



MAHTOMEDI SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PLAN

Engagement Summary 2022-2023

Introduction

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) staff provided community engagement support to collect ideas on walking and biking from the Mahtomedi community. The SRTS team assisted Mahtomedi staff by using multiple strategies such as hosting an [interactive engagement website](#), requesting feedback through caregiver and student surveys, and engaging with families at open houses (Figure 1).

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, and
4. **Build excitement** for the Mahtomedi Safe Routes to School Plan.



Figure 1: Staff engage with a caregiver at St. Jude of the Lake’s Open House

These engagement strategies were chosen to make it easy for the Mahtomedi communities to talk to staff and participate.

Table 1: Engagement strategies for Mahtomedi’s SRTS Plan

Date	Strategy	Description	Participants
September 11, 2022 – January 20, 2023	Interactive map	Interactive online map provided for residents to leave comments and match them to the exact locations.	35
September 11, 2022 – January 20, 2023	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 and in paper-pencil form upon request. Available languages were English, Spanish, Somali, Karen, Hmong, and Chinese.	129
September 11, 2022 – January 20, 2023	Student survey	Survey using student-friendly language to help identify why they walk and bike and what	18

Date	Strategy	Description	Participants
		would help make it safer to walk and bike. Surveys were distributed during school lessons.	
September 6, 2022	Pop-up table	Tabling at the OH Anderson Elementary School open house. Activities included an interactive trivia board, a roll plot map of the school's neighborhood, and a sticker survey.	40
September 22, 2022	Pop-up table	Tabling at St. Jude of the Lake School open house. Activities included an interactive trivia board, a roll plot map of the school's neighborhood, and a sticker survey.	15
November 1, 2022	Equity scorecard	An equity analysis was completed with the project team during the Rapid Planning Workshop and used to guide engagement strategies.	24
November 1, 2022	Student discussion	Asked students questions during the Rapid Planning Workshop to better understand their successes and challenges with walking and biking in their community.	5

Key takeaways from engagement include:

- The community would like to see reduced speeding and traffic control throughout Mahtomedi, but especially around school zones. Caregivers from Mahtomedi schools often mentioned Warner Avenue/Warner Road, Hilton Trail, and Stillwater Road as the largest barriers to walking and biking to school.
- The lack of safe walking and biking paths were noted time and again by families in Mahtomedi (Figure 2). Many mentioned Warner Avenue/Warner Road and Hilton Trail as roads without safe walking and biking options, especially for younger students.
- Programs found to be most compatible with the specific needs of the Mahtomedi community are a Bike Train, Bike Rodeo, and Crossing Guards.
- School parking lots become congested at the start and end of school. A student might be able to safely bike to school, but navigating the parking lot with moving cars presents safety concerns at several of the schools in the area.

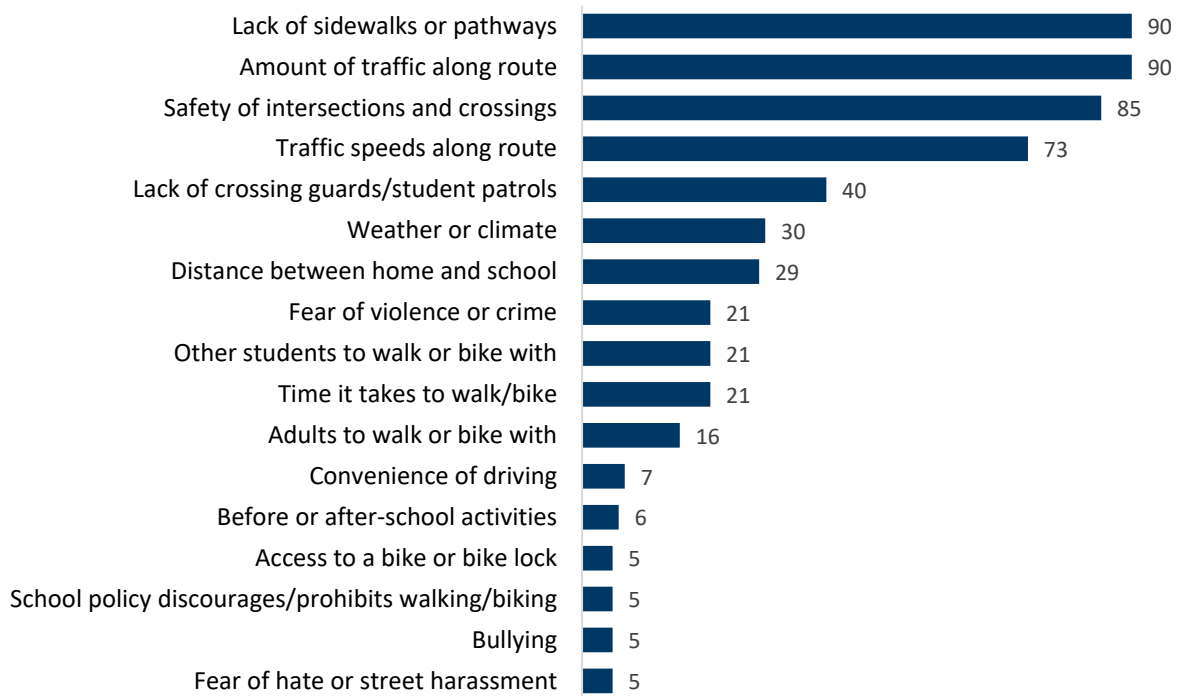


Figure 2: Caregiver responses to survey questions “Which of the following issues prevent your child from walking or biking to/from school? (check all that apply)”

Equity

Engagement efforts were well received by the Mahtomedi community, especially the caregiver survey and in-person pop-up tables that made it easy for busy families to provide feedback for the SRTS Plan. Future SRTS efforts should look to engage families online or at school events. Additionally, attendees of the Rapid Planning Workshop noted that many students gather at the Wildwood Library after school. This could be an ideal location to distribute information about the project in the future as well.

School staff at the Rapid Planning Workshop have noticed a desire for independence shared between students and caregivers. Many students already walk or bike to school and should be engaged as key leaders in programming for their peers.

Some families do not attend school events due to transportation barriers, according to school staff. Project materials should address action steps caregivers can take to encourage walking and biking while at home.

Programs

Many students and caregivers in the area said that they enjoy biking for fun. Several families mentioned that they drive to parks to go on their bike rides instead of biking locally due to high-traffic roads. There are several Safe Routes to School programs that could make walking and biking safer and more appealing for all students.

Bike Train

There is a group of students that live east of Katherine Abbott Park that often bike to OH Anderson Elementary School together. Implementing an official Bike Train might encourage other children to bike and provide caregivers with peace of mind when thinking about their students crossing busy roads.

In-School Curriculum

A handful of students mentioned that they did not know how to ride a bike or that they were not very comfortable riding one. A caregiver mentioned that they didn't know how to teach their child how to ride. In-school curriculum like "Walk! Bike! Fun!" could teach students biking skills and help new riders learn how to bike.

School Safety Messaging

Many caregivers and students mentioned that traffic moves quickly around the school. Increased safety messaging could be a good fit to alert people driving that there could be people walking and biking, especially during student pick-up and drop-off times. Other messaging could look to approach bus-riding etiquette as several caregivers mentioned bullying on school buses as a reason they prefer to drive their students to school.

Infrastructure

There are no sidewalks or trails in many areas of Mahtomedi and most families are looking for high-quality options that have separation from vehicle traffic. Caregivers mentioned they would feel more comfortable letting their students walk or bike to school if they did not have to walk or bike in the streets surrounding their schools. Figure 3 shows this sentiment reflected in caregiver responses to the survey question, "What would help your child walk or bike to/from/at school more often?"

The roads most often mentioned by families at many of the schools in Mahtomedi included Hilton Trail, Warner Avenue/Warner Road, and Stillwater Road. Additionally, caregivers said drop-off and pick-up areas around many of the schools are chaotic and make visibility of students in crossings difficult.

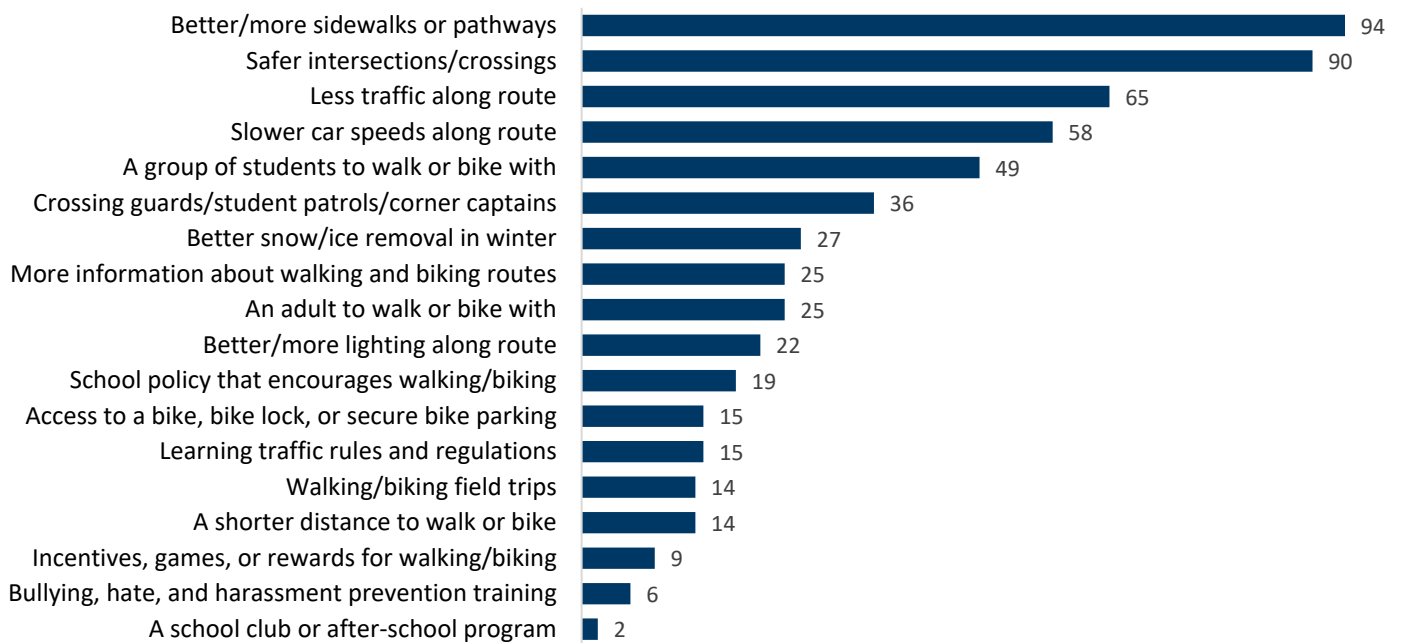


Figure 3: Caregiver responses to the survey question: “What would help your child walk or bike to/from/at school more often? Check all that apply.”

Hilton Trail

Many families mentioned that traffic moves quickly along Hilton Trail and the lack of safe crossing is a point of concern. Many people driving do not slow down to let people walking and biking cross. Caregivers noted several intersections near OH Anderson Elementary School as issues—70th Street North, 69th Street North, and 66th Street North. Additionally, caregivers pointed out that there are not dedicated walking or biking paths along this road. The shoulder on Hilton Trail is not wide enough for people walking or biking, especially younger students. One caregiver said, “Speed on Hilton is not appropriate in a community. It’s scary as an adult to walk on Hilton or Warner. More cars with construction. Sidewalks would also be helpful.”

Warner Avenue/Warner Road

Caregivers had similar complaints about Warner Avenue/Warner Road that they do with Hilton Trail. The traffic moves quickly along Warner Avenue/Warner Road and there are no dedicated walking or biking paths. In addition, there is no shoulder on the road, so people who do walk on this road tend to walk in the grass and bike in the vehicle lane. One caregiver suggested adding a sidewalk along the entire road or if there isn’t enough room, making it one-lane and using the other for a walking and biking trail.

During pick-up and drop-off hours at OH Anderson Elementary School, traffic often backs up to the south to Puma Lane, and sometimes down to Bichner Lane.

Stillwater Road/CSAH 12

Families said Stillwater is unsafe to cross, especially at major intersections. Caregivers and students were particularly concerned about intersections and safe crossings on Stillwater Road at Warner Avenue, Hilton Trail, Ideal Avenue, and Hallam Avenue. One family mentioned their student used to love to bike to school before getting hit by a car crossing Stillwater Road at the intersection with Hilton Trail.

Katherine Abbott Park

Several students cut through Katherine Abbott Park when biking to school. There is no official path connecting to their neighborhood on the west side of the park; it's a dirt trail at the end of a cul-de-sac. This route is not maintained but numerous children use it.

East Avenue

A few people mentioned East Avenue as a road that is difficult to cross. A couple people said that the East Avenue entrance to St. Andrew's is especially difficult and said a crosswalk would be helpful.

Wildwood Road/Highway 244

A number of caregivers mentioned that Wildwood Road near Lost Lake is dangerous to bike on with limited shoulder space. Many caregivers said that they did not feel comfortable with their children biking on this road even though it might be a more direct path to school. Biking from the houses around Echo Lake to St. Jude of the Lake School takes almost twice as long when avoiding this road, according to students.