



Prairie River Middle School SRTS Action Plan

Merrill Area Public School District
Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program

2020

School Demographics:

Enrollment: 557

Grades: 6th—8th grade

Start Time: 7:50 a.m.

End Time: 3:30 p.m.

Principal:
Ryan Martinovici

106 N. Polk St.
Merrill, WI

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Safe Routes to School Background Information

The purpose of the SRTS program is to provide safe pedestrian and bicycle facilities that encourage healthier lifestyles. Programs can be established to educate students, parents, and the community on the benefits of walking and bicycling to school and provide tips to do so safely. Major SRTS goals are:

- To enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bike to school.
- To make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age.
- To facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools.

SRTS Planning efforts assess the facilities and conditions near school, examine how students are currently traveling to /from school, and identify safety concerns/issues raised by parents and the community. Infrastructure and non-infrastructure recommendations are then created and implemented, sometimes with grant funding assistance, by the SRTS Task Force and other community members. SRTS Plans focus on projects within two miles of an elementary or middle school (Kindergarten-8th grade) and address the 5 E's:

- ⇒ **Engineering**
- ⇒ **Enforcement**
- ⇒ **Education**
- ⇒ **Encouragement**
- ⇒ **Evaluation**



The main goal of SRTS programs is to get children safely walking and biking to school.

Prairie River Middle School Background Information

Prairie River Middle School serves the whole Merrill School District. In 1997 the location evolved from a combined Middle and High School to Middle School only. The majority of students travel to and from school in the family vehicle (57 & 49%) or on the school bus (31%). In comparison, walking to and from school is 6 & 14%.

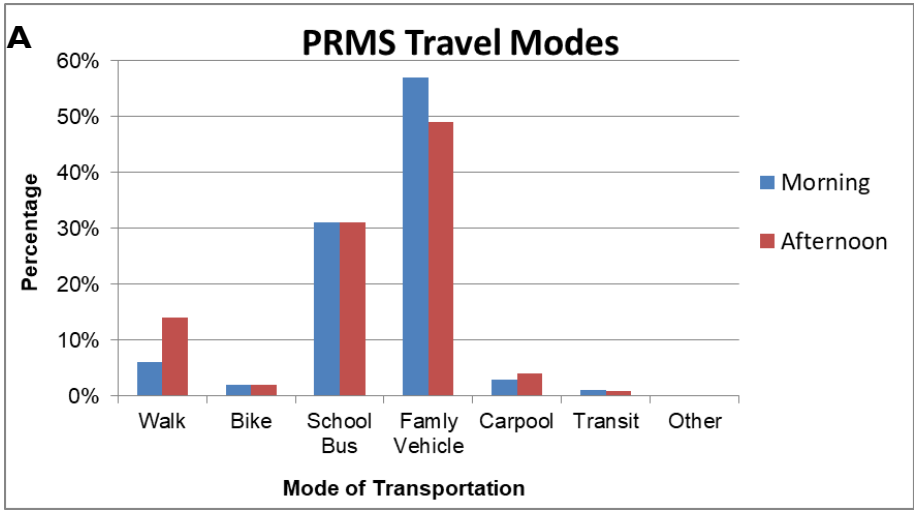
The top three concerns of parents who do not allow their children to walk or bike to school are distance from school, the weather, and amount of traffic along the route.

STH 64 split into two divided one way streets (E. 1st and E. 2nd Sts.). The AADT on STH 64/E. 1st. St. between N. Polk St. and Logan St. was 4,200 in 2019.

The Middle School is located in a very busy section of the City. Most traffic comes through the City on STH 64. The school is located in close proximity to a

The vast majority of students arrive and depart in the family vehicle (57 & 49%, Fig. A), followed by the school bus (31%), compared with some walkers (6 & 14%), and very few bikers (2%).

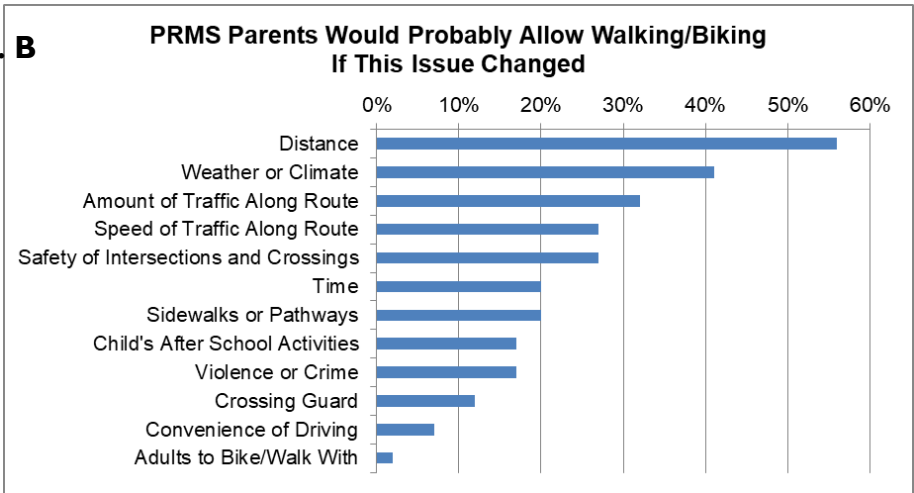
Fig. A



Student Tallies, October 2019

“PRMS Travel Modes” bar chart (Fig. A) shows that 8% more parents are driving their kids to school in the morning, but those kids get home by walking (8%).

Fig. B

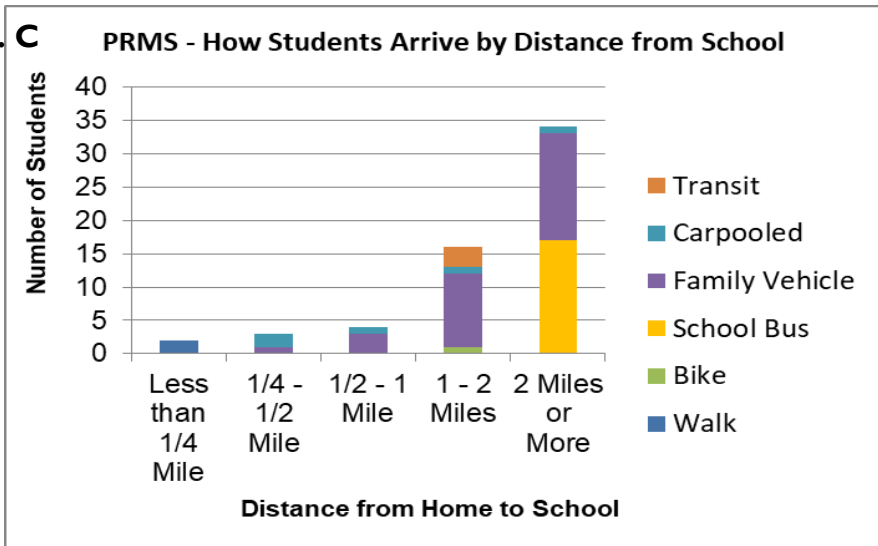


Parent Surveys, October 2019

“Distance” is the most commonly cited barrier by parents (Fig. B).

Fig. C shows 15% living within a mile of school and only two (3.4%) walkers; therefore the potential to increase walking is 12%.

Fig. C



Parent Surveys, October 2019

Community/Task Force

BACKGROUND

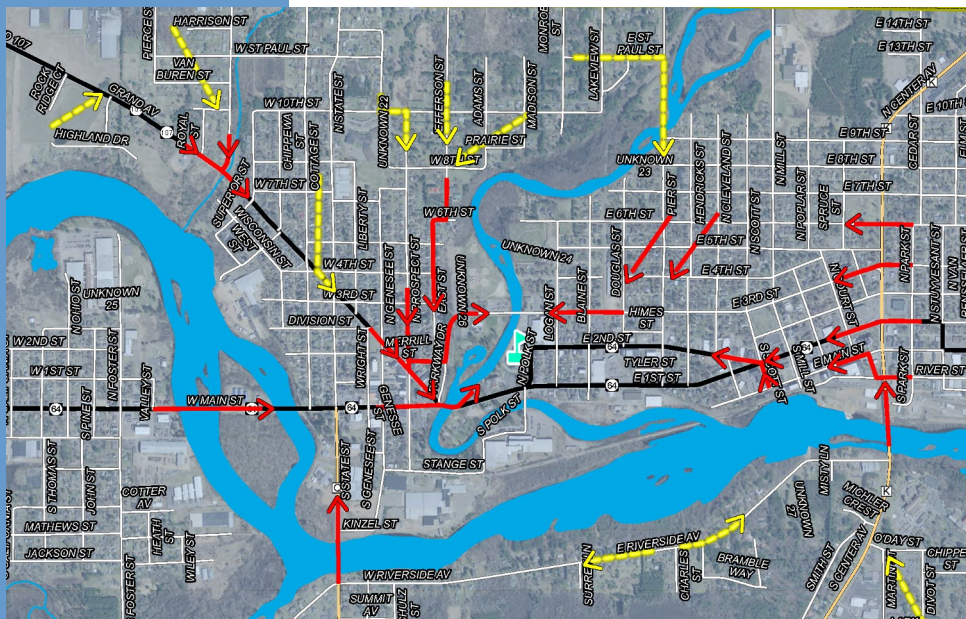
Many positive attributes make Merrill a great place to walk or bike for daily trips and for recreation. Historic downtown buildings and houses in some neighborhoods, surrounded by rivers and towering white pines provide scenic beauty to travel through. Distances are short to walk or bike. Many destinations are within a 3.5-mile, 20-minute, bicycling distance of most residents. Topography in Merrill is generally flat with gradual hills that are convenient to climb on a bike or to walk. All of these reasons make Merrill a good place to walk and bike.

Bicycling education in Merrill is multifaceted. The police department has been providing bicycle education in 3rd and 4th grades. The Merrill Optimist Club along with Merrill Park and Recreation Department and the Merrill Police Department provides bicycle safety training at the annual Children’s Festival, which targets toddlers up to 5th grade.

TASK FORCE

The Merrill SRTS Tasks Force began meeting in the fall of 2019. An overarching issue was identified as the limiting factor to getting more walkers and bikers – parental convenience. Additional issues were reviewed at each school as basic air photo audits were conducted of each school.

School Route Maps: The City of Merrill and NCWRPC created school route maps (Maps 5A-5E) to show the major and minor feeder routes that children use to get to school. As part of the school route map development, recommendations were created.



Map 5A
School Routes

Prairie River
Middle School

Legend














- Prairie River Middle School
- Feeder Route
- Main Route
- Minor Civil Division
- State Highway
- County Highway
- Local Roads
- Water

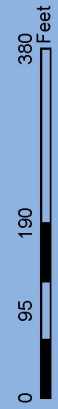
Map 3A Site Assessment

Prairie River Middle School

Merrill Safe Routes To School

Legend

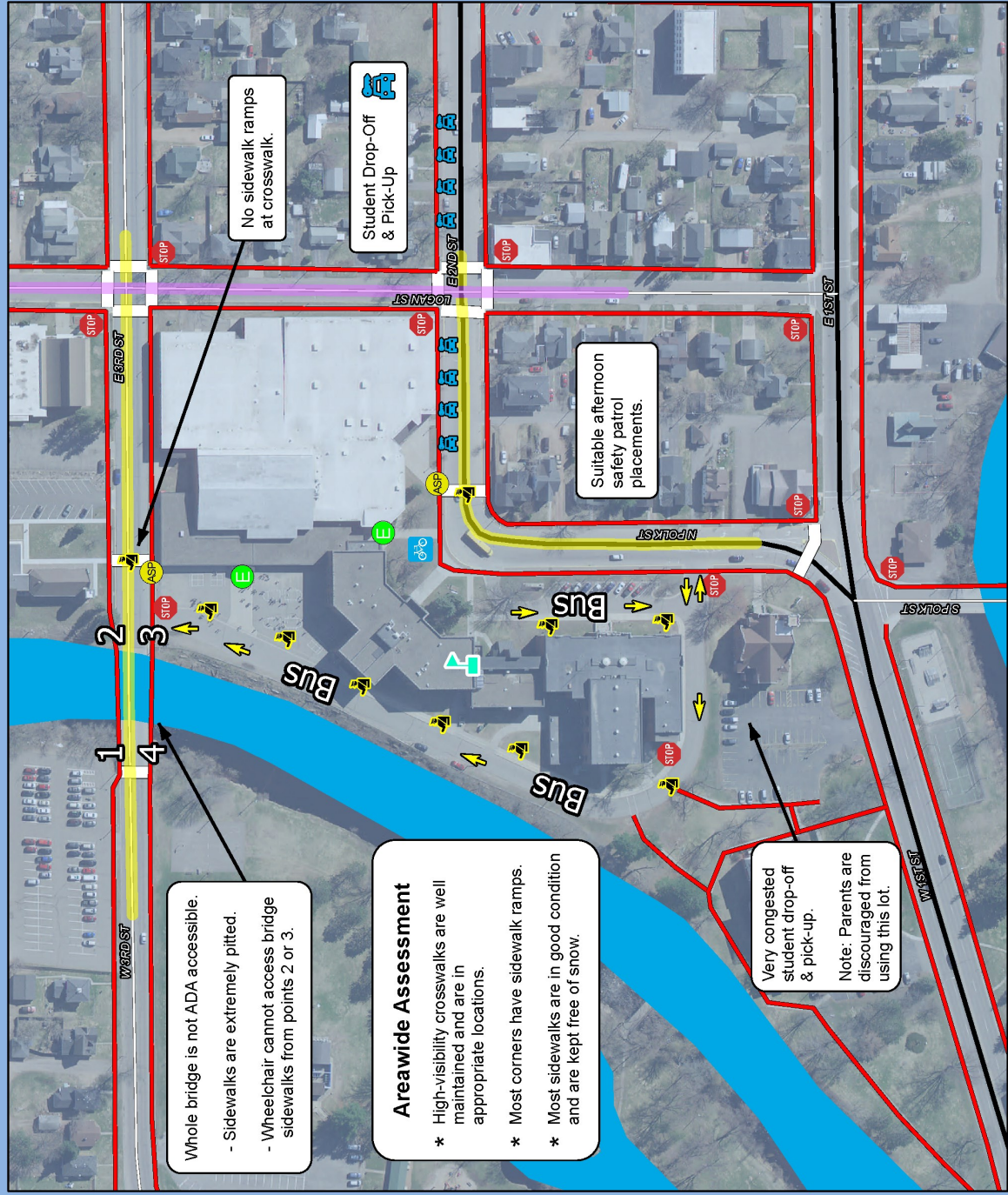
-  Prairie River Middle School
-  Bike Rack
-  Crossing Guard
-  Afternoon Safety Patrol
-  School Entrance
-  Stop Sign
-  15 MPH School Speed Limit (Includes Higher Fine Zone)
-  Higher Fine Zone
-  Sidewalks
-  High Visibility Crosswalk
-  State Highway
-  Local Roads
-  Water



Source: WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
 This map is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey. It is a compilation of records, information and data used for reference purposes only. NCVRPC is not responsible for any inaccuracies herein contained.



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Map 6A Recommendations

Prairie River Middle School Middle School

Merrill Safe Routes To School

Legend

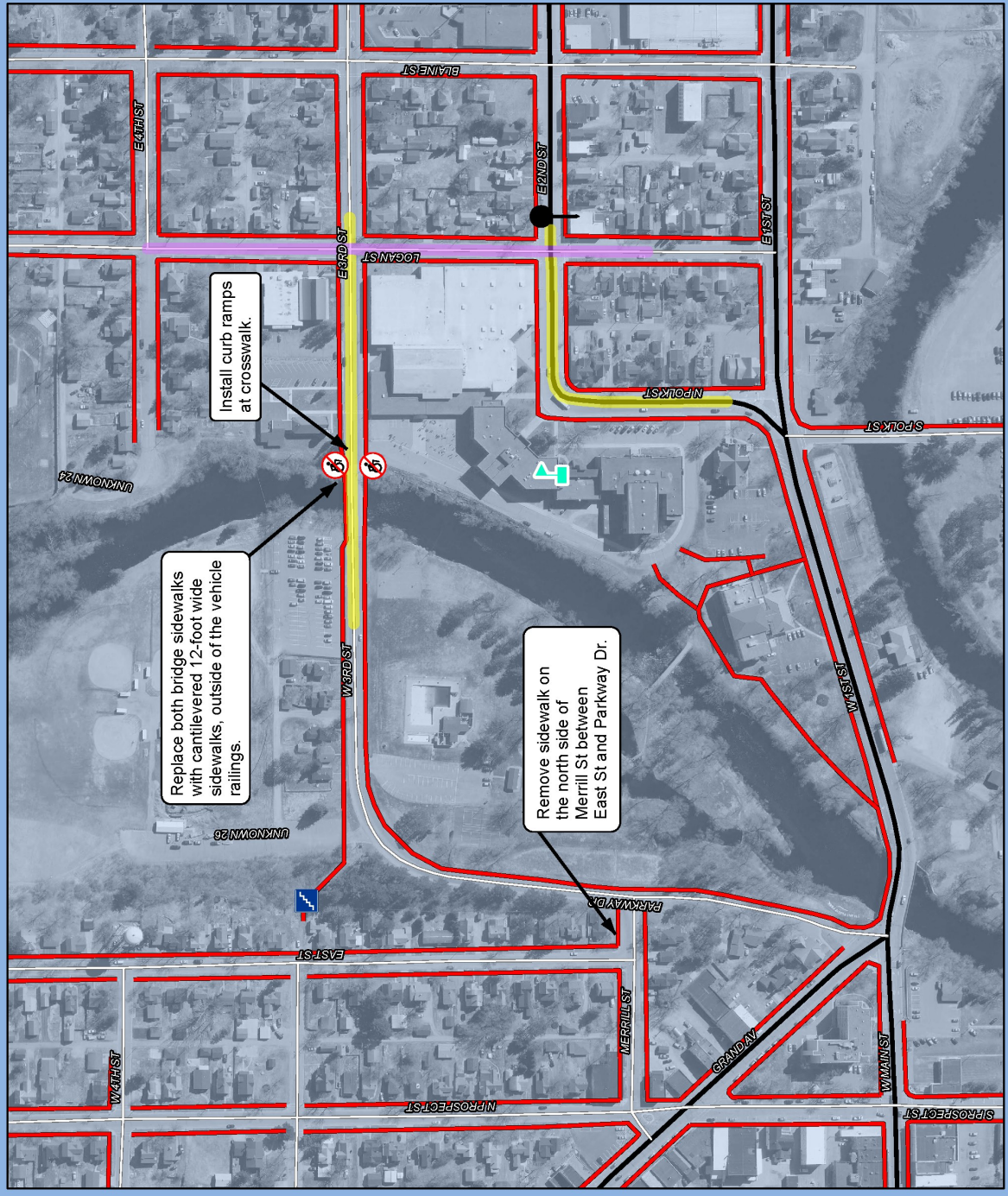
- Prairie River Middle School
- Sidewalks
- 15 MPH School Speed Limit (Includes Higher Fine Zone)
- Higher Fine Zone
- Stairs
- Not Handicapped Accessible
- Digital Message Board Assembly
- State Highway
- Local Roads



Sources: WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, CITY OF MERRILL, AND AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS. THIS DRAWING IS A COMPILATION OF RECORDS, INFORMATION AND DATA USED FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS STUDY. THE DRAWING IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY INACCURACIES BEING CONTAINED.



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Regional Safe Routes to
School Program. For addi-
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Edmondson, Regional SRTS
Coordinators at 715-849-
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www.ncwrpc.org.



RECOMMENDATIONS for Prairie River Middle School

ACTIVITY	LOCATION	FUNDING	LEAD AGENCY (BOLD)	TIME FRAME
Engineering				
Replace both W 3rd St bridge sidewalks with cantilevered 12-foot wide sidewalks.	See Map 6A.	WisDOT (Up to 80%), local taxes	City	Medium term (TAP application every other year)
Install curb ramps at Prairie River bridge crosswalk.	See Map 6A.	Local taxes	City	Short term
Remove dangerous sidewalk segment.	Merrill St. See Map 6A.	Local staff	City	Short term
2nd Street Sign Plan.	See Figure B, p.49	Local taxes	City, WisDOT	Short term
Over-the-road school sign assembly.	See Figure C, p. 50	WisDOT (Up to 80%), local taxes	City	Medium term (TAP application every other year)
Replace all bike racks. See Att. C guidance.	Folk St entrance	Local taxes	School Dist.	Short term
Education				
Provide materials to student's families about how to walk or bike with your kids.	School families	Local taxes	School Dist., Nat'l SRTS, NCWRPC, WI Bike Fed	Annually or as needed
Consider starting an additional bicycle training event.	Community	Local taxes	School Dist., City	Short term
Consider school field trips that integrate safe walking and biking practices into the curriculum.	PRMS	Local taxes	School Dist.	Short term
Encouragement				
Create a "Walk to School Week" every fall.	Community-wide	Current staff	School Dist., Police, City	Annually in fall
Review creating a walking/biking club.	PRMS	Current staff	School Dist., NCWRPC	Short term Ongoing
Enforcement				
Promote community education about how to act in a school zone. See page 53 in Plan.	PRMS school zones.	Current staff	City, School Dist.	Short term Ongoing
Continue to provide crossing guards.	As needed around PRMS.	Local taxes	City, School Dist.	Annually
Continue maintaining school speed limit zones.	See <u>Site Assessment</u> map.	Local taxes	City	Ongoing
Evaluation				
Conduct student tallies to see if walking and biking have increased.	PRMS	Current staff	School Dist., NCWRPC	After initial changes and as new modifications are made.
If walking or biking have not increased after all Engineering actions have occurred, then review various educational programming on "Resources" webpage and implement one or more of the resources.	PRMS	Current staff	School Dist.	After student tally information has been collected