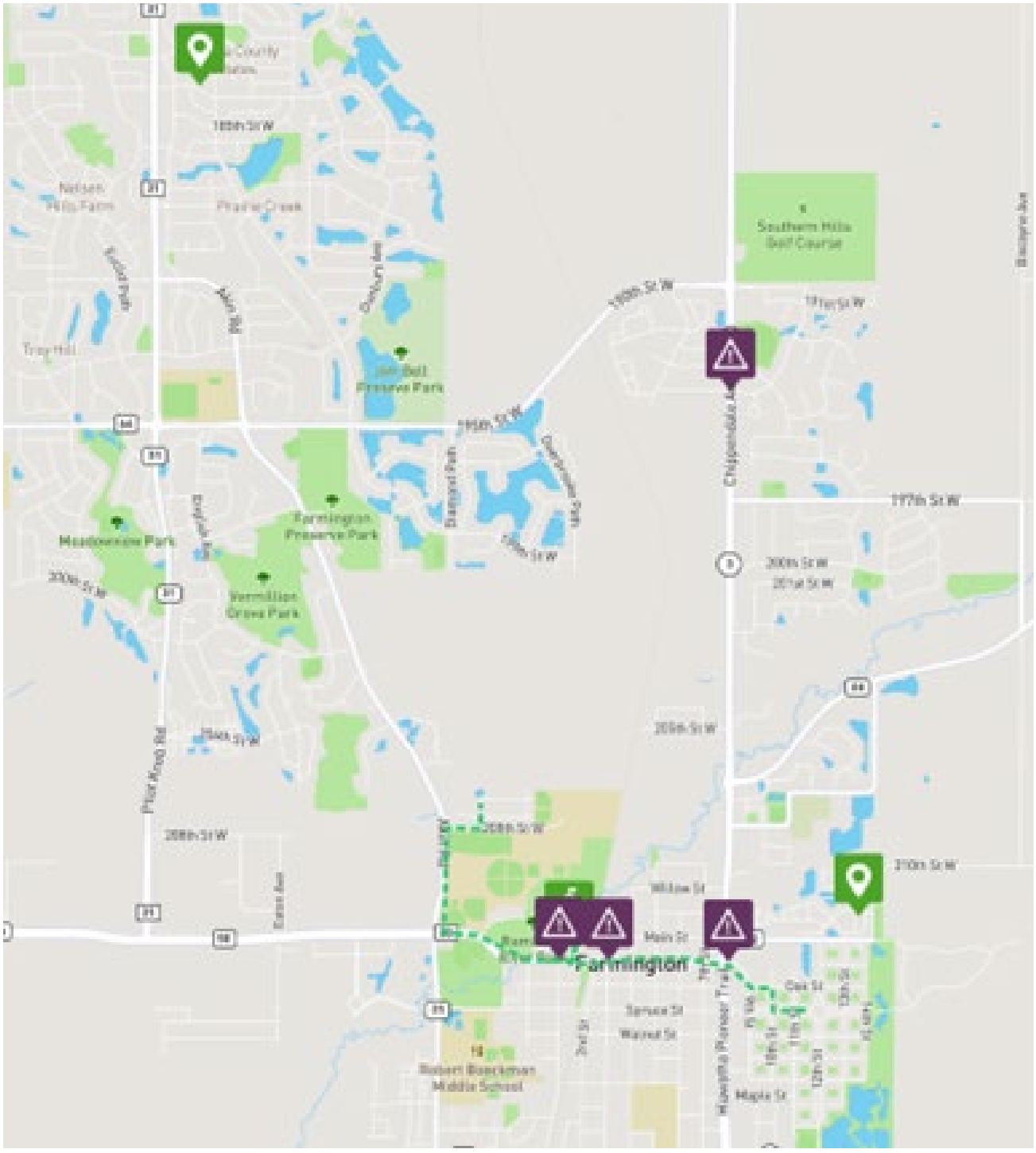


Figure 1: Screenshot of Great Oaks Academy interactive map comments

Appendix G: Methods and Data Sources

CRASHES BY ROAD USER VULNERABILITY

Visualized crashes are taken from a crash database that spans from January 2018 to December 2022. Pedestrian- and bike-involved crashes were those events with "Crash Type Description" values of either "Pedalcycle (bike)" or "Pedestrian".

ROAD OWNERSHIP

Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) data from 2021 were visualized on the basis of each road segment's "Ownership" value. These values were consolidated from 26 categories down to six for visualization purposes; these six categories were "Federal," "Tribal," "State," "County," "Local," and "Other."

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT CHARACTERISTICS

School year 2023-2024 enrollment data were downloaded from the Minnesota Department of Education Data Center.

PRIORITY EQUITY AREAS

Data representing priority populations used for this report is from MnDOT's Active Transportation Equity application. This process used a set of data inputs to assign an equity score to half-mile hexagons across the state of Minnesota, for use in awarding Active Transportation Program grants.

Scores range from 0 to 13 out of a possible 15 points (note that no hexagon received 15/15 points). Higher numbers of points indicate areas with greater equity needs that will receive more points in the equity section of grant solicitation.

Input data sets used to create the scores include:

- Life expectancy lower than MN average (CDC U.S. Small-area Life Expectancy Estimates Project 2010-2015)
- Presence of transit (Metropolitan Council, 2019; MnDOT Office of Transit and Active Transportation)
- Presence of pedestrian-generating jobs (On the Map LEHD 2017)
- Presence of schools (Minnesota Department of Education SY 2019-2020)
- Two or more pedestrian crashes within 5 years (DPS Crash Data, 2014-2018)
- Tribal government areas (MnDOT Tribal Government Areas)
- Foreign born population greater than MN average (American Community Survey 2017 5-year estimates)
- More people 17 and under than MN average (American Community Survey 2017 5-year estimates)

(Continued on next page)

- More people 65 and older than MN average (American Community Survey 2017 5-year estimates)
- More people with disabilities than MN average (American Community Survey 2017 5-year estimates)
- More people of color than MN average (American Community Survey 2017 5-year estimates)
- More people with low incomes than MN average (American Community Survey 2017 5-year estimates)
- More people without vehicle access than MN average (American Community Survey 2017 5-year estimates)
- More people who do not speak English than MN average (American Community Survey 2017 5-year estimates)
- More people without high school diplomas than MN average (American Community Survey 2017 5-year estimates)


MINNESOTA
SAFE ROUTES
TO SCHOOL