

Grand Rapids/Cohasset Safe Routes to School Plan Update

SRTS Team Meeting #3
March 25, 2021, 2:00 p.m.
Zoom Video/Audio Conference

SUMMARY

Introductions

Russell Habermann, Senior Planner at ARDC Planning, welcomed everyone and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

Attendees: Melanie DeBay (ISD 318 Community Ed. Director), Anna Johnson (Get Fit Itasca), Jayme Smith (Itasca County SHIP), Eric Trast (City of Grand Rapids), Maren Webb (MnDOT District 1), Russell Habermann (ARDC Planning), Justin Otsea (ARDC Planning)

Action Plan Review

Habermann shared the draft action plan with the SRTS Team and went through the project sheets one by one. Comments are organized by project sheet below.

Walk/Bike Education

- More flexibility on grade level for curriculums is desired, though a parenthetical note about recommended grade levels for the curriculum would be fine. Use of curriculum would likely take place in PE class; most use of the bike fleet currently is in 6th grade.
- The bike fleet, its enhancements, and its maintenance were brought up as another strategy. Adding adaptive bikes (in addition to the tricycles at each school) was noted.

Walk/Bike Support Programs

- It was noted that the Forestry Center grooms the Sylvan Point Trail and that a study of the trail use for skiing (through trail counts) should be explored before considering completely plowing the trail during the winter. It was noted that ARDC has trail counters that could be borrowed.

Walk/Bike Incentives Programs

- Other groups besides the Boys and Girls Club could be engaged; some ideas were the after-school group at the Y and the middle school student council.

Road Safety Programs

- The group felt like the crossing guard strategy from the Walk/Bike Support Programs better fits under this category.
- It was noted that school staff may not have ability to serve as crossing guards; maybe a community group could volunteer.
- A larger push of general community education could be made through a back-to-school newsletter, radio spots with local law enforcement, and press releases in local papers; it could also be tied with bus safety.

- The SRTS Team could get messaging out at community events like National Night Out and back-to-school events.
- The Arts & Culture Commission might be interested in helping with creative crosswalks in school zones.

Walk/Bike Infrastructure

- A reference to supporting implementation of the Highway 2 Cohasset study should be made.
- The City of Cohasset is responsible for snow clearing of sidewalks on Highway 2; making practice of clearing these sidewalks should be addressed.
- The signal timing of the Highway 2 intersection in Cohasset should be explored.
- Extending the Golf Course Road trail to the golf course also could be addressed.

SRTS Team Development

- Connecting with the School Wellness Committee would be wise too.
- Keeping SRTS work alive and visible is a good way of raising attention, getting new people involved, and building strong relationships with the school.

It was questioned where evaluation efforts could be fit into this action plan. Habermann said that a final meeting of the SRTS Team this academic year would address a plan of action for evaluation.

The SRTS Team also inquired about who would be responsible for the plan and its implementation. To address this, a note should be made at the beginning of the document that says this action plan is for the SRTS Team (not ISD 318 on its own) to pursue.

A question about formatting all items into an implementation spreadsheet with parties responsible for pursuing different items was brought forward. This can also be included in the final plan document.

The SRTS Team then did an exercise to prioritize the project sheets. The results are listed below:

1. SRTS Team Development
2. Road Safety Programs
3. Walk/Bike Support Programs
4. Walk/Bike Education
5. Walk/Bike Infrastructure
6. Walk/Bike Incentives Programs

Spring SRTS Activities

Habermann shared that the planning process includes two more tools for evaluation: Student Travel Tallies and School Site Observations. Before school lets out, the schools will be contacted about administering student travel tallies in classrooms. Habermann asked the committee when they think School Site Observations should take place, and they mentioned sometime in May would work.

Anna Johnson shared that work to engage the schools about implementation could happen as early as June. Habermann also shared that National Bike to School Day is the first Wednesday in May; this might be an opportunity for education or encouragement. Habermann is available to help out with getting things off the ground while ARDC is under contract.

Next Steps

- ARDC Planning will prepare meeting notes and distribute them to the SRTS Team.
- ARDC Planning will revise the draft plan document based on discussion at the meeting.
- ARDC Planning will connect with the schools about administering Student Travel Tallies.
- ARDC Planning will look at coordinating School Site Observations in May.
- ARDC Planning will communicate with the SRTS Team about the fourth and final Team meeting, expected for the end of May.

The meeting adjourned at 3:02 pm.