

FY 2020-2021 Report on

Safe Routes to School in Minnesota

September 2021



Prepared by:

The Minnesota Department of Transportation

395 John Ireland Boulevard

Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155-1899

Phone: 651-296-3000

Toll-Free: 1-800-657-3774

TTY, Voice or ASCII: 1-800-627-3529

To request this document in an alternative format, call 651-366-4718 or 1-800-657-3774 (Greater Minnesota).

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Legislative Request

This report is issued to comply with [Minnesota Statutes 174.40, subdivision 8.](#)

174.40 SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM.

Subd. 8. Legislative report.

By November 1 of each odd-numbered year, the commissioner shall submit a report on the safe routes to school program to the chairs and ranking minority members of the house of representatives and senate committees with jurisdiction over transportation policy and finance. The report must at a minimum:

- (1) summarize program implementation;
- (2) provide an overview of grant evaluation and criteria used in project selection;
- (3) provide a brief description of each project funded in the previous fiscal year, including the amount of money provided from each safe routes to school account under this section and the amount provided under the federal program;
- (4) summarize the status of the federal program or successor legislation; and
- (5) identify any recommendations for legislative changes, including proposals to improve program effectiveness.

The cost of preparing this report is less than \$5,000.

Executive Summary

This legislative report provides an overview of the Safe Routes to School program in Minnesota for the FY 2020-21 biennium.

Since the 2019 legislative report, MnDOT funded nine SRTS solicitations:

- 2019-2020 infrastructure implementation (federal Transportation Alternatives funds)
- 2020-2021 infrastructure implementation (federal TA funds)
- 2019-2020 planning assistance grants (federal and state funds)
- 2020-2021 planning assistance grants (federal and state funds)
- 2019-2020 boost implementation grants (state funds)
- 2020-2021 boost implementation grants (state funds)
- 2020-2021 demonstration projects (state and federal funds)
- 2020-2021 equity in Walk!Bike!Fun! (federal SAFTEA-LU funds)
- 2019 local coordinator grants (federal SAFTEA-LU funds)

Since 2005, MnDOT has awarded more than \$58 million to Minnesota communities for SRTS projects. These projects have reached more than 740 schools.

During the 2020-2021 biennium MnDOT also provided funding for new and existing statewide programs and projects:

- **Minnesota Safe Routes to School Strategic Plan Update:** The [Minnesota Safe Routes to School Strategic Plan](#) establishes a five-year action plan to improve walking and biking to school for youth in Minnesota. This document updates the 2015 Five-Year Strategic Plan, and provides a refined vision and new goals, strategies, action steps and performance measures to expand, strengthen and monitor Minnesota's SRTS program. This document is a tool to guide state and regional SRTS practitioners and partners in building a stronger, more equitable SRTS program at the local, regional and state levels.

Implementation of the strategic plan for FY 2022-2023 prioritizes the following strategies:

- Improves user experience and accessibility of the MnSRTS Resource Center
 - Rebrands MnSRTS program with a more user friendly and accessible design
 - Develops tools and trainings to support equitable implementation of the SRTS program
 - Creates materials to support local school siting to meet all forms of student transportation needs
 - Integrates youth voices and participation in local programs
- **Minnesota SRTS Resource Center:** [The Minnesota Safe Routes to School Resource Center](#) serves as a centralized source of information, resources and training for communities looking to implement SRTS projects and programs. Resources are developed and added to the resource center based on engagement with SRTS stakeholders and their expressed needs on an ongoing basis. Notable resources added during this biennium were to assist school transportation planning during the pandemic and resources for distance learning.

- Walk! Bike! Fun! pedestrian and bicycle safety K-8 curriculum:** Walk! Bike! Fun!, the Minnesota pedestrian and bicycle safety curriculum, continued to expand its reach in 2020-21. In partnership with the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota, MnDOT trained 800 teachers and educators how to teach pedestrian and bicycle safety in their classrooms. The estimated annual reach of the trained educators is more than 77,000 students annually. Modifications were made to the curriculum to create a distance learning version for teachers and parents to use due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The distance learning curriculum has options for students depending on the equipment and technology available to them. The goals of the lesson plans are to teach children to walk and bike safely — building confidence and helping them stay safe, active and healthy. Additionally, BikeMN's bike fleet check-out system was updated to prioritize schools with higher inequities. Much of the modified Walk! Bike! Fun! curriculum was translated to meet the needs of non-English speaking families and the adaptive curriculum was completed to address different learning needs for students with cognitive and physical disabilities.
- Student Transportation Equity for Priority Populations Tool:** Through the 2020 MnSRTS Strategic Plan engagement process, Minnesota communities expressed that centralizing equity be a priority for the MnSRTS program. The [Student Transportation Equity for Priority Populations](#) tool was developed to support equitable scoring during the Safe Route to School grant application process. The STEPP tool uses a variety of metrics to better reach priority populations and allows grant applicants to quickly look up the equity score for schools identified in their application.
- Safe Routes to School plans:** Walkable and bikeable communities are best implemented by using a comprehensive plan that outlines a well-rounded strategy for making it safer and easier to walk and bike to school. As a result, SRTS plans continue to be a program priority. In FY 2020 and 2021, 39 communities applied for planning assistance – of these, 25 communities received funding. During the pandemic, there was a decrease in applications for funding, however interest remains high.
- Walk and Bike to School Days:** Encouragement events such as International Walk to School Day, National Bike to School Day and Winter Walk to School Day, are key to building interest at the school level while elevating issues of walking and bicycling with local leaders. Schools that register online receive toolkits to help generate excitement for their events. MnDOT also sponsors an annual Bike to School Day poster contest, Walk to School Day photo contest and Winter Walk to School Day Golden Snow Boot Award. Walk and bike to school days regularly have over a hundred schools that participate each year. During the pandemic, the event days were modified to support schools that were in distance learning, such as the creation of Bike to Anywhere Day (May 2020 and 2021) and Walk to Anywhere Day (October 2020). Schools and families were excited to have something fun to celebrate and support kids being kids.

- **Safe Routes Academy:** To support communities interested in advancing Safe Routes to School that lack the technical or program expertise, MnDOT works closely with state partners at the Minnesota Department of Health and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota to provide customized, day-long trainings on request to build local capacity in rural, urban and suburban areas to implement SRTS. The feedback on these trainings is consistently positive. During the pandemic these workshops transitioned into virtual meetings and direct technical assistance with local communities through resource sharing and coaching.
- **Communications:** The MnDOT SRTS program amplified efforts to inform and engage key stakeholders on everything from funding opportunities to best practices in program approach. Presence on a monthly SRTS webinar, ongoing skill-sharing activities, SRTS e-news and social media posts ensured a higher level of engagement from communities across the state, growing the e-news subscribers from 982 in October 2015 to 2,728 in September 2021.
- **[Best Practices for Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Guide](#)** - This guide assists practitioners to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety on their roadway networks. The strategies in this handbook include a mix of widely used treatments across the state that are proven strategies and emerging treatments that are considered experimental.
- **Engineering studies** - SRTS engineering studies are intended to bridge the gap between safety strategies documented in a SRTS plan and implementation. SRTS engineering studies use a data-driven approach to verify existing strategies suggested in SRTS plans and identify new engineering strategies to improve routes for students to walk and bicycle to and from schools. The resulting SRTS engineering studies include project summary sheets for select projects that may include concept level drawings and a list of potential infrastructure projects prioritized by effectiveness in addressing safety risks, potential use and cost.
- **Demonstration Projects:** Safe Routes to School teams in communities across Minnesota want guidance to develop, implement and evaluate demonstration projects as a way to build support for safer walking and bicycling facilities on MnDOT trunk highways, state aid roadways or local roads. These low-cost installations give communities a chance to “test out” new ideas for improving walking and bicycling before committing to a project and allocating funding. Over the past several years, MnDOT developed the [“Demonstration Project Implementation Guide: A Resource for the Development of Short-Term, Low-Cost, Temporary Roadway Projects to Promote and Advance Walking and Bicycling”](#) and supported implementation of demonstration projects across the state. Seven projects across the state received funding in FY2020-2021, and three were installed.

- **Local Safe Routes to School Coordinators:** To support implementation of SRTS plans, federal funding was secured for a grant solicitation to hire SRTS coordinators in six school districts over a three year period. These districts now have more capacity to implement a comprehensive SRTS program to increase the number of students walking and biking to school. SRTS Coordinators were hired in Grand Rapids, New Ulm, Rochester, South St Paul, St Paul and Richfield school districts. Some coordinators were hired just before March 2020 when many schools switched to distance learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Coordinators supported unique efforts the pandemic created for schools while also working to make sustainable changes, secure additional funding and provide some fun programming.
- **Boost Grants:** Boost grants are new this biennium and are intended to enhance STRS programmatic efforts by providing funds for implementation. Through these grant awards, MnDOT supports communities with existing SRTS plans or comprehensive approaches in advancing non-infrastructure strategies for schools that support making it safe, easy and fun for students to walk and bicycle to school. During this biennium, 15 communities received grant awards, totaling \$308,051.

In FY 2022-2023, the MnDOT SRTS program continues to offer statewide programs and grants for local projects including SRTS planning assistance, curriculum implementation, Boost non-infrastructure grants, engineering studies, demonstration projects, local coordinators and infrastructure. The program also continues to explore how to address equity in MnSRTS. These priorities are identified and implemented with ongoing feedback from the statewide SRTS Steering Committee, the SRTS State Network and regional and local partners. MnSRTS 2025 Strategic Plan implementation is focusing on a brand refresh, developing equity training and resources and broadening youth engagement in the program.

Safe Routes to School in Minnesota

In 1969, 48 percent of students walked or bicycled to school. As of 2014, only 17 percent of students walk and bike to school. Meanwhile, students in Minnesota and elsewhere, suffer from unprecedented health issues including pre-diabetes, physical inactivity and unhealthy weight. There are a number of factors affecting the decline in walking and bicycling to school including construction of new schools on the outskirts of town, high traffic speed and volume, parental fears of child safety and more. Safe Routes to School, an international approach to increasing walking and bicycling to school, is a comprehensive program to help children safely walk and bicycle to school through infrastructure improvements, education and promotional activities. The program follows the “6 E’s”:

- Equity
- Engineering
- Encouragement
- Evaluation
- Education
- Engagement

Benefits of SRTS include increased physical activity, students arriving at school focused and ready to learn, and decreased traffic congestion with improved air quality around schools statewide.

MnDOT’s SRTS program in 2005 began with the federal transportation bill named “The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users,” or SAFETEA-LU. SAFETEA-LU provided funding to all 50 states to increase safety and opportunities for children in grades K-8 to walk and bicycle to school. All projects were funded entirely with federal funds because SAFETEA-LU did not require a local match.

The federal program under SAFETEA-LU ended in 2012 and was replaced with “The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act,” otherwise referred to as MAP-21. In 2012, the Minnesota Legislature created a state SRTS program and in 2013 provided funding for non-infrastructure activities. This state SRTS funding has continued to provide funding for the MnSRTS program to date.

Program Funding Sources

Federal Legislation: SAFETEA-LU

The federal transportation bill, SAFETEA-LU, passed in 2005. It created and funded SRTS programs in all 50 states. As part of this legislation, each state was required to have a full-time SRTS coordinator to manage the program, follow recommended program evaluation guidance and fund SRTS activities that supported the objectives outlined in the federal legislation. Additionally, SAFETEA-LU funds were available until expended. As a result, when awarded projects were unable to implement, the funds were returned to the SAFETEA-LU account to be used on other SRTS projects.

Table 1: Minnesota's SAFETEA-LU SRTS apportionments for 2005-2021

Year	Apportionment
2005	\$1,000,000
2006	\$1,441,000
2007	\$1,897,225
2008	\$2,324,104
2009	\$2,906,875
2010	\$2,906,875
2011	\$3,383,120
2012	\$2,713,764
2019	\$4,500,000
2020	\$0
2021	\$0
Total 2005-21	\$23,072,963

SAFETEA-LU Spending in FY 2020-2021

In FY 2019, FHWA authorized \$4.5 million for new and innovative Safe Routes to School projects in Minnesota. Those included demonstration projects, equity in Walk!Bike!Fun! education, establishing local SRTS coordinators, developing engineering plans, updating Minnesota's Best Practices for Pedestrian/Bicycle Safety guidebook and funding several infrastructure projects.

- Funded six coordinators to quickly advance SRTS efforts in school districts
- Conducted 16 engineering studies to increase success of infrastructure recommendations
- Tested five demonstration projects to identify the best safety improvements
- Hired one additional MnDOT employee to assist program coordination
- Created new distance-learning curriculum and virtual teacher training to improve equity in reach of the curriculum to more rural, high-need areas.

Federal Legislation: MAP-21/FAST Act

Under MAP-21, which replaced SAFETEA-LU and took effect Oct. 1, 2012, SRTS was no longer a required, stand-alone federal program. Instead, SRTS was an eligible program under the federal Transportation Alternatives program and competes with other types of projects including scenic byways and recreational trails. MnDOT's TA program is administered through the area transportation partnerships in Greater Minnesota and the Metropolitan Council in the Twin Cities metro area. TA requires a 20 percent local match for SRTS projects. SRTS projects have been successful in securing funding through TA in both the Metropolitan Council's regional solicitation and in the Greater Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership TA solicitations.

In 2015, Congress passed the FAST Act, which sustained many of the funding priorities outlined in MAP-21 for five more years.

Spending in 2020-2021

During the last biennium, two solicitations were held to award TA funding for infrastructure projects, including Safe Routes to School, through the Area Transportation Partnerships. One solicitation was held by the Metropolitan Council. The ATPs funded 14 Safe Routes to School projects and the Metropolitan Council awarded six projects.

Table 2: TAP and Metropolitan Council Award Funding Amounts

Year	MnDOT TAP Award Amount	Metropolitan Council Award Amount
2020	\$2,249,440	\$3,628,943
2021	\$1,937,035	\$0
Total	\$4,186,475	\$3,628,943

State Legislation

In 2012, a state SRTS program was established in [Minn. Stat. 174.40, subd. 2\(a\)](#), "...to provide assistance in capital investments for safe and appealing non-motorized transportation to and from a school." The law establishes a SRTS account in the bond proceeds fund, and a SRTS account in the general fund. The Minnesota program follows many of the guidelines established in the federal SRTS legislation. The law provides specific program administration requirements and evaluation criteria, which MnDOT staff implement.

In 2013, the transportation finance omnibus bill included \$500,000 in general funds over the biennium for Safe Routes to School non-infrastructure activities. In 2014, this was increased to \$1 million per biennium for non-infrastructure activities. Additionally, \$1 million from the general fund was invested by the state Legislature for SRTS infrastructure projects. An infrastructure solicitation for \$1 million was held in 2015. In 2017, the state Legislature again put \$1 million toward SRTS infrastructure and then \$3 million in 2019.

State Spending in FY 2020-2021

The state allocated \$3 million in infrastructure funds in 2019, and an additional \$5 million for the SRTS program in FY 2022. These funds are being used for a fall 2021 solicitation for both infrastructure and non-infrastructure SRTS solicitations.

Funding Summary

Table 3: Summary of Funding for SRTS by Type and Year

STATE FISCAL YEAR	FUNDING TYPE			
	SAFETEA-LU	MAP-21/FAST Act	State non-infrastructure	State infrastructure
2014	\$1 million	\$4 million	\$250,000	
2015	\$112,000	\$1.9 million	\$500,000	\$1 million
2016	\$150,000	\$3.9 million	\$500,000	N/A
2017	N/A	\$250,000	\$500,000	N/A
2018	N/A	\$250,000	\$500,000	\$1 million
2019	\$4.5 million	\$2.3 million	\$500,000	\$1 million
2020	\$0	\$2,249,440	\$500,000	\$3 million
2021	\$0	\$1,937,035	\$500,000	\$0

2020-2021 Biennium: Grant Evaluation & Project Selection Criteria

During the 2020-2021 biennium, MnDOT solicited SRTS projects for infrastructure, planning and implementation activities using a mix of federal and state funds. The solicitation timelines, schedules and applications varied by funding source and grant type.

Since the 2019 legislative report, MnDOT provided funding for ten SRTS solicitations:

- 2019-2020 infrastructure implementation (federal TAP funds)
- 2020-2021 infrastructure implementation (federal TAP funds)
- 2019-2020 Boost grants (state funds)
- 2020-2021 Boost grants (state funds)
- 2020-2021 planning assistance grants (federal and state funds)
- 2021-2022 planning assistance grants (federal and state funds)
- 2019-2020 demonstration projects (state and federal funds)
- 2019 engineering studies
- 2019 equity in Walk!Bike!Fun!
- 2019 local coordinator grants (federal funds)

Grant Evaluation and Project Selection Criteria:

- To be eligible, all SRTS project applicants are required to submit a resolution of support from the appropriate decision-making body (e.g., city council or school board) to ensure there is knowledge of, and support for the application.

SRTS planning assistance applicants are scored based on:

- Existence of a SRTS team and champion to lead the work
- Capacity to collect needed information and identify goals
- Potential to increase mode share or significantly improve safety for existing walkers and bikers
- Equity based on the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch
- Evidence the plan will be implemented and a commitment to evaluating the program over time

SRTS infrastructure implementation grants are evaluated based on:

- Evidence of planning and evaluation
- Feasibility of implementing the proposed project
- Evidence the proposed project addresses barriers to walking and bicycling to school
- Evidence of supporting programs that encourage use of the new infrastructure or safety improvement

SRTS Boost non-infrastructure grants are evaluated based on:

- Existence of a SRTS team and champion to lead the work
- Evidence of planning and evaluation
- Number of students a grant will reach
- Evidence it serves an “E” component of a comprehensive approach to SRTS
- Whether the project will provide equitable outcomes, addressing safety and access disparities for underserved communities

SRTS local coordinator grants are evaluated based on:

- Schools with the highest need determined by free and reduced lunch rates
- Comprehensive implementation plan described for education, encouragement, enforcement, evaluation and equity strategies to improve safety and increase the number of walkers and bicyclists
- Percentage of students living within the walk zone or one mile around the school who could switch modes to walking or bicycling to reduce traffic congestion and improve safety

SRTS demonstration project grants are evaluated based on:

- Existence of a SRTS team and champion to lead the work
- Evidence of planning and evaluation
- Evidence the proposed project addresses barriers to walking and bicycling to school
- Evidence of supporting programs that encourage use of the demonstration project
- Equity based on the STEPP tool score
- Feasibility of implementing the demonstration project as a future permanent infrastructure project

SRTS engineering study grants are evaluated based on:

- Evidence of planning and evaluation
- Feasibility of implementing the proposed project
- Addressing barriers and safety concerns as perceived by students and school staff
- Supporting programs and policies

Funded Projects

A list of funded projects is available in Appendix A. Maps showing the projects funded in each MnDOT district for FY 2020 -2021 are available in Appendix B. Since 2005, MnDOT awarded more than \$58 million to Minnesota communities for SRTS projects. MnDOT received more than 2,400 applications and funded 1,586 SRTS projects. These projects reach more than 740 schools. Collectively, Safe Routes to School projects have impacted over 850,000 students in Minnesota.

During FY 2020-2021, MnDOT received 142 applications and awarded 83 grants funding local SRTS projects.

Table 4: Summary of Available Funding, Requests and the Number of Selected Projects

	Total Amount of Funds Requested	# of Applications Received*	# of Applications Selected
Federally Funded Infrastructure (TA)	\$13,327,395	38	14
Federally Funded Infrastructure (Met Council)	\$4,113,343	6	6
Planning Assistance	\$584,908	39	25
Boost Grants	\$606,579.52	28	15
Engineering Studies*	\$1,028,718	16	16
Demonstration Projects*	N/A	15	7

*COVID-19 pandemic may have decreased interest and/or ability of communities and schools to apply for grants funded last biennium, implemented this biennium.

Selected infrastructure improvements included upgraded sidewalks and street crossings at multiple schools, shared use paths or trails, and traffic calming efforts.

The schools awarded funds for planning assistance conducted their planning processes during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years to develop SRTS plans:

- Five of the nine regional development commissions are working to complete plans in their region this biennium.
- The schools not in a Regional Development Commission area worked with a planning consultant hired by MnDOT to complete SRTS plans

Local coordinator grants were awarded to school districts that showcased foundational work in Safe Routes to School. These districts highlighted the need for a position dedicated solely to walking and bicycling and to advance their initiatives to implement their SRTS plans.

Boost implementation grants included funding Walking School Buses, bike fleets and racks, pedestrian safety campaigns, school and community based bike repair, and the development of a Street Harassment curriculum for middle school students.

Current Projects & Priorities

In addition to the solicitations in the last biennium, MnDOT worked on several initiatives that address statewide needs, many of which will continue into 2025.

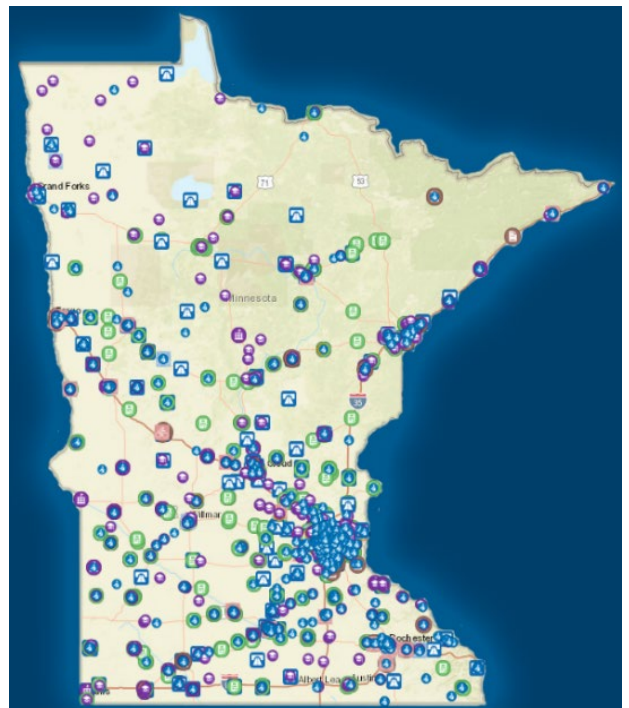
Safe Routes to School Steering Committee

Minnesota has a SRTS steering committee to provide guidance and oversight for the SRTS program since October 2011. The committee has 31 members representing cities and counties, regional planning organizations, non-profit organizations, schools, educators and health professionals. Steering committee members are actively engaged in setting goals for the program, serving on selection committees and providing feedback on statewide initiatives. The steering committee was involved in guiding the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan update. The outcome of this process will help the Minnesota SRTS program set future priorities and evolve the program to better meet the needs of changing demographics in rural, suburban and urban communities across Minnesota.

A member list is provided in Appendix C.

Visualizing Safe Routes to School in Minnesota

MnDOT has allocated more than \$58 million from state and federal sources to Safe Routes to School projects in Minnesota. Local communities, regional development organizations, and the Minnesota Department of Health's Statewide Health Improvement Partnership have also supported additional plans, bike fleets, and more. In the spirit of financial transparency, this [Visualizing SRTS in Minnesota interactive map](#) was developed to display the location of these projects and programs around the state and includes useful layers to examine their geographic distribution. This map allows engineers, schools and other partners to immediately identify SRTS plans, awards and partners in their area.



Project/Program Contents Shown:

- Projects funded through MnDOT SRTS and TA solicitations, including infrastructure, planning assistance, bicycle fleets and more. Users can view award amounts, funding sources, project descriptions and data on impacted schools, including student population, school-free and reduced-lunch rate at the time of the award, and more. Completed SRTS plans can be accessed from map pop-ups.
- Plans and bicycle fleets funded through other sources, including SHIP

- Schools participating in Walk to School Day, Bike to School Day, and Winter Walk to School Day
- Cities that have hosted a Walk! Bike! Fun! curriculum training, and curriculum trainees around the state

Additional Layers:

- Minnesota Recognized Tribal Lands
- Senate Districts
- House Districts
- School Districts
- Statewide Health Improvement Program Grantees
- MnDOT Districts
- Regional Development Organizations

The 2020-2025 Minnesota SRTS Strategic Plan

The Minnesota Safe Routes to School Strategic Plan establishes a five-year action plan to improve walking and biking to school for youth in Minnesota by updating the previous five-year strategic plan, completed in 2015. The MnSRTS Strategic Plan provides a refined vision and new goals, strategies, action steps and performance measures to expand, strengthen and monitor Minnesota’s SRTS program. This document also identifies lead and support roles and implementation phasing recommendations for each action.

The MnSRTS Strategic Plan is a tool to guide state and regional SRTS practitioners and partners in building a stronger, more equitable SRTS program at the local, regional and state levels. The ultimate goal is to make walking and biking to school and in daily life safe, comfortable and convenient for youth in Minnesota.

Equity in Safe Routes to School

This MnSRTS Strategic Plan builds on internal equity work already underway at MnDOT and calls for a deeper focus on equity in SRTS engagement, funding, planning and implementation. This plan includes strategies and actions to better understand and reduce SRTS disparities by focusing resources where the need is greatest, including prioritizing funding and support for communities that have experienced historic disinvestment.

Historically, the MnSRTS program is structured around the 6 E’s of SRTS: evaluation, equity, education, encouragement, enforcement and engineering. Enforcement strategies can disproportionately and negatively affect black/indigenous/people of color (BIPOC) students, families and communities, which may put equity and enforcement strategies at odds with one another. As of June 2020, the Safe Routes to School National Partnership updated its 6 E framework, shifting the focus from enforcement to engagement.

Since MnSRTS wants to ensure enforcement strategies do not disproportionately affect BIPOC, the program is reevaluating the role of enforcement, equity and engagement while respecting local communities’ planning and implementation related to SRTS. Communities statewide are concerned about student safety and understand that what feels safe for one child or family may not feel safe for another in rural, suburban and urban contexts. In order to address this, the MnSRTS Strategic Plan calls for an exploration of policies that remove barriers and advance equity goals statewide.

Equity in SRTS means that every student is able to safely, comfortably and conveniently walk and bike to school, regardless of race, cultural identity, tribal affiliation, immigrant or refugee status, language, gender or sexual identity, income, religion, and whether or not a student receives special education, has a physical or mental disability, or is homeless or highly mobile. An equity approach requires working with local partners to tailor programs and allocate resources to meet the unique needs of the community.

Priority populations include individuals, groups and communities who are more likely to rely on walking, biking or transit for transportation; are more vulnerable to unsafe traffic conditions; or have suffered historic disinvestment in safe, comfortable, walking and biking infrastructure.

Minnesota SRTS Resource Center

A Minnesota resource center was identified as a need and priority during the strategic planning process. The goals of [the Minnesota SRTS Resource Center](#) are to raise awareness, provide resources and tools for practitioners and to share successes and information from around the state related to walking and bicycling to school.

Tools and highlights from the resource center include:

- A one-stop shop to learn about SRTS and implement programs and projects
- Engagement tools to use at school and community events
- Walk and Bike to School Day event tools and resources
- Trainings for:
 - Crossing Guards
 - School Safety Patrol
 - SRTS Planning
 - Bus Stop and Walk
 - Mapping
- Tip sheets and resources to launch SRTS programs
- Contact information and regional resources
- Success stories and how to get started on SRTS
- Templates, branded materials and free resources for schools or local coordinators to use for events, programs and more

Walk! Bike! Fun! Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Curriculum

In 2013, MnDOT, Blue Cross Blue Shield and the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota (BikeMN) developed safety curriculum for youth about biking and walking that meets Minnesota state education standards. BikeMN trains teachers and school staff and provides technical assistance to schools and communities.

The training curriculum prepares trainers to teach children the skills needed for pedestrian and bicycle safety, and builds confidence and help them stay safe, active and healthy. Training teachers to include the program in their school curricula, afterschool programming or community center programs ensures education can continue without support from MnDOT.

Since the launch, 800 individuals were trained to teach the Walk! Bike! Fun! curriculum, over 100 trainings were requested, and 59 trainings were held around the state. It is estimated that more than 77,000 students are reached annually by Walk!Bike!Fun!-trained instructors in Minnesota. People who participated in the training report feeling more knowledgeable about pedestrian and bicycle safety skills and are more confident in their ability to teach the curriculum.

During the 2020-2021 biennium, Minnesota Department of Health supported BikeMN and MnDOT in redesigning the curriculum to provide adaptive options for students with physical and cognitive disabilities. FY 2022-2023 will see continued investment in the Walk! Bike! Fun! program and evaluation and engagement methods that will lead to a more equitable delivery of the program. These methods will ensure the curriculum is designed for all people and with a focus on priority populations.

Safe Routes to School Plans

Successful Safe Routes to School programs use a comprehensive 6E approach to increase safe walking and bicycling habits to school. SRTS plans are one of the most effective ways Minnesota schools and their partners make walking and bicycling to school an option for more families. The planning process allows schools to identify existing conditions around schools, evaluate assets in the community and develop specific goals and strategies for the next one to five years to support more students walking and bicycling to school. During the 2020-2021 biennium, 28 SRTS grants were awarded for local plans.

MnDOT continues to use a variety of funding sources (federal and state) to support communities in their Safe Routes to School planning efforts.

Interagency Coordination

MnDOT works closely with the Minnesota Department of Health and other partners to leverage SRTS efforts supported by local public health agencies across Minnesota. MDH began supporting SRTS in 2009 through the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership. SHIP is a comprehensive set of evidence-based strategies for schools, communities, health care and worksites to reduce chronic disease, reducing the estimated \$2.8 billion spent on obesity-related health care costs annually in Minnesota. Safe Routes to School is a strategy that 73 percent of local public health agencies are implementing using SHIP funds for non-infrastructure activities which complements MnDOT's program.

During 2020-2021, 530 schools across the state worked on implementing SRTS through the SHIP program reaching a combined 172,000 students. Many MnDOT SRTS grantees partnered with SHIP coordinators on SRTS activities to leverage resources, partners and shared goals. MDH worked with MnDOT and the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota to provide SRTS technical assistance and trainings; they actively participated in the ongoing development and distribution of the Walk! Bike! Fun! bicycle and pedestrian safety curriculum – including implementing the CDC grant to update the curriculum to provide for students with adaptive needs.

The 2020-2021 Legislature appropriated \$35 million for SHIP. Grants were awarded to 41 community health boards and 10 tribal governments. In anticipation, MnDOT has worked to align evaluation requirements, coordinate trainings and encourage local partnerships between schools, regional planners and public health agencies. MnDOT and MDH will continue to work closely to support SRTS statewide.

MnDOT continues to partner and coordinate SRTS work with local, regional and state agencies to leverage resources and partnerships. During 2020, MnDOT's long-standing partners in SRTS, the Minnesota Department of Health and the Department of Education shifted their focus to the emergency response to the pandemic. The shift in focus meant there were little engagement efforts directed towards local communities. Many partners like Minnesota's regional development commissions, cities, counties and non-profits stayed engaged throughout the pandemic even with the shift to remote work. In FY 2022-2023 one goal will be to re-engage with all our partners to assist them as they recover from the pandemic and to support their capacity to implement SRTS activities.

Legislative Recommendations

Walkable and bikeable communities are desirable, accessible, safe and welcome people from age eight to 80. Safe Routes to School is popular with Minnesota schools and communities, as demonstrated by the number of project applications received each year and the level of involvement from communities across the state. Since 2012, the Safe Routes to School program has invested in creating community-wide plans, spurring more plans, programs and projects to be implemented throughout the state. To date, more than 450 schools have SRTS plans in Minnesota setting the framework for a multi-strategy approach to create a more walkable and bikeable community for children; however, the program still faces several challenges, some that may need to be addressed through legislative action.

Additional investment can increase the reach of the Safe Routes to School program to better meet the needs of rural, suburban and urban communities and reduce crashes involving children.

As school districts grow or consolidate, attention must be given to long-term effects of the siting of the new school location on student transportation costs, school health and the community. Schools are often sited near city borders without adequate facilities connecting students who walk and bike to school or nearby destinations after school. This increase of distance forces the school to provide hazard bussing at the expense of the school district or ride with caregivers adding a time and cost burden to families in lieu of safe routes to school.

One way to advance walking and bicycling through the Safe Routes to School program is to enact policies that support schools and districts in finding a balance between new, larger facilities and long-term impacts of building schools sited away from where students and families live and play.

State funding approved in 2013 for non-infrastructure activities allowed the SRTS program to meet many needs throughout Minnesota with a broader reach into Greater Minnesota. Over the course of the program, demand (largely for infrastructure projects) continues to exceed available funding and communities continue to use the SRTS framework to think about how to plan for connected pedestrian and bicycle networks.

Additional state funding for infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects through the Safe Routes to School program, or the Active Transportation program, would allow the programs to meet the developing need as community interest in walk and bikeability grows.

In the past, general bond funds were allocated to SRTS for infrastructure; however, bond funds are not able to be used for projects on the trunk highway system, to contract with tribal nations, or for engineering studies. Two-thirds of schools are within a half-mile of a trunk highway, the 2020 SRTS Strategic plan identified tribal communities as a priority population to address transportation system inequities, and engineering studies are a strategy for advancing and implementing planning priorities. Since these areas of work continue to be priority, funding from sources where these priorities are eligible to be funded, may be effective.

Funding from trunk highway funds versus state funds impacts the eligibility of tribal communities and the types of projects, so, considering this in future allocations enables more priorities to be met.

The demand for state and federal funds for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure continues to grow in the Twin Cities Metro and across Greater Minnesota. While communities continue to seek grant funding, there are also challenges with finding adequate money within city transportation budgets to fund improvements for walking

and bicycling due to many competing needs and limited resources. Local SRTS and transportation planning helps communities identify opportunities to align and integrate improvements into upcoming projects, and MnDOT continues to encourage walking and bicycling facilities into existing efforts. However, there are network gaps that would benefit from separate funding. This creates a backlog of projects awaiting state or federal funds.

Enacting policies that incentivize complete streets and encouraging cities to develop their own funds dedicated towards walking and bicycling improvements to ease the backlog of state and federal grant requests may advance walking and bicycling.

Demand for walking and bicycling funding is increasing and provides an opportunity to incentivize policies, local funding sources and community engagement strategies prior to using state Safe Routes to School funds. More than 450 schools have SRTS plans and are identifying how to address the needs of students walking and bicycling with infrastructure projects. Communities want to expand their bicycle and pedestrian efforts community-wide to reinforce the safety and convenience for families to walk and bike to school, work, parks and all of the places they need to travel. Funding an Active Transportation program could meet the growing demand for community pedestrian and bicycle plans to create a connected network of safe and connected facilities for walkable and bikeable communities. Supporting an Active Transportation program reinforces priorities identified in the [Safe Routes to School Strategic Plan](#), [Statewide Bicycle System Plan](#) and the recently completed [Minnesota Pedestrian Plan](#). Priorities identified in these state plans advance Safe Routes to School efforts and have a broader reach to populations experiencing transportation inequities.

Funding of the Active Transportation Program at MnDOT may increase safe routes for children to other priority destinations like parks, libraries and access to healthy food through planning, education and infrastructure improvements and complement the Safe Routes to School program by increasing reach throughout a community.

Conclusion

Minnesota's Safe Routes to School program ranks third nationally and continues to see high levels of community engagement. There are opportunities for Minnesota to elevate SRTS and address the challenges communities statewide face in a meaningful way. The newly developed Strategic Plan, built from local and regional engagement, will guide the evolution of this program over the next five years. A stronger equity focus will improve safety and well-being for Minnesota's youth, priority populations and under-resourced communities.

The future of MnSRTS is that of growth and inclusion. Building on existing partnerships and successful initiatives, the program will continue to use the guidance of the 2025 Strategic Plan to grow the program. This will include an evaluation of equity and resources for locals to expand their equity work, integrating equity measures into funding solicitations and focusing future efforts on under-resourced communities. Emerging best practices around demonstration projects, engineering studies and training will continue to make local impacts in rural, suburban and urban areas to meet the unique needs of each community. The continued expansion of funding at a state and federal level will impact more Minnesotans and lead to a safer multimodal transportation network for the state's most vulnerable children. This is an exciting time for Safe Routes to School nationally and MnDOT intends to leverage funding and new resources to improve the lives, safety and health of Minnesota's youth.

Appendix A: Funded Project Lists

For more details on funded projects, visit the [Visualizing SRTS in Minnesota interactive map](#).

Table 5: 2020/2021 infrastructure grants funded with TAP, SAFETEA-LU and state dollars

MnDOT District	County	City	Description	SRTS Award
1	Carlton	Cloquet	CSAH 24 Install multi-use path	330,000
1	Nicollet	North Mankato	Add pedestrian infrastructure safety improvements identified in the 2015 North Mankato Safe Routes to School Plan for the area surrounding Hoover Elementary School.	345,416
1	Lake	City of Two Harbors	Construct a 12' non-motorized trail that would safely connect pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorized forms of transportation.	300,000
1	Carlton	City of Moose Lake	Construction of Phase 2 of City of Moose Lake TH 73 Trail, which will complete Loop Trail around the entire City.	300,000
2	Polk	City of Fosston	Sidewalk improvements in the city to promote healthy lifestyles and provide safe, accessible routes to all.	134,414
3	Stearns	St. Cloud	Reconstructing 1.6 miles of multimodal roadway (CR 136) including six foot (6') sidewalk and six foot (6') bike lanes from 22nd St S to Oak Hill	424,000
3	Sherburne	Zimmerman	Construct a pedestrian route that will complete a route to Zimmerman Schools by connecting the end of the Great Northern Trail at Lion's Park ball fields to a main commerce area of Zimmerman.	225,600
3	Wright	City of Monticello	Add Safe Routes to School improvements including installation of two enhanced pedestrian crossings, various sidewalk safety improvements located on the 3-school campus, and city-wide school zone signing enhancements.	330,051
Metro	Anoka	Columbia Heights	Install pedestrian ramps and crosswalk markings along 49th Ave	484,400
Metro	Dakota	West Saint	Keep sidewalk safe along an important corridor for students to walk and bike comfortably and safely to and from Moreland Arts and Health Sciences Magnet Elementary School, and Heritage E-STEM Magnet Middle School in West St. Paul.	640,000
Metro	Carver	Chaska	Construct a grade separated crossing (pedestrian underpass) of the northern leg of Trunk Highway 41 at its intersection with Highway 10 (Engler Boulevard) in the City of Chaska	933,360
Metro	Hennepin	Minneapolis	Implement pedestrian and bicycle-related improvements along East 34th Street from east of 4th Avenue South to 10th Avenue South and along 10th/11th Avenue South from East 34th Street to Midtown Greenway/East 29th Street.	1,000,000

MnDOT District	County	City	Description	SRTS Award
Metro	Ramsey	Saint Paul	Construct approximately 0.6 miles of new sidewalks near Crossroads Elementary School and River East Elementary School filling some critical gaps in the pedestrian network allowing students to walk to and from school	720,000
Metro	Washington	Mahtomedi	Install a new sidewalk on the south side of 72nd Street North from Warner Road to Glenmar Avenue	335,583
7	Nicollet	St. Peter	Add sidewalk enhancements at multiple locations throughout the city that are within a 500' radius of a school and/or park and completes missing links between schools to improve pedestrian safety.	354,584
7	Jackson	City of Jackson	Enhancing and increasing Safe Alternative Transportation Opportunities from Sunrise Estates Townhomes to the Jackson Trail Network along HWY 71.	192,030
8	Murray	Slayton	Construct a concrete sidewalk on 28th Street, a connecting route between schools and local parks	291,840
8	Renville	Olivia	Extend pedestrian and bike connections from the SRTS trail at the High School to the west, connecting the 'orphaned' neighborhood of Viking Drive, creating a safe & visible crossing across Highway 71, providing access to neighborhoods west of the highway including West Court Apartments and ultimately terminating at Pond Park	278,000
8	Lyon	City of Marshall	Construction of a multi-use trail to reduce non-motorized traffic on the roadway.	490,700
8	Yellow Medicine	City of Granite Falls	Add approximately 1550 feet of off-road bituminous trail and three improved crosswalks connecting downtown to a residential neighborhood currently without pedestrian infrastructure.	189,840

Table 6: 2020-2021 planning assistance grants with a total of more than \$463,100 in MnDOT investments

SRTS PLANNING ASSISTANCE GRANTS: 2020-2021

MnDOT District	County	City	Description	Award
1	Carlton	Cloquet	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$7,295
1	Cook	Grand Marais	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$12,321
1	Itasca	Grand Rapids	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$44,269
1	Itasca	Grand Rapids	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$16,966
1	Pine	Hinckley	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$8,048
1	St. Louis	Chisholm	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$15,024
1,2	Koochiching	Littlefork	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$12,791
3	Wright	Delano	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$18,796
3	Stearns	Paynesville	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$ 19,641.96
3	Wadena	Verndale	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$19,715
4	Stevens	Morris	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$19,874
4	Grant	Barrett	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$19,739
4	Stevens	Hancock	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$9,711
4	Otter Tail	Underwood	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$9,711
6	Olmsted	Rochester	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$ 28,220.28
6	Olmsted & Goodhue	Pine Island	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$19,861
7	Jackson	Jackson	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$33,132
7	Jackson	Jackson	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$15,992
8	Lincoln	Tyler	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$16,950
Metro	Hennepin	Shorewood	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$ 18,472.48
Metro	Hennepin	Minneapolis	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$13,833
Metro	Dakota	Rosemount	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$18,693
Metro	Dakota	Inver Grove Heights	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$20,069
Metro	Ramsey	St. Paul	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$21,453
Metro	Scott	Shakopee	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$31,549

Table 7: 2020-2021 boost grants representing more than \$308,000 in MnDOT investments

SRTS BOOST IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS

MnDOT District	County	City	Awardee Name	State SRTS Award	Award
1	Cook	Grand Marais	Cook County SRTS Committee & Sawtooth Mountain Clinic	Boost	\$18,097
2	Beltrami	Red Lake	Red Lake School District	Boost	\$35,000
4	Stearns	Melrose	Melrose Area Public Schools	Boost	\$21,500
4	Otter Tail	Fergus Falls	West Central Initiative	Boost	\$19,346
6	Olmsted	Rochester	Rochester Public Schools	Boost	\$14,937
6	Houston	Spring Grove	City of Spring Grove	Boost	\$6,541
8	Lincoln	Tyler	City of Tyler	Boost	\$6,943
Metro	Hennepin	Minneapolis	Minneapolis Public Schools	Boost	\$29,720
Metro	Hennepin	Minneapolis	PedalPowerMN	Boost	\$24,975
Metro	Hennepin	Minneapolis	Richfield Public Schools	Boost	\$12,604
Metro	Dakota	South St. Paul	South St. Paul Public Schools	Boost	\$14,045
Metro	Hennepin	Richfield	Richfield Public Schools	Boost	\$33,746
Metro	Hennepin	Minneapolis	Seward Montessori School	Boost	\$33,425
Metro	Dakota	South St. Paul	South St. Paul Public Schools	Boost	\$3,420
Metro	Hennepin	Minneapolis	Minneapolis Public Schools	Boost	\$33,752

Table 8: 2019 local coordinator grants representing more than \$1 million in MnDOT investments

SRTS LOCAL COORDINATOR GRANTS

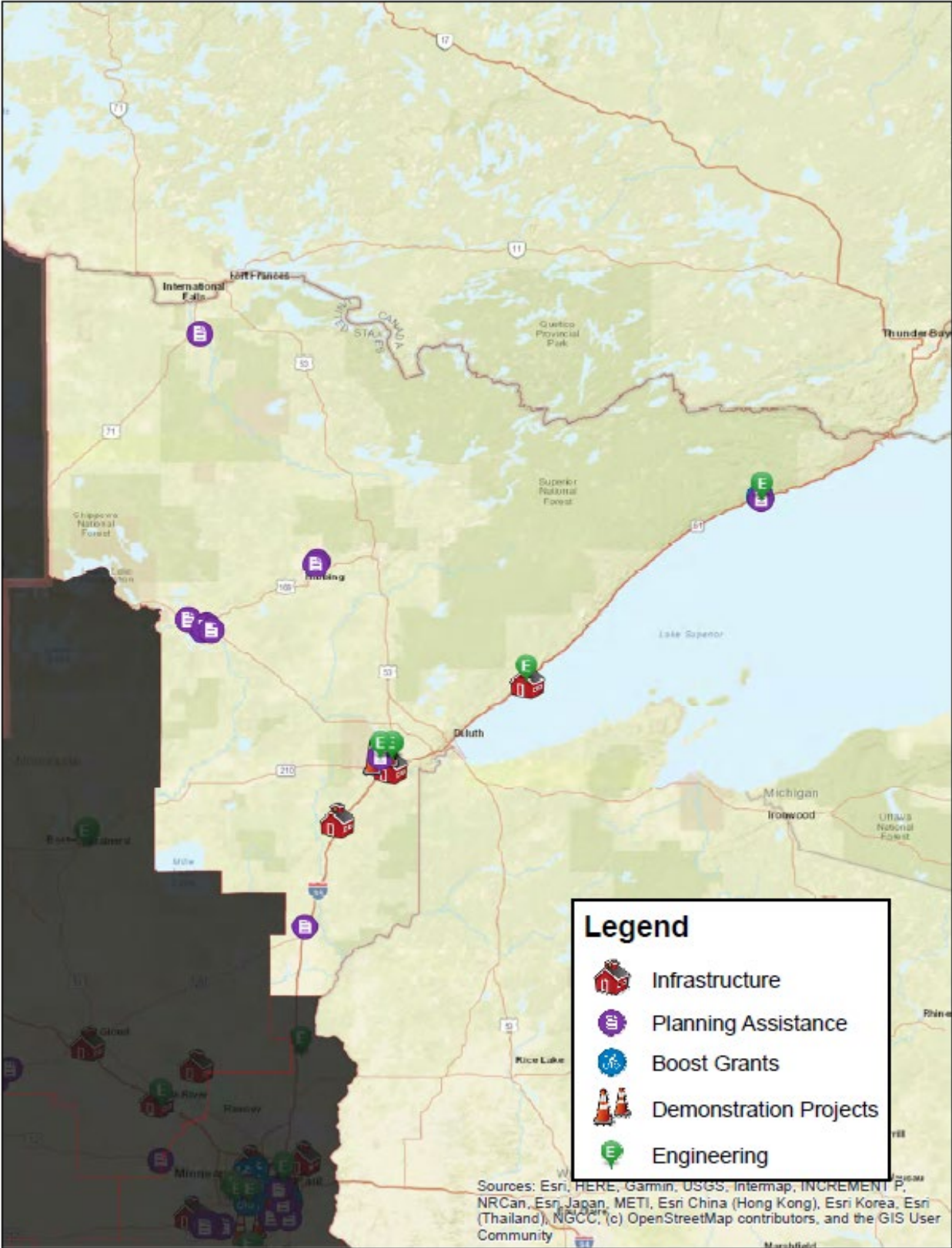
MnDOT District	County	City	School District	Description	Award
1	Itasca	Grand Rapids	Grand Rapids School District (ISD 318)	Local Coordinator	\$143,466
6	Olmsted	Rochester	Rochester Public Schools (ISD 535)	Local Coordinator	\$209,998
7	Brown	New Ulm	New Ulm Public Schools (ISD 88)	Local Coordinator	\$77,400
Metro	Hennepin	Richfield	Richfield Public Schools (ISD 280)	Local Coordinator	\$179,720
Metro	Ramsey	St. Paul	Saint Paul Public Schools (ISD 625)	Local Coordinator	\$293,641
Metro	Dakota	South St. Paul	South Saint Paul Public Schools (ISD 6)	Local Coordinator	\$98,600

Appendix B: 2020-2021 Maps

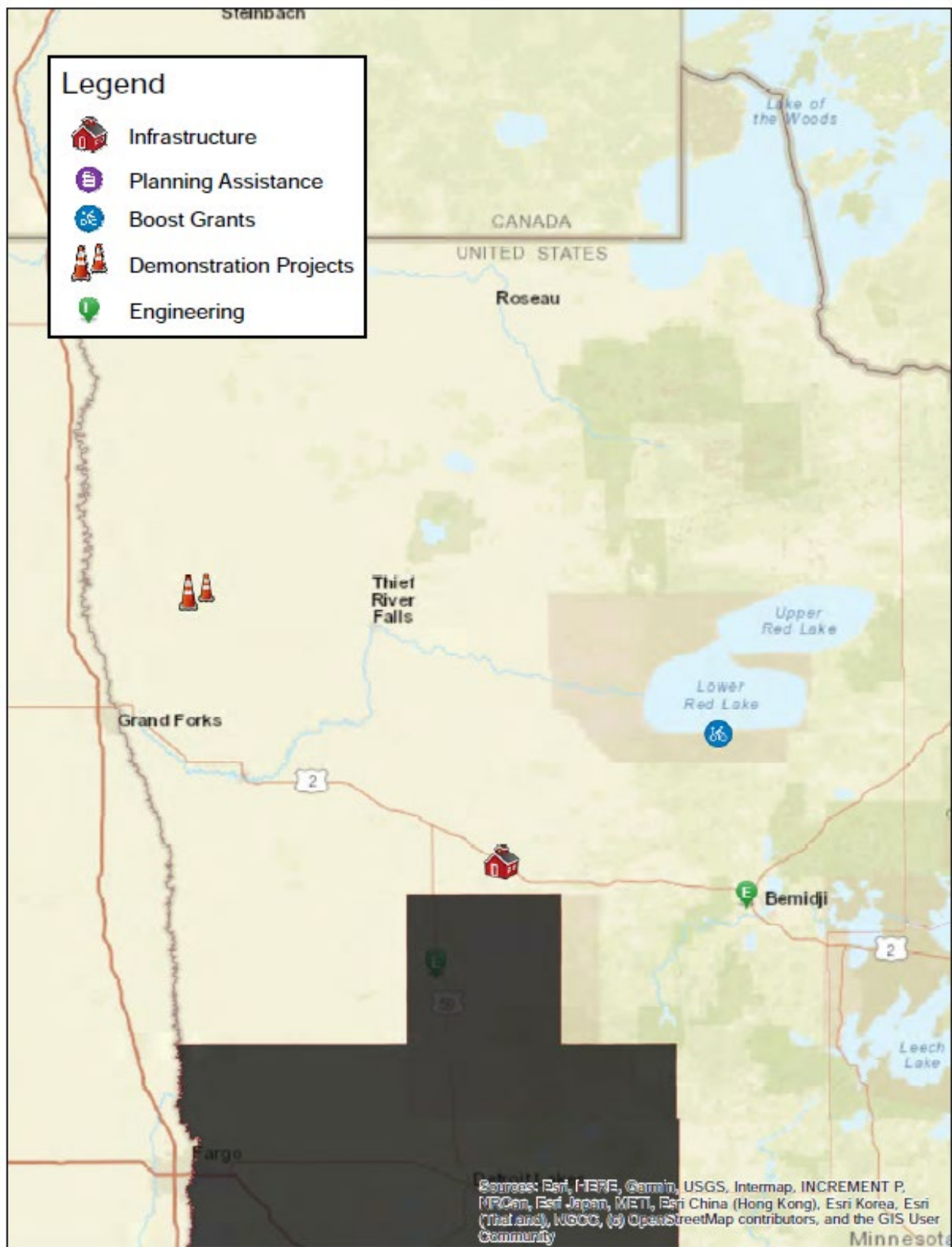
The following maps show SRTS projects by MnDOT district in 2020-2021.

[A more detailed, interactive map of all Safe Routes to School projects can be viewed here.](#)

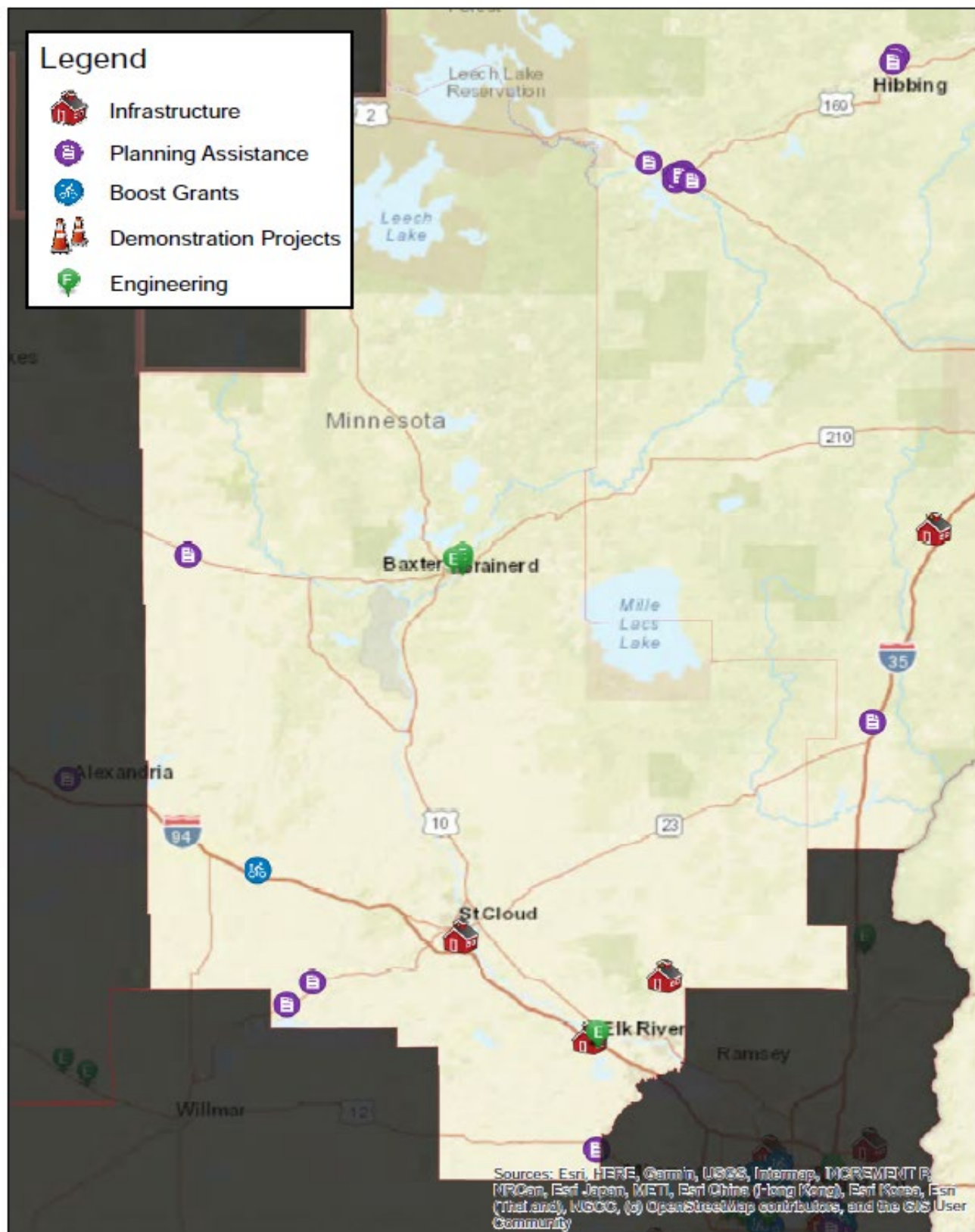
District 1 Safe Routes to School Awards, FY 2020-21



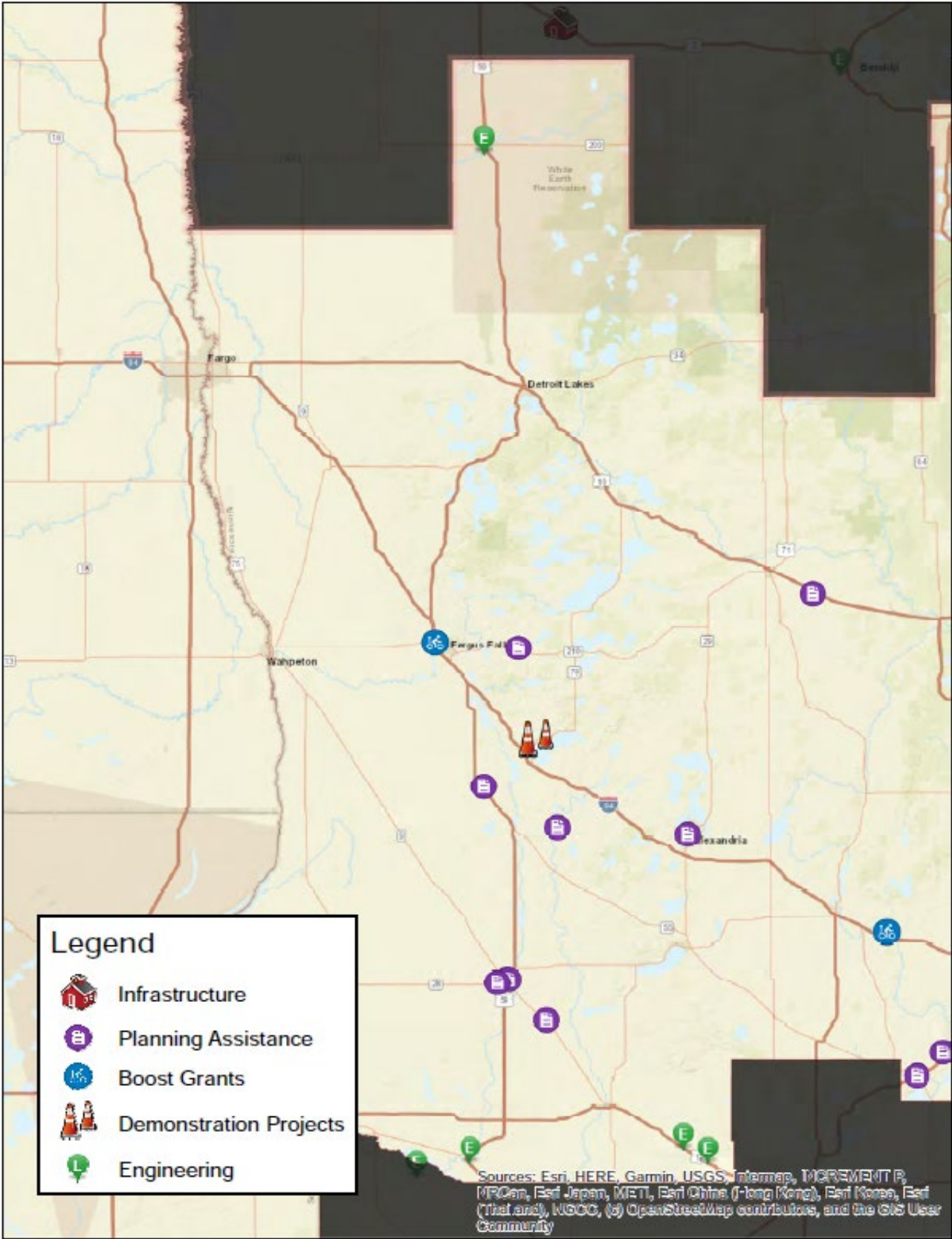
District 2 Safe Routes to School Awards, FY 2020-21



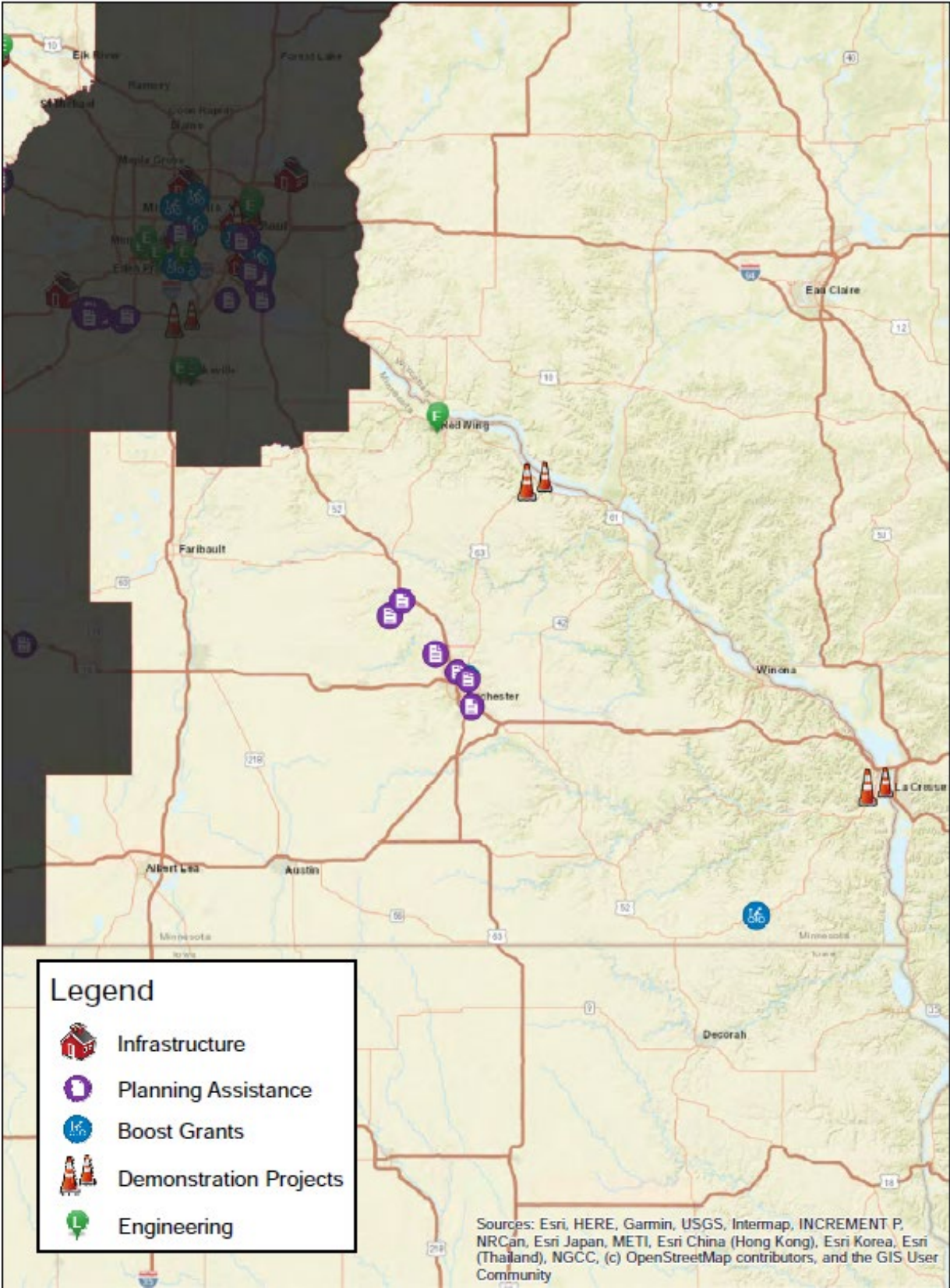
District 3 Safe Routes to School Awards, FY 2020-21



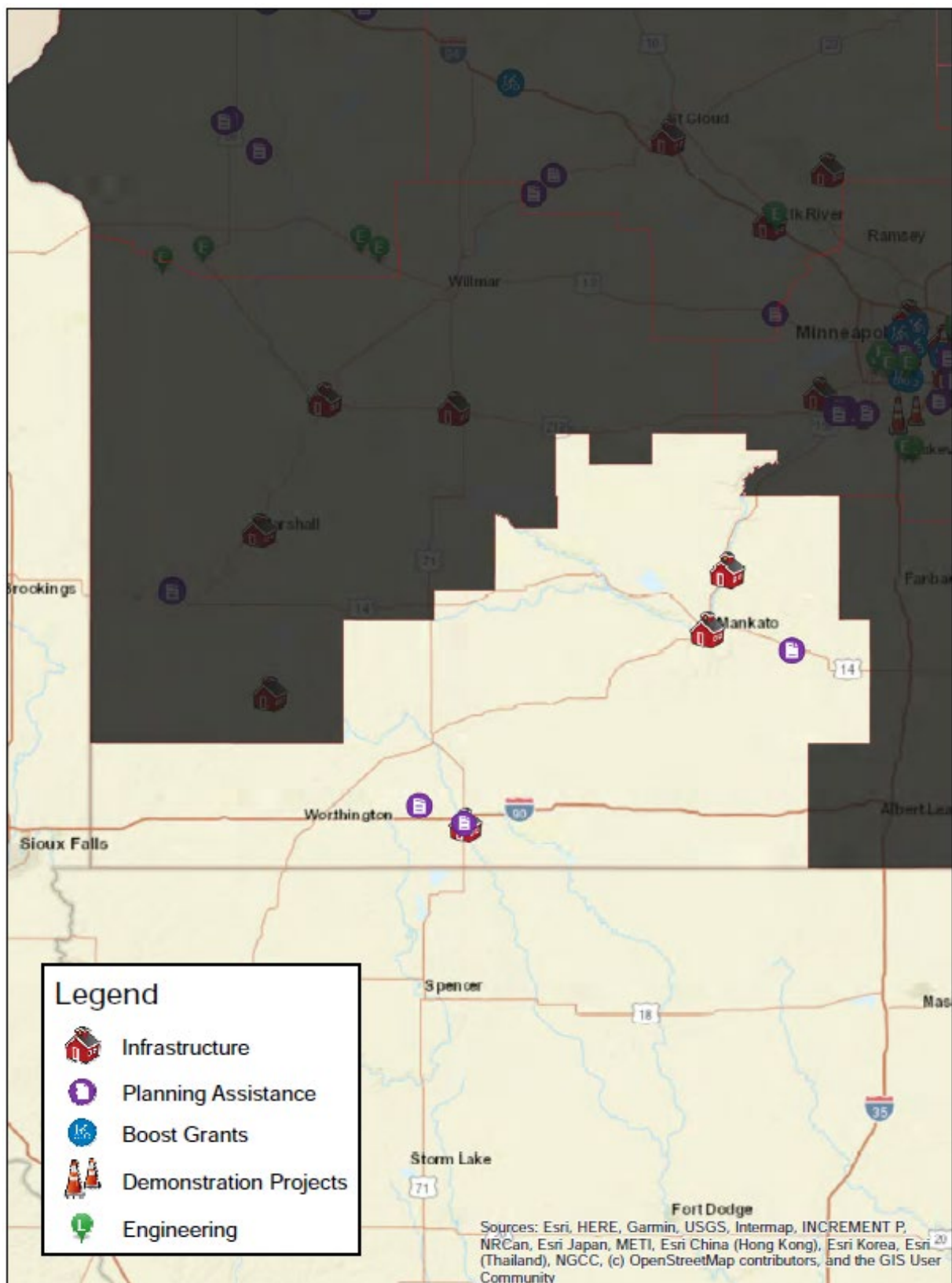
District 4 Safe Routes to School Awards, FY 2020-21



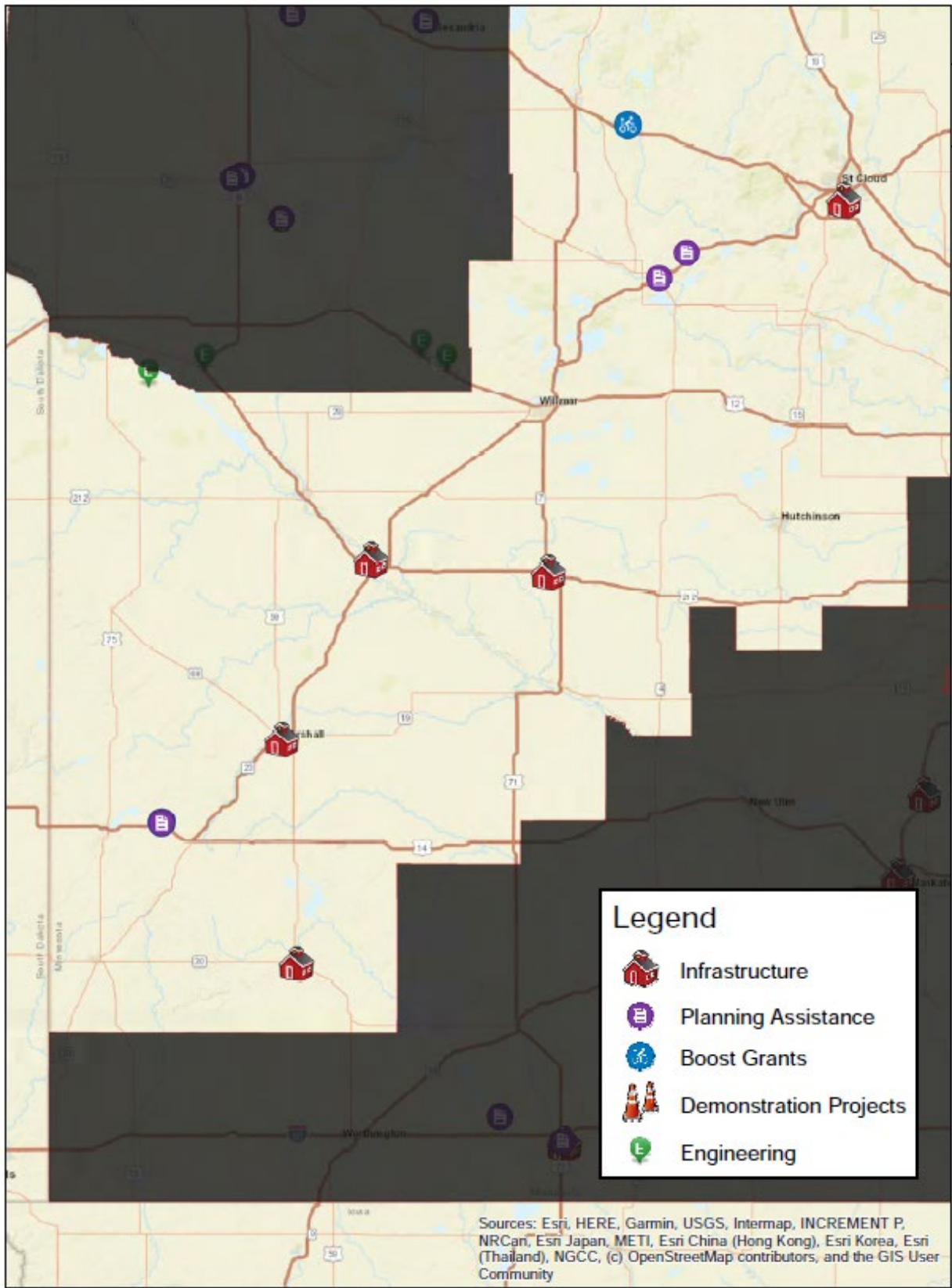
District 6 Safe Routes to School Awards, FY 2020-21



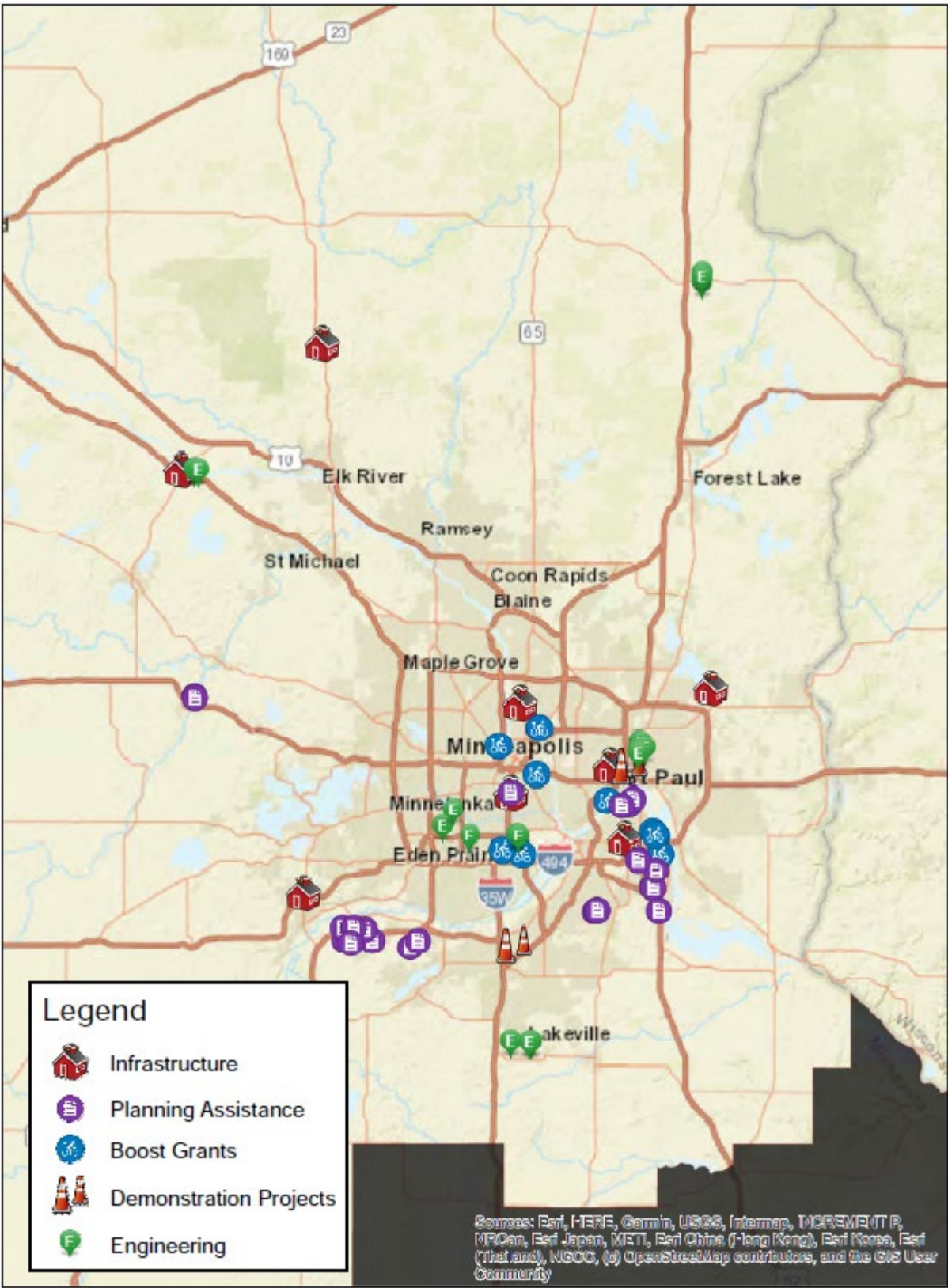
District 7 Safe Routes to School Awards, FY 2020-21



District 8 Safe Routes to School Awards, FY 2020-21



Metro District Safe Routes to School Awards, FY 2020-21



Appendix C: SRTS Steering Committee

Table 9: Organization representation on SRTS steering committee

MnDOT SRTS Steering Committee	
Action for Healthy Kids	Minnesota Parent Teacher Association
Allina Health	Minnesota Safety Council
American Cancer Society	MnDOT District 1 – District Planner Representation
American Heart Association	MnDOT District 3 – District State Aid Representation
Anoka - Hennepin Schools	MnDOT Office of Traffic Engineering
Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota	MnDOT Office of Transit and Active Transportation
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota	MnDOT Office of Transportation System Management
City Engineer	MnDOT State Aid
Elementary School Principal	Pollution Control Agency
Federal Highway Administration	Quality Bicycle Products
Minneapolis Public Schools - School District Representation	Regional Development Commission Representation
Minnesota Department of Education	MPO representation
Minnesota Department of Public Safety	Tribal Nation - Fond Du Lac Reservation
Minnesota Department. of Health	YMCA of Minnesota