

FY 2022-2023 Report on

Safe Routes to School in Minnesota

October 2023



Prepared by:

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November 8, 2023

The Honorable Frank Hornstein
Chair
House Transportation Finance & Policy Committee
563 State Office Building
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

The Honorable Scott Dibble
Chair
Senate Transportation Committee
3107 Minnesota Senate Building
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

The Honorable John Petersburg
GOP Lead
House Transportation Finance & Policy Committee
217 State Office Building
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

The Honorable John Jasinski
Ranking Minority Member
Senate Transportation Finance & Policy Committee
2227 Minnesota Senate Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Re: 2022-2023 Safe Routes to School Report

Dear Legislators,

In accordance with [Minnesota Statutes 174.40, subdivision 8](#), the Minnesota Department of Transportation is submitting its Safe Routes to School program report for 2022 and 2023.

Since 2005, MnDOT has awarded more than \$66 million to Minnesota communities for SRTS projects. These projects have reached more than 1000 schools.

Please contact me with any questions you may have, or you may contact Sarah Ghandour, Director, Office of Transit and Active Transportation, MnDOT, at sarah.ghandour@state.mn.us.

Sincerely,



Nancy Daubenberger, P.E.
Commissioner

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Legislative Request

This report is issued to comply with [Minn. Stat. 174.40, subd. 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 2022-23 biennium.

Since the 2021 legislative report, MnDOT held eight SRTS solicitations:

- 2021-2022 infrastructure implementation (federal TA funds)
- 2021-2022 infrastructure implementation (federal TA funds)
- 2022-2023 infrastructure implementation (federal TA funds)
- 2021-2022 planning assistance grants (federal and state funds)
- 2022-2023 planning assistance grants (federal and state funds)
- 2021-2022 boost implementation grants (state funds)
- 2022-2023 boost implementation grants (state funds)
- 2022-23 demonstration projects (state and federal funds)
- 2021-23 Walk!Bike!Fun! (state funds)

Since 2005, MnDOT has awarded more than \$66 million to Minnesota communities for SRTS projects. These projects have reached more than 1000 schools.

During the FY2022-2023 biennium, MnDOT also provided funding for new and existing statewide programs and projects.

Minnesota Safe Routes to School Strategic Plan Implementation: The 2020 [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, 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 2022-23 prioritizes the following strategies:

- Uses various tools to ensure that MnSRTS intentionally invests resources in partners, programs, training, and technical assistance to reach communities of color and other priority communities including families with low incomes, new immigrants, English language learners, tribal communities, people with disabilities, and other historically marginalized communities
- Improves user experience and accessibility of the MnSRTS Resource Center to create a more intuitive user experience, improve site navigation, and expand opportunities for SRTS practitioners to share resources.
- Develops and disseminates resources that integrates youth voice and participation in local, regional, and state programs
- Research on school siting and campus design processes, policies, guidance, and best practices to provide to practitioners interested in being more involved in the process

Student Transportation Equity for Priority Populations Tool: Through the 2020 MnSRTS Strategic Plan engagement process, Minnesota communities expressed the need to develop criteria for grants, funding opportunities, and program support that provides special consideration and preference to high-need priority communities. 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 identify concentrations of priority populations and allows grant applicants to quickly look up the equity score for schools identified in their application. An update to this tool was made in 2022 to adjust for new school data from the Minnesota Department of Education.

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 2022 and 2023, 37 communities applied for planning assistance – of these, 28 communities received funding. During the pandemic, there was a decrease in applications for funding; however, more schools and communities are expressing interest and desire for planning.

Walk! Bike! Fun! pedestrian and bicycle safety K-8 curriculum: Walk! Bike! Fun!, the Minnesota pedestrian and bicycle safety curriculum, worked to engage schools that had become disengaged during the pandemic. In partnership with the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota, MnDOT trained 970 teachers and educators how to teach pedestrian and bicycle safety in their classrooms. The estimated annual reach of the trained educators is more than 99,000 students. Lesson plan goals 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. As MnDOT pivots to provide support and resources to school districts implementing the new Active Transportation Safety Education legislative requirement, Walk!Bike!Fun! has been critical to quick mobilization of staff and tools in support of teachers and administrators scrambling for tools.

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 nearly 200 schools that participate each year. Many schools use this day to provide community awareness and bring elected officials from cities, counties, and school boards together to see the demand for walking and biking around schools and identify infrastructure improvements.

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 presence ensured a higher level of engagement from communities across the state, growing the e-news subscribers from 982 in October 2015 to 3,899 in September 2023.

Demonstration Projects: Safe Routes to School teams in communities across Minnesota want guidance to develop, implement and evaluate demonstration projects 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 a new guide: [“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. Twelve projects across the state were funded with SRTS dollars and installed in FY2022-2023.

Boost Grants: Boost grants are intended to boost Safe Routes to School programmatic efforts by providing funds for implementation of strategies identified in Safe Routes to School plans. Through these grant awards, MnDOT supports communities with existing Safe Routes to School plans, or other comprehensive SRTS 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, 21 communities received grant awards, totaling nearly \$640,000.

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 during 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 Saint Paul, Saint Paul, and Richfield school districts. Many 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. Building off the success of this grant opportunity and demand from communities, a new solicitation is planned for late 2023.

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.

In FY 2022 and 2023, the MnDOT SRTS program continued to offer statewide programs and grants for local projects including Safe Routes to School planning assistance, curriculum implementation, Boost non-infrastructure grants, engineering studies, demonstration projects, local coordinators, and infrastructure. The program also continued to explore how to address equity in MnSRTS. These priorities were identified and implemented with ongoing feedback from the statewide SRTS Steering Committee, the SRTS State Network and regional and local partners. Increased legislative funding and directives for Safe Routes to School, Active Transportation, and Climate Change are likely to increase engagement and demand for the Safe Routes to School 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, suffer from unprecedented health issues including pre-diabetes, physical inactivity, and unhealthy weight. There are several factors affecting the decline in walking and bicycling to school, including new schools built 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” of Safe Routes to School:

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

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

MnDOT’s SRTS program began in 2005 with the federal transportation bill formally 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 legislation called “The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act,” otherwise referred to as MAP-21. Concurrently, the Minnesota Legislature established its own SRTS program and allocated state funding for non-infrastructure activities starting in 2013. This state-level commitment has sustained the MnSRTS program to the present day.

In 2021, SRTS funding was bolstered again by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). While IIJA did not allocated dedicated funds to SRTS, it did reauthorize and expand the program in several ways, including eligibility for high schools, explicitly including Tribal agencies as eligible recipients, requirement to prioritize high-need communities as a part of Transportation Alternatives funding, and the expansion of SRTS eligibility in Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP).

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 2005-2023

Year	Apportionment
2005	\$1,000,000
2006	\$1,441,060
2007	\$1,897,225
2008	\$2,324,104
2009	\$2,555,730
2010	\$3,258,020
2011	\$3,383,090
2012	\$2,713,794
2019	\$4,579,667
2020	\$0
2021	\$0
2022	\$0
2023	\$0
Total 2005-23	\$23,152,690

SAFETEA-LU Spending in FY 2022-2023

In FY 2019, FHWA authorized \$4.5 million for new and innovative Safe Routes to School projects in Minnesota, because of delays caused by the pandemic several projects continued through FY2022 and FY2023. Those ongoing projects included advancing equity in Walk!Bike!Fun! education, establishing local SRTS coordinators, and planning, designing, and installing SRTS demonstration projects.

Federal Legislation: MAP-21/FAST Act/IIJA

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 ATP TA solicitations.

In 2015, Congress passed the FAST Act, which sustained many of the funding priorities outlined in MAP-21 for five more years. Enactment of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) in 2021 signaled another shift in the funding landscape for SRTS. Overall, the IIJA has expanded the scope and funding opportunities for SRTS, even if it remains a part of broader transportation funding programs.

Spending in 2022-2023

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 eight Safe Routes to School projects and the Metropolitan Council awarded 10 projects.

Table 2: TAP and Metropolitan Council Award Funding Amounts

Year	MnDOT TAP Award Amount	Metropolitan Council Award Amount
2022	\$983,795	\$7,379,791
2023	\$2,365,492	\$0
Total	\$3,349,287	\$7,379,791

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 an 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, and \$5 million in 2021. During the 2022 legislative session, the state legislature passed a transportation bill that included several advancements in funding for SRTS in the state:

- Increased the FY 2024 and FY 2025 general fund apportionment for SRTS to \$10.5 million each year realigning the base for \$1.5 million in FY 2026 and 2027.
- Passed legislation requiring Active Transportation Safety Training in public schools, [adding federally recognized Indian Tribes as eligible for funding](#), and allotting an additional \$500,000 annually to support grants and implementation of this law.

State Spending in FY 2022-2023

During this period, \$7.5 million was solicited and awarded for state SRTS infrastructure projects. In addition, \$1.5 million in state funds were used for non-infrastructure activities including planning, education, encouragement, and implementation.

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	\$1,000,000	\$4,000,000	\$250,000	N/A
2015	\$112,000	\$1,900,000	\$500,000	\$1,000,000
2016	\$150,000	\$3,900,000	\$500,000	N/A
2017	N/A	\$250,000	\$500,000	N/A
2018	N/A	\$250,000	\$500,000	\$1,000,000
2019	\$4,500,000	\$2,300,000	\$500,000	\$1,000,000
2020	\$0	\$2,249,440	\$500,000	\$3,000,000
2021	\$0	\$1,937,035	\$500,000	\$0
2022	\$0	\$8,363,586	\$750,000	\$7,480,000
2023	\$0	\$2,365,492	\$750,000	\$0

Grant Evaluation & Project Selection Criteria FY 2022-2023

Biennium

During the 2022-2023 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 2021 legislative report, MnDOT provided funding for nine SRTS solicitations:

- 2021-2022 infrastructure implementation (state SRTS funds)
- 2021-2022 infrastructure implementation (federal TAP funds)
- 2022-2023 infrastructure implementation (federal TAP funds)
- 2021-2022 Boost grants (state funds)
- 2022-2023 Boost grants (state funds)
- 2021-2022 planning assistance grants (federal and state funds)
- 2021-2022 planning assistance grants (federal and state funds)
- 2021-2023 demonstration projects (state and federal funds)
- 2021-23 equity in Walk!Bike!Fun!

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. Additionally, it is legislated that to be eligible for infrastructure funding, “A statutory or home rule charter city, county, or town is eligible to receive funding under this section only if it has adopted subdivision regulations that require safe routes to school infrastructure in developments authorized on or after June 1, 2016.”

SRTS planning assistance applicants are scored based on:

- Existence of an 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/bikers
- Equity based on the [STEPP tool score](#)
- Evidence the plan will be implemented and a commitment to evaluating the program over time

SRTS state infrastructure implementation grants are evaluated based on:

- Evidence of planning and evaluation
- The school has no plans to relocate within 10 years
- Feasibility of implementing the proposed project
- Evidence the proposed project addresses barriers to walking and bicycling to school and has at least a 10-year useful service life
- Evidence of supporting programs that encourage use of the new infrastructure or safety improvement
- Equity based on the [STEPP tool score](#)

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
- Ensures the project will provide equitable outcomes, addressing safety and access disparities for underserved communities
- Equity based on the [STEPP tool score](#)

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

Funded Projects

A list of funded projects is available in Appendix A. Maps showing the projects funded in each MnDOT district for FY 2022 and 2023 are available in Appendix B. Since 2005, MnDOT awarded more than \$66 million to Minnesota communities for SRTS projects.

During FY 2022-2023, MnDOT received 167 applications and awarded 101 grants funding local SRTS projects.

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

Safe Routes to School Funding Source	Total Amount of Funds Requested	# of Applications Received*	# of Applications Selected
Federally Funded Infrastructure (TA)	\$12,200,000	28	8
Federally Funded Infrastructure (Met Council)	\$7,300,000	10	10
State Funded Infrastructure	\$17,000,000	55	23
Planning Assistance	\$1,023,000	37	28
Boost Grants	\$659,000	22	20
Demonstration Projects*	N/A	15	12

(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 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years to develop SRTS plans:

- Four of the nine regional development commissions are working to complete plans in their region this biennium.
- The schools not in a RDC area worked with a planning consultant hired by MnDOT to complete SRTS plans
- Boost implementation grants included funding Walking School Buses, bike fleets and racks, safety education campaigns and more.

Current Projects & Priorities

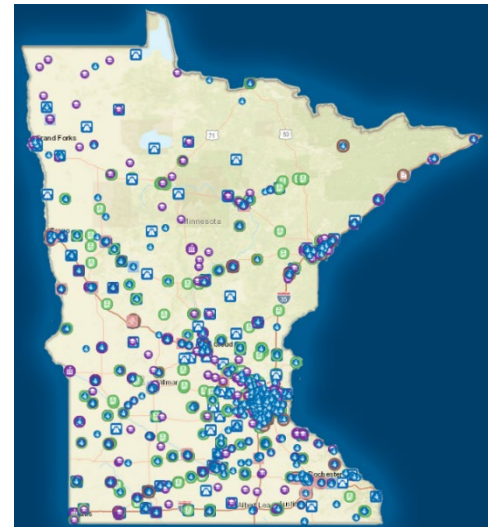
In addition to the solicitations in the last biennium, MnDOT worked on several initiatives that address statewide needs, many of which will continue into 2025.

Safe Routes to School Steering Committee

There has been an 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, nonprofit 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 supports the Minnesota SRTS program in setting future priorities and evolving the program to better meet the needs of changing demographics in rural, suburban, and urban communities across Minnesota. Moving forward, the SRTS Steering Committee will work with the new legislatively formed Active Transportation Advisory Committee. A member list is provided in Appendix C.

Visualizing Safe Routes to School in Minnesota

MnDOT has allocated more than \$60 million from state and federal sources to Safe Routes to School projects in Minnesota since 2005. 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, MnDOT developed this [Visualizing SRTS in Minnesota interactive map](#) to display the location of these projects and programs around the state. This map includes useful layers to examine their geographic distribution, which 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 Statewide Health Improvement Partnership
- 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 from 2015.

The 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.

It 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.

Equity in SRTS means that every student can 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

The 2015 strategic planning process identified the need for an SRTS Minnesota resource center. This continued to be a priority in the 2020 MnSRTS Strategic Plan with a relaunch on a new, easier to navigate platform. 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 curriculum prepares trainers to teach children the skills needed for pedestrian and bicycle safety, and builds confidence that 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.

In partnership with the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota, MnDOT trained 970 teachers and educators how to teach pedestrian and bicycle safety in their classrooms. The estimated annual reach of the trained educators is more than 99,000 students annually. People who participated in the training reported feeling more knowledgeable about pedestrian and bicycle safety skills and were 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 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 ensure the curriculum is designed for all people and with a focus on better reaching priority populations.

Active Transportation Safety Education

In 2023, the State of Minnesota mandated that all students in public schools must receive age-appropriate education related to safe walking and bicycling during the first few weeks of school. This legislation is like the law that requires students to receive bus safety education at the beginning of each school year. MnDOT's SRTS program provided existing resources for the 2023-24 school year. Staff are working to develop new resources for the 2024-25 school year based on feedback and engagement from school and local partners to ensure meaningful implementation of the requirements which include:

- Students in grades K-3 must receive pedestrian safety education including crossing roads
- Students in grades 4-8 must receive pedestrian safety education including crossing roads using the searching left-right-left for vehicles in traffic technique; as well as bicycle safety, including relevant traffic laws, use and proper fit of protective headgear, bicycle parts and safety features, and safe biking techniques
- In most cases, students must receive this education by the end of the third week of school
- Non-public schools may provide this education but are not required to do so

[Review the Active Transportation Education requirement legislation or view resources.](#)

Safe Routes to School Plans

Successful Safe Routes to School programs use a comprehensive [6E approach-evaluation, education, encouragement, equity, engagement and engineering](#)-to increase safe walking and bicycling habits to school. From our local partner engagement data and program evaluation results, 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 FY2022-2023 biennium, 28 SRTS grants were awarded for local plans.

MnDOT continues to use a variety of federal and state funding sources 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 \$3.2 billion spent on obesity-related health care costs annually in Minnesota. Safe Routes to School is a strategy that 65 percent of local public health agencies are implementing using SHIP funds for non-infrastructure activities which complements MnDOT's program.

During 2021-2023, 333 schools across the state worked on implementing SRTS through the SHIP program, reaching over 156,987 students. Many MnDOT SRTS grantees partnered with SHIP coordinators on SRTS activities to leverage resources, partners, and shared goals. MDH worked with MnDOT and Move Minnesota to provide SRTS technical assistance and trainings including coordination support of the Minnesota SRTS network in-person gathering.

The 2021-2023 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 2021, MnDOT's long-standing partners in SRTS, the Minnesota Department of Health and the Department of Education was focused on rebuilding as the emergency response to the pandemic wound down. The shift in focus during the pandemic required activities in 2022 to emphasize re-engagement with SHIP partners and local communities to implement SRTS activities.

Legislative Recommendations

Walkable and bikeable communities are desirable, accessible, safe, and welcome people from age 8 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. The Safe Routes to School program has invested in community-wide plans since 2012, spurring more plans, programs, and projects throughout the state. To date, more than 500 schools have SRTS plans in Minnesota, setting the framework for a multi-strategy approach to create more walkable and bikeable communities for children. However, there are still challenges to fully implementing the SRTS program.

Challenge: Infrastructure demand exceeds funding available

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 SRTS planning 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. 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.

The demand for state and federal funds for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure continue 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 funding 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 existing network gaps that would benefit from separate funding. This creates a backlog of projects awaiting state or federal funds.

Policies that promote complete streets and encourage cities to develop their own funding sources for walking and bicycling improvements may ease the backlog of state and federal grant requests generally and could also further SRTS program goals.

Challenge: School location siting for new schools or school consolidation

As school districts grow or consolidate, attention must be given to long-term effects of the siting of the new school locations on student transportation costs, school health and the community. Schools are often sited near city limit 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.

To advance walking and bicycling through the Safe Routes to School program, enacting 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 is important.

Challenge: Update Active Transportation Education requirement

In the 2023 legislative session, a statewide mandate for biking and walking education was made a requirement for all schools with students in K-8 grades. However, schools have expressed challenges, such as that this mandate is required “within the first three weeks of school.” It is recommended that this to be changed to “within the first 6 weeks of the school year” to allow schools time to implement this education in a more meaningful way, and perhaps combine with national Walk to School Day during the first week of October.

Conclusion

Minnesota’s Safe Routes to School program ranks in the top programs 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 2020 Strategic Plan, built from local and regional engagement, will guide the evolution of this program through 2025. A stronger equity focus will improve safety and wellbeing for Minnesota’s youth, priority populations and under-resourced communities.

The future of MnSRTS is growth and inclusion. Building on existing partnerships and successful initiatives, the program will continue to use the guidance of the 2020 Strategic Plan to grow the program. This will include a deeper dive into 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, design 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 our 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 past funded projects, visit the [Visualizing SRTS in Minnesota interactive map](#).

Table 5: FY 2022/2023 infrastructure grants funded with state Safe Routes to School dollars

STATE FUNDED SRTS INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS: FY 2022-2023

MnDOT District	County	City	Description	SRTS Award
1	St. Louis	City of Duluth (Lincoln Park)	Various sidewalk replacements and new shared-use path construction	\$293,046
2	Marshall	City of Warren	Various new sidewalks and ADA-compliant sidewalk ramps	\$77,450
3	Dakota	Gideon Pond Elementary (Burnsville)	Curb extensions on 130th Street	\$151,731
3	Isanti	City of North Branch	Sidewalk and trail improvements along CSAH 30 and Maple Street	\$366,700
3	Hennepin	City of Edina	New shared-use path and new sidewalks along Claremore Drive	\$275,000
3	Ramsey	City of Arden Hills	New shared-use path along Valentine Road	\$450,000
3	Washington	Cottage Grove	Shared-use path along 65th Street South	\$253,482
3	Anoka	City of Coon Rapids	Various crossing improvements along CSAH 11	\$458,000
3	Crow Wing	City of Brainerd	Crossing and improvements and new curb construction along Oak Street	\$500,000
3	Wright	City of Monticello	Sidewalk ADA ramp replacements and new RRFB crossing	\$500,000
4	Hennepin	City of Richfield	71st Street sidewalk and Elliot Street crossing improvements	\$173,000
4	Mahnomen	City of Mahnomen	Shared-use path along Jefferson Avenue (CSAH 25) & various new sidewalks	\$227,000
4	Lac qui Parle	Lac qui Parle School District (Appleton)	New signage and striping on Appleton Elementary school property	\$55,000
6	Goodhue	City of Red Wing	Speed zone signage and various crossing improvements	\$240,000
7	Dakota	Dakota County (Inver Grove Heights)	ADA and crossing improvements at intersection of Boyd Ave & 80th Street	\$250,000
7	Dakota	City of Lakeville	Various ADA and crossing improvements along 210th Street	\$500,000
7	Sibley	Sibley County (Gaylord)	New trail and construction of various sidewalks	\$360,000
7	Jackson	City of Jackson	Various new sidewalks along Thomas Hill Road	\$118,753
7	Watonwan	City of St. James	New sidewalks along 10th Street	\$250,000
8	Pipestone	City of Edgerton	New sidewalks along CSAH 17 and CSAH 19 and new RRFB crossing improvements	\$488,000
8	Lincoln	City of Tyler	New sidewalks along CSAH 8 and new RRFB crossing improvements	\$500,000
Metro	Dakota	City of Saint Paul	Curb extensions at multiple intersections along Victoria Street	\$500,000
Metro	Hennepin	City of Minneapolis	Various ADA and crossing improvements along E 24th Street & E 28th Street	\$500,000

Table 6: FY 2022/2023 infrastructure grants funded by Met Council Regional Solicitation

MET COUNCIL SRTS INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS: FY 2022-2023

MnDOT District	County	City	Description	SRTS Award
Metro	Dakota	South St. Paul	Marie Avenue SRTS	\$1,000,000
Metro	Hennepin	New Hope, Brooklyn Park	Meadow Lake Elem. SRTS	\$363,617
Metro	Hennepin	Minneapolis	South & Folwell SRTS Improvements	\$1,000,000
Metro	Hennepin	Minneapolis	Whittier Safe Routes to School	\$1,000,000
Metro	Ramsey	St. Paul, Falcon Heights	Chelsea Heights Elementary Pedestrian Improvements	\$1,000,000
Metro	Hennepin	Bloomington	Valley View Schools SRTS	\$398,000
Metro	Hennepin	Richfield	73rd St SRTS Connection	\$635,000
Metro	Carver	Chaska	Engler Boulevard Trail Gap	\$825,520
Metro	Dakota	West St. Paul, Mendota Heights	Delaware Avenue Trail Gap	\$600,000
Metro	Ramsey	Vadnais Heights	Koehler Rd/Edgerton St Trail	\$557,654

Table 7: FY 2022/2023 infrastructure grants funded through Transportation Alternatives program

TA INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS: FY 2022-2023

MnDOT District	County	City	Description	SRTS Award
1	Itasca	City of Deer River	Build a connection to the previously completed section of a Safe Routes to School pathway.	\$331,480
1	St. Louis	City of Duluth	Improve student walkability by replacing poor sidewalk with new sidewalk and ADA ramps and installing a missing segment of the route to Lincoln Park Middle School.	\$384,091
2	Polk	City of Crookston	Connect nature area trails and residential structures to a multi-purpose community events center, elementary, secondary, and post-secondary schools along a scenic byway.	\$1,000,000
3	Morrison	City of Little Falls	Build ADA-compliant pedestrian crossings where 4th Street NE and 1st Street NE cross the North Pacific Railway.	\$603,882
3	Sherburne	City of Big Lake	Provide safe connectivity and mobility to destinations such as schools, parks, and pedestrian crossings adjacent to county road or State Aid route.	\$206,850
3	Benton	City of Rice	This trail connection will provide safe access to the existing parks and trails within the City of Rice, which includes picnic areas, playgrounds, a hockey and skating rink, softball diamonds, soccer field, Farmers Market and Rice Elementary School.	\$144,000
6	Houston	City of La Crescent	Implement the Safe Routes to school plan by building eight projects that make walking and biking to school safer and more equitable.	\$223,280
8	Lyon	City of Marshall	Widening and construction of a 10-foot-wide concrete multi-use trail adjacent to E. Lyon Street.	\$455,704

Table 8: 2022-2023 planning assistance grants with a total of more than \$819,000 in MnDOT investments

SRTS PLANNING ASSISTANCE GRANTS: FY 2022-2023

MnDOT District	City	County	Description	Award
1	Bemidji	Beltrami	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$15,015
1	Mesabi East	St. Louis	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$24,506
2	Baudette	Lake of the Woods	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$20,000
2	Warroad	Roseau	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$28,605
2	Crookston	Beltrami	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$15,160
2	Crookston	Polk	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$16,246
3	Pequot Lakes	Crow Wing	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$14,264
3	Alexandria	Douglas	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$48,239
3	St. Cloud	Stearns	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$35,000
3	Osakis	Douglas	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$23,315
4	Pelican Rapids	Otter Tail	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$22,500
4	Graceville	Big Stone	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$38,515
6	Hayfield	Dodge	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$28,605
6	Plainview	Wabasha	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$38,250
7	Madelia	Watonwan	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$19,301
8	Tracy	Lyon	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$17,726
Metro	Saint Paul	Ramsey	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$28,605
Metro	Minneapolis	Hennepin	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$51,845
Metro	Saint Paul	Ramsey	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$37,811
Metro	Brooklyn Park	Hennepin	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$38,250
Metro	Farmington	Dakota	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$28,605
Metro	Mahtomedi	Washington	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$38,847
Metro	Red Wing	Ramsey	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$28,605
Metro	Eagan	Dakota	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$37,811
Metro	Chaska	Carver	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$28,605
Metro	Minneapolis	Hennepin	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$28,605
Metro	Dayton	Hennepin	SRTS Planning Assistance	\$28,605

Table 9: FY 2022-2023 Boost grants representing more than \$630,000 in MnDOT investments

SRTS BOOST IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS

MnDOT District	County	City	Awardee Name	State SRTS Award	Award Amount
1	St. Louis	Duluth	Congdon Park Elementary School	Boost	\$49,634
2	Itasca	Grand Rapids	Independent School District 318	Boost	\$23,232
2	Polk	East Grand Forks	Safe Kids Grand Forks	Boost	\$18,871
2	East Grand Forks	East Grand Forks	Safe Kids Grand Forks	Boost	\$18,423
3	Sherburne	Elk River	ISD 728	Boost	\$33,610
4	Otter Tail	Fergus Falls	Fergus Falls School District	Boost	\$15,409
4	Otter Tail	Underwood	Underwood School	Boost	\$20,000
4	Otter Tail	Fergus Falls	City of Fergus Falls	Boost	\$19,700
4	Wilkin	Rothsay	Rothsay School District	Boost	\$27,340
6	Olmsted	Rochester	Rochester Public Schools	Boost	\$33,648
6	Houston	La Crescent	City of La Crescent	Boost	\$33,061
7	Brown	New Ulm	New Ulm Public Schools / ISD 88	Boost	\$14,531
7	Blue Earth	Blue Earth	Blue Earth Area Schools - Community Education	Boost	\$17,705
8	Dakota	Dakota County	Dakota County Public Health	Boost	\$49,764
Metro	Hennepin	Minneapolis	Minneapolis Public Schools	Boost	\$50,000
Metro	Ramsey	Saint Paul	Saint Paul Public Schools	Boost	\$37,460
Metro	Hennepin	Richfield	Richfield Public Schools	Boost	\$17,310
Metro	Hennepin	Minneapolis	Minneapolis Public Schools	Boost	\$46,640
Metro	Ramsey	Saint Paul	Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS)	Boost	\$42,740
Metro	Hennepin	Richfield	Richfield Public Schools ISD #280	Boost	\$25,506
Metro	Hennepin	Brooklyn Center	Brooklyn Center Community Schools	Boost	\$43,720

Table 10: FY 2022-2023 Demonstration Project Installations

DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

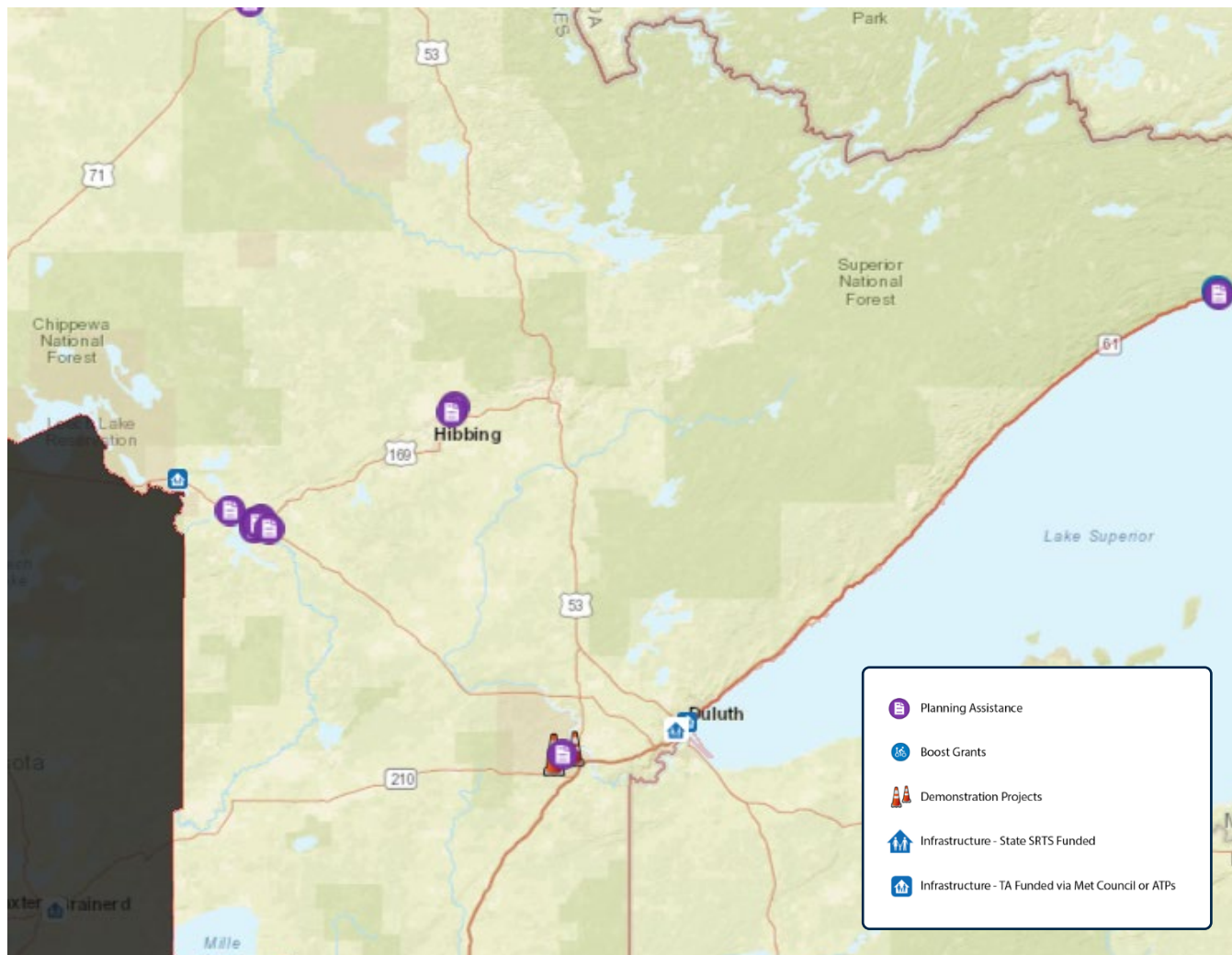
MnDOT District	County	City	Awardee
2	Marshall	Warren	City of Warren
4	Grant	Ashby	City of Ashby
4	Stevens	Hancock	City of Hancock
4	Otter Tail	New York Mills	City of New York Mills
6	Houston	La Crescent	City of La Crescent
6	Wabasha	Lake City	City of Lake City
M	Dakota	Burnsville	Gideon Pond Elementary
M	Ramsay	Saint Paul	Bruce Vento Elementary
M	Scott	Shakopee	Sweeney Elementary
M	Dakota	South St Paul	Kaposia Ed Center
M	Hennepin	Minneapolis	Green Central Elementary
M	Hennepin	Richfield	Richfield STEM; Richfield Dual Language Elementary

Appendix B: FY 2022-2023 Maps

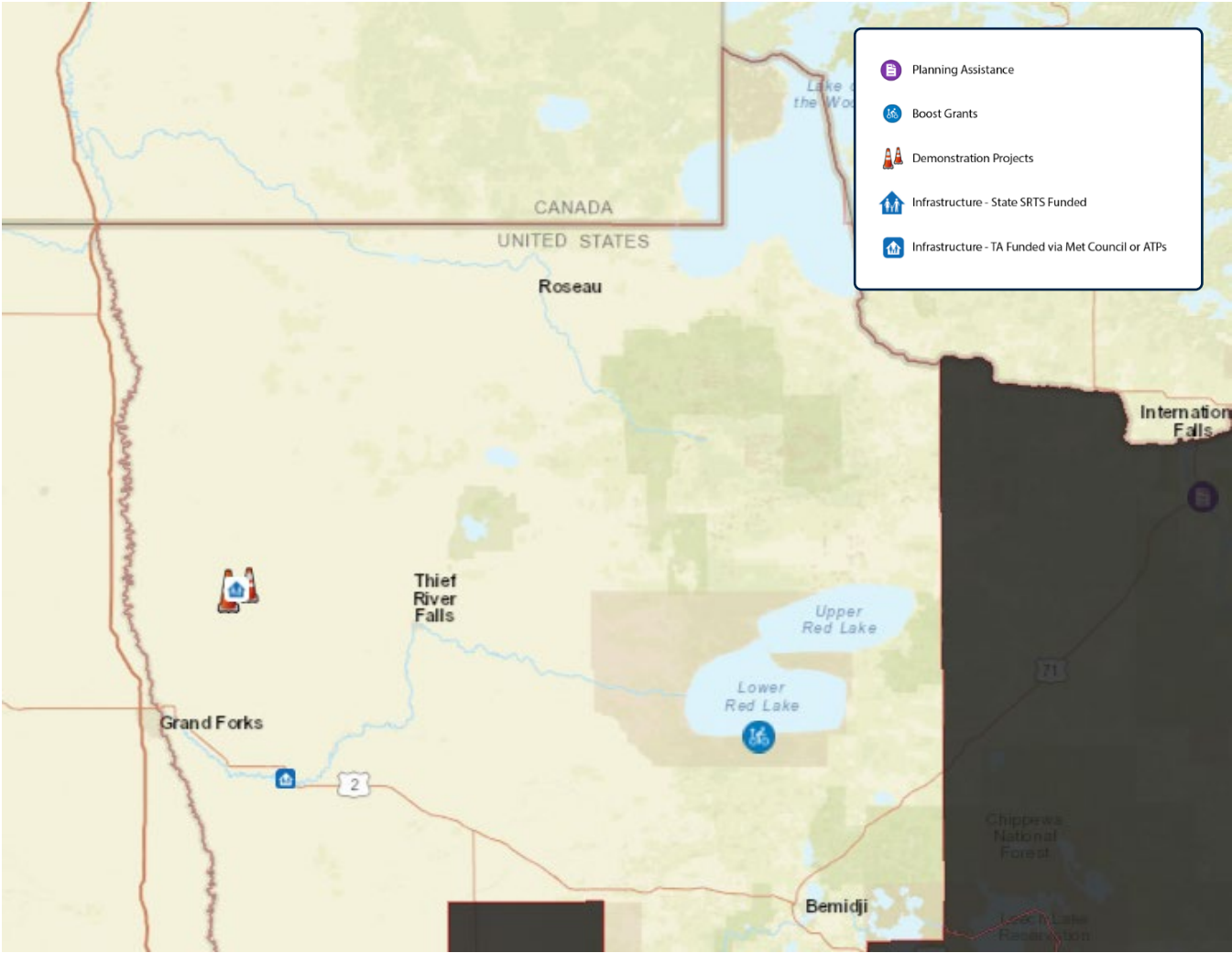
The following maps show SRTS projects by MnDOT district in FY 2022-2023.

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

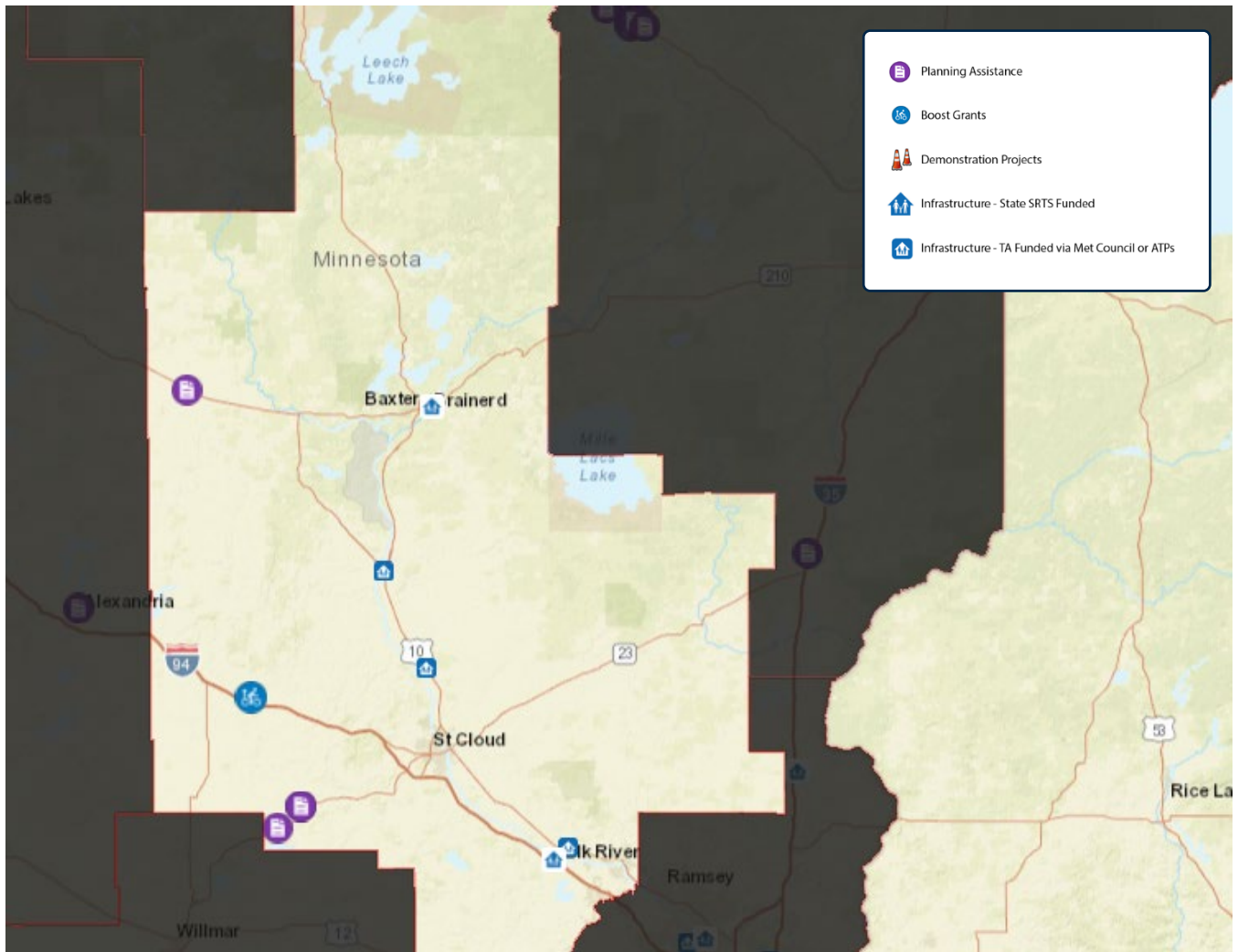
District 1 Safe Routes to School Awards, FY 2022-2023



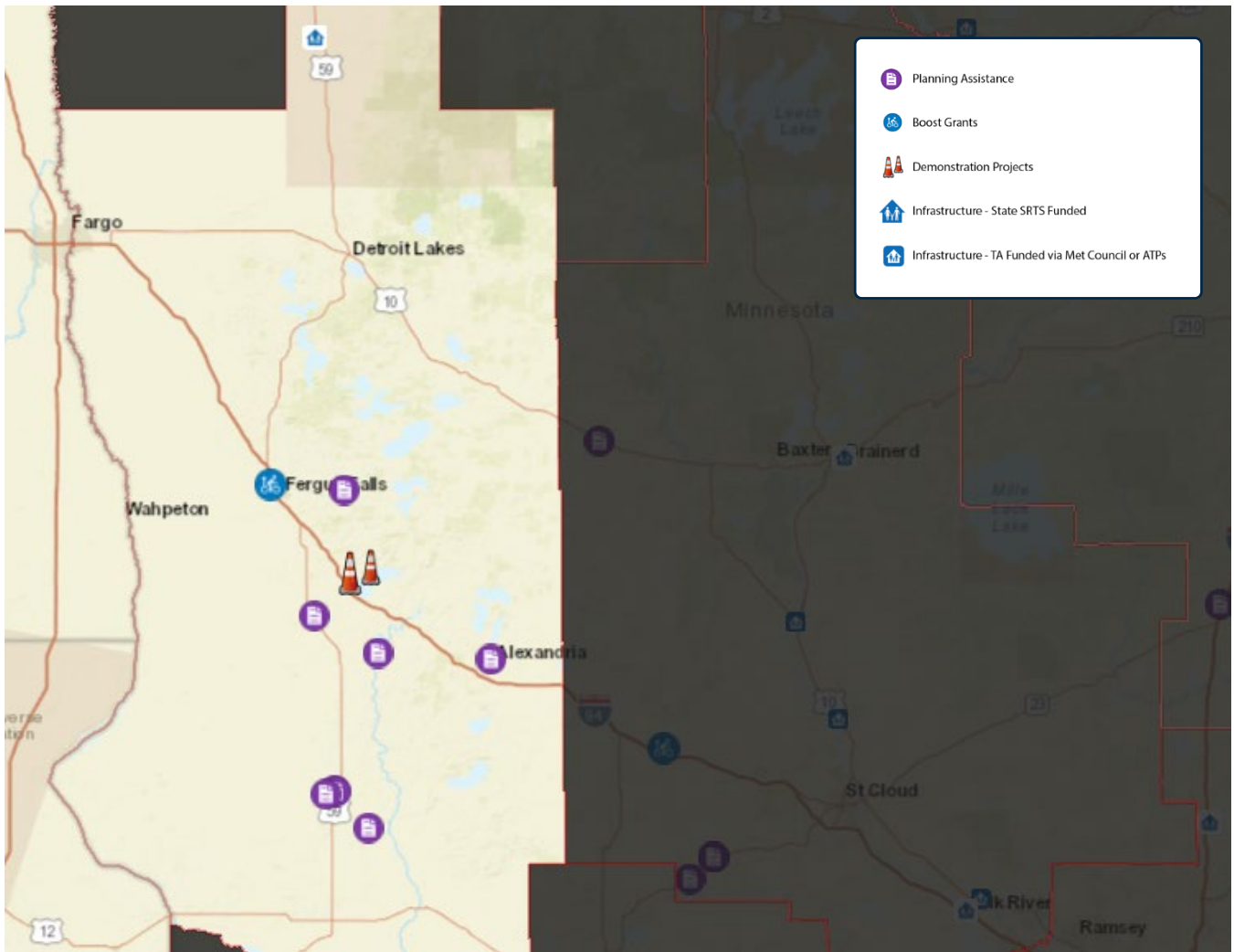
District 2 Safe Routes to School Awards, FY 2022-2023



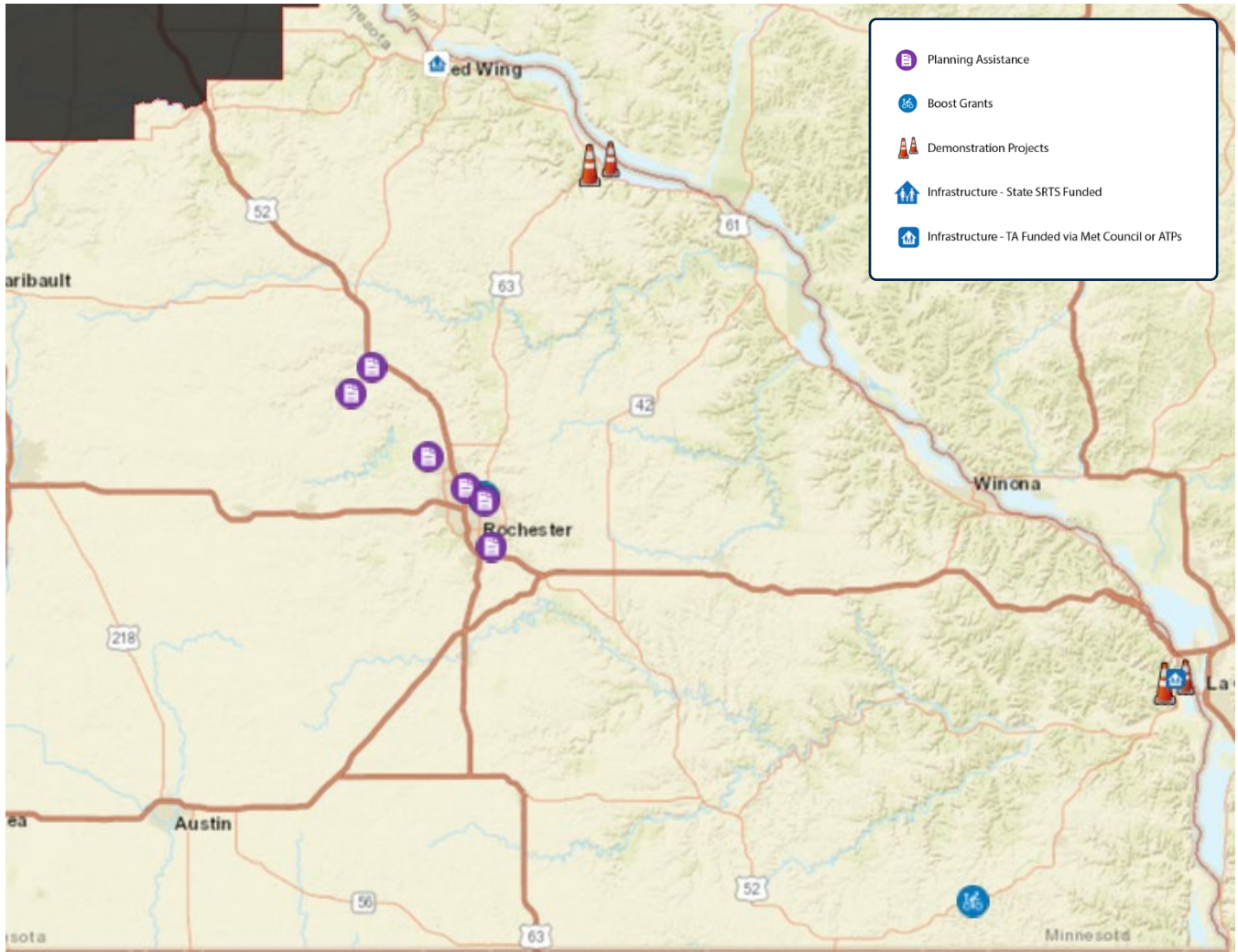
District 3 Safe Routes to School Awards, FY 2022-2023



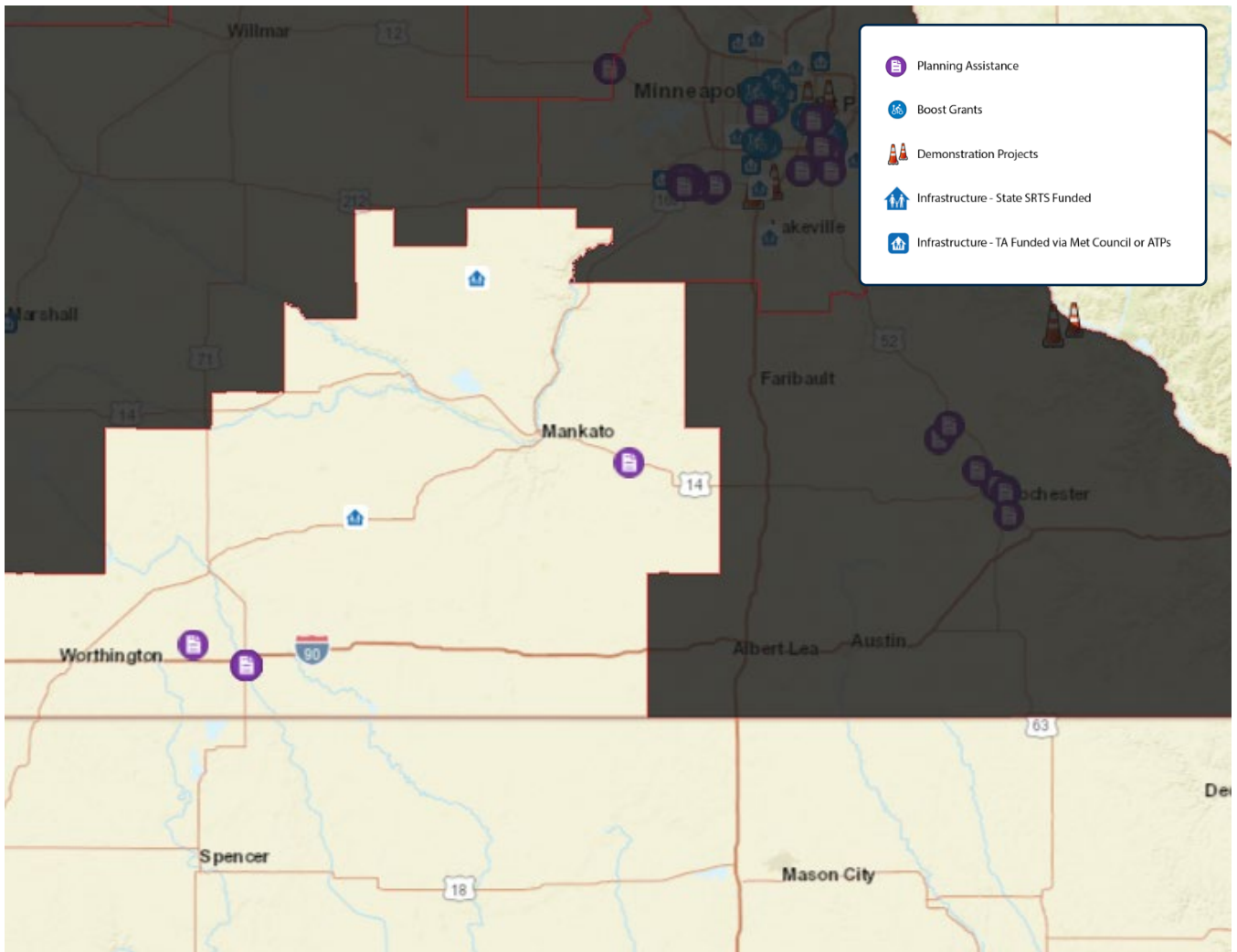
District 4 Safe Routes to School Awards, FY 2022-2023



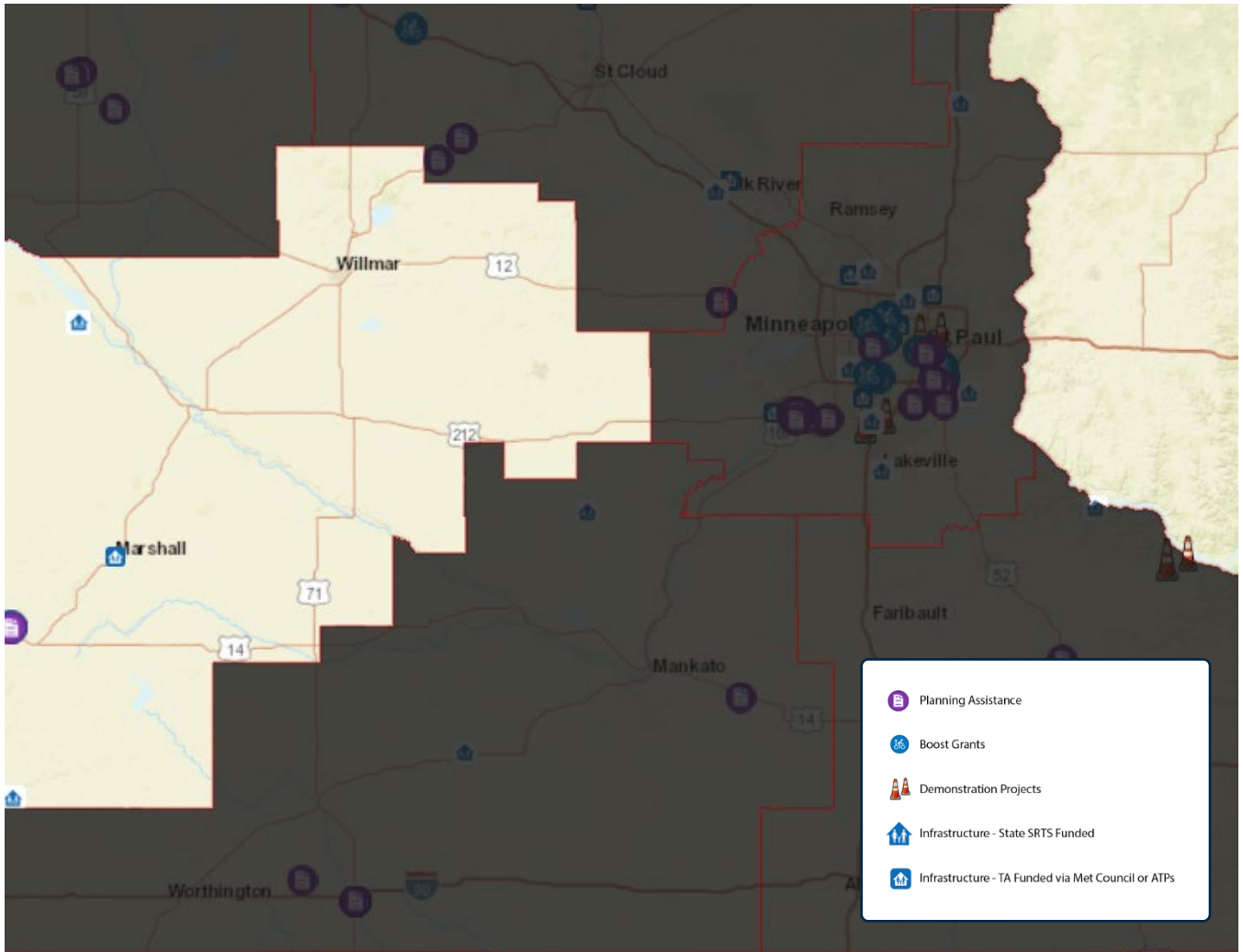
District 6 Safe Routes to School Awards, FY 2022-2023



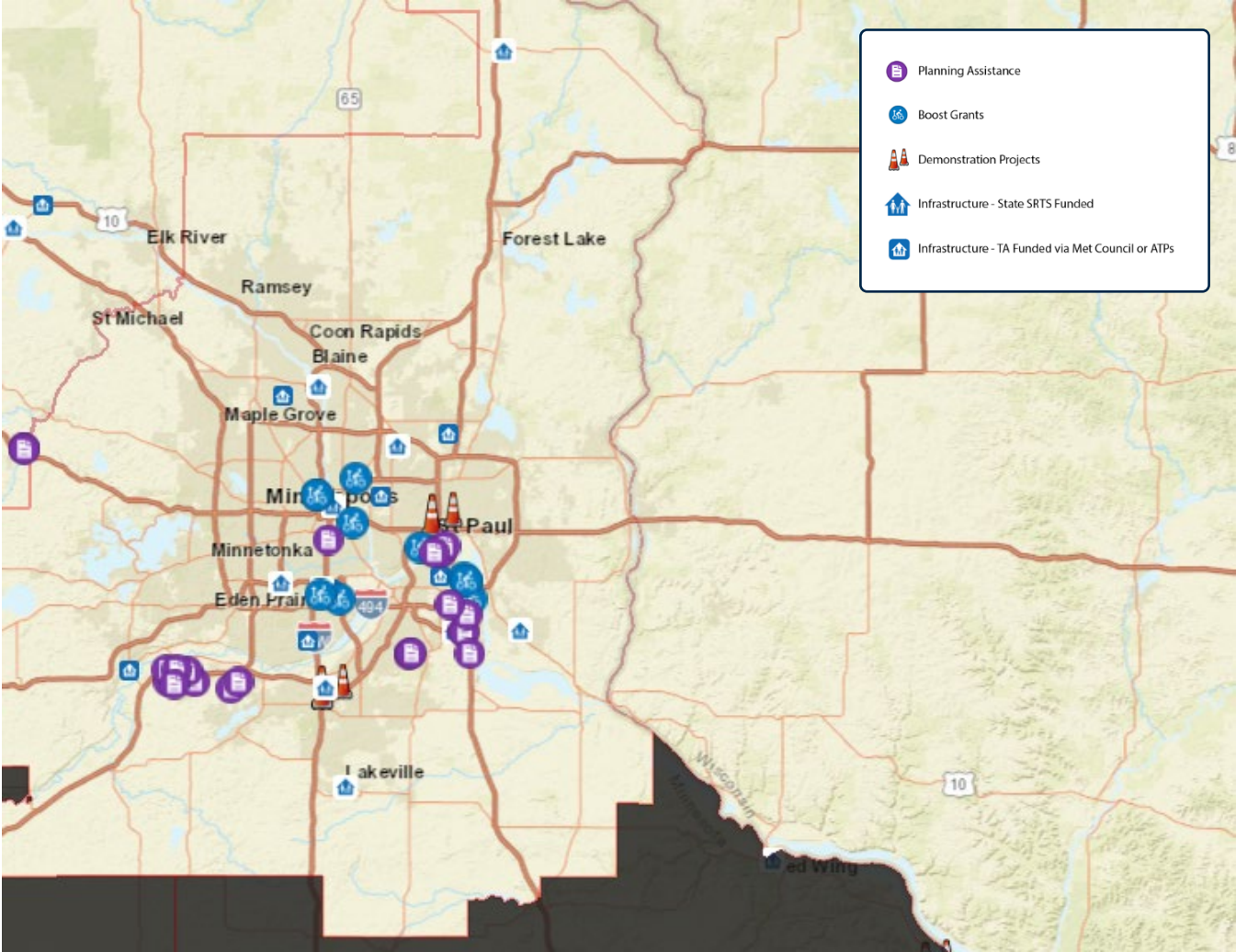
District 7 Safe Routes to School Awards, FY 2022-2023



District 8 Safe Routes to School Awards, FY 2022-2023



Metro District Safe Routes to School Awards, FY 2022-2023



Appendix C: SRTS Steering Committee

Table 11: 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