

REPORT / RECOMMENDATION



To: Edina Transportation Commission

Agenda Item #: VI. B.

From: Mark K. Nolan, AICP, Transportation Planner

Action

Date: January 16, 2014

Discussion

Subject: Edina Active Routes to School Presentation

Information

Action Requested:

No action requested.

Information / Background:

Engineering staff along with ETC members Janovy and Bass have been working with Edina Public Schools, Bloomington Public Health and consultant Kimley Horn Associates on the Edina Active (Safe) Routes to School (ARTS) Plan. The final draft of the Plan is complete, with the goal to be considered for Council approval in February. Member Bass will give a presentation of the Plan.

Attachments:

Edina Active Routes to School Plan Executive Summary

Edina Active Routes to School Comprehensive Plan



Executive Summary

The purpose of an Active Routes to School Plan (ARTS) is to identify opportunities and priorities to increase walking and biking to schools, and develop an implementation plan for making improvements in these areas. A comprehensive process involving Edina School District, City of Edina, parents, and residents was begun in 2012 to develop a plan for the nine public schools in Edina. Through site visits, principal interviews, data gathering, and stakeholder input, a set of short-, mid-, and long-term improvements have been developed to address the needs of students walking and biking to school. These improvements involve actions by multiple stakeholders and include both infrastructure and policy changes.

Introduction

Walking and biking to school in the United States has decreased dramatically, from over 60 percent in the 1960s to an average of less than 10 percent today. This reduction in active transportation, and corresponding increase in vehicular transportation, negatively affects students' health, vehicle congestion, traffic safety, and environmental quality around schools. To reverse this decades-long trend of decreased walking and biking, the nationwide Safe Routes to School (SRTS) initiative was created to increase walking and biking to school through the implementation of each of the five "E's":

- **Education** – Teaching children to walk and bike safely
- **Encouragement** – Developing programs that get children excited about walking or biking to school
- **Enforcement** – Having law enforcement support along the designated routes to school
- **Engineering** – Identifying infrastructure barriers to walking and biking
- **Evaluation** – Measuring the effectiveness of the various components of the SRTS project

This Active Routes to School Plan plays an important function of connecting the roles of the school district and the city in jointly seeking to increase walking and biking to school. It is intended to complement and support the work and planning already completed, while also capturing all the factors that influence choices about transportation. The plan builds on the infrastructure improvements previously identified, but also addresses the other four areas of ARTS including policy and programming.

Edina has already taken a number of significant steps to improve walking and bicycling in the community, including:

- Established a bicycle task force.
- Completed the Bicycle Transportation Plan (2007). Implementation of the plan is underway.
- Created a sidewalk map as part of the City's Comprehensive Plan (2008). Implementation of the plan is underway.
- Completed and implemented the Edina Schools Speed Zone Study (2009).
- Created the Pedestrian and Cyclist Safety (PACS) Fund (2012) through franchise fees on gas and electricity. The fees are estimated to generate more than \$1 million per year.
- Hired a Transportation Planner whose primary role is to administer the PACS Fund (2013).
- Adopted a Living Streets Policy and formed an on-going advisory committee to guide Living Streets Plan development (2013).

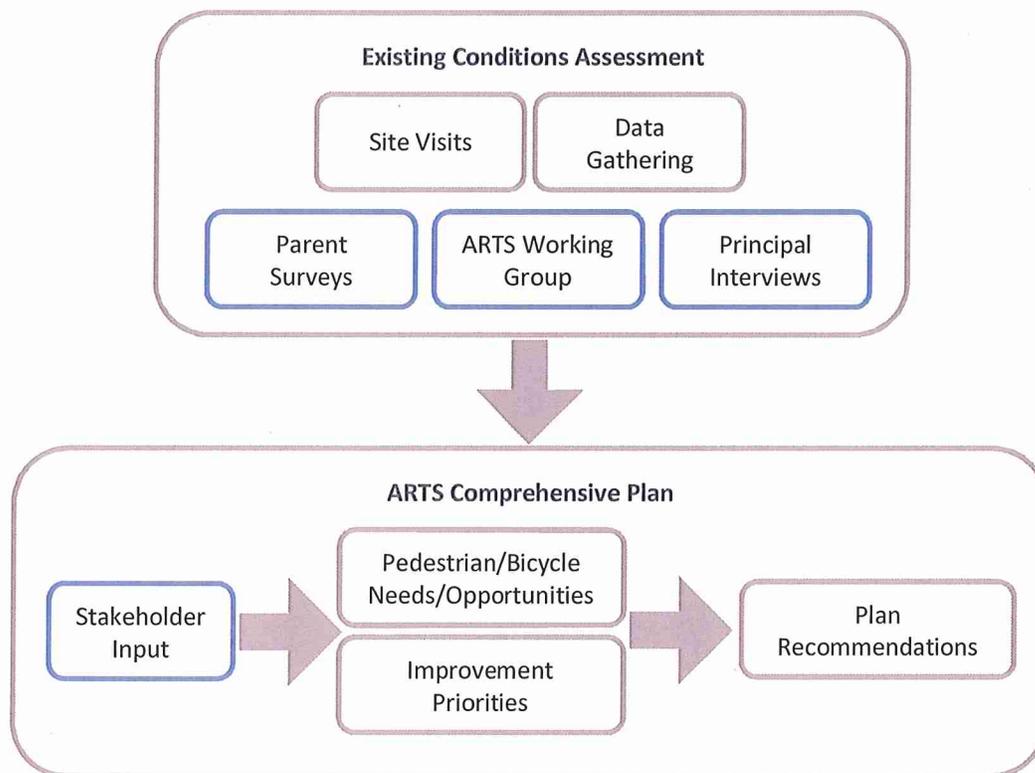
Edina Active Routes to School Comprehensive Plan



The benefits of a comprehensive ARTS plan are to provide an all-inclusive picture of the needs throughout a school district or city, allowing for programming and prioritization. In addition, it provides the opportunity to address district and city policies and programs related to walking and biking, and having a plan puts the agencies in a favorable position when applying for funding. At the school and neighborhood level, increased walking and biking to school has been shown to improve student health and academic performance, reduce traffic congestion around the school, and thereby also improve air quality and reduce traffic noise.

Project Process

This plan was developed with input from the key ARTS stakeholders in Edina, including school staff, parents, school district staff, city staff, and students. The initial phases included significant data collection and assembly, along with site observations at each school, discussions with stakeholders, and development of recommendations. Stakeholder input was gathered at several key points in the process, as highlighted by the blue boxes in the diagram below.



Recommendations

The following bullets present recommendations to increase walking and biking to schools in Edina. Some recommendations could be feasibly implemented in the next year, while others are longer term and

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may trigger other processes such as policy changes or identification of significant funding sources. Each measure has been classified according to the agency that would lead its implementation.

City of Edina Improvements

- Provide enforcement in school zones
- Establish city policy for crosswalk markings
- Modify ordinance language to allow bicycling on sidewalks
- Evaluate effectiveness of school speed zone signing and establish city policy for use of school speed zones
- Construct pedestrian ramps at W 72nd Street/ Oaklawn Avenue
- Construct sidewalk on 58th Street east of Wooddale Avenue
- Construct sidewalk or trail on Interlachen Boulevard
- Obtain easement and construct sidewalk connection from Oaklawn Avenue to Parklawn Avenue
- Construct sidewalk connection from Ayrshire Boulevard to Highlands Elementary
- Construct sidewalk on Valley View Road, Tracy Avenue, and Gleason Road
- Construct sidewalk on Sun Road, Arbour Avenue, and Olinger Boulevard
- Construct sidewalk on Benton Avenue
- Construct sidewalk on Claremore Drive, Kellogg Avenue, and Wooddale Avenue
- Construct sidewalk on Cornelia Drive from 70th Street to 66th Street

Edina Public Schools Improvements

- Improve bicycle parking at Edina High School and Valley View Middle School
- Improve bicycle parking at Highlands Elementary
- Continue or initiate site-level walking and biking activities
- Develop a walking and biking section of the school district website
- Create a program to improve bicycle parking at all schools
- Designate a district Active Routes to School coordinator
- Incorporate language regarding walking and biking to school into the district wellness policy
- Incorporate walking and biking safety education into the physical education curriculum
- Reconstruct and narrow the driveways at Cornelia Elementary School

Joint City-District Improvements

- Establish a permanent Active Routes to School working group or task force
- Create a pedestrian and bicycle safety public education campaign
- Continue student travel tallies on at least a yearly basis
- Address safety and traffic issues on Valley View Road at Edina High School/ Valley View Middle School

Based on its past planning and active efforts to improve its bicycle and pedestrian facilities, Edina is well-positioned to implement infrastructure improvements and effect the cultural and policy changes necessary to see long-term shifts in travel behavior.