



ITEM REPORT CITY COUNCIL

Agenda Date: 12/02/2024
Agenda Section: Unfinished Business

Department: Public Works – City Engineer

Agenda Item: School District Safe Routes To School (SRTS)

No Approvals required.

BACKGROUND

Back on December 4, 2023 (I believe I got this time frame correct), Tad Erickson, Transportation Planner for Region 5, presented a Planning document on the Safe Routes To School (SRTS) program.

Region 5 assisted the School District, Pequot Lakes, Breezy Point, and Crow Wing County in preparing this Planning document. The Planning document listed several goals – possible projects – to help in providing Safe Routes To School (both Eagle View Elementary and the High School / Middle School).

The School District has been pursuing an Application for a Transportation Alternatives (TA) grant funding assistance State program. The School District also is looking at an Application to the State for a SRTS funding assistance program. Both of these programs have their own set of rules, and both programs are competitive (our experience, and Region 5's experience is that applicants do not necessarily get funding the first year . . . but . . . you do not have a chance of getting funded if you do not apply).

As several of these goals / possible projects are within City street corridors, the School District met with some City Staff in the previous weeks to talk about how the two entities can cooperate.

We / Widseth will be preparing "30,000 feet level" cost estimates for the proposed improvements for the Application(s) at no charge. Depending on the extent of further funding Application assistance, we may need to charge for our assistance.

The Applications are due in January, shortly after the January City Council meeting.

This Memo is intended to educate the City Council so that questions can be asked between now and the January City Council meeting, and, when Applications are presented at the January City Council meeting, necessary approvals can be obtained.

We have included a few pages from the Planning document at the end of this Memo.

Goal 3: Rasmussen Road Pedestrian Infrastructure

Sidewalk from Oriole Street to Isabelle Drive on (probably) the west side of Rasmussen.

Goal 4: Pavement Markings and Lighting

Pavement Markings and Lighting will be implemented on various Goals / improvements as necessary.



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Goal 5: Patriot Ave

Sidewalk on the west side of Patriot Avenue from Main Street to West Lake Street.

Goal 6: Patriot Ave Crossing

Complete sidewalk from Oasis driveway on south side of West Lake Street to Patriot Avenue.

Put in painted crosswalk on Patriot Avenue at West Lake Street with signage.

From Patriot Avenue to Paul Bunyan Trail (PBT) - put in walking path (work with the DNR adjacent to the PBT).

Probably as a separate effort, the City can look into a “connection” from the Paul Bunyan Trail to the Rae Avenue neighborhood.

Goal 7: Woodman and Patriot Crossing

Complete sidewalk from First Street out to Patriot.

Enhance any existing painted crosswalk and signage.

Add a push button flashing beacon for a crosswalk on the north side of West / East Woodman crossing Patriot.

The City knows that at some point, they will have to reconstruct East Woodman from Patriot to Rasmussen. At that time, the City can look into a sidewalk.

Goal 8: South Oak Street

Add parking and sidewalks along the ball fields.

We will need to analyze and modify the existing grassed stormwater basin on the east side adjacent to the ballfields – we need storm drainage cooperation between the City and the School District in this area.

Look at adding a sidewalk / trail / path from Brown Street to the School entrance. It would probably be on the west side due to the tight width on the east side.

Include a painted crosswalk across South Oak Street with appropriate signage.

In the next month or so, the School District and the City will need to work through details of not only the TA and SRTS funding assistance program Applications but also who is going to pay for what.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The School District and the City need to meet on funding sources (funding assistance program grants and maybe loans along with local matches).

COUNCIL ACTION REQUESTED

Review and ask questions.



Safe Routes to School

A plan to encourage more students to walk and bike to/from school – when and where it's safe.

June 27, 2023

PEQUOT LAKES, MINNESOTA

Eagle View Elementary, Pequot Lakes Middle School, and High School



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The Vision

Walking, biking, and rolling to school is safe, comfortable, and fun for all students in Pequot Lakes.

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs are sustained efforts by parents, schools, community leaders, and local, state, and federal governments to improve the health and well-being of children by enabling and encouraging them to walk and bicycle to school WHEN AND WHERE IT IS SAFE TO DO SO.

The vision identified by the SRTS planning team is to increase opportunities for all students to walk or bike to and from school safely by identifying and addressing the issues and barriers that currently exist. Therefore, the local planning team hopes to accomplish three main goals through the SRTS planning process.

1. Determine the current environment surrounding walking and biking to school i.e., how many students district-wide are walking and biking to school?
2. Assess issues and barriers to walking and biking to school.
3. Develop strategies that lead to an environment more conducive to safe walking and biking to school.

THE 6 E'S

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs rely on six core strategies, called the "Six Es", to work towards their vision. Successful Safe Routes to School projects see remarkable changes in the way students and parents choose to travel to and from school. These projects succeed by including each of the "Six E's" of Safe Routes to School to ensure that their project is a well-rounded, multi-prong, and time-tested approach to getting students safely walking and bicycling. The Six E's of Safe Routes to School are:

ENGAGEMENT

Working with students, families, school staff, and community members and organizations, especially those from priority Equity groups, to create and implement Safe Routes to School initiatives.

ENGINEERING

Developing Equity-focused changes to the built environment, designed and prioritized through Community Engagement.

EDUCATION

Providing students and other community members, especially those from priority Equity groups, 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 Equity groups.

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 Equity groups.

EQUITY

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.





HAZARD OBSERVATION

In addition to the walk audit, the LPT spent time observing both driver and pedestrian behavior during peak hours including school drop-off and pick-up at both school sites. The purpose is to identify not only unsafe driver or pedestrian behaviors, but also to identify any issues and barriers such as congestion, back-ups, or unsafe crossings. Lastly, the LPT used this opportunity to attempt to reimagine the infrastructure layout of roads, sidewalks, crosswalks signage, lighting, and any other aspect of driver or pedestrian safety should the need arise.

Assessment of Issues and Barriers

Building on the information gathered from the in-class student tally, the parent survey, the walk audit, and their observations from school drop-off and pick-up, the local planning team discussed and assessed the issues and barriers that emerged and were identified. There is a great quote from Albert Einstein that goes: “If I had an hour to solve a problem, I’d spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and five minutes thinking about solutions.” With this saying in mind, the local planning team spent a considerable amount of time assessing the issues and barriers to appropriately identify solutions to the challenges that they identified throughout the planning process.

The assessment of issues and barriers was meant to inform the decision-making process by bringing together all the information gathered from the surveys, walk audit, public meetings, and working sessions.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After collecting as much information as possible throughout the in-class student tally, the parent survey, the walk audit, and their observations from school drop off and pick up; and after spending considerable time assessing the issues and barriers, the local planning team developed a list of observations and recommendations intended to address the issues identified as well as to capitalize on some of the opportunities that were discovered along the way. The observations and recommendations were then arranged and organized accordingly within the nationally recognized six “E” approach.



Engineering Goals and Actions

Creating physical improvements to streets, sidewalks, trails, infrastructure, and neighborhoods that make walking and bicycling safer, more comfortable, and more convenient.

Goal 1: County Road 11 Trail Development

PRIORITY: High

RECOMMENDATION

Continue to seek funding and feasibility for the development of a trail along Crow Wing County Road 11 between Pequot Lakes and Breezy Point.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

Trail development would provide a barrier from heavy traffic and could potentially increase the number of walkers and bikers for all students K-12

WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

County, city, and school staff, with funding from MnDOT.

HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improving pedestrian conditions makes walking and rolling easier and safer for people with disabilities and meet all ADA requirements.

Goal 2: County Road 11 and Eagle View Intersection Improvements

PRIORITY: High

RECOMMENDATION

Consider additional improvements to County Road 11

- Rapid Flashing Beacon
- Traffic Control
- Nickel Road (change to general terms for South of Eagle View access)
- Use Bushman to avoid CR11 in future.
- Intersection improvements

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

Each of these recommended actions would improve the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians and all users on County Road 11 by improving traffic flow would making the intersection less intimidating for pedestrians while also reducing emissions by reducing vehicle idling.

WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

County, city, and school staff, with funding from MnDOT.

HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improving sidewalk conditions makes walking and rolling easier and safer for people with disabilities. This intersection is also a key crossing to schools for lower-income families and students from Grande Apartments.

Goal 3: Rasmussen Road Pedestrian Infrastructure

PRIORITY: High

RECOMMENDATION

Consider extending the sidewalk along Rasmussen Road to the manufactured home park to the north.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

The sidewalk network currently has gaps and extending along this route would connect key areas of town.

WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

City staff, with funding from MnDOT.

HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improving sidewalk conditions makes walking and rolling easier and safer for people with disabilities. This intersection is also a key crossing to schools for lower-income families and students from the manufactured home community along Rasmussen Road.

Goal 4: Pavement Markings and Lighting

PRIORITY: High

RECOMMENDATION

Continue to consistently repaint and re-stripe crosswalks/ pavement markings and improve lighting to ensure a high degree of visibility.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

Poor visibility of striping and pavement markings and poor lighting can lead to potentially unsafe routes. Continuing to maintain these pavement markings will lead to safer outcomes.

WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

County, city, and school staff, with funding from MnDOT.

HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improving pavement markings and lighting makes walking and rolling safer for people with disabilities along all routes that require striping and pavement markings.

Goal 5: Patriot Ave

PRIORITY: High

RECOMMENDATION

Consider extending the sidewalk network to future development opportunities.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

New and anticipated developments are taking place south of town and pedestrian facilities have not yet been put in place to accommodate these developments.

WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

County, city, and school staff, with funding from MnDOT.

HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improving sidewalk conditions makes walking and rolling easier and safer for people with disabilities. Patriot Avenue is also a key route and crossing to schools for lower-income families and students.

Goal 6: Patriot Ave Crossing

PRIORITY: High

RECOMMENDATION

Consider improvements to the cross walk on Patriot Avenue, South of Lake Street. (Possible in conjunction with the City of Pequot Lakes Patriot Ave redesign).

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

This is one of the main intersections for students crossing Patriot Ave to and from school.

WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

City and school staff, with funding from MnDOT.

HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improving crossing conditions makes walking and rolling easier and safer for people with disabilities. This intersection is also a key crossing to school for lower-income families and students.

Goal 7: Woodman and Patriot Crossing

PRIORITY: High

RECOMMENDATION

Seek funding and feasibility for Improving crossing and intersection markings on Woodman and Patriot Ave.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

This is one of the main intersections for students crossing Patriot Ave to and from school.

WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

City and school staff, with funding from MnDOT.

HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improving crossing conditions makes walking and rolling easier and safer for people with disabilities. This intersection is also a key crossing to school for lower-income families and students.

Goal 8: Oak Street

PRIORITY: High

RECOMMENDATION

Consider adding parking and sidewalks on South Oak Street along ball fields and bus drop area; and seek ways to slow traffic on Oak Street.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

This is one of the main intersections for students crossing Patriot Ave to and from school.

WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

City and school staff, with funding from MnDOT.

HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improving conditions along this route makes walking and rolling easier and safer for people with disabilities. This intersection is also a key crossing to school for lower-income families and students.

Goal 9: Installation of Rapid Flashing Beacons

PRIORITY: High

RECOMMENDATION

Consider installing Rapid Flashing Beacons at certain intersections or crossings as this will get more kids outside walking before school and getting active with the potential of encouraging more kids to walk to school.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

This would potentially improve safety at several intersections.

WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

City and school staff, with funding from MnDOT.

HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improving crossing safety would potentially make walking and rolling safer for people with disabilities. This intersection is also a key crossing to school for lower-income families and students.

Engagement Goals and Actions

All Safe Routes to School initiatives should begin by listening to parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and seek to work with community organizations, to build intentional, ongoing engagement opportunities into the program structure.

Goal 1: Consider developing a walking school bus program that would include local PTA and school staff enabling local, vetted/verified/certified adults to walk or bike along with students along the clearly identified route.

PRIORITY: Low

RECOMMENDATION

Consider developing a walking school bus program that would include local PTA and school staff.