

Dakota County
Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA
31
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Safe Routes to School Comprehensive Plan

Parkview Elementary School

**City of Lakeville
Dakota County, MN**

May 2010

Prepared by:



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SHIP

Statewide Health Improvement Program

Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA
31
COUNTY



Project Background

The Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) aims to help Minnesotans live longer, healthier lives by reducing the burden of chronic disease. The Dakota County Public Health Department received SHIP funding to work with community partners to develop and implement programs to improve nutrition, increase physical activity, and reduce tobacco use in schools, workplaces, community settings, and healthcare sites. As part of this effort, comprehensive Safe Routes to School (SRTS) plans have been developed for 10 schools in Dakota County that seek to increase walking and biking to school through the following means:

- **Education** – Teaching children to walk and bike safely.
- **Encouragement** – Developing programs that get children excited about walking or biking to school, such as walk/bike incentive programs or Walk to School Day. May also include methods that help parents and guardians feel comfortable letting their child walk or bike, such as walking school buses or adult crossing guards.
- **Enforcement** – Having law enforcement support, such as speed zone enforcement or increased patrols, along the designated routes to school.
- **Engineering** – Identifying infrastructure barriers to walking and biking, such as sidewalk/trail gaps, hazardous crossings, or the need for secure bicycle parking.
- **Evaluation** – Measuring the effectiveness of the various components of the SRTS project.

The following sections describe the development of a Safe Routes to School Plan for Parkview Elementary in the City of Lakeville, Dakota County, Minnesota.

Existing Conditions

Parkview Elementary School is part of Independent School District 196 serving the Rosemount, Apple Valley, and Eagan communities in the Twin Cities suburbs. Parkview Elementary School is located between Cedar Avenue and Flagstaff Avenue, just south of County Road 46 (160th Street), in the City of Lakeville. Parkview Elementary School was opened in 1970 and was expanded and upgraded in 2006. The school site is located adjacent to Parkview Park and the surrounding area is primarily residential.

Student Data

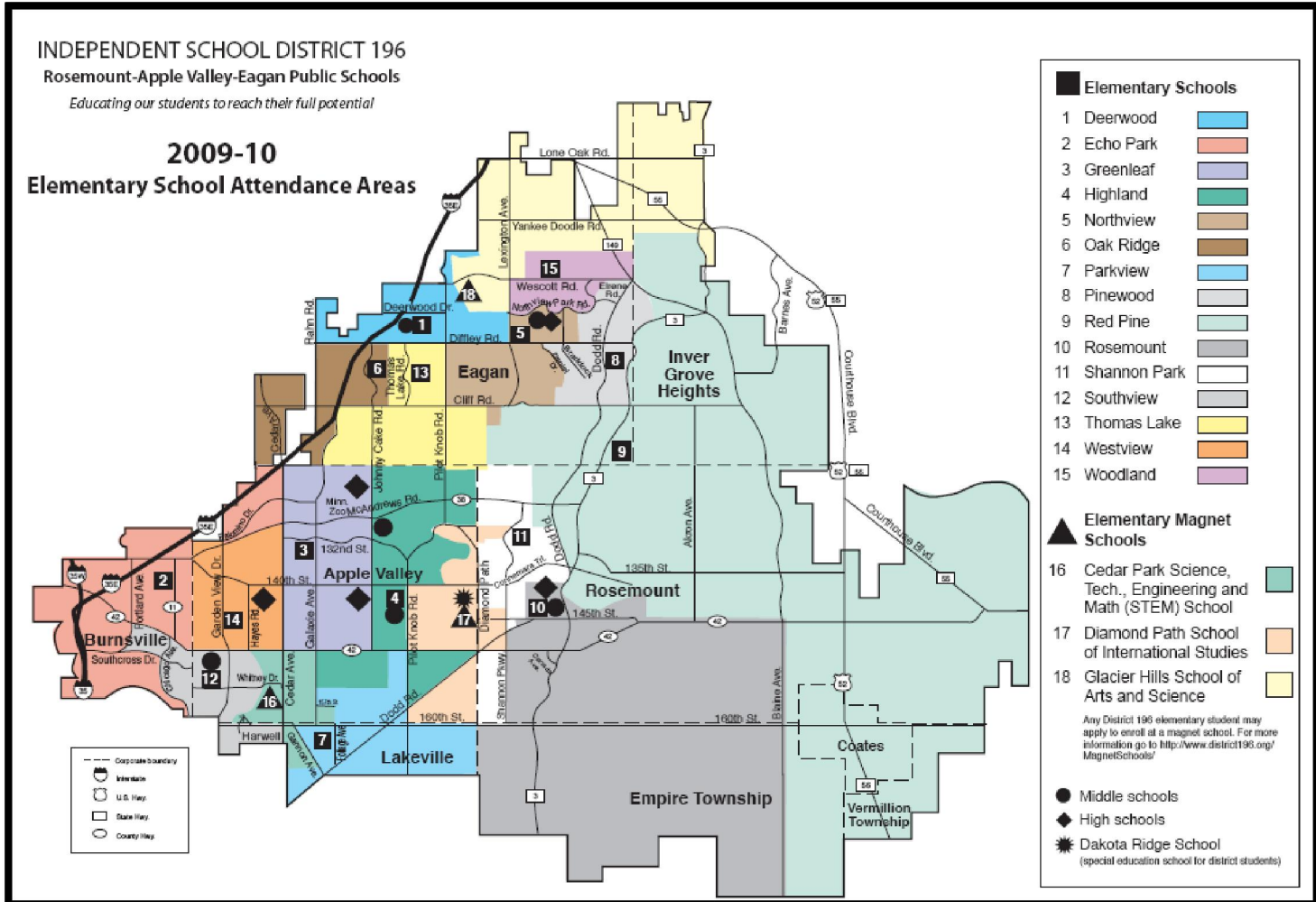
Currently, there are approximately 770 students in kindergarten through 5th grade at Parkview Elementary (2009-2010 school year) and the school day is from 9:25 am to 3:45 pm. The elementary

Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA
31
COUNTY



school boundary map for District 196 shows, Parkview Elementary is located in the southwest corner of its attendance area, which extends north of County Road 46, south of Dodd Boulevard, and east of County Road 31 (Pilot Knob Road).



Source: www.district196.org

The designated walk area for Parkview is approximately ½ mile and there are no roadways designated as hazardous crossings. However, Flagstaff Avenue does have higher traffic volumes and speeds. The walk area for Parkview Elementary is shown on the map on page 12.

Dakota County Safe Routes to School

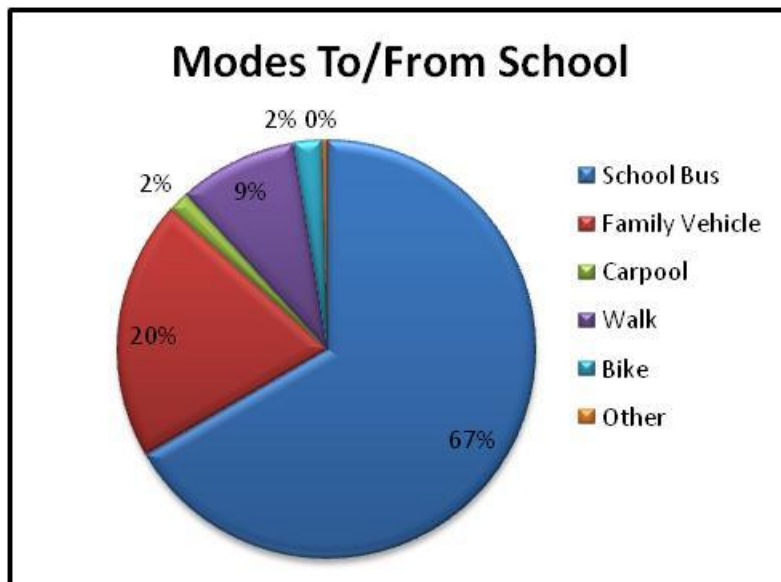
DAKOTA
31
COUNTY



Safe Routes to School Activities

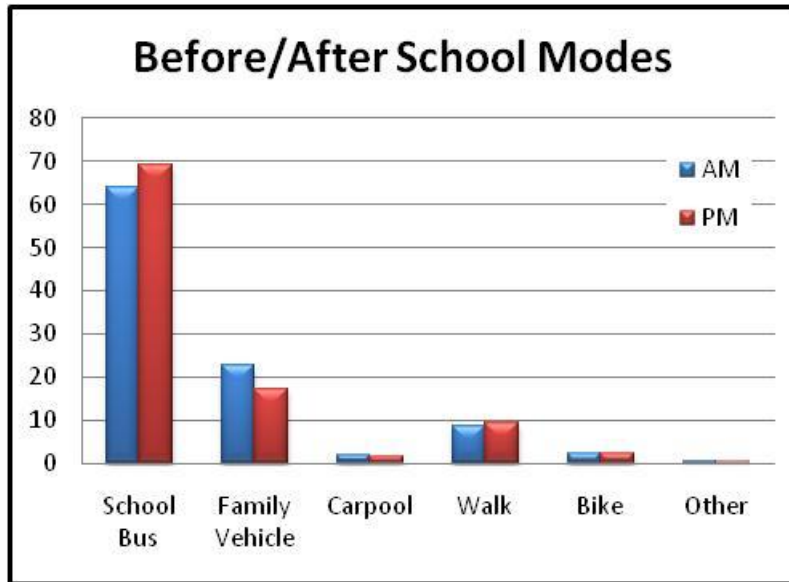
Currently, there isn't a targeted Safe Routes to School program at Parkview, but there is a regular school patrol. The school has participated in National Bike/Walk to School Day, with extra staff on the routes about 1 block from the school. In addition, the City of Lakeville Police holds a bike safety program for all students every year at Parkview Elementary.

In-classroom tallies of students' arrival and departure modes were conducted at Parkview Elementary during April 2010. As shown in the chart below, an average of 9 percent of students currently walk to school and an average of 2 percent of students currently bike to school. The most predominant mode to and from school is school bus. The tallies also showed that slightly more students walked and rode the bus home from school in the afternoon, compared to the morning.



Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA
31
COUNTY



In 2008, a Safe Routes to School study was conducted for all K-8 schools in the City of Lakeville. As part of the study, a parent survey was distributed to assess concerns and attitudes related to walking and biking. According to the survey, parents' concerns about allowing their children to walk or bike to school are primarily due to:

- Too many high speed vehicles
- High volumes of vehicle traffic
- Gaps in the sidewalk network
- Roads are too dangerous to cross.

Next, parents were asked what factors would influence their decision to allow their children to walk or bike to school. The primary considerations were:

- Being accompanied by an adult or older children
- Continuous sidewalks from home to school
- Clearly marked walking and bike routes with signs
- Lower traffic speeds in the neighborhoods
- Having a secure place to park bikes

Based on the infrastructure needs identified in the Safe Routes to School study, the City of Lakeville applied for and received a federal Safe Routes to School grant from Mn/DOT to implement infrastructure improvements at several locations. While not all recommended improvements at all the

Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA
31
COUNTY

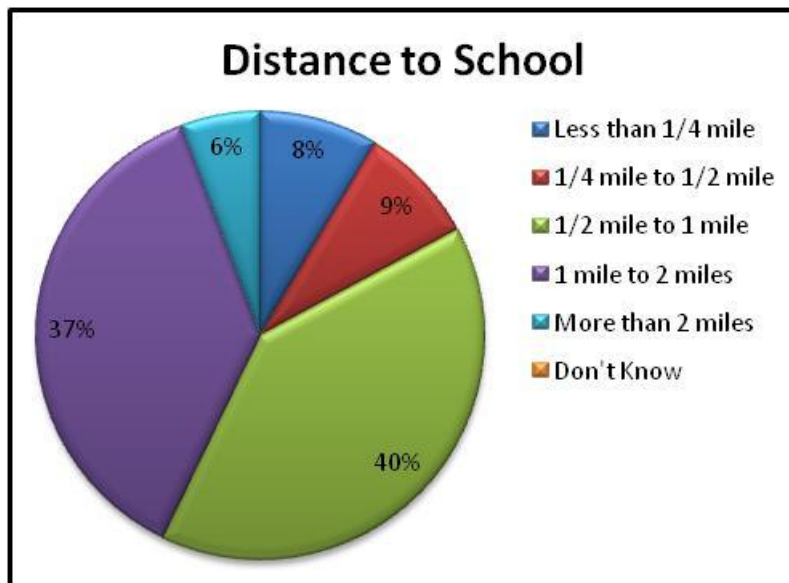


school sites could be implemented using the grant funding, the funded improvements at Parkview, which are scheduled to be constructed in the summer of 2010, included:

- Construct a direct sidewalk connection from the school building to Foliage Avenue
- Relocate the school crossing on Foliage Avenue from Upper 162nd Street to Florida Way
- Mark and sign the new school crossing at Florida Way and install pedestrian ramps

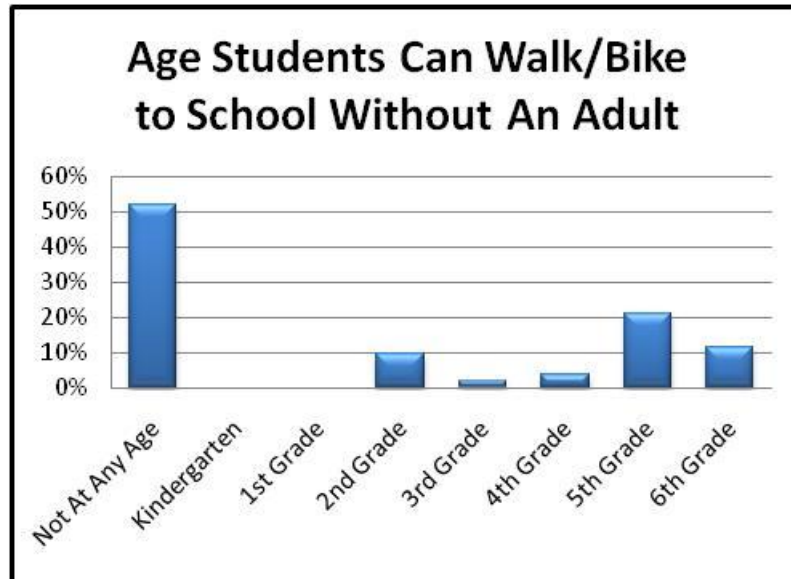
Traffic volumes, traffic speeds, and intersection safety were the most common reasons for not walking or biking, and intersection safety was the improvements that would be most likely to influence parents to starting letting their students walk or bike.

A parent survey of concerns and attitudes related to walking and biking was also conducted in April 2010, with 50 responses. Only 10 percent of the survey respondents live north of County Road 46, which is classified as a hazardous crossing, but approximately 75 percent of the survey respondents live east of Flagstaff Avenue, which is not classified as a hazardous crossing. The charts below provide a summary of some of the other survey results, which supplement the information gathered in the 2008 survey.



Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA
31
COUNTY



Infrastructure

The roadways surrounding the school generally have a well-connected system of sidewalks and trails. There are currently sidewalks on both sides of Foliage Avenue and Gerdine Path, as well as trails connecting to County Road 46 and Cedar Avenue through Parkview Park. There are currently three designated crossings on the roadways surrounding the school:

- Foliage Avenue/Upper 162nd Street (signed as pedestrian crossing)
- Foliage Avenue/Gerdine Path (signed as school crossing)
- Gerdine Path/Frazer Way (164th Street) (signed as school crossing)

As already mentioned, the school patrol will be relocated from the Foliage Avenue/Upper 162nd Street intersection to Foliage Avenue/Florida Way after the crossing improvements are completed at Florida Way in the summer of 2010. The school crossings are patrolled by a group of 30 students that alternate weekly duties. Most of the students in the patrol actually live in the bus area, but walk to and from school with their flags and vests to patrol their designated intersection. The patrol at the Foliage Avenue/Gerdine Path intersection also has a school staff member to assist and supervise.

Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA
31
COUNTY



Existing school crossing and school patrol on Gerdine Path at Frazer Way.

A review of the crash history for the past five years (2004-2008) showed there have been no crashes at any of the school crossing intersections, and only one pedestrian crash within the entire walk area of the school. The pedestrian crash occurred at the Foliage Avenue/167th Street intersection at 1 am on a weekend and both the driver and the pedestrian had been drinking. Overall, the crash history on Foliage Avenue is very low and no safety issues have been identified.



View of the trail running from Foliage Avenue on the north side of the school. There are currently no crosswalk markings or pedestrian ramps to cross Foliage Avenue at this location.

Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA
31
COUNTY



Studies conducted by the City of Lakeville in 2007 showed that there are approximately 2,300 vehicles per day on Gerdine Path between Frazer Way (164th Street) and Foliage Avenue and 4,300 vehicles on Foliage Avenue just south of County Road 46 (150th Street). No speed studies were available, but both Gerdine Path and Foliage Avenue have school speed zones posted at 20 miles per hour.

In addition to the off-site pedestrian and bike facilities, Parkview Elementary also has several bike racks on the west side of the parking lots, which is convenient to the trail network.



Bike racks located on the west side of the west parking lot.

Site Evaluation

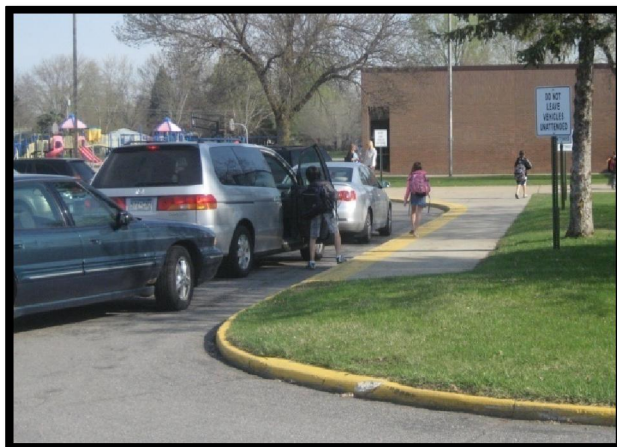
A site evaluation was completed at Parkview Elementary on April 14, 2010 that included walking around the site and observing the arrival process on a typical day. All buses enter and exit the site to Parkview Elementary using the two driveways on Gerdine Path. The west parking lot is used for staff parking and for parent pick-up/drop-off. The east parking lot is primarily used for visitor parking and bus loading/unloading. The two parking lots are connected, but signed to restrict vehicles from entering the parent pick-up/drop-off lot from the visitor/bus lot during school arrival and dismissal. In the afternoon, there is a lack of sufficient bus loading/unloading space in the east parking lot, so one bus loads in the parent/staff parking lot. It is anticipated that the number of buses serving Parkview Elementary will continue to increase as housing development continues to grow in Lakeville, which will make it more difficult to accommodate all the buses under the existing parking lot configuration.

Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA
31
COUNTY



Sign posted between east and west parking lots on the Parkview site.



The sidewalk does not extend to the end of the vehicle or bus loading/unloading areas.

The school patrols were out at the intersections around the school from approximately 9 am until 9:20 am and were very effective in crossing students.

Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA
31
COUNTY



School patrols at the Foliage Avenue/Gerdine Path intersection during morning arrival.

Although there appeared to be adequate space in the parking lots, a number of staff vehicles were observed parked on Foliage Avenue near the Florida Way intersection. This is primarily due to the proximity of the on-street parking to the north end of the building, where those staff work. As long as vehicles are parked far enough from the intersection to provide adequate sight lines to pedestrians crossing Foliage Avenue, the parked vehicles provide some benefit because they narrow the effective width of the roadway, which typically influences drivers to slow down.



Vehicles parked on Foliage Avenue near Florida Way.

Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA
31
COUNTY



Existing Issues and Challenges

In addition to the data collection and site evaluation completed as part of this project, a Safe Routes Working Group was established for Parkview Elementary that included the teachers, District 196 Transportation, the City of Lakeville, and a parent representative. The role of this group was to identify and discuss barriers to walking and biking to school as well as potential ways to overcome the barriers.

The existing challenges to walking and biking to Parkview Elementary are summarized in the following bullets, as well as the map on the following page:

- Lack of pedestrian ramps, crosswalks and signing at Foliage Avenue/Florida Way.
- Lack of crosswalk at the trail connection from Foliage Avenue to the main north entrance.
- Lack of trail/sidewalk connection from Foliage Avenue to the east side of the building.
- Parking lot lacks sufficient bus loading/unloading space. The number of buses at the school is expected to increase due to additional residential developments in Lakeville.
- District budgets may increase walk radius in the future, which creates opportunities for more walking and biking, but could also result in even more parents driving.
- Lack of traffic control (stop signs) at school driveways.
- Sidewalks that are not shoveled in winter or that have insufficient space for snow storage become impassable.
- Safety education is needed for students that walk to school.
- Parked staff vehicles on Foliage Avenue limit the sight lines at the Florida Way intersection.
- Concern for school patrols that are located further away than the intersections immediately next to the school. Too much traffic on Flagstaff Avenue and too far from school to have a patrol.
- The existing trail crossing of Gerdine Path to Parkview Park has an offset trail connection and there is a lack of pavement markings/signing at the crossing.
- Parents would be more willing to let students walk or bike if they knew they would be supervised and they walked as a group.
- Existing sidewalk from Gerdine Path to south side of building is in poor condition.

- 1 - SCHOOL CROSSING PLANNED TO MOVE TO FLORIDA WAY
- 2 - LACK OF SIDEWALK CONNECTION
- 3 - BUS LOADING/UNLOADING SPACE
- 4 - PARENT DROP-OFF/PICK-UP
- 5 - LACK OF TRAFFIC CONTROLS AT SCHOOL DRIVEWAYS
- 6 - SNOW REMOVAL IN WINTER
- 7 - SIGHT LINES DUE TO PARKED VEHICLES
- 8 - STAFF PARKING
- 9 - OFFSET TRAIL CROSSING
- 10 - SIDEWALK IN POOR CONDITION



LEGEND

- SCHOOL CROSSING
- CROSSWALK
- SCHOOL PATROL LOCATION
- SIDEWALKS
- MULTI-USE TRAILS
- DESIGNATED HAZARDOUS CROSSING
- WALK AREA
- WALK AREA - CURRENTLY BUSSED
- PUBLIC SCHOOL
- SCHOOL STAFF PATROLLED AREA
- ON-SITE SIDEWALKS
- ON-SITE MULTI-USE TRAILS

NOTE: SIDEWALKS SHOWN ON MAJOR ROUTES ONLY FOR CLARITY.

Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA
31
COUNTY



Recommendations

Despite some of the current challenges to walking and biking to Parkview Elementary, the school's location in a residential area, the existing sidewalk/trail infrastructure, and the existing strong school patrol and core group of walkers provide great opportunities to increase the numbers of students regularly walking and biking to school. The following recommendations have been developed specifically for Parkview Elementary to address the identified challenges to walking and biking. The short-term recommendations are actions that could be implemented prior to or during the 2010-2011 school year, while the long-term recommendations may require policy changes, additional discussion and coordination, or significant funding sources. In addition to the recommendations, the group that should take the lead in implementing the recommendation has also been identified.

Short-Term Recommendations

The short-term recommendations included in this section primarily consist of low-cost improvements that can be implemented in the six months, although some are dependent on funding availability. The recommendations are generally prioritized in terms of actions that are easiest or most necessary to complete first. The infrastructure recommendations are also summarized on the map included at the end of this report.

1. Maintain the current school patrol program and locations. Provide the patrol students with appropriate weather gear so that the patrols can be outdoors in dark, cold or rainy weather. Implementation lead – Parkview.
2. Install pedestrian ramps and school crossing signing at the Foliage Avenue/Florida Way intersection. This project is already funded using a federal Safe Routes to School Grant and will be implemented in 2010. Implementation lead – City of Lakeville.
3. Sign and paint no parking clearance zones on Foliage Avenue at Florida Way to improve sight lines at the new school crossing. Implementation lead – City of Lakeville.
4. Construct a sidewalk connection from Foliage Avenue to the school building at about Upper 163rd Court. This project is already funded using a federal Safe Routes to School Grant and will be implemented in 2010. Implementation lead – City of Lakeville.

Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA
31
COUNTY



5. Enhance visibility of the uncontrolled school crossings on Gerdine Path and Foliage Avenue using in-street crossing signs. Implementation lead – Parkview.¹



Example of an in-street sign at a school crossing.

6. Install stop signs at the parking lot driveways onto Gerdine Path. Implementation lead – Parkview/District 196.
7. Prioritize clearing of trails near Parkview, specifically Gerdine Path and Foliage Avenue. This recommendation has already been implemented by the City of Lakeville, as part of their Snow and Ice Control Policy. Snow removal from the boulevard should also be considered during years with heavy snow accumulation.
8. Establish a permanent Safe Routes committee at Parkview to provide on-going support and organization for Safe Routes activities, including regular Walk to School days, adult crossing guard volunteers, and special events. Implementation lead – Parkview.
9. Create information for parents and students that communicates the benefits of walking or biking to school, as well as teaching them how to walk and bike safely. Implementation lead – Parkview, with assistance from Dakota County Public Health.

¹ Parkview has already taken steps to implement this recommendation using two \$1,000 Safe Routes mini-grants from Dakota County to hold Walk to School Days in 2010, as well as purchase incentives for the event, new vests and flags for the school patrol, and mobile in-street school crossing signs for the crosswalks.

Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA
31
COUNTY



10. Organize a walking school bus² or bike train for student to walk and bike together as a group to and from school. The best potential for this would be for students that live east of the school and already have informal groups walking together. Implementation lead – Parkview.
11. Start a walking/biking incentive program or pedometer challenge. Students that complete a certain number of miles receive a small prize or are entered into a raffle for a larger prize. Laps or mileage can be tracked in each classroom and competitions held between classes or an overall mileage/lap goal could be set for the school. Implementation lead – Parkview.
12. Start a weekly or monthly “Walk to School Day” with additional staff or parent volunteers walking with or supervising students on the designated walk and/or bike days. Implementation lead – Parkview.¹

Long-Term Recommendations

The long-term recommendations included in this section primarily consist of higher cost improvements or actions that would require a significant policy change, either of which would be expected to take longer than six months to occur. These recommendations are generally prioritized in order of importance, however funding availability may mean that the highest priority recommendations are not the first to be implemented. The infrastructure recommendations are also summarized on the map included at the end of this report.

1. Close the drive between the east and west parking lots. Alternatively, the drive could be closed with cones or barrels during the school day. Implementation lead – Parkview/District 196.
2. Reconfigure the loading/unloading operations so that buses use the west parking lot and parents use the east parking lot. Implementation lead – Parkview/District 196.

² A walking school bus is a group of children walking to school with one or more adults. It can be as informal as two families taking turns walking their children to school to as structured as a route with meeting points, a timetable and a regularly rotated schedule of trained volunteers.

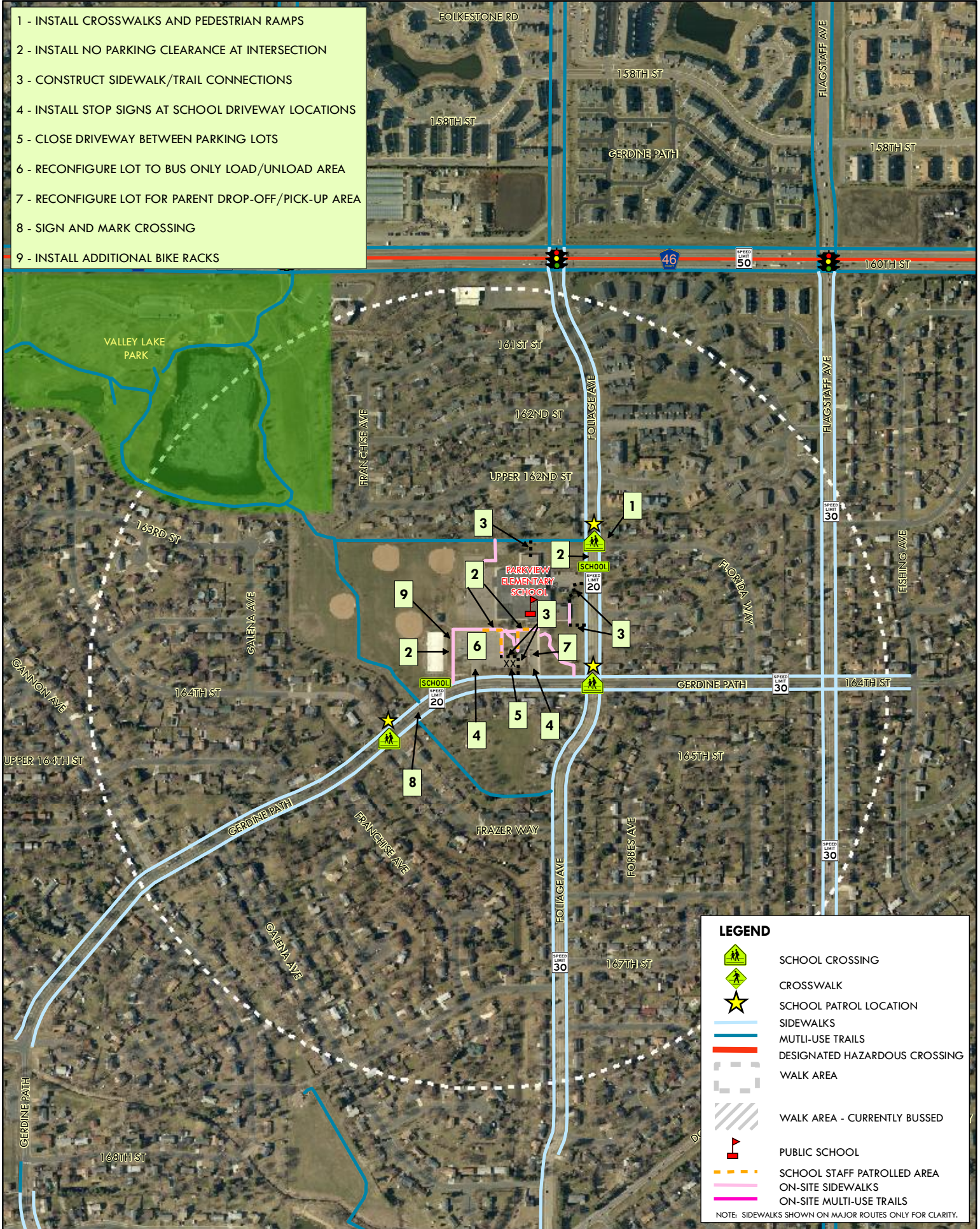
Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA
31
COUNTY



3. Construct sidewalk connections around the school site. Implementation lead – Parkview/District 196.
 - Complete the sidewalk connections in the parking lots in the loading/unloading areas.
 - Construct a sidewalk connection from the school building directly to Gerdine Path through the existing driveway area (recommended to be closed).
 - Construct sidewalk along the small north parking lot from the existing sidewalk to Foliage Avenue.
 - Construct a direct sidewalk connection from the north entrance of the building to the trail.
4. Install pedestrian ramps and crosswalk markings on Upper 162nd Street at Foliage Avenue. Implementation lead – City of Lakeville.
5. Install pedestrian ramps, pedestrian crossing signs, and crosswalk at the trail crossing on Gerdine Path. Implementation lead – City of Lakeville.
6. Install additional bike racks when the capacity of the existing racks is reached. Implementation lead – Parkview.
7. Develop a Safe Routes website for Parkview Elementary that provides walking/biking route information, the leaders/winners of walk/bike challenges, as well as other information, such as a schedule for Walk/Bike to School days. Implementation lead – Parkview.
8. Designate a Safe Routes coordinator at the district level and each of the individual elementary and middle schools in the district. The district-level coordinator would share information and coordinate Safe Routes activities and best practices among all the District 196 schools. The school SRTS coordinator would be responsible for scheduling meetings of the SRTS committee, training adult volunteers, and working with parents and students to address issues or concerns related to walking and biking. Implementation lead – District 196.

- 1 - INSTALL CROSSWALKS AND PEDESTRIAN RAMPS
- 2 - INSTALL NO PARKING CLEARANCE AT INTERSECTION
- 3 - CONSTRUCT SIDEWALK/TRAIL CONNECTIONS
- 4 - INSTALL STOP SIGNS AT SCHOOL DRIVEWAY LOCATIONS
- 5 - CLOSE DRIVEWAY BETWEEN PARKING LOTS
- 6 - RECONFIGURE LOT TO BUS ONLY LOAD/UNLOAD AREA
- 7 - RECONFIGURE LOT FOR PARENT DROP-OFF/PICK-UP AREA
- 8 - SIGN AND MARK CROSSING
- 9 - INSTALL ADDITIONAL BIKE RACKS



LEGEND

- SCHOOL CROSSING
- CROSSWALK
- SCHOOL PATROL LOCATION
- SIDEWALKS
- MULTI-USE TRAILS
- DESIGNATED HAZARDOUS CROSSING
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Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA
31
COUNTY



Funding and Implementation

Funding for the various recommended projects may come from a variety of sources depending on the type of project and who is implementing it. Some potential funding opportunities that currently exist and may be used to fund these recommendations include, but are not limited to:

- Statewide Health Improvement Program funds, which are available through several programs administered by Dakota County Public Health:
 - Safe Routes to School mini-grants
 - Active Living grants, which are available to cities in Dakota County, but may be used to fund improvements on school sites
 - Assistance with preparation of infrastructure grant applications. Cities in Dakota County can submit infrastructure projects and the County's consultant will assist in identifying potential funding sources and preparing applications.
- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota
- Federal Transportation Enhancement (TE) funds through the Metropolitan Council
- Federal Safe Routes to School funds through the Minnesota Department of Transportation³

No one of the E's of Safe Routes to School will by itself increase walking and biking, which emphasizes the need for cooperation among school, city, county and other agencies to implement change.

³ The federal Safe Routes to School program was funded through fiscal year 2009. Future funding will be dependent on passage of the Federal Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill, which is currently being discussed in the United States Congress.