

Duluth Safe Routes to School Planning Assistance Process

Presented By:

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OUR MISSION

Every student, every day will be empowered with learning opportunities for growth, creativity and curiosity, in preparation for their future in a global community.

OUR VISION

Duluth Public Schools provides an academically engaging, safe and inclusive environment with high expectations and responsible use of resources.

OUR CORE VALUES

Learning



Developing a love of learning through life-long inquiry.

Excellence



Having high standards for all through accountability, integrity and authenticity.

Equity



Creating conditions of justice, fairness and inclusion so all students have access to the opportunities to learn and develop to their fullest potential.

Collaboration



Working in partnership with staff, families, students and community.

Belonging



Providing a welcoming and accessible environment where everyone feels safe, seen and heard.

Introductions

Andie Heil - Safe Routes to School Coordinator, DULuth Public Schools

Gavin Bukovich - Planner, Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC) Email: gbukovich@ardc.org

ARDC has been selected as the planning and development organization to assist in creating a full-district Safe Routes to School Plan for Duluth Public Schools (ISD #709).

This planning process is funded by Minnesota Department of Transportation.

MnDOT SRTS - Program Overview

- The MnDOT Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program encourages K-8 students to walk, bike, and roll to school.
- It provides funding, planning, and educational resources for safety and infrastructure projects.
- The goal is to improve student physical activity, safety, and well-being, and reduce traffic and improving air quality around schools.
- The SRTS initiative includes both state and federal funding to support a variety of initiatives.



The 6 E's

SRTS programs improve safety, reduce traffic and improve air quality near schools through a multidisciplinary approach that is structured around the 6 E's.

- Evaluation: Figuring out what issues to address and how to make projects effective.
- Education: Teaching students and parents traffic safety skills and the benefits of walking and biking.
- Encouragement: Creating fun events and activities to get students and families excited about walking and biking to school.
- Equity: Making sure all students, especially those from underserved communities, benefit from the program.
- Engagement: Listening to the community—students, parents, and staff—to build a successful program together.
- Engineering: Making physical improvements like better crosswalks and signs to create safer routes.



The Benefits of Safe Routes to School

COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS

- Stronger student friendships & relationships through walking & biking together
- Positive social connections for families & neighbors



CLIMATE BENEFITS AND CLEANER AIR

- Fewer student asthma attacks due to less driving & reduced air pollution results
- Cleaner air & reduced greenhouse gas emissions



BETTER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

- Better focus, improved concentration & less distraction for students who are active before school
- Fewer absences and less tardiness when students walk or bike in groups



TRAFFIC SAFETY

- Reduced traffic injuries & dangers for students and community members at arrival & dismissal through street improvements near schools
- More chances to learn & practice road safety for students



SAFETY FROM CRIME

- Increased safety from crime & violence due to more people on the streets, good lighting & better street design
- Less harassment, bullying, or violence when students walk or bike together or with adults



SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION FIXES

- Solutions to reduced or non-existent bus service through Safe Routes to School
- Reduced traffic congestion at pick-up/drop-off times



COST SAVINGS

- Household savings from reduced gas & car use
- Education budget savings through reduced student busing costs



SRTS Timeline - ARDC Scope of Work

- ❑ Task 1: Initial Contact with Project Applicant (July/August 2025)
- ❑ Task 2: Kick-Off Meetings (September/October 2025)
- ❑ Task 3: Data Collection (September-November 2025)
- ❑ Task 4: Data Assessment (December 2025)
- ❑ Task 5: Action Plan Development (January 2026)
- ❑ Task 6: Plan Development (February 2026)
- ❑ Task 7: Draft Plan (March 2026)
- ❑ Task 8: Local Plan Review (April 2026)
- ❑ Task 9: Final Plan Review (May 2026)
- ❑ Task 10: Plan Completion (May-June 2026)

**These tasks are currently outlined on a typical 12-month contract. However, given that this project is unique and under an 18-month contract; there will be some slight variabilities in the outlined timeline.

Data Collection Overview - Fall 2025

Duluth Public Schools:

- Parent/Caregiver Surveys
- Student Travel Tallies
- Pick Up/Drop Off Observations
- Student Population Density Maps
- School Environment and Policy Assessment
- Walk/Bike Audit Events
- School Zone Hazard Assessment

Other Data Collection (ARDC):

- Crash Data for the past 10 years
- Speed Data
- Average Daily Traffic Counts
- Qualitative data obtained through community meetings
- Any other data relevant to the planning process



Final Product - Duluth Public Schools SRTS Plan

The final product of this planning process will be a document that outlines strategic plan to make Duluth neighborhoods safer and more accessible for kids walking and biking to school.

This plan can serve as a strategic tool for improving the entire pedestrian and bike network in the City of Duluth and St. Louis County.

Funding Opportunities as a Result of the Planning Process

- **SRTS Boost Grants:** For communities with existing SRTS Plans, these grants fund non-infrastructure projects such as education, encouragement, and promotional activities to keep walking and biking safe and fun.
- **State-Funded SRTS Infrastructure Grants:** Provides funding for construction projects that improve access and safety on walking, biking, and rolling routes to schools, such as new sidewalks, trails, and improved crossings.
- **Active Transportation (AT) Program:** A grant program for projects that increase walking and bicycling. Future funds are expected to cover planning, infrastructure, and non-infrastructure projects.
- **Greater Minnesota Transportation Alternatives:** This is open to communities in Greater Minnesota for projects including bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
 - SRTS projects are eligible, but a 20% local match is typically required.



Questions?

- Any questions?
- Comments?
- Concerns?
- Feedback?