

Dakota County  
Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA  
31  
COUNTY



# Safe Routes to School Comprehensive Plan

**Gideon Pond Elementary School**

**City of Burnsville  
Dakota County, MN**

**December 2010**

Prepared by:



Kimley-Horn  
and Associates, Inc.



**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 17 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 Gideon Pond Elementary in the City of Burnsville, Dakota County, Minnesota.

## Existing Conditions

Gideon Pond Elementary School is part of Independent School District 191 serving the Burnsville, Egan, and Savage communities in the Twin Cities suburbs. Gideon Pond Elementary School is located on 130<sup>th</sup> Street between Nicollet Avenue and Parkwood Drive, in the City of Burnsville. The surrounding area is primarily residential.

## *Student Data*

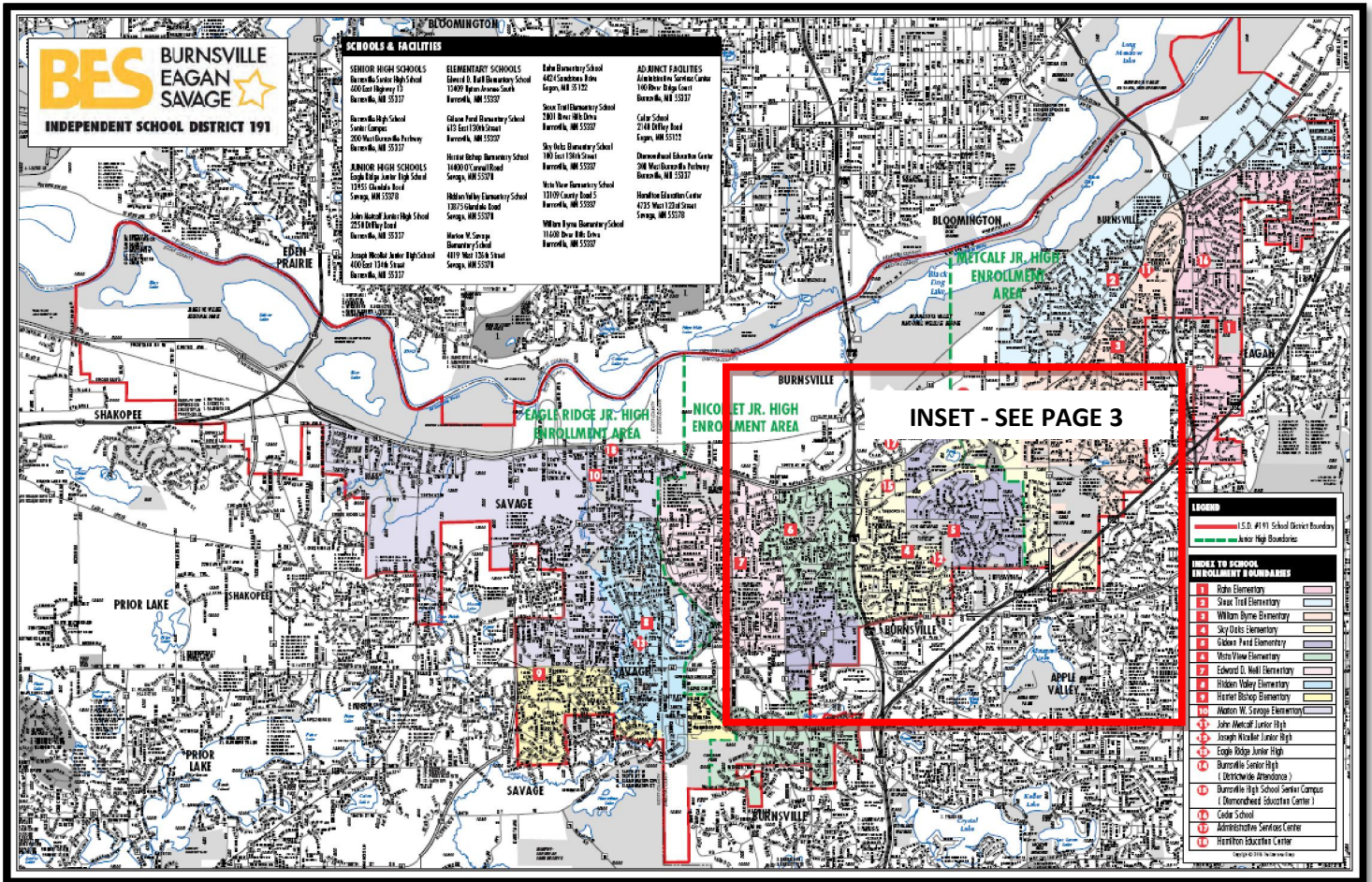
Currently, there are approximately 430 students in kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade at Gideon Pond Elementary (2010-2011 school year) and the school day is from 8:30 am to 2:55 pm. The school boundary map for District 191 shows that the attendance area for Gideon Pond Elementary is broken

# Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA  
31  
COUNTY



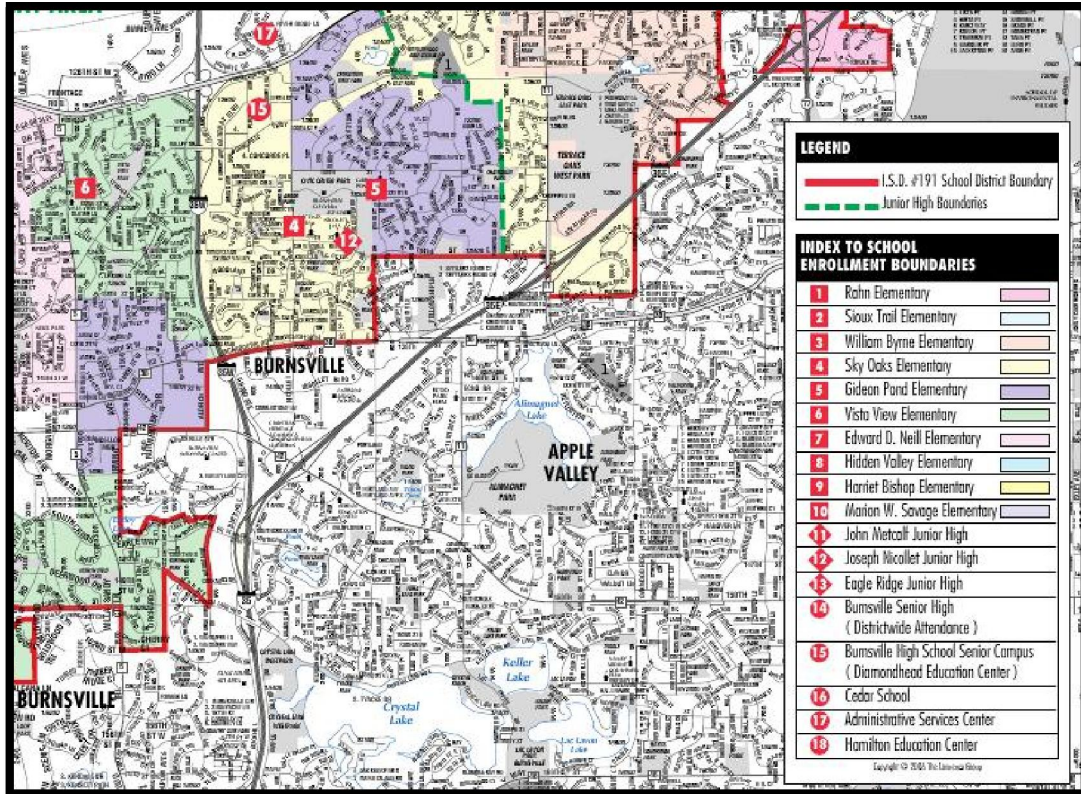
into three separate areas – one surrounding the school, one north of Burnsville Parkway, and one near Trunk Highway (TH) 5 and County Road 42, west of I-35W.



Source: [www.isd191.org](http://www.isd191.org)

# Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA  
31  
COUNTY



*Gideon Pond Elementary attendance area.*

*Source: <http://schools.ncompasstech.com/schools2/burnsville/viewer.asp>*

The walk area for Gideon Elementary is established as a one-mile radius by District 191 Transportation. However, both Burnsville Parkway and Nicollet Avenue are both designated as hazardous roadways by the district. Students that would have to cross either of these roadways are provided bus transportation, even if they live within the walk area. In addition, 134<sup>th</sup> Street is the southern boundary of the school district. The walk area for Gideon Pond Elementary is shown on the Existing Conditions/Issues map at the end of this report.

# Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA  
31  
COUNTY



## *Safe Routes to School Activities*

Gideon Pond Elementary has not held any Walk/Bike to School events and does not have a specific Safe Routes to School program, but has an active school patrol of 8 students and approximately 100 students currently walk or bike to school.

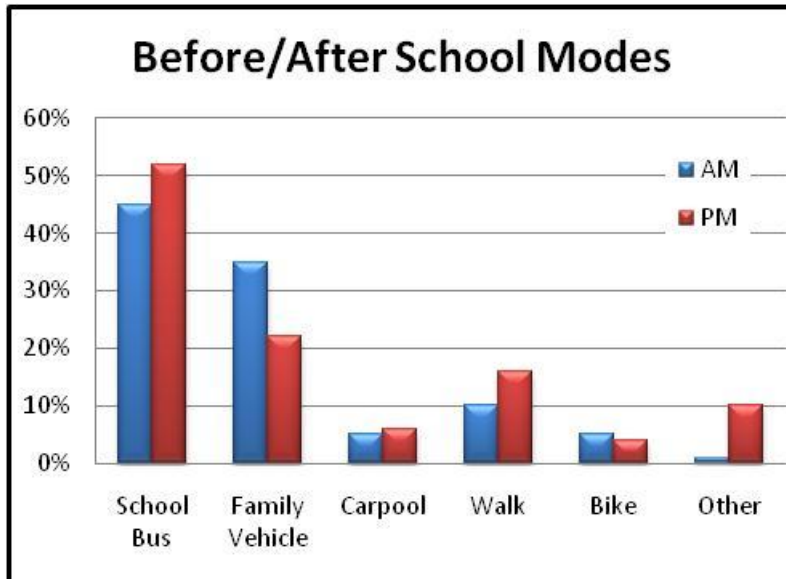
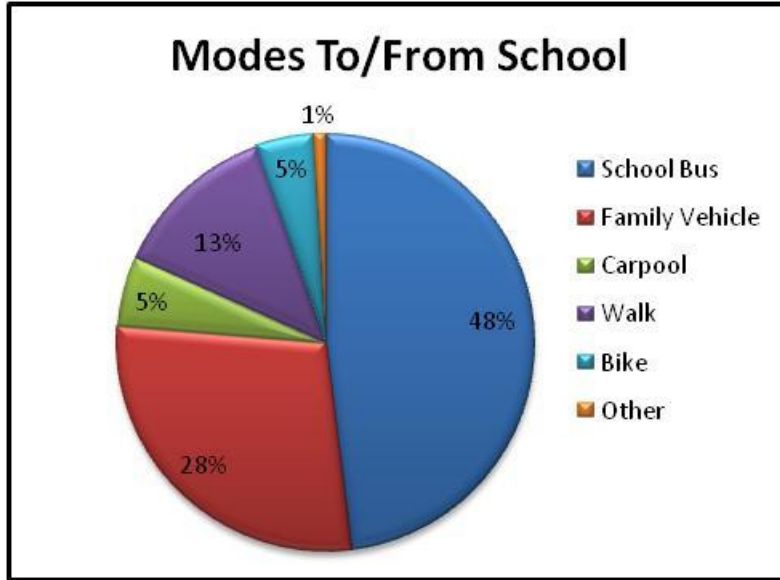


*School patrol at the 130<sup>th</sup> Street/Oakland Drive intersection.*

In-classroom tallies of students' arrival and departure modes were conducted at Gideon Pond Elementary October 2010. As shown in the chart below, an average of 13 percent of students currently walk to school and an average of 5 percent of students currently bike to school. The most predominant mode to and from school is school bus, however 28 percent of students are driven to school, resulting in an estimated 100 parent vehicles during pick-up and drop-off. The tallies also showed that significantly more students walked or rode the bus from school in the afternoon, compared to the morning.

# Dakota County Safe Routes to School

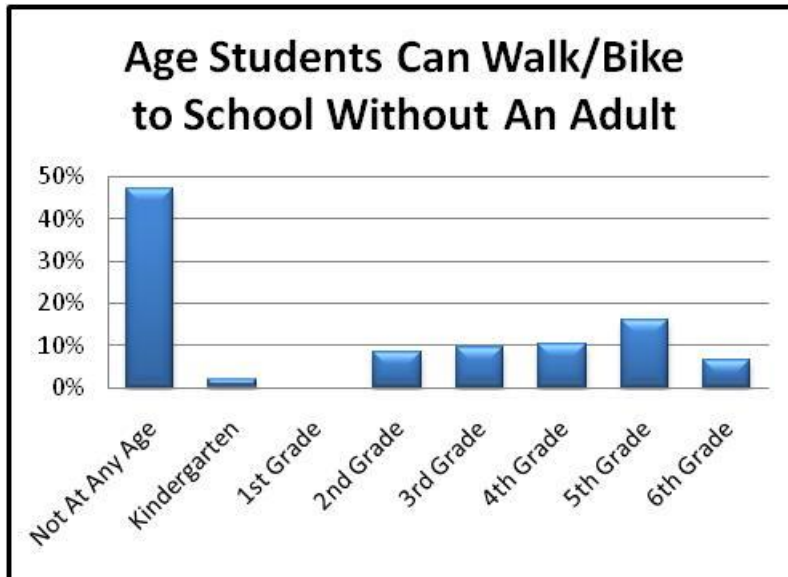
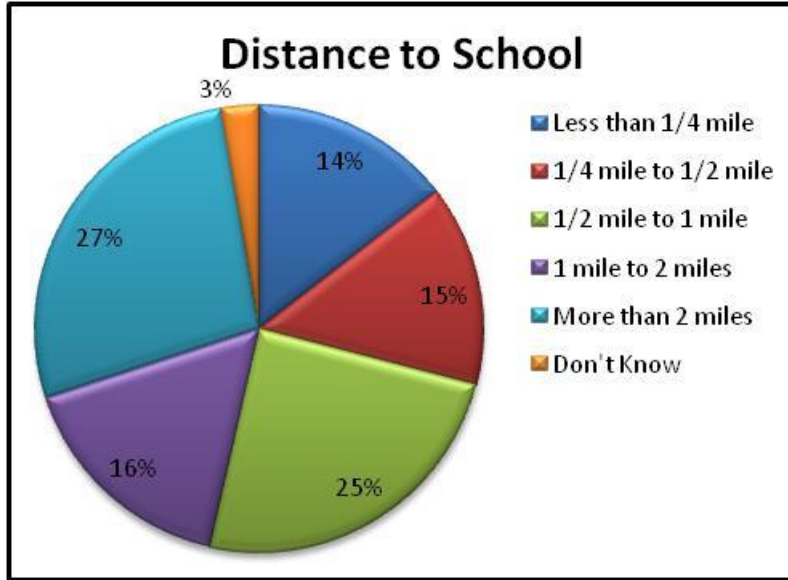
DAKOTA  
31  
COUNTY



A parent survey of concerns and attitudes related to walking and biking was also conducted in October 2010, with 115 responses. More than 50 percent of the respondents live within 1 mile of school, and distance, weather, and traffic volumes/speeds were the key factors that influenced the decision to walk or bike. The survey also showed that slightly less than 50 percent of the respondents live within the walk area. The charts on the following pages show some of the other key results from the survey. A sample of the parent comments from the survey is also included in the Appendix.

# Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA  
**31**  
COUNTY

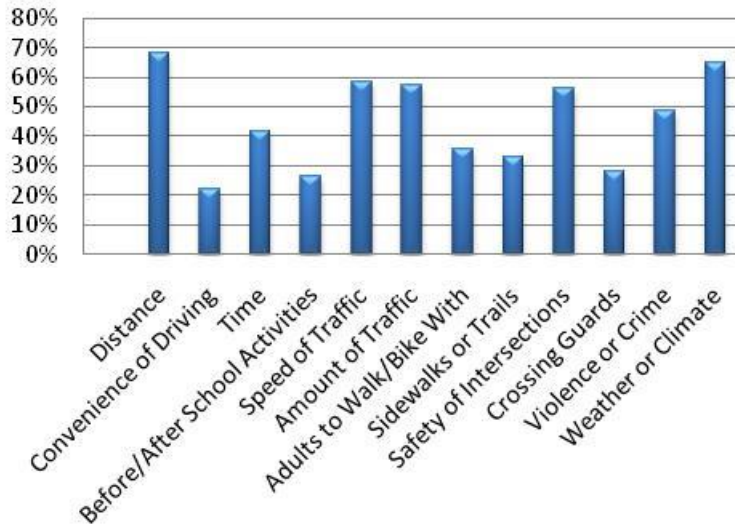


# Dakota County Safe Routes to School

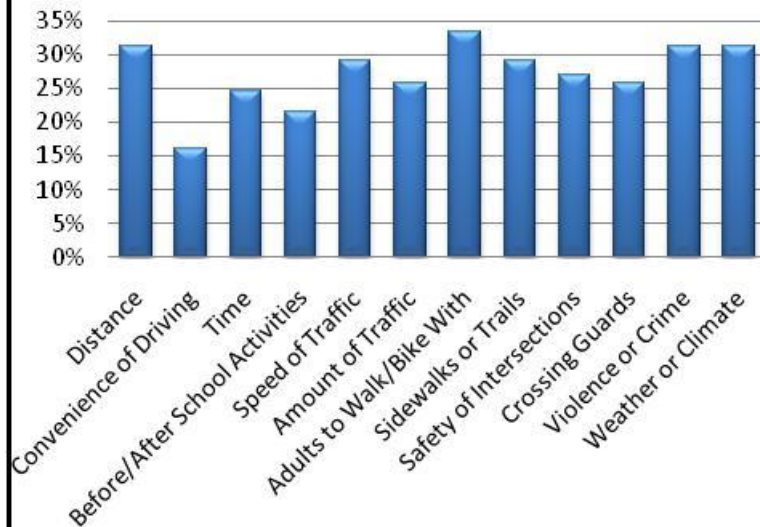
DAKOTA  
**31**  
COUNTY



## Factors Affecting Decision to Walk/Bike



## Improvements That Would Increase Walking/Biking





# Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA  
31  
COUNTY



## *Infrastructure*

The collector and arterial roadways surrounding the school generally have a well-connected system of sidewalks and trails. Local city streets in Burnsville do not have sidewalk.



*View of sidewalk and school crossings on 130<sup>th</sup> Street near Gideon Pond Elementary.*

There are currently two designated school crossings around the school with 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade student school patrols:

- 130<sup>th</sup> Street/Oakland Drive (4 student patrol)
- 130<sup>th</sup> Street/Portland Avenue (4 student patrol)

The 131<sup>st</sup> Street/Oakland Drive intersection is also signed as a school crossing, but is not patrolled. Due to the volume of traffic in the parking lot before and after school and the resulting pedestrian conflicts at the 130<sup>th</sup> Street/Oakland Drive intersection, left turns are prohibited from the parking lot onto 130<sup>th</sup> Street during those times. A portable sign is also placed in the driveway during the times the left-turn is restricted to reinforce the restriction.

# Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA  
31  
COUNTY



*Signed turn restrictions for the Gideon Pond driveway at 130<sup>th</sup> Street.*

In addition to the off-site infrastructure, Gideon Pond also has well-used bike racks at the back of the school near the playground and near the front entrance to the school.



*Bike racks located next to the playground, behind the school.*

# Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA  
31  
COUNTY



A review of the crash history for the past ten years (1999-2008) showed there have been no pedestrian or bicycle crashes at any of the designated school crossing intersections. There has been one pedestrian crash at the 130<sup>th</sup> Street/Parkwood Drive intersection on a weekday afternoon, but the time of day and age of the pedestrians suggests that they were middle school students. In terms of vehicle crashes, there has been one crash at the 130<sup>th</sup> Street/Portland Avenue intersection during the evening rush hour and one crash at the 130<sup>th</sup> Street/Oakland Drive intersection that involved a vehicle turning left out of the school driveway and being struck by a westbound vehicle on 130<sup>th</sup> Street. The crash occurred at 3 pm on a weekday in 2000, and therefore was likely related to the school dismissal. However, since the left-turn movement has now been prohibited at that time of day, this is no longer an issue. Overall, the crash rates at the intersections near the school are low compared to similar intersections in Minnesota.<sup>1</sup>

Counts conducted on 130<sup>th</sup> Street by the City of Burnsville in 2010 showed that there are approximately 2,900 vehicles per day on 130<sup>th</sup> Street between Nicollet Avenue and Parkwood Drive. The speed limit on 130<sup>th</sup> Street is 30 miles per hour (mph) and there is a 20 mph school speed zone posted in front of Gideon Pond.

## ***Site Evaluation***

A site evaluation was completed at Gideon Pond Elementary in September 2010 that included walking around the site and observing the dismissal process on a typical day. All buses load and unload in a parking bay on 130<sup>th</sup> Street and all parent pick-up and drop-off occurs in the parking lot. All vehicles enter and exit the Gideon Pond site using the same driveway on 130<sup>th</sup> Street, which is also one of the designated school crossings.

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<sup>1</sup> Mn/DOT Crash Data Kit, 2005-2007.

# Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA  
31  
COUNTY



*Bus loading area on 130<sup>th</sup> Street in front of Gideon Pond. Parking is not allowed in this area during arrival and dismissal (8:15-9:00 AM and 2:45-3:30 PM), but parking is allowed during the school day.*

The queue of vehicles in the parking lot begins before 2:30 pm and quickly stretches up to 130<sup>th</sup> Street. As a result, vehicles queue on 130<sup>th</sup> Street waiting to get into the parking lot. The movement of vehicles in and out of the parking lot is also impacted by all the pedestrian crossings of the driveway and 130<sup>th</sup> Street. It was noted during the site visit that some vehicles parked on the north side of 130<sup>th</sup> Street and crossed the street to pick up their students. Some vehicles also park on the south side of 130<sup>th</sup> Street, in front of the buses. As long as vehicles park legally, do not park in the bus loading area, and cross at the designated locations (i.e., not mid-block between the buses), there are not any safety concerns related to this practice. However, vehicles should not be allowed to park next to the crosswalks, which limits the visibility of the patrols and students as they enter the crosswalk.

# Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA  
31  
COUNTY



*View of the parking lot at Gideon Pond, just before afternoon dismissal.*

The school entrance nearest to the parking lot is open during morning arrival and afternoon dismissal, but otherwise is locked during the school day. There is no sidewalk on the east side of the school that connects the parking lot to 130<sup>th</sup> Street or the main entrance of the school. In addition, the grades on the site would make it difficult to pave a sidewalk in this area. During the site visit, bicyclists were observed riding in the driveway from the bike parking area at the back of the school to 130<sup>th</sup> Street.

A total of about 60 to 65 pedestrians were observed crossing at either the 130<sup>th</sup> Street/Oakland Drive or 130<sup>th</sup> Street/Portland Avenue intersection. The majority of the pedestrians and bicyclists continued along 130<sup>th</sup> Street, but some also continued north into the neighborhood. An estimated 10 to 20 students cross at the 131<sup>st</sup> Street/Oakland Drive intersection into the neighborhood south of the school.

# Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA  
31  
COUNTY



*Bicyclist riding in the driveway from the bike parking behind the school to the sidewalk on 130<sup>th</sup> Street.*

## **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 Gideon Pond Elementary that included the school principal, school patrol coordinator, and the City of Burnsville. 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 Gideon Pond Elementary are summarized in the following bullets, as well as the Existing Conditions/Issues map at the end of this report:

- Congestion in the parking lot and vehicle queues on 130<sup>th</sup> Street due to parent pick-up and drop-off.
- Pedestrian/vehicle and vehicle/vehicle conflicts at the 130<sup>th</sup> Street/Oakland Drive intersection.
- Vehicles parking too close to crosswalks, limiting visibility of pedestrians entering the roadway.
- Keeping sidewalks and trails clear of snow in the winter.
- District budgets may increase walk radius in the future – opportunity for more walking and biking, but could also mean even more parents driving.

# Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA  
31  
COUNTY



## **Recommendations**

Despite some of the current challenges to walking and biking to Gideon Pond Elementary, the school's location in the neighborhoods it draws students from, the existing sidewalk/trail infrastructure, and the existing groups of students walking and biking provide opportunities to further increase the numbers of students regularly walking and biking to school. The following recommendations have been developed specifically for Gideon Pond Elementary to address the identified challenges to walking and biking. The short-term recommendations are actions that could be implemented 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 Recommendations map at the end of this report.

1. Gideon Pond is doing an excellent job with the existing school patrols on 130<sup>th</sup> Street and should be continued. Additional equipment such as whistles may help the school patrols communicate with each other during the periods of heaviest vehicle traffic. Implementation lead – Gideon Pond.
2. Establish No Parking clearance zones at the school crossing on 130<sup>th</sup> Street and Oakland Drive to provide better sight lines of pedestrians entering the crosswalk. Signing would need to be approved and installed by the City of Burnsville. Implementation lead – City of Burnsville.

# Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA  
31  
COUNTY



*Vehicle parked at the school crossing on 130<sup>th</sup> Street at Oakland Drive.*

3. Consider a remote pick-up/drop-off site on 131<sup>st</sup> Street at Oakland Drive to reduce the vehicle conflicts and congestion on the school site. This would require increased adult supervision between 131<sup>st</sup> Street and the rear entrance of the school and may require additional or accelerated snow removal on the trail leading from the school to Oakland Drive. Implementation lead – Gideon Pond.



# Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA  
31  
COUNTY

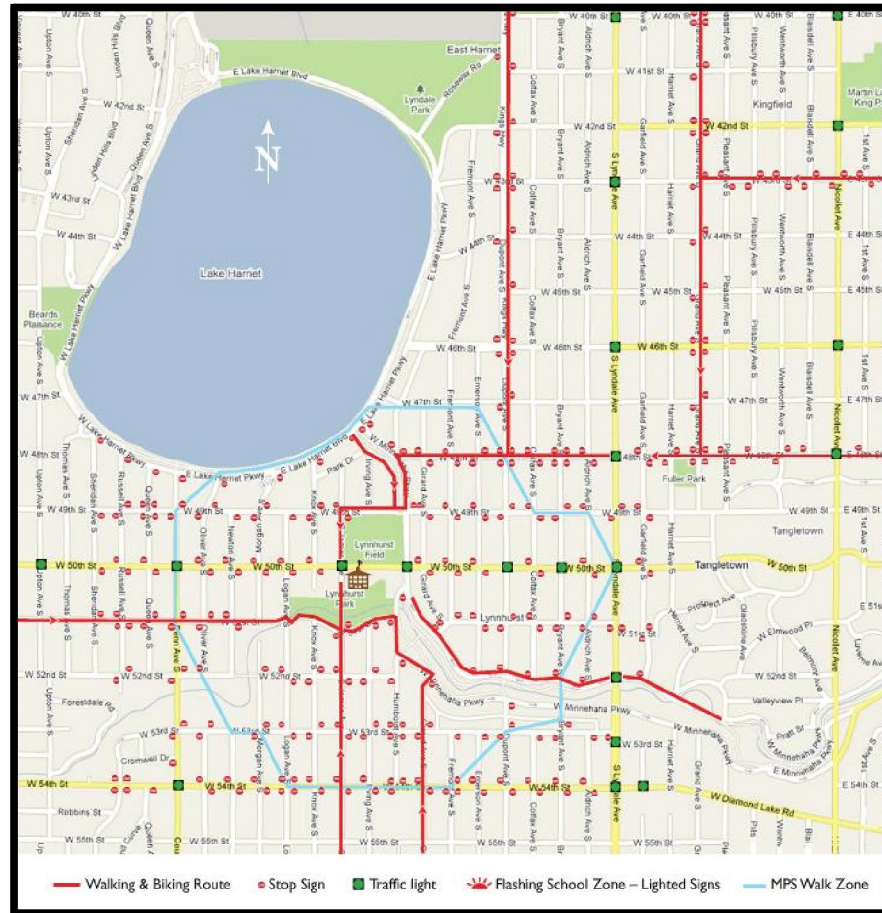


*Trail connection from 131<sup>st</sup> Street/Oakland Drive to Gideon Pond Elementary.*

4. Establish a permanent Safe Routes committee at Gideon Pond to provide on-going support and organization for Safe Routes activities. Implementation lead – Gideon Pond.
5. Create a bike/walk map showing available routes and to and from school, as well as other key “safe” locations like libraries, police station, other schools, or community center. The maps would then be distributed to Gideon Pond parents and students, as well as Burnsville Police. Implementation lead – Gideon Pond, with assistance from City of Burnsville, District 191, and Dakota County, as needed.

# Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA  
**31**  
COUNTY



*Example of a school walk/bike route map.*

6. Start a monthly “Walk to School Day” with staff or parent volunteers along the major routes and at the school patrolled crossings on the designated walk and/or bike days. The best location for a remote drop-off site for a walk to school event would be at Civic Center Park, based on the distance from the school, the availability of sufficient parking/loading space, continuous trail/sidewalk between the site and the school, and no major crossings between the site and the school. Buses could drop off students along the north side of Civic Center Parkway and parents could park at the Burnsville Ice Center. Students would walk along the trail from Civic Center Parkway to 130<sup>th</sup> Street and then walk on the sidewalk on the north side of 130<sup>th</sup> Street to Gideon Pond. The sidewalks and trails along the route are plowed by the City of Burnsville, so the events could still be held in winter or early spring. Adult supervision would be needed for the two crossings of 130<sup>th</sup> Street at Viking Drive and Portland Avenue.

# Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA  
31  
COUNTY



A secondary remote site at Chateaulin Park could also be used, which has the advantage of not requiring any crossings of 130<sup>th</sup> Street, but this location has very limited parking and likely could not accommodate all the buses. Implementation lead – Gideon Pond.



*View of trail from Civic Center Parkway*

7. Develop a Safe Routes page on the Gideon Pond Elementary website that provides walk/bike routes, school patrol locations, and pick-up/drop-off procedures, as well as other walking and biking information. Implementation lead – Gideon Pond.

## ***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 Recommendations map at the end of this report.

1. Construct a sidewalk connection from the parking lot behind the school to 130<sup>th</sup> Street and the front of the school. Implementation lead – District 191.

# Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA  
31  
COUNTY



2. 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 191 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 191.
3. Investigate the feasibility of constructing a sidewalk connection on the south side of 130<sup>th</sup> Street from Viking Drive to Portland Avenue to eliminate the two crossings of 130<sup>th</sup> Street between Civic Center Park and Gideon Pond Elementary School. Implementation lead – City of Burnsville.



*Area for proposed sidewalk connection on the south side of 130<sup>th</sup> Street.*

4. Investigate the feasibility of a second parking lot access to Oakland Drive at 131<sup>st</sup> Street to relieve congestion and queuing on 130<sup>th</sup> Street. The second access could be closed except during arrival and dismissal if traffic in the neighborhood were a concern. The site plan for a second driveway would need to be approved by the City of Burnsville. Implementation lead – District 191.

# Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA  
31  
COUNTY



*Area for potential second access driveway from Oakland Drive to the back of Gideon Pond.*

5. Investigate the feasibility of constructing curb bump-outs on 130<sup>th</sup> Street at Oakland Drive to reduce the crossing distance and make pedestrians more visible. This improvement would need to be studied and designed by the City of Burnsville, but the construction cost would need to be funded by District 191 or grant funded. Implementation lead – City of Burnsville/District 191.

## ***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 grants
  - Active Living grants, which are available to cities in Dakota County, but may be used to fund improvements off school sites

# Dakota County Safe Routes to School

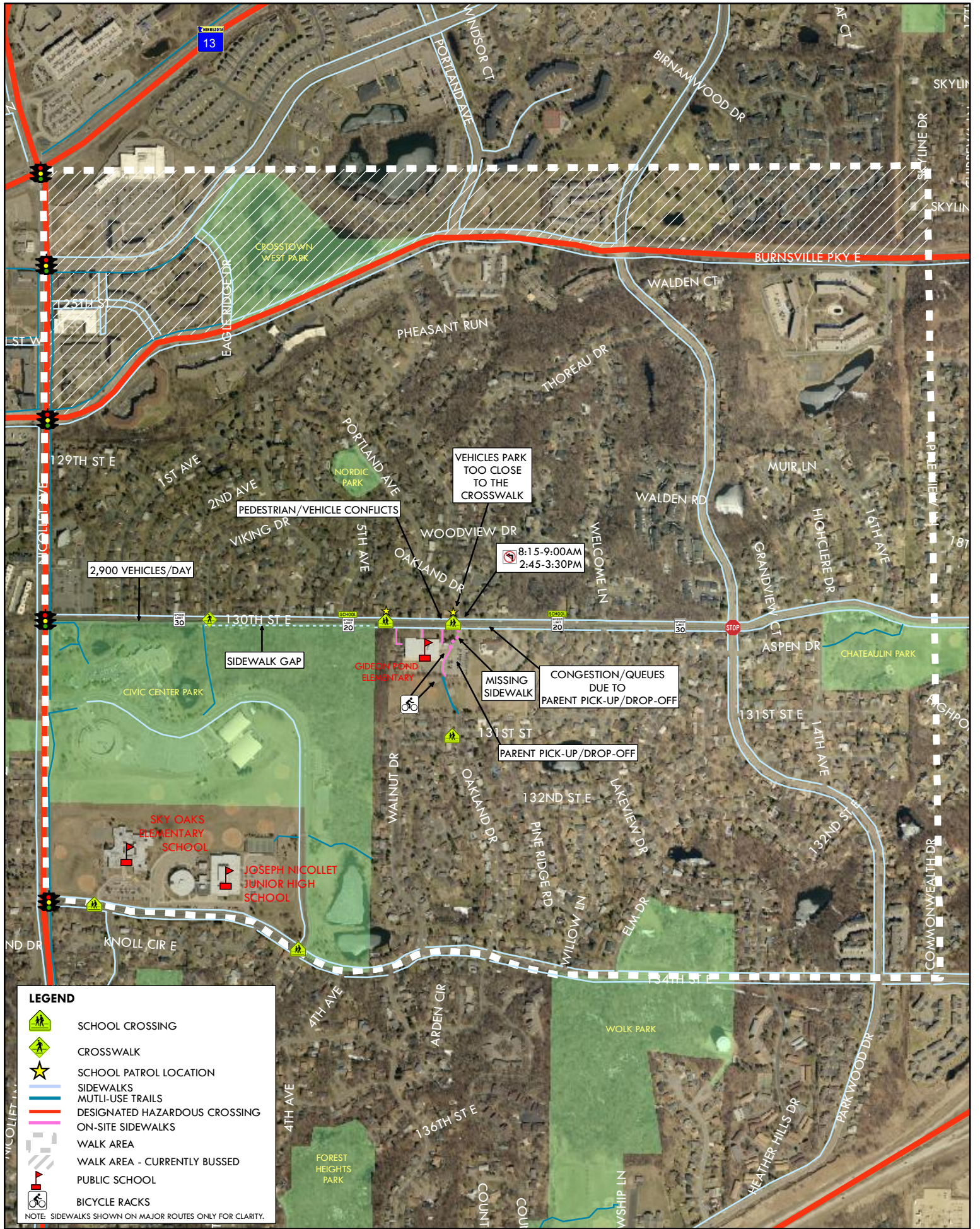
DAKOTA  
31  
COUNTY



- 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
  - Mini-grants through the National Center for Safe Routes to School
  - Federal Transportation Enhancement (TE) funds through the Metropolitan Council
  - Federal Safe Routes to School funds through the Minnesota Department of Transportation. The federal Safe Routes to School program was originally funded through fiscal year 2009, but Mn/DOT is expected to have another grant solicitation in spring 2011. Future funding will be dependent on passage of the Federal Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill, which is still being discussed in the United States Congress.

Increased liability of the school, school district, or adult volunteers as a result of encouraging walking and biking to school is a frequent concern when implementing Safe Routes to School programs. In general, encouraging walking and biking to school does not increase the liability of the school or the district. Some tips and guidelines from the National Center for Safe Routes and the Public Health Law Center are included in the Appendix of this report as a reference. Links to additional resources such as an overall Safe Routes to School guide, walking school bus guide, and safety education materials are also provided in the Appendix.

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. The process used to develop this plan is only the start of on-going efforts that will be needed to result in cultural changes and significant increases in walking and biking.



2,900 VEHICLES/DAY

VEHICLES PARK TOO CLOSE TO THE CROSSWALK

PEDESTRIAN/VEHICLE CONFLICTS

8:15-9:00AM  
2:45-3:30PM

SIDEWALK GAP

MISSING SIDEWALK

CONGESTION/QUEUES DUE TO PARENT PICK-UP/DROP-OFF

PARENT PICK-UP/DROP-OFF

**LEGEND**

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

NOTE: SIDEWALKS SHOWN ON MAJOR ROUTES ONLY FOR CLARITY.

- 1 - POST NO PARKING ZONES NEAR INTERSECTION
- 2 - POTENTIAL DAILY REMOTE PICK-UP/DROP-OFF LOCATION
- 3 - POST NO PARKING ZONE AT CROSSWALK
- 4 - RECOMMENDED REMOTE DROP-OFF SITE FOR WALK TO SCHOOL DAYS
- 5 - CONSTRUCT CURB BUMP-OUTS
- 6 - CONSTRUCT SIDEWALK/TRAIL SEGMENT
- 7 - INVESTIGATE FEASIBILITY OF ACCESS DRIVEWAY



**LEGEND**

- SCHOOL CROSSING
- CROSSWALK
- SCHOOL PATROL LOCATION
- SIDEWALKS
- MULTI-USE TRAILS
- DESIGNATED HAZARDOUS CROSSING
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- BICYCLE RACKS

NOTE: SIDEWALKS SHOWN ON MAJOR ROUTES ONLY FOR CLARITY.



# Dakota County Safe Routes to School



## Appendix

# Dakota County Safe Routes to School

DAKOTA  
31  
COUNTY



## Parent Survey Comments

I would not allow my child to walk to/from school - she needs her special ed bus to ensure safety.

My children walk/ride bike/scooter in nice weather. Winter/rain I drive them.

We live right behind our school. Our kids walk out the back door and about 300 ft to the school, so our decision to let them walk was very easy.

Children not old enough to walk on their own.

My kids walk, but we only live 1.5 blocks from school. I don't let them walk if there are no cross guards, which happens on below 0 degree days. I don't think they should hold school on days too cold for guards.

Last school year my children were considered walkers. I drove them daily. I think .69 miles is a little too far to walk in -40 degree weather. And I don't exactly think it's safe to have 5-7 year old kids walking alone either, especially w/ no sidewalks.

No sidewalks where the busses pass - very unsafe.

There are NO sidewalks on Portland and people drive way to fast on it.

Safety comes first. My child bikes occasionally because I know he is capable. In all honesty though I wouldn't let him do it every day.

I don't like to have my little girl walk to school. I always wonder if she got there alright.

My son enjoys the bus and if we lived closer to the school and did not have to cross major traffic routes I would consider after 5th grade.

I see no issues with my students walking home from Gideon Pond. It is a safe neighborhood and has sidewalks.

I think the system at Gideon Pond is safe for students.

If there were more kids her age or older at 5th or 6th grade could bike to school in good weather distance 1 mile.

Overall - I'm just not comfortable, I think my child is too young (1st grade).

We live too far to walk/bike to school. If we lived closer our children be more likely to ride bike or walk to/from school.

There are no patrols at the Parkwood/130th intersection. There used to be patrols at this intersection. Our children are not bused yet are required to cross the intersection without patrols.

My biggest factor for allowing my child to walk/bike by himself would be if he's responsible enough to make the 3/4 mile (one way) trip on his own.

My kids bike everyday as long as the weather permits and we are not running late.

# 10 TIPS FOR Safe Routes to School Programs and Liability

**SafeRoutes**  
National Center for Safe Routes to School



TIP SHEET

## Background and Overview

Forty years ago, nearly 90 percent of children who lived close to their school walked or bicycled to get there. Today, this number has decreased by about 25 percent.<sup>1</sup> As Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs have developed to reverse this trend, some have wondered if encouraging walking and bicycling to school may increase a school's liability exposure.

In general, the answer is no. In fact, SRTS programs are designed to help schools and communities identify and address potential safety concerns. Taking concrete steps to make walking and bicycling safer will reduce the likelihood of injury, and thereby minimize exposure to liability.

A SRTS program that simply encourages or promotes bicycling and walking to school should not, in most cases, expose schools to increased liability risk. Even school-sponsored walking and bicycling programs, such as a Walking School Bus or Bicycle Train should not expose schools to any greater liability than other school-sponsored activities. Of course, schools with SRTS programs must ensure they are meeting their responsibilities for children's safety just as they must routinely do with all other forms of school transportation and with other school activities.



SRTS programs can vary greatly, ranging from programs to encourage walking and bicycling to active sponsorship of walking and bicycling programs and providing new infrastructure to support these activities. The school's responsibility for safety will vary according to the individual elements of the SRTS program and the local legal context. The information below provides a brief overview of the relevant legal definitions and identifies several issues you may want to look into as you develop your program to ensure you are addressing any potential liability issues. **This information is not intended as legal advice and should not be used as such. For specific legal guidance, you should consult with an attorney with relevant knowledge and experience.**

## Legal Context

Schools and school districts must regularly address issues of liability for a variety of school programs and school sponsored activities. Regardless of whether students walk, bike, take the bus, or are driven to school, there is a possibility that an injury may occur on or off school property. However, not all injuries result in liability. The extent to which a school will be held legally responsible or "liable" for its negligent actions or omissions depends on the facts of a given case, on laws and legal principles that vary from state to state, and even from school district to school district.

In general, to establish liability for negligence, the injured person or someone acting on his or her behalf must show that the school owed a legal duty of care to that person, that the school breached that duty, and that the breach was the "proximate cause" of damages or injury.<sup>2</sup> (Visit Law.com and search liability and negligence for more detailed definitions and descriptions.)



# 10 TIPS FOR

## Safe Routes to School Programs and Liability (continued)

### 1 Work with your school district's administrative and legal staff to understand the relevant liability issues and to develop appropriate policies.

Most likely, your school district already has a number of policies in place to help manage its liability for various school programs and activities. A SRTS program is no different. You should work closely with your school district's administrative and legal staff to identify any particular risk management and insurance needs based on your individual SRTS program and the relevant laws of your jurisdiction.

### 2 Be aware of local laws, regulations, and school policies.

Work with your school's legal counsel to identify the laws and regulations in your jurisdiction that are relevant to walking and bicycling. These may include laws regarding school safety patrols, the designation of school walking routes (some states require them), student bus transportation, and any bicycle safety requirements such as helmets, bells or lights. You should also review the state and local pedestrian laws and portions of the local development code regarding pedestrian safety and provision of pedestrian accommodations. Make sure you are following any applicable school policies, such as parental permission slips, waivers, or required supervision for school-sponsored activities. If appropriate, your school may consider making modifications or exceptions to any school policies that appear to be in conflict with your SRTS activities.

### 3 Take steps to fix problems.

If you are aware of unsafe walking and bicycling conditions, such as unsafe vehicle drop off and pick up conditions, take steps to fix them. Even if the problem is not subject to the school's control, such as a heavily trafficked local street, the school should warn parents of any known hazards, and take any prudent steps to address conditions under the school's control that might exacerbate the risk of injury.

### 4 Be proactive. Develop a plan.

Developing a SRTS Plan for an individual school is a great way to identify potential safety problems and prioritize needed improvements. If you identify problems, take steps to address the problems and inform the school community of possible hazards that cannot be or have not yet been corrected.

### 5 Document your efforts.

If you are aware of potential problems, document your efforts to fix them. For example, if you are made aware of problems with speeding vehicles in the school area, keep records of your communication with law enforcement officials to address the problem and your communications to parents warning them of any uncorrected problems.



# 10 TIPS FOR

## Safe Routes to School Programs and Liability (continued)

### 6 Be uniform, systematic and consistent in undertaking safety improvements.

In making improvements such as new sidewalks or improved crossings, follow accepted engineering and design practices. Any design exceptions should be carefully reviewed so as not to compromise safety.

### 8 Consider waivers.

Where a SRTS program sponsors specific transportation activities, such as a walking school bus or bicycle train, a school may decide to require parent volunteers and parents of student participants to sign waivers or permission slips acknowledging that the participants are assuming the risk of injury by engaging in walking and bicycling activities, and waiving any claims against the school for its negligent acts or omissions. Keep in mind that waivers need to be carefully drafted in order to be effective.

### 9 Obtain adequate insurance coverage for your program.

Your school district is likely to have a large umbrella policy that covers a range of school programs and school sponsored activities. Review this policy to ensure the SRTS activities you are organizing are covered. If they are not, have the policy adjusted to include these activities.

### 7 Inform and involve parents.

Parents and designated caretakers are ultimately responsible for deciding how their children get to school. Material promoting SRTS programs should make clear that parents should determine their child's readiness and the best route for walking and bicycling. Encourage parents to accompany younger children. Let parents know the location of signalized or marked crossings and locations with crossing guards and recommend that they use them. Provide pedestrian and bicycle safety tips to parents as well as students. (See safety tip sheets at the National Center's Web site at [http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/resources/education\\_tip-sheets.cfm](http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/resources/education_tip-sheets.cfm))

### 10 Provide training.

Make sure crossing guards and school employees working on traffic and safety issues are well trained regarding pedestrian and bicycle safety and their responsibilities for ensuring that children are safe on their journey to and from school. Provide training to volunteers, and if appropriate, screening, where volunteers will be supervising children as part of a SRTS activity, such as a formal Walking School Bus or Bike Train.



**Q: What does acting in “good faith” mean?**

**A:** This means acting with a good, honest intention or belief.

**Good Faith:** A volunteer takes the children down a different route one day, believing the traffic will be lighter. The traffic is actually heavier, and a car hits a child while he is crossing the road in a crosswalk.

**Not Good Faith:** A child misbehaves during the walk. The volunteer makes the child walk home by himself, knowing that the child does not know the way home. The child gets lost and is injured.

**Q: What does acting “within the scope of their duties” mean?**

**A:** This means acting according to one’s role or responsibilities as a volunteer.

**Within the Scope of Duties:** A student slips and is injured while the volunteer is walking the student to school.

**Not Within Scope of Duties:** After school, a student stays over at a volunteer’s house to play with the volunteer’s children. The student slips and is injured.

**Q: What is “willful or reckless” conduct?**

**A:** This means acting with disregard for the safety of others, or failing to act with ordinary care to prevent or discover a danger. Some examples of willful or reckless conduct might include: telling a child to run across the street when the light is red; telling children to cross the road without looking both ways; or making children walk long distances in extreme heat without water.

**Q: If I am sued, will insurance cover the costs of the litigation?**

**A:** Check the terms of your homeowner’s or renter’s insurance policy to learn what is covered. Typically, insurance consists of two parts—property coverage and personal liability coverage. The personal liability portion of the policy may protect against a lawsuit brought by someone who is injured by something you do. It will pay for damages or medical expenses if you are responsible for the injury. Also, it will pay for legal expenses to defend you if the lawsuit is unjustified.



**Q: How can Walking School Bus Program volunteers reduce the risk of liability?**

**A:** Common sense precautions go a long way toward avoiding liability risk. Most importantly, a parent volunteer should *act like an ordinary, reasonable person*. Additional steps could be:

- Creating safety rules and handing them out to all students and parents. These safety rules should comply with any local school rules.
- Planning a training day for students and volunteers.
- Wearing fluorescent vests while walking with the children.
- Asking the parents or guardians to sign a waiver saying they will not hold you liable for any injuries. (Please refer to the Public Health Law Center’s Waivers and Releases Fact Sheet.)
- Eliminating dangers, where possible.
- Having one adult volunteer for every six children over the age of 10 and one adult volunteer per three children for four to six year-olds.
- Documenting all precautions taken to avoid harm or risk.

For related publications, visit [www.publichealthlawcenter.org](http://www.publichealthlawcenter.org). Click on “Publications and Resources” link and then on “Fact Sheets.” The Public Health Law Center provides information and technical assistance on issues related to tobacco and public health. The Public Health Law Center does not provide legal representation or advice. This document should not be considered legal advice. For specific legal questions, consult with an attorney. Contact the Public Health Law Center for citations used in this factsheet. Updated July 2010.





# Safe Routes to School guide

saferoutesinfo.org



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This guide was developed by the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center (PBIC) with support from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE). This guide is maintained by the National Center for Safe Routes to School at [www.saferoutesinfo.org](http://www.saferoutesinfo.org).

# Adult School Crossing Guard Guidelines



Pedestrian and Bicycle  
Information Center

**SafeRoutes**

National Center for Safe Routes to School



[www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov)  
**nhtsa**   
people saving people

Prepared by the National Center for Safe Routes to School and the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center, both part of the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center, with funding from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

# The Walking School Bus: Combining Safety, Fun and the Walk to School



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Information Center

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## Teaching Children to Walk Safely as They Grow and Develop:

A guide for parents and caregivers



Created July 2008



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