



Safe Routes To School: Thief River Falls

A plan to make walking and biking to school a safe, fun activity.

MAY 29, 2026

THIEF RIVER FALLS, MINNESOTA

Primary, Middle and High Schools



Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the participation of the following individuals and organizations in the development of this Safe Routes to School Plan.

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ORGANIZATION OF THIS REPORT

This report is designed to support and be accessible to multiple groups of people involved with Safe Routes to School in Thief River Falls, including students, caregivers, teachers, school administrators, city staff, elected officials, and county and state employees. This plan focuses on key information and recommendations, while the appendices document additional participation, analysis, resources, and deliberation that shaped the development of the plan.



The Vision

Walking, biking, and rolling to school is safe, comfortable, and fun for all students at Thief River Falls.

THE 6 E'S

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs rely on six core strategies, called the “Six Es”, to work towards their vision.

EQUITY – THE OVERARCHING E

Prioritizing positive outcomes for students from lower-income households; Black, Indigenous, and other students of color; students with disabilities; and other students who face disproportionate barriers to walking, biking, and rolling to school because of their group membership. This plan uses the term “priority populations” to refer to disproportionately impacted groups of students and other community members.

ENGAGEMENT

Working with students, families, school staff, and community members and organizations, especially those from priority populations, to identify needs, better understand barriers, and create solutions together for walking, biking, and rolling.

ENGINEERING

Developing Equity-focused changes to the built environment that support youth travel, designed and prioritized through community Engagement.

EDUCATION

Providing students and other community members, especially those from priority populations, with skills and knowledge about walking, biking, and rolling.

ENCOURAGEMENT

Normalizing a culture of walking, biking, and rolling through incentive programs, events, and activities that center priority populations.

EVALUATION

Measuring how Safe Routes to School initiatives are implemented (process evaluation) and what impacts are (outcome evaluation), especially how initiatives Engage with and support priority populations.

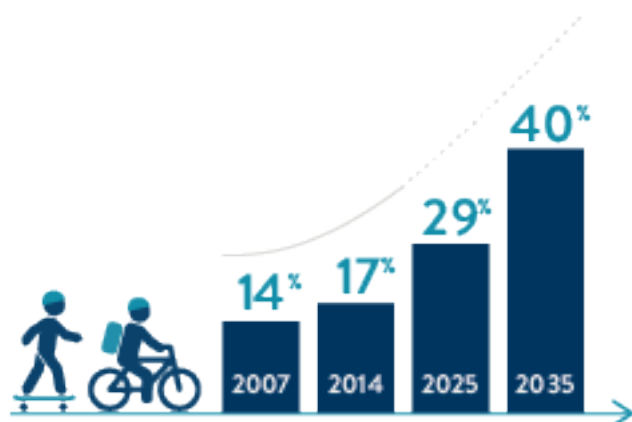


Why Safe Routes to School?



Why Safe Routes to School?

Today, less than 20% of K-8 students walk or bike to school, but as recently as 1970, nearly 50% of students walked or biked to school. Where schools and housing are located, how roads are designed, and how automobiles are regulated have all contributed to this decline. Through policy changes, infrastructure improvements, and programs, Safe Routes to School helps create physical and social environments that empower students, their families, and their communities to walk and bike more often. Communities that participate in Safe Routes to School also benefit from less air, noise, and water pollution; lower road maintenance costs; and more pleasant streetscapes for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers alike.



SRTS initiatives are contributing to more students and families walking and biking to school.



Most kids are not getting enough physical activity.



Roads near schools are congested, decreasing safety and air quality for children.

KIDS WHO WALK OR BIKE TO SCHOOL:



Arrive alert and able to focus on school



Get most of their recommended daily physical activity just from traveling to and from school



Feel better about their physical health



Have better school performance and test scores



Are more likely to have good mental health

A REINFORCING CYCLE OF WALKING AND BIKING TO SCHOOL



More students walking and biking to school

Greater focus on policies, infrastructure, and programs to support walking and biking

Better air quality and more pleasant bike and pedestrian environments

Safer and easier routes to and from school

*More information, including primary sources, can be found at <http://guide.saferoutesinfo.org>.



Equity in SRTS

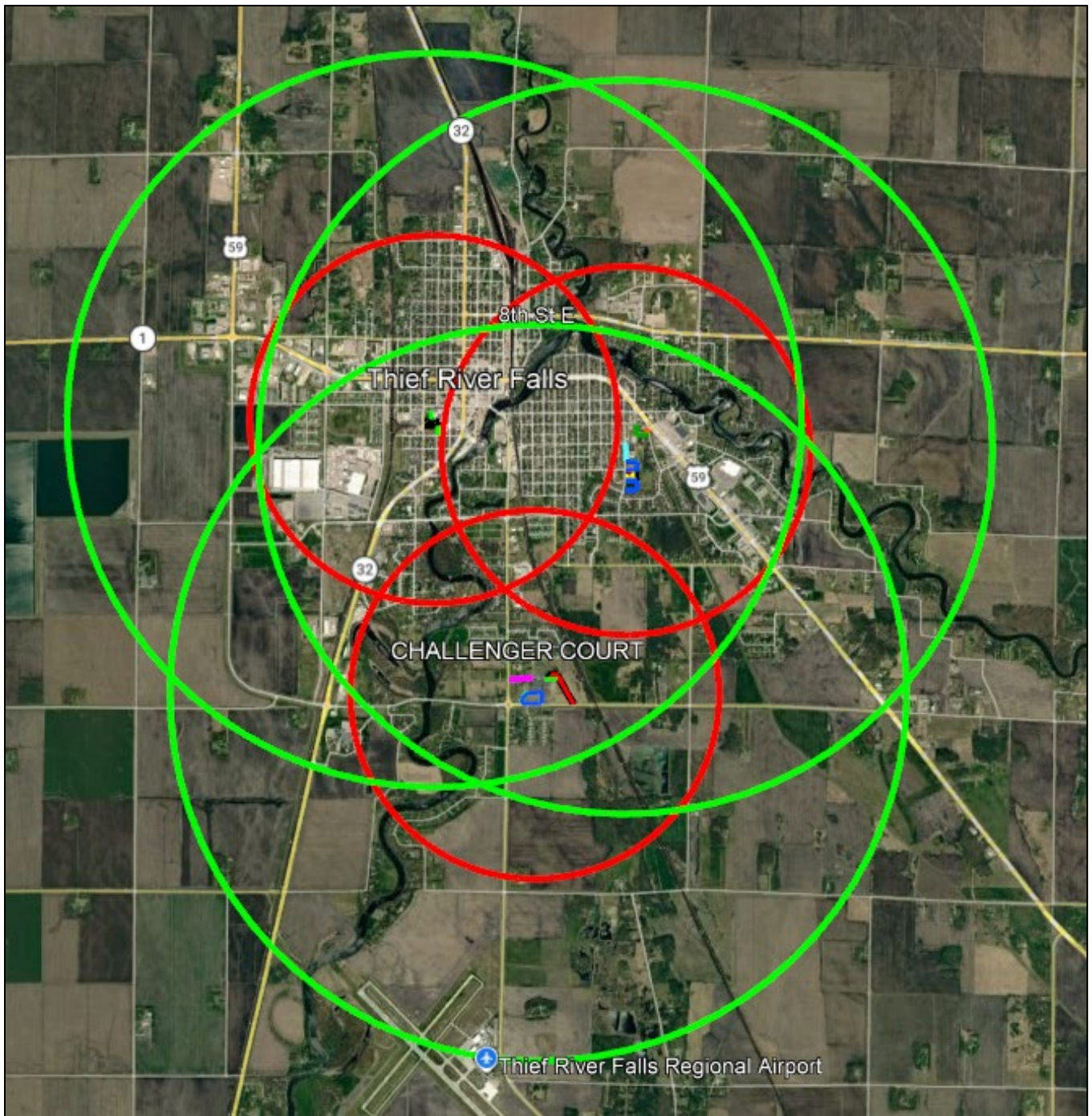
Disparities in access to resources (such as high-quality jobs, schools, parks, healthcare, food, and a full range of transportation choices) impact the health and well-being of communities. These differences are not random; they are the results of government policy and funding in the past and present, which has worked to the benefit of some and to the disadvantage of others.

Equity in Safe Routes to School is impacted by transportation system inequities—such as limited access to high-quality walking, biking, and rolling infrastructure.

Safe Routes to School works to improve walking, biking and rolling opportunities for all students, while addressing these inequities through programs, infrastructure, and policy improvements that specifically help priority populations. Priority populations include individuals, groups, and communities who are more likely to rely on walking, biking, rolling, or transit for transportation; are more vulnerable to unsafe traffic conditions; or have suffered historic disinvestment in safe, comfortable,

walking, biking, and rolling infrastructure. By looking at demographic data, examining existing transportation services and policies, and speaking with members of the community, the Thief River Falls Safe Routes to School team worked to develop recommendations that support equity in walking, biking, and rolling to school.

Thief River Falls Schools, along with the city and county, work to continuously address these inequities by prioritizing programs, infrastructure, and policy improvements that help individuals and groups with less access to resources, in particular those who don't have safe, convenient, and fun routes to school.



Map: A green, two-mile radius around each school denoting where each school does not provide busing. A red, one-mile circle is included for context. Individual projects are also located on this map for situational awareness. Closer maps of recommended safe routes projects occur later in this document.

Challenger School



SITE CIRCULATION

Pedestrians: Challenger's location makes walking to school difficult for a large segment of its population due to distance and age of the students. A few students were observed walking from the housing development on the south side and north side of the school. Navigating the large volume of traffic makes it very difficult and unsafe.

- Parking lot is congested during pick-up times.
- Area lacks sidewalks for students that walk or bike to school.

Bicyclists: Very few students were observed biking to Challenger. Distance, weather and age are deterrents for Challenger's students. The same difficult crossings and high traffic volume make it a challenge for students to navigate.

School Buses: Challenger has a good system for buses to get students to school. The back parking lot drop-off area provides a safe system for students and keeps buses away from most of the vehicle traffic.

- Students within two miles of Challenger School are not eligible for busing.

Transit: Public transit is available in Thief River Falls. Some students have used it successfully, but times and location do not make it available for all situations. Current school pass for public transit can cost students up to \$450/year if utilized.

Vehicles: Challenger has a very busy vehicle drop off and pick up lot. Vehicles are backed up for a long time. Traffic is heavy for vehicles that want to park in the lot. Congestion on the roads around the school is very evident.

- Traffic arrives at the school from all four directions.
- Traffic can back up into the roundabout during drop-off.
- Morning drop-off zone is not sufficient size-wise, so traffic backs up onto county roadways. A short left turn lane on the county road can also be viewed, also causing traffic to back up.

Franklin School



SITE CIRCULATION

Pedestrians: Franklin has a large volume of students walking to school from every direction. Several high traffic crossings exist for the students to navigate. In this and previous years, student – vehicle incidents with injury have occurred.

- Many students have to cross Highway 59 and 1st St., which have consistent high volumes and speeds of traffic.
- A trail is needed on the north side of the school. Currently, students walk through grass and snow.

Bicyclists: Franklin has a lot of students that bike to school. The same difficult crossings and high traffic volume make it a challenge for students to navigate.

School Buses: Franklin has bus drop off in an area with high vehicle and pedestrian traffic. Potential for conflict is greater in this area.

- Students within two miles of Franklin School are not eligible for busing.
- Bus drop off is collocated in the same area as vehicle drop off.

Transit: Public transit is available in Thief River Falls. Some students have used it successfully, but times and location do not make it available for all situations. Current school pass for public transit can cost students up to \$450/year if utilized.

Vehicles: Traffic around Franklin is very heavy with drop-off and pick-up times being very dangerous for vehicles and pedestrians.

- Additional parking is needed during special events

Lincoln School



SITE CIRCULATION

Pedestrians: Lincoln has students that walk to school with the most difficult crossings along First St.

- There is a need for additional sidewalks and crosswalks.

Bicyclists: Very few students were observed biking to Lincoln. The older age of students affects the number of students biking to Lincoln.

School Buses: Lincoln has buses drop off in areas with vehicle and pedestrian traffic. Potential for conflict is greater in these areas.

- Students within two miles of Lincoln School are not eligible for busing.
- Drop-off is on 1st St., which has a high volume of vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

Transit: Public transit is available in Thief River Falls. Some students have used it successfully, but times and location do not make it available for all situations. Current school pass for public transit can cost students up to \$450/year if utilized.

Vehicles: Lincoln seems to have better vehicle flow, but the volume is very high.

- Student parking lot in the back has a high volume of traffic before and after school.

SCHOOL CONTEXT:

Thief River Falls

ENROLLMENT:

1811

GRADES SERVED:

K-12

34% of students eligible for free or reduced lunch

DEMOGRAPHICS*

White, non-Hispanic, 82.1%

Hispanic, 7.5%

Asian 0.7%

American Indian/Alaska Native 2.1%

Multiracial, 6.8%

Black/African American, 0.8%

SOCIOECONOMIC**

Free and Reduced-Price Lunch 34%

English Language Learner 53

Receiving Special Education 360

*Source: School district records

**Source: School district records

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS:

* Students who attend Thief River Falls schools are predominantly White (82%). 7.5% are Hispanic/Latinx. Multiracial with two or more races make up 6.6%. The student population also includes a small percent of Black/ African American, Asian, or American Indian/Alaska Native.

* 34% of Thief River Falls students qualify for free or reduced lunch.

* 53 students are in the English Language Learner program.

* 44% of Thief River Falls students are ineligible for busing because they live within two miles of school. An estimated 2% of students currently walk or bike to school.

* 11.4% of the community lives below the poverty line.

* 360 students are currently receiving special education.

Infrastructure





Introduction to Infrastructure

Physical changes to the streetscape are essential to making walking, biking, and rolling to school safer and more comfortable.

An in-person walk audit and discussions with the Safe Routes to School Team, school and district staff, caregivers, students, community members, and city and county staff informed recommendations to address key barriers to walking and biking around Thief River Falls.

Recommendations are prioritized based on community and stakeholder input, traffic and roadway conditions, cost, number of students impacted, and benefit to priority populations. This planning process was designed to address historical and contemporary inequities in who benefits from and who is burdened by transportation systems, and equity considerations accordingly played a central role in the prioritization of infrastructure

recommendations. Especially in the winter months, improved maintenance and lighting can contribute to improving equitable access to walking and biking routes, even where a sidewalk or path is present.

WINTER MAINTENANCE

For students and community members with disabilities, winter maintenance is key to accessing sidewalks and trails during snowy months. This is also true for students and families who walk and roll as their primary means of transportation, either because they cannot afford or choose not to own a vehicle, or because other transportation options aren't accessible to them. Cities can adopt policies that prioritize winter maintenance of existing infrastructure and make it easier for the most vulnerable users of our transportation system, including students—to get around in winter. These policies help to increase transparency and improve reliability for the active transportation network.

For example, they can:

- Adopt policies that prioritize snow clearing and removal on active transportation facilities
- Prioritize clearing of routes that provide access to transit
- Develop and share information publicly regarding sidewalk and shared use pathway snow clearing and removal practices
- Hold a winter maintenance forum or conduct a survey around specific winter engagement concerns
- Work with schools to establish volunteer groups of residents to clear sidewalks on priority routes to school

LIGHTING AND VISIBILITY

Similarly, lighting for people walking and biking is important for both actual and perceived sense of safety and security. In winter climates like Minnesota's, where darker days mean school arrival and dismissal can occur in the dark, lighting is especially important for mitigating safety concerns and encouraging active transportation throughout the year.

While lighting can sometimes be seen as a costly investment, it is an important step for ensuring equitable access to walking and biking routes. Lighting should be seen as a necessary component of bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements, not seen as a potential add-on or "nice-to-have" feature.

Communities can consider:

- Creating a lighting plan for priority pedestrian routes to install trail or sidewalk lighting over time
- Partnerships with or requirements for private development to provide lighting
- Incorporating high-visibility safety vests into crossing guard and Walking School Bus events
- Solar powered street and trail lighting
- Giveaways that help kids access winter gear such as clothing or bike lights

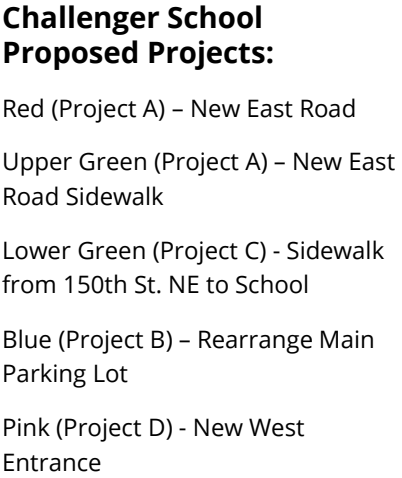
HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

This plan does not represent a comprehensive list of every project that could improve conditions for walking and bicycling, rather community priorities, key conflict areas, and potential improvements identified in the planning process.

Recommendations range from simple striping changes to more significant changes to streets, intersections, and school infrastructure.

Recommendations identified in this plan are not necessarily endorsed by MnDOT but planning-level concepts that will require additional engineering design. Additionally, all recommendations for pedestrian and bicycle crossings of County Highways will be evaluated by the Pennington County Highway Engineer prior to implementation.





A: Challenger New East Road

PRIORITY: High (Map: Red Line Outlined By Black)

RECOMMENDATION

A new entrance road will be established on the east edge of the school property that will connect 150th St. NE with the back parking lot currently used for school bus drop off and pick up. A new sidewalk will need to be established from the drop-off area to the school.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

This will allow personal vehicles to avoid congestion in the front parking lot, the entrance to the parking lot and the roundabout. This will also encourage some traffic to travel east away from the congestion. The new drop-off area will use part of the existing bus parking lot but will not interfere with the current bus drop-off and pick up area.

WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

County and school staff, with funding from MnDOT.

HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Less congestion will provide a safer drop off with less traffic for those with disabilities.



B: Rearrange the Main Parking Lot at Challenger

PRIORITY: High (Photo Below)

RECOMMENDATION

The main parking lot on the south side of the Challenger school will be updated by rearranging parking lanes, establishing safety barriers and providing safe walking lanes to the school.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

Current drop-off and pick-up times are very congestive, confusing and unsafe for pedestrians.

WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

School staff with funding from various sources.

HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improving traffic flow and providing safe walking zones will make it safer for all students and adults entering the school parking lot.





C: Sidewalk from 150th St. NE to school

PRIORITY: High (See Photo Above)

RECOMMENDATION

Install a new sidewalk from 150th St. NE to the school that will provide a safe route for walking, biking and rolling from the roundabout area to the school. (See picture above).

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

Currently there is not a designated place for students to travel along this route. This will connect the trail system along County 17 connecting at the roundabout at 150th St. NE to the school keeping students off the parking lot area.

WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

School staff with funding from various sources.

HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Students walking, biking or rolling to and from school will have a safe and accessible route to travel on.

D: New West Entrance at Challenger

PRIORITY: Medium (Map: Pink Lined Area)

RECOMMENDATION

Install a new driveway from County 17 to the current parking lot on the northwest side of Challenger. (See picture below).

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

Staff and bus traffic will have an alternative route to the school. This will help reduce traffic on the other routes to and from school.

WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

School staff with funding from various sources.

HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

This could be used as a handicap drop-off and pick-up zone.





Franklin School Project Map

Lower Green (Project E): New sidewalk next to the school.

Black (Project E): One-way road connecting two parking lots and the school.

Red (Project E): New basketball court.

Yellow (Project E): New tennis courts.

Upper Dark Blue (Project E): New expanded parking lot next to the school.

Light Blue (Project F): New off-street bus drop-off and pick-up zone.

Upper Green (Project G): Trails connecting school to ballfields, pickleball courts and parking lot.

Orange (Project G): New pickleball court parking.

Lower Dark Blue (Project H): Remove trees and create a new parking lot.

Purple (Potential Change): When the Highway 59 Corridor Project commences, this area could be altered. Exact project specifications not yet known.

E: Move Tennis Courts at Franklin

PRIORITY: High

RECOMMENDATION

Move the existing four court block of courts to the south side of the existing two courts. Expand the parking lot into the area of the existing courts. Create a one-way drive around the perimeter of the parking lot to create a new drop-off and pick-up zone next to the school. Create a new sidewalk next to the school.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

This will add needed parking for the school, especially during special activities. A new drop-off zone will be created that will allow for better traffic flow and a safer system for students. The sidewalk next to the school will provide a safe zone for students going to and from school.

WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

School staff with funding from various sources.

HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

All students and adults will have safer and more equal access to the school building.

F: Create a Bus Zone in Front of the School

PRIORITY: High

RECOMMENDATION

Create a zone off the street for buses to drop-off and pick-up students and develop a new sidewalk to keep students away from the zone.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

Buses currently park alongside the street to load and unload students. This impedes traffic and allows students to walk close to the street. The new zone will be safer for students and traffic.

WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

School and city staff with funding from various sources.

HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Students with disabilities will be further from traffic and a safe zone will be established.

G: New Parking and Trail by Ball Fields and Pickleball Courts

PRIORITY: High

RECOMMENDATION

A new parking lot will be constructed along the frontage road near the ballfields and pickleball court. This will be done in conjunction with a new trail that connects the frontage road to the school and from the school between the two fields to 1st St.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

There is no parking in this area, and it is needed. Students currently walk through this area in grass, dirt and snow. It provides a short cut for students living on the east side of Highway 59 to travel. The trail to 1st St. will provide an alternate route for students that will direct them away from the busy Spruce Avenue.

WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

City and school staff with funding from various sources.

HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Additional safe routes will be provided for students to walk, bike and roll to school.

H. Remove Trees for Parking Lot

PRIORITY: Medium

RECOMMENDATION

Remove the trees from the southwest corner of Franklin property. This will provide an area to develop an additional parking lot.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

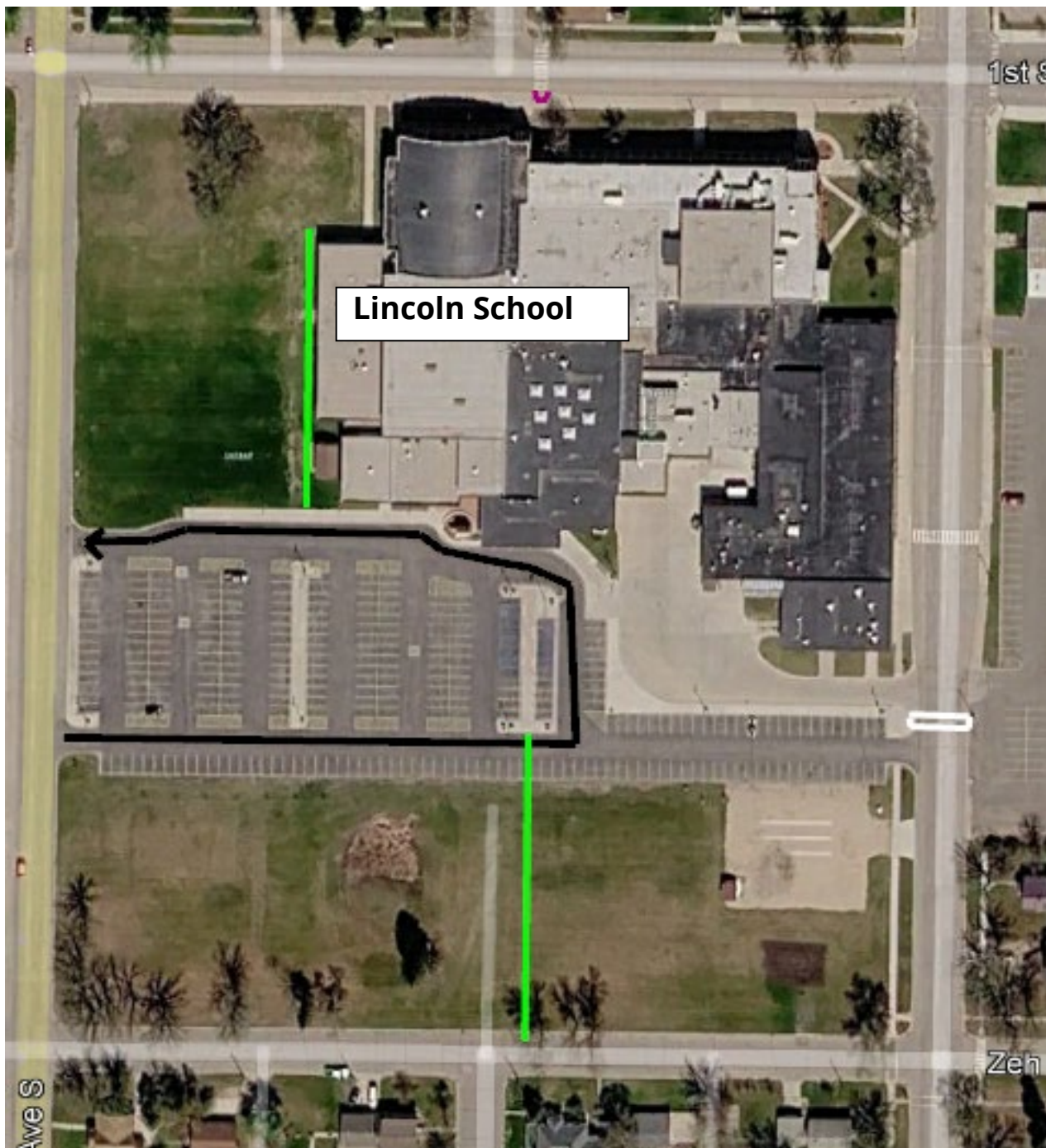
Parking is needed for overflow parking for the school. This parking lot also will provide needed parking for after-school activities. Currently parking occurs mostly on the streets. This will provide needed parking for tennis, basketball, soccer and football.

WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

School staff with funding from various sources.

HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Currently there is no parking for those with disabilities. This parking lot will give everyone access to outdoor sporting events.



I: Create Two Sidewalks at Lincoln

PRIORITY: High (Map: Green Lined Area)

RECOMMENDATION

A sidewalk is needed on the south side of the school to provide a way for students to walk and bike from 1st St. to the main school entrance. A sidewalk is also needed from the main entrance going east to Zeh Street to provide student access.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

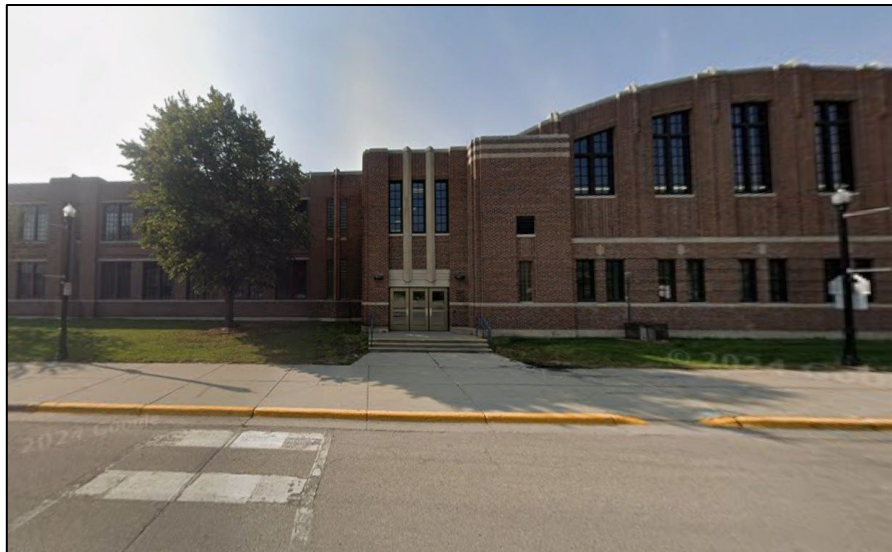
Currently students are forced to walk or bike on streets or grass areas. This will provide a safe place for students to access school property.

WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

School staff with grant funding from various sources.

HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improving sidewalk conditions makes walking and rolling easier and safer for people with disabilities.



J: Create a Handicap Accessible Ramp on 1st St.

PRIORITY: High (See Photo Above)

RECOMMENDATION

Install a handicap accessible ramp on the west entrance to the school on First Street.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

The current ramp is located about thirty feet away from the crosswalk and does not line up with the crosswalk, forcing students to walk or roll on the street to the ramp. Students that need the ramp to access the sidewalk must navigate through traffic.

WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

City staff, with funding from MnDOT.

HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Handicap accessible ramps are essential to provide safe access to sidewalks from streets. This will make it possible for all students to access the front of the school.

K: Create New Crosswalk on the Northwest Side of the School.

PRIORITY: High (See Photo Below)

RECOMMENDATION

A crosswalk is needed in this location because it is where students and staff naturally cross to the north parking lot. The current crosswalk is further west where no one crosses.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

This is a wide street that encourages high traffic speed. Students and staff need a crosswalk that is properly signed to allow safer crossing.

WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

City staff, with funding from MnDOT.

HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

This will provide safer access to and from school for everyone who walks, bikes or rolls.





Programs



Introduction to Programs

Programs are opportunities to increase awareness, understanding, and excitement around walking, biking, and rolling to school.

Programs are focused on educating students, families, and the broader community about walking and biking, as well as on building a culture that supports and normalizes walking and biking to school and other destinations. Because programs are low-cost and can often be implemented quickly by an individual school or the school district, they represent an important Safe Routes to School strategy that complements longer-term strategies, including infrastructure improvements and policy changes.

EXISTING PROGRAMS

Thief River Falls and Thief River Falls schools have been actively working towards providing safe and inviting spaces around school campuses for students. This foundation of encouraging student travel safety provides a valuable baseline for expanding programs to encourage more students to walk and bike.

PROGRAMS ALREADY ACTIVE AT THIEF RIVER FALLS PUBLIC SCHOOLS:

- Walking field trips around town
- Bike giveaway
- Student involvement in community events
- Bike Thief River Falls
- Teens Toward Zero Deaths
- Walk! Bike! Fun! Curriculum
- Walk and Bike to School Days

PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Conversations with school and district staff, caregivers, students, community members, and city and county staff led to the following program recommendations. Programs were tailored to meet the needs, capacities, and interests of the community and were prioritized based on existing programs, input from local stakeholders, the extent to which the program would serve priority equity populations, and the readiness of the school to launch the program.

RECOMMENDED PROGRAMS INCLUDE:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • Bike Fleet | • Ongoing Evaluation |
| • Bike Mechanic Classes | • School Curriculum |
| • Bike Rodeo | • Student Patrols |
| • Community Organizations | • Student Clubs |
| • Crossing Guards | • SRTS Campaign |
| • Drop and Walk | • Suggested Route Map |
| • Educational Videos | • Walk & Bike Field Trips |
| • In-School Curriculum & Activities | • Walk! Bike! Fun! |
| • Inter-School Partnership | • Walking School Bus and Bike Train |
| • School Communications | |



EQUITABLE IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Each of the recommended programs can be implemented to benefit priority populations. In some cases, programs are inherently beneficial, but other times they require intentional thought to make sure they are implemented equitably and reach students who could benefit the most from them.

When working to start a new or update an old program, school staff and partners should ask themselves:

- Who could benefit the most from this program?
- Are there any barriers to participating in this program, including cultural, social, or financial?
- Are there any school resources that can help reduce barriers to participation?
- Are there community partners who could help us spread the word about this program, or help make it more effective?

After an event, it is also important to think about what went well and what could be improved in the future. Helpful questions to consider include:

- Is this a one-off program, or is there a way to provide ongoing support for it?
- Were any student or family groups absent? Is there something that could help them participate in the future?
- What did students think of the event? Families? Staff?

Taking a few minutes before and after an event to check in on these questions can make a big difference in building a culture of walking and biking that is accessible to all students and families.



WALK/BIKE TO SCHOOL DAYS

National Walk to School Day and Bike to School Day attract millions of students and families to try walking, biking, and rolling to school every October and May. In addition, Minnesota celebrates Winter Walk to School Day in February. Additional education, encouragement, and partner engagement programming can be used to promote the event, increase awareness, and expand participation. Walk/bike to school days can also take place more frequently (e.g., Walking Wednesdays) if there's interest and capacity.

When, where, and how will this be implemented?

This event would be held on nationally identified days. Implementation would occur with local personnel in coordination with partners. Suggested curriculum would be followed, with adaptations made to best serve Thief River Falls Schools.

Why is this relevant and recommended?

This would assist in teaching safe biking, walking and rolling habits to youth. These habits would follow through into adulthood.

How will this address transportation inequities?

Safe walking and biking is appropriate for all students. Anyone can practice the safety measures taught.

How will this be evaluated?

Evaluation would occur by involved staff with further measures done as needed/suggested.

Who needs to be involved to make this happen?

School staff, parents, students, local agencies

What is the timeline for implementation?

Annually as dictated by the nationally chosen date with alterations made due to scheduling conflicts and weather.



DROP & WALK

During a drop and walk event (also called park and walk or remote drop-off) bus drivers and caregivers drop students at a designated off-campus location and students walk the rest of the way to school. Remote drop-off events can help reduce drop-off congestion on campus and provide students who live further from school with an opportunity to walk to school.

When, where, and how will this be implemented?

This could be implemented by school personnel in coordination with bus drivers and parents/guardians. Discussions are ongoing with Thief River Falls School administration/board personnel to possibly begin this in the fall of 2026.

Why is this relevant and recommended?

It is likely to occur at the beginning and end of the year. This encourages healthy lifestyle habits as well as exercise before the school day starts.

How will this address transportation inequities?

All students could participate in this event, with the distance from home to school not playing a factor. Bused students, as well as those that walk or are dropped off could take part.

How will this be evaluated?

By participant feedback as well adults/monitors tasked with safety duties along the route.

Who needs to be involved to make this happen?

School bus drivers, Thief River Falls School administration, students, and parents.

What is the timeline for implementation?

Dependent upon previously scheduled events.

WALK! BIKE! FUN!

Walk! Bike! Fun! is a two-part curriculum designed specifically to meet Minnesota education standards. The program helps students ages five to thirteen learn traffic rules and regulations, the potential hazards to traveling, and handling skills needed to bike and walk effectively, appropriately, and safely through their community.

When, where, and how will this be implemented?

Annually offered event in the school's physical education curriculum that is dependent upon the physical education schedule of events for students. Event is based upon the Walk! Bike! Fun! curriculum.



Why is this relevant and recommended? Used as part of the physical education curriculum, with healthy habits that can follow through to adulthood.

How will this address transportation inequities?

All students will be given the opportunity to learn how to ride a bike safely as well as how to be a safe bicyclist/pedestrian. Potential traffic accidents will be reduced.

How will this be evaluated?

Walk! Bike! Fun! Curriculum.

Who needs to be involved to make this happen?

Administration, students, physical education instructors, teachers, and parents.

What is the timeline for implementation?

Beginning of school year.

BIKE RODEO



Bicycle safety education should involve comprehensive skills-based session(s) designed to encourage students to bike more, by giving them the knowledge and skills they need to be able to ride a bike safely and confidently.

When, where, and how will this be implemented?

Bike rodeos can be held any time in the year as long as space is sufficient and partner agencies/parents are willing to assist. Note: this is already being done annually at Challenger School.

Why is this relevant and recommended?

Parents can be comfortable knowing that safe biking skills are being taught to students.

How will this address transportation inequities?

Learning opportunities are provided to all students, with a regional cache able to be utilized for those that may not own a bike.

How will this be evaluated? By participant, parent, and school feedback.

Who needs to be involved to make this happen?

Parents, students, school faculty and partnering agencies.

What is the timeline for implementation?

Implementation schedule would be worked out with participating agencies, with weather and current events factoring into event timelines.

CROSSING GUARD/SCHOOL SAFETY PATROL

Crossing guards are trained adults, paid or volunteer, who are legally empowered to stop traffic to assist students with crossing the street. School safety patrols are trained student volunteers responsible for enforcing drop-off and pick-up procedures and assisting with street crossing.

When, where, and how will this be implemented?

This is not a funded initiative but is a future consideration. Implementation will be affected by budget/grant requirements. A current proposal involves applying for a Minnesota Boost Grant through MnDOT.

Why is this relevant and recommended?

School crossing guards will not only increase safety for students and pedestrians but will also provide a benefit for traffic calming.

How will this address transportation inequities?

Safe walking, biking, and rolling for all those affiliated with Thief River Falls Schools.

How will this be evaluated?

Changes in patterns will be noted by school administration, crossing guards, parents, and faculty through observation and tallies. Numbers of individuals walking, biking, and rolling to school will increase. Traffic speeds will lessen and local safety will increase.

Who needs to be involved to make this happen?

Individuals from the city of Thief River Falls as well as Thief River Falls Schools in combination with parents, caregivers, and local partners.

What is the timeline for implementation?

Dependent upon funding approval and requirements/policies not yet established or known.



WALK AND BIKE FIELD TRIPS

A field trip made by foot or by bicycle gives students a supportive environment in which to practice their pedestrian safety or bicycling skills and showcases the many benefits of walking and bicycling for transportation, including health and physical activity, pollution reduction, and cost savings. The destination of the field trip may vary, or the field trip could be the ride itself.

When, where, and how will this be implemented?

This could be implemented at any time if the distance, location, and time of the field trip ensures that every student can appropriately participate.

Why is this relevant and recommended?

Establishment of healthy habits as well as positive benefits of outdoor exercise and experiences for student education and growth.

How will this address transportation inequities?

This would not occur unless all students could appropriately participate. Education materials would be disseminated to all students. Safety lessons would be utilized on multiple transportation thoroughfares.

How will this be evaluated?

Student/teacher feedback.

Who needs to be involved to make this happen?

Teaching faculty, school administration, parents, and students.

What is the timeline for implementation?

Depending on the event schedule, field trip location availability and weather.

BIKE FLEET

A fleet of bicycles, helmets, tools, and supplies are available for use for entities within Northwest Minnesota. Equipment is enclosed in a trailer for easy access and transportation. BikeMN is currently in charge of this resource, which is provided at no cost. Several schools have utilized this resource in the past to promote bike safety, use and education as well as to engage participants in planned events.

BIKE THIEF RIVER FALLS

Bike Thief River Falls, a chapter of the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota, is a working group encouraging active living and community connections through bicycle access, education, and infrastructure. Bike Thief River Falls is a group of stakeholders and individuals working together to make Thief River Falls and the surrounding area more bike friendly and welcome all to participate. Several community events as well as school events are supported by members of Bike Thief River Falls.



Bike Thief River Falls: A Community Organization That Promotes Biking In/Around Thief River Falls

BIKE ALLIANCE OF MINNESOTA

Bike Thief River Falls is a chapter of the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota, a bicycle and pedestrian education and advocacy group for Thief River Falls, Minnesota. They are dedicated to making biking and walking safe, easy, and fun and are a resource to individuals, organizations and businesses who want to incorporate biking and walking into their daily lives. Several community events as well as school events are supported by members.



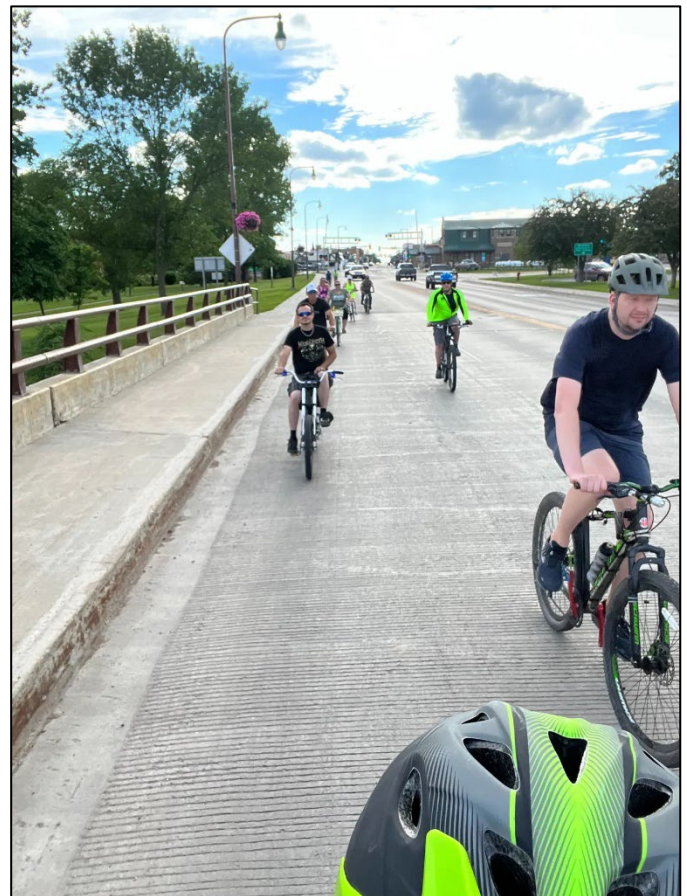
COMMUNITY EVENTS

Thief River Falls is a vibrant and active community that supports walking, biking and rolling. In addition to the infrastructure improvements already completed through the city, several businesses, agencies, groups and private citizens support outdoor activities. Together, Thief River Falls residents regularly look at community safety, infrastructure, bridges, traffic patterns, sidewalks, crosswalks, curbs and lighting so that everyone can enjoy walking, biking and rolling throughout the city.

This positive community approach strengthens safe routes to school initiatives listed in this plan.



Community Bike Repair Day



**SAFE
K:DS**

**TEENS
TOWARD
ZERO
DEATHS**

Working for Change





Action Steps

This plan provides two critical ingredients for creating a more equitable transportation system in Thief River Falls: a prioritized set of infrastructure and program recommendations. To make these recommendations a reality, all members of Thief River Falls can play a role. The following text provides ideas for where to start.



IMPLEMENTING INFRASTRUCTURE CHANGES

DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

Before investing in a long-term infrastructure change, cities and partners may implement a demonstration project to test out an idea. These temporary projects are quick, have a relatively low installation cost, and build support for a long-term permanent change. Demonstration projects can also help engineers and designers make sure that design details are worked out before any new concrete is installed, such as making sure school buses have enough room to turn.

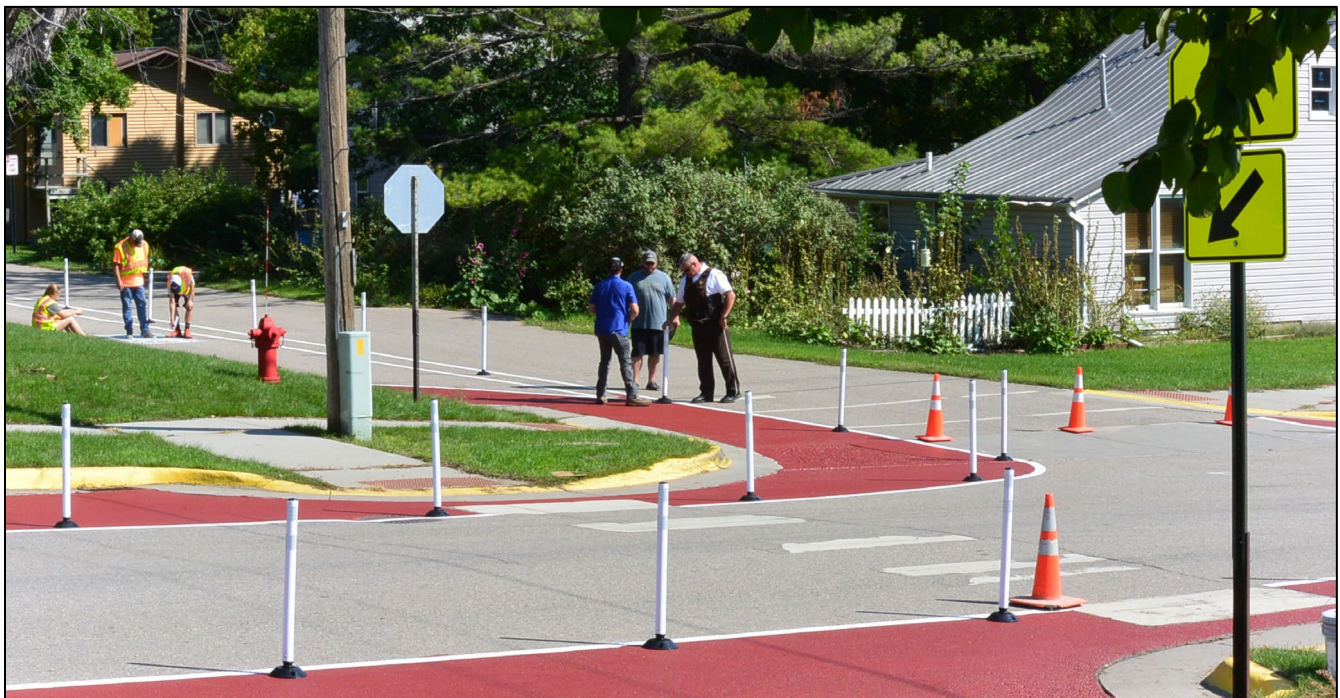
Demonstration projects can also be paired with programming or educational events to encourage additional behavior change. For example, new curb extensions may be paired with a crossing guard to bring additional attention to tricky crossing locations. Or a school may organize a Walk or Bike to School Day after installing a demonstration project



This raised crosswalk connects to a school entrance and slows traffic on the adjacent road.

to encourage students and families to try out the new infrastructure.

A demonstration project can include multiple components. The project shown here includes curb extensions and an on-street walking lane where there is currently a sidewalk gap.



A demonstration project can include multiple components. The project shown here includes curb extensions and an on-street walking lane where there is currently a sidewalk gap

DEMONSTRATION PROJECT EXAMPLES

Demonstration projects can take many forms, with a few examples shown here. In previous SRTS efforts, communities have installed a shared use path on the street where there are no sidewalks (top left photo below), curb extensions at wide and uncomfortable intersections (top right and bottom photos below), and a number of other creative solutions.

Demonstration projects are typically installed in the spring or fall to have enough time to observe their effects before winter arrives. In some cases, a community may be specifically interested in a component of winter maintenance and may design the project to stay in place through the winter.





TAKING COMMUNITY ACTION

A more equitable transportation system that prioritizes safe, comfortable, and fun opportunities to walk, bike, and roll benefits everyone. While this plan is focused on addressing connections to schools, many improvements will benefit people with no relationship to the schools because we all share the same streets, sidewalks, and trails. Likewise, many needed changes, such as reducing speed limits and normalizing walking and biking, extends far beyond the school system.

Your number one role as a community member is to advocate for changes that make walking, biking, and rolling safer, more comfortable, and more fun. Speak to elected officials, show up to community meetings, talk about walking and biking at school events and with school administrators, and organize and vote for candidates who support walking, biking, and public transit.

I AM A STUDENT, CAREGIVER, OR COMMUNITY MEMBER

Students, families, neighborhood associations, advocacy groups, and local businesses can have incredible influence when advocating for change in their school and broader community. This is true both as individuals, as well as when community members come together into groups, such as a Parent Teacher Organization or disability advocacy groups. For example, students, caregivers, and community members can support and lead SRTS initiatives including:

- Advocating for policy change and funding at City Hall
- Developing campaigns to generate enthusiasm and improve social conditions for SRTS
- Volunteering time to lead a Walking School Bus or organize a bike drive
- Fundraising for SRTS programs and small infrastructure projects

I AM A SCHOOL DISTRICT EMPLOYEE

School district staff bring an important perspective and voice to advocating for a more equitable transportation system. By describing challenges and opportunities they see confronting their students and petitioning local elected officials for improvements, school district employees can support policy and infrastructure improvements that benefit their students and the broader community. Staff are also ideally positioned to implement the recommendations in this plan, whether it be a classroom-level curriculum or school district-wide policy around walking and biking.

I WORK FOR THE CITY OR COUNTY

As members of the governments that own, regulate, and maintain the roads, city and county staff can be instrumental in re-orienting transportation policies and infrastructure around walking and biking to schools and other destinations. City and county staff can leverage their expertise to identify, advocate for, and implement changes that contribute toward a more equitable transportation system. Key policies that staff can support include:

- Reducing lane widths and vehicular speed limits
- Eliminating minimum parking requirements
- Revising land use regulations to promote denser and more integrated land uses that promote walkable and bikeable trips
- Prioritizing municipal maintenance and snow clearing of all pedestrian and bike facilities
- Requiring complete streets infrastructure as part of all road resurfacing and reconstruction projects

City staff can also use this report to support Safe Routes to School funding applications to programs such as MnDOT SRTS grants, Federal SRTS grants, and the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP).



Appendices



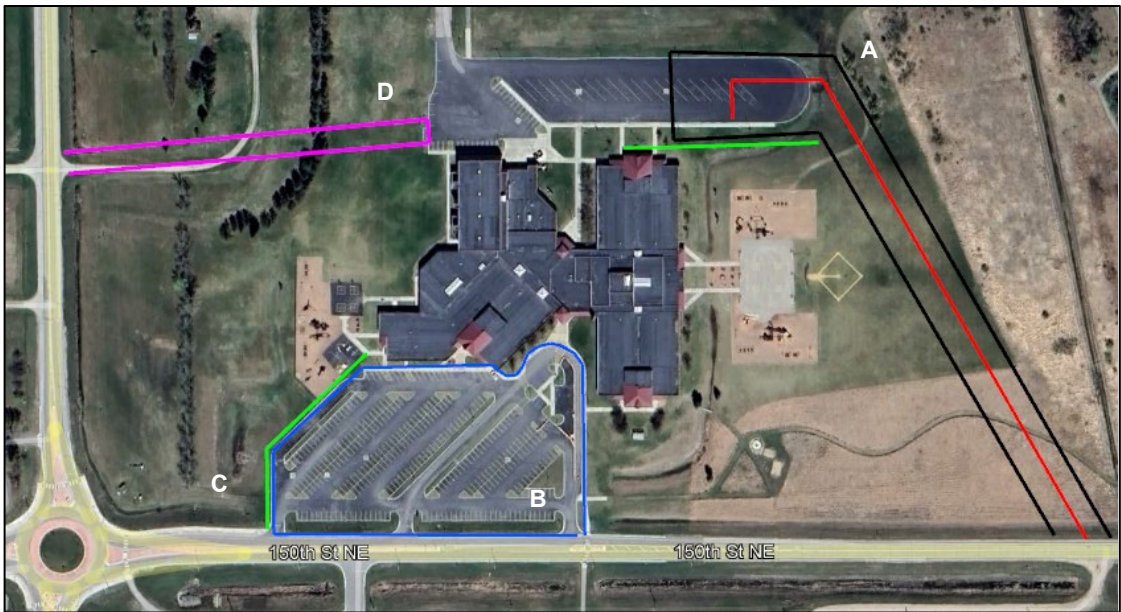


A plan to make walking and biking to school a safe, fun activity

Challenger Infrastructure *Engineering projects that improve streets & routes*

INFRASTRUCTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

- A: Challenger New East Road: Establishment of a new entrance road for congestion reduction and safety.
- B. Main Parking Lot (Restructure): Updating parking lanes and safety barriers to manage traffic flow.
- C. New Sidewalk (150th St. NE): Removing pedestrian and student presence from roadways.
- D: New West Entrance: Adding an alternate route to the school & reducing traffic flows to main entrance.

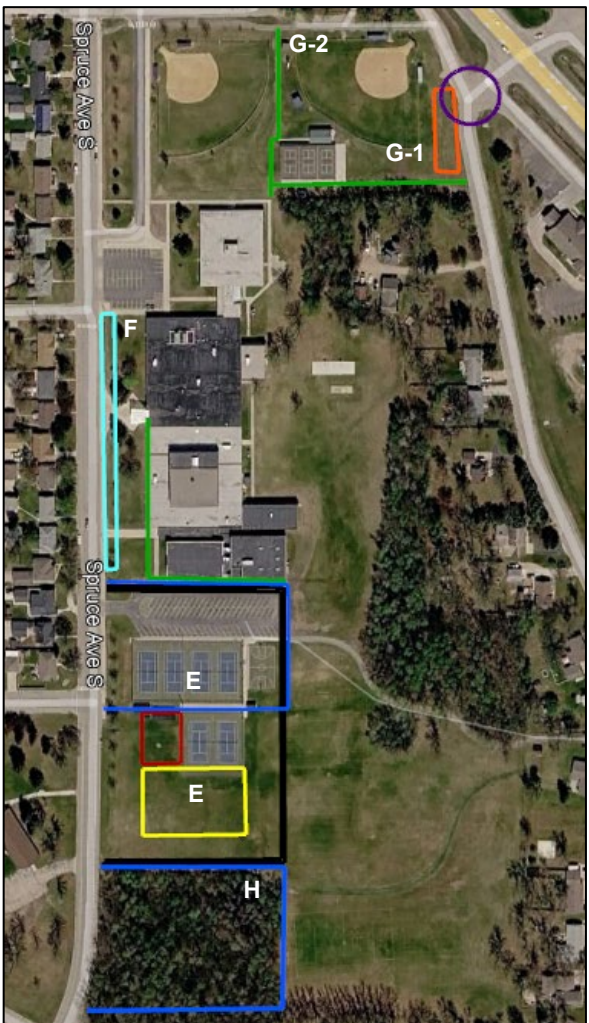


Franklin Infrastructure

Engineering projects that improve streets & routes

INFRASTRUCTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

- E: Tennis Court Relocation: Movement of tennis courts south for increased school parking.
- F. Bus Zone Establishment: Create a safe zone for bus drop-off and pick-up.
- G-1. Additional Parking: New parking lot near the ballfields and pickleball court.
- G-2. New Trail Development: Connection between the school, ballfields and the Thief River Falls community.
- H. Tree Removal: Space needed for additional parking for after-school activities.

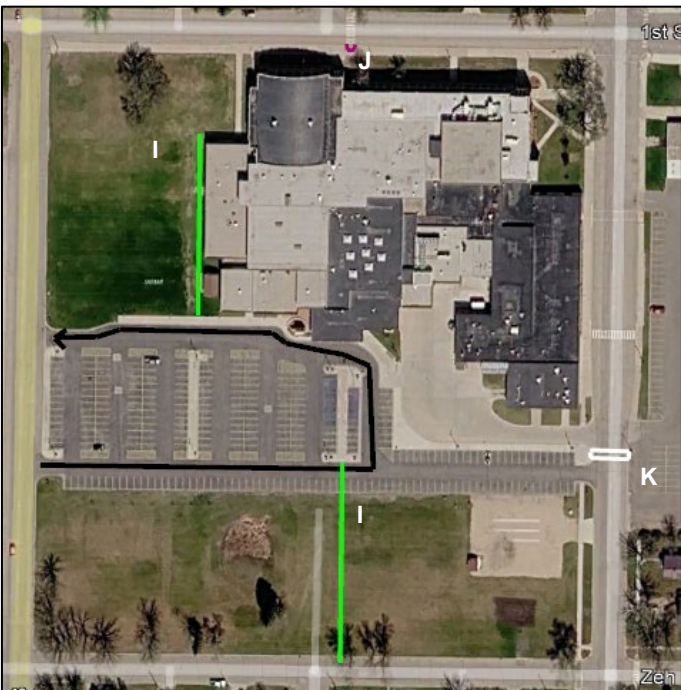


Lincoln Infrastructure

Engineering projects that improve streets & routes

INFRASTRUCTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

- I: New Sidewalks: Additional access for walking, biking and access to school.
- J: Handicap Ramp: Installation of a handicap ramp to align the crosswalk with the school entrance.
- K: New Crosswalk: Pedestrians preferred road crossing lacks a crosswalk on a busier intersection.



Thief River Falls

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL



Executive Summary

A plan to make walking and biking to school a safe, fun activity

Programs *Equity + Education + Encouragement + Engagement + Evaluation*



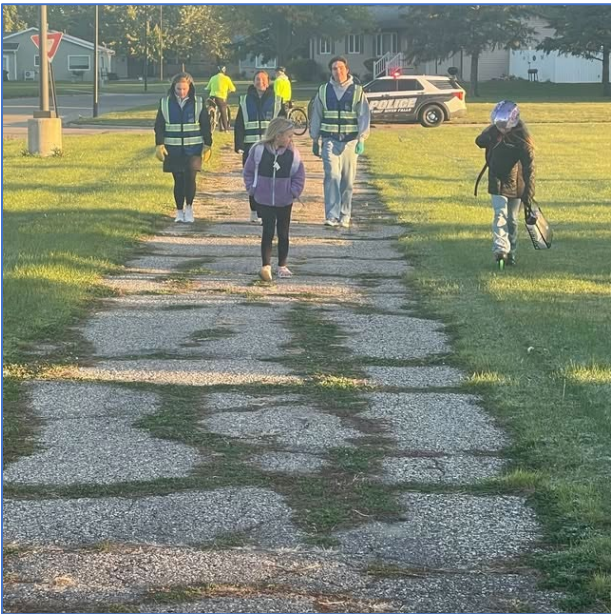
WALK/BIKE TO SCHOOL

National Walk to School Day and Bike to School Day attract millions of students and families to try walking, biking, and rolling to school every October and May. In addition, Minnesota celebrates Winter Walk to School Day in February. Additional education, encouragement, and enforcement programming can be used to promote the event, increase awareness, and expand participation. Walk/bike to school days can also take place more frequently (e.g., Walking Wednesdays) if there's interest and capacity.



BIKE FLEET

A fleet of bicycles, helmets, tools, and supplies are available for use for entities within Northwest Minnesota. Equipment is enclosed in a trailer for easy access and transportation. BikeMN is currently in charge of this resource, which is provided at no cost. Several schools have utilized this resource in the past to promote bike safety, use and education as well as to engage participants in planned events.



Drop & Walk

During a drop and walk event (also called park and walk or remote drop-off) bus drivers and caregivers drop students at a designated off-campus location and students walk the rest of the way to school. Remote drop-off events can help reduce drop-off congestion on campus and provide students who live further from school with an opportunity to walk to school.



WALK! BIKE! FUN!

Walk! Bike! Fun! is a two-part curriculum designed specifically to meet Minnesota education standards. The program helps students ages five to thirteen learn traffic rules and regulations, the potential hazards to traveling, and handling skills needed to bike and walk effectively, appropriately, and safely through their community.



Crossing Guard/School Safety Patrol

Crossing guards are trained adults, paid or volunteer, who are legally empowered to stop traffic to assist students with crossing the street. School safety patrols are trained student volunteers responsible for enforcing drop-off and pick-up procedures and assisting with street crossing.



WALK/BIKE FIELD TRIPS

A field trip made by foot or by bicycle gives students a supportive environment in which to practice their pedestrian safety or bicycling skills and showcases the many benefits of walking and bicycling for transportation, including health and physical activity, pollution reduction, and cost savings. The destination of the field trip may vary, or the field trip could be the ride itself.



Get Involved

Want to help make it safer, easier, and more comfortable to walk and bike to school in Thief River Falls? Contact your school principal or SRTS lead to learn how to get involved.

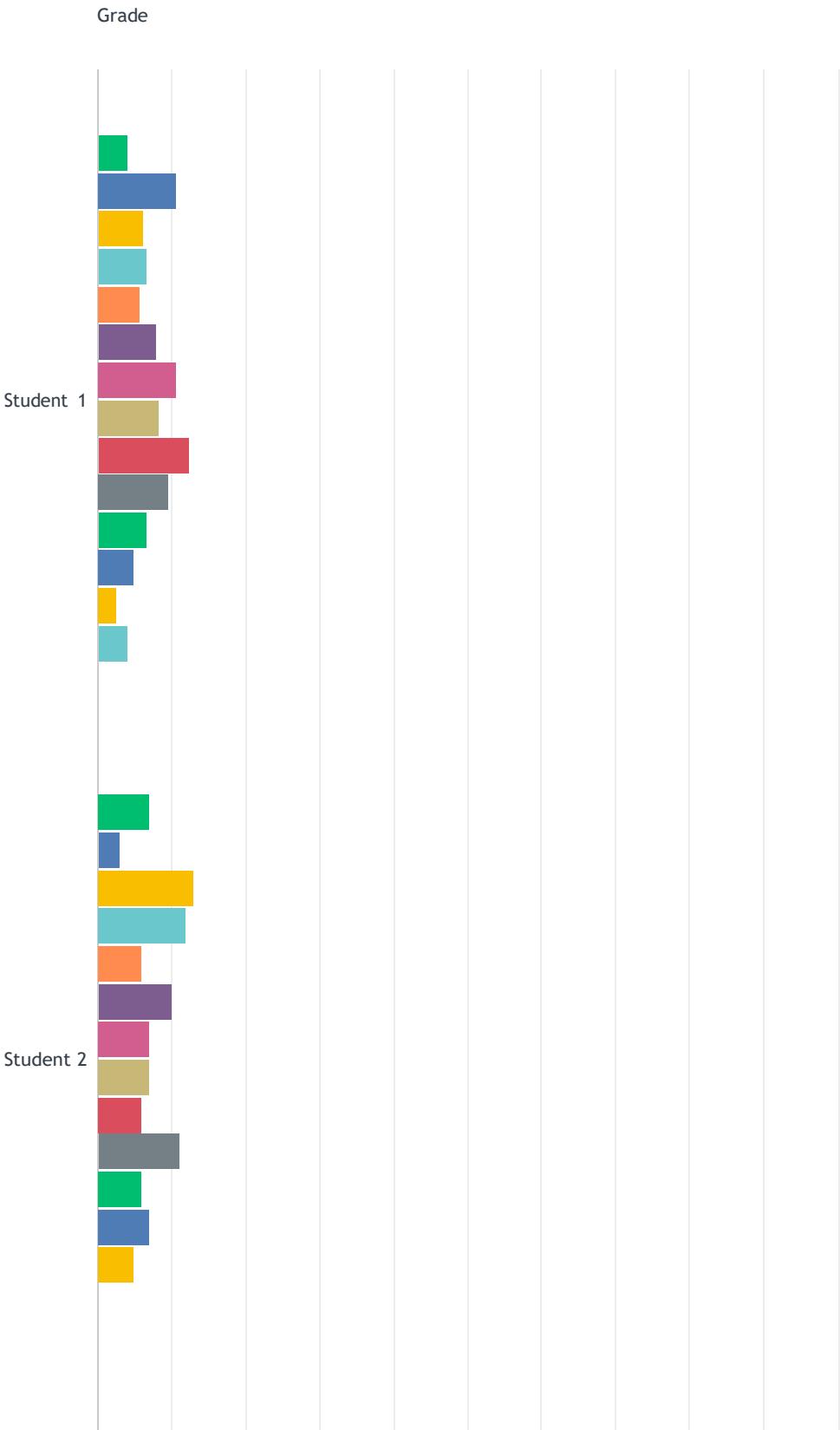
Chris Mills – Thief River Falls School District Superintendent.

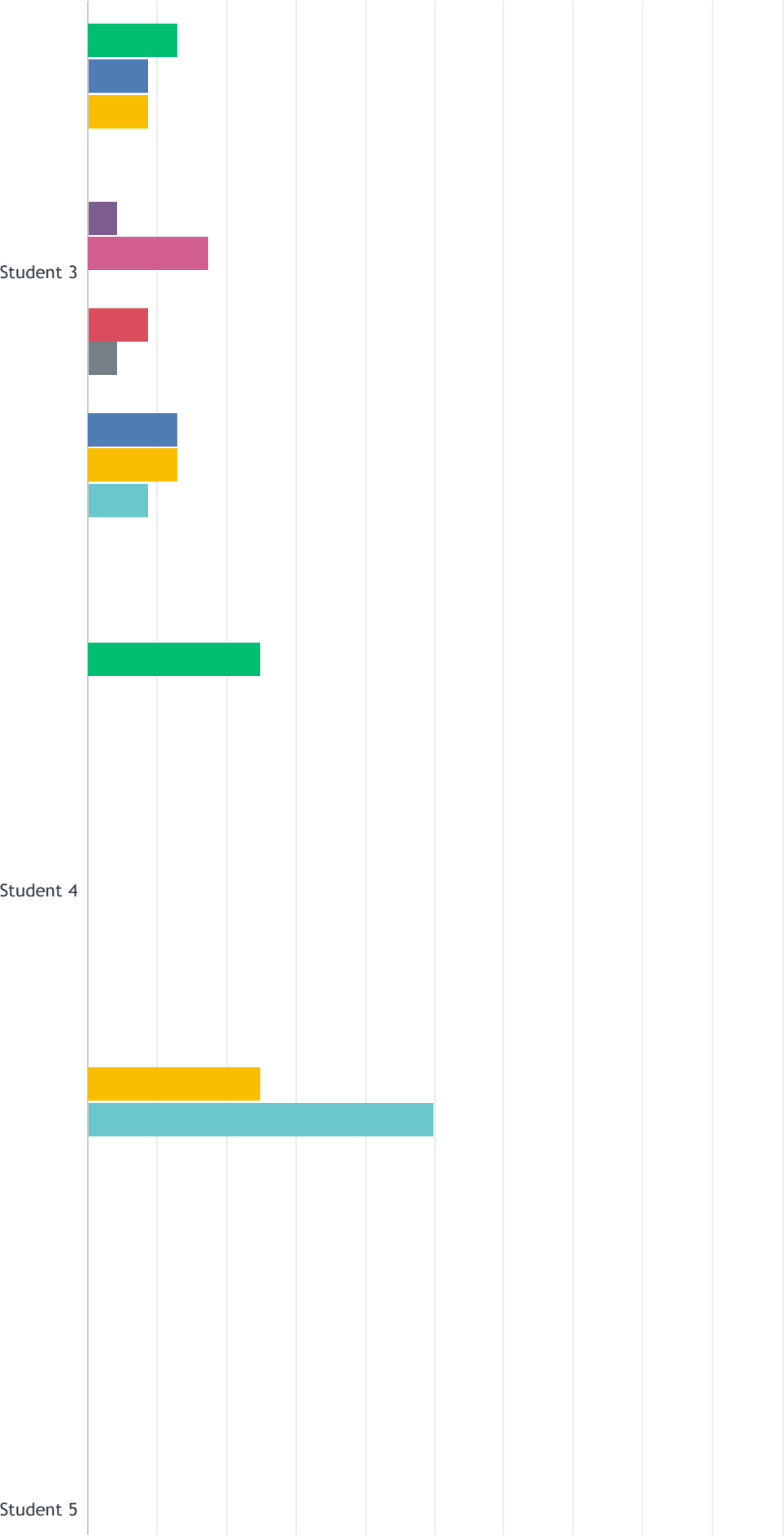
Learn more about Safe Routes to School at: www.dot.state.mn.us/saferoutes/



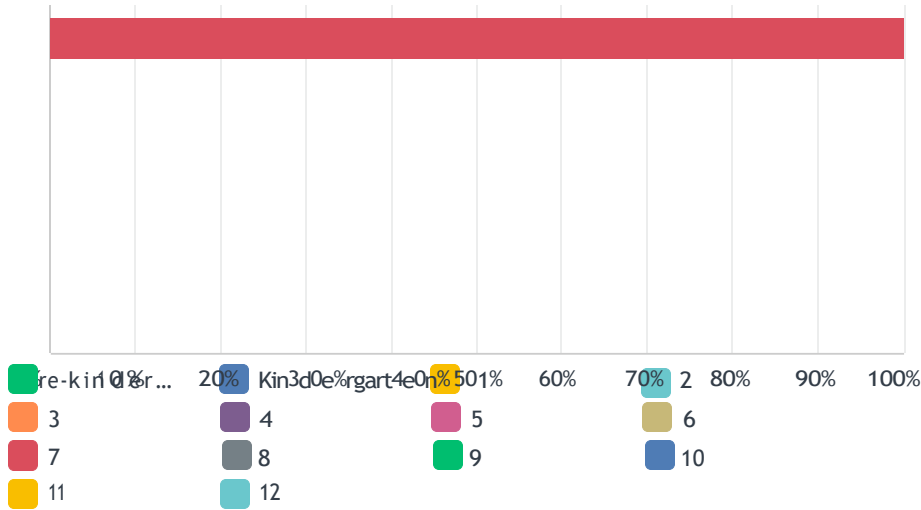
Q2 Please tell us about each of the students you have enrolled in this school.

Answered: 227 Skipped: 2

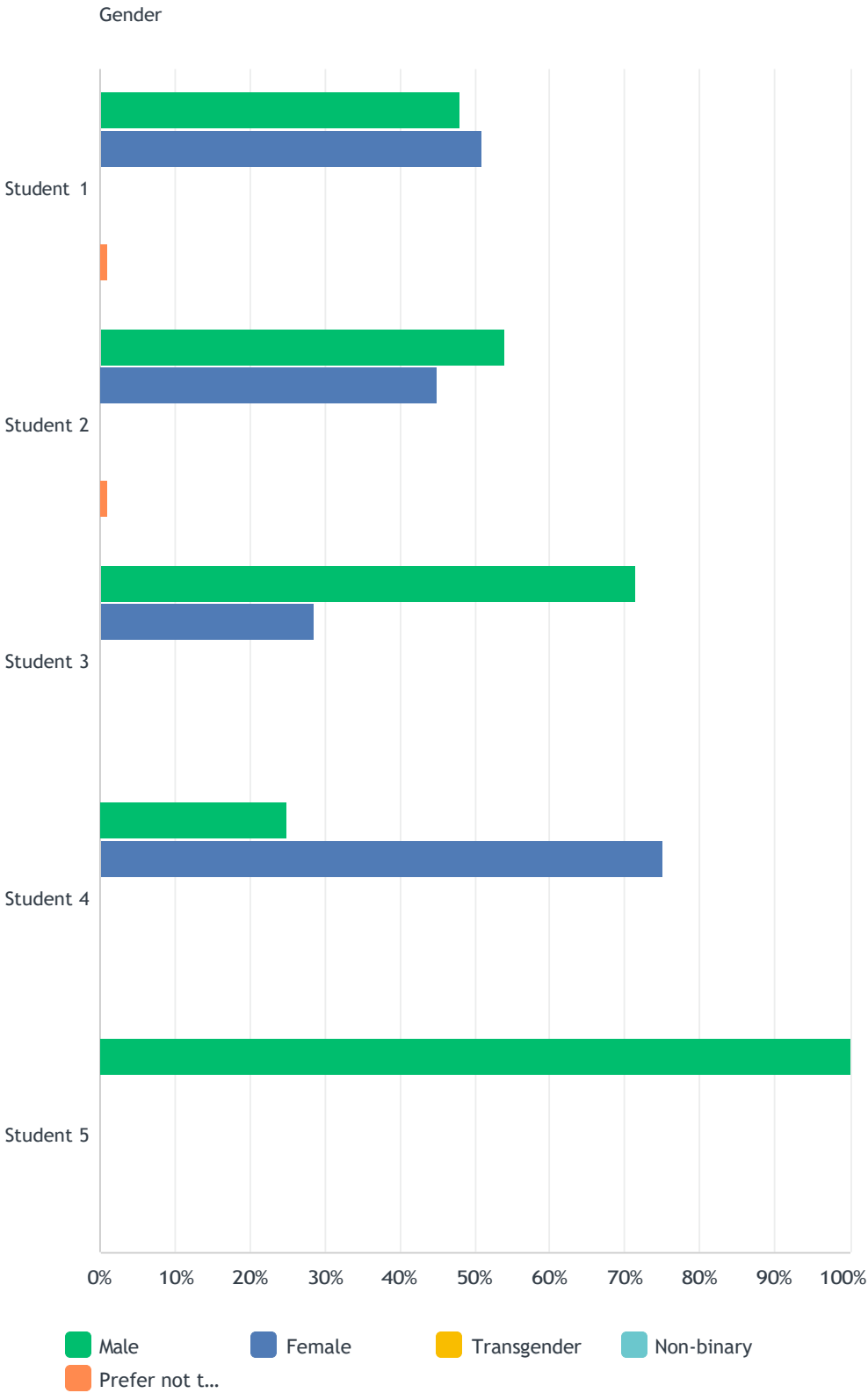




Safe Routes to School - Parent/Caregiver Survey (Thief River Falls)



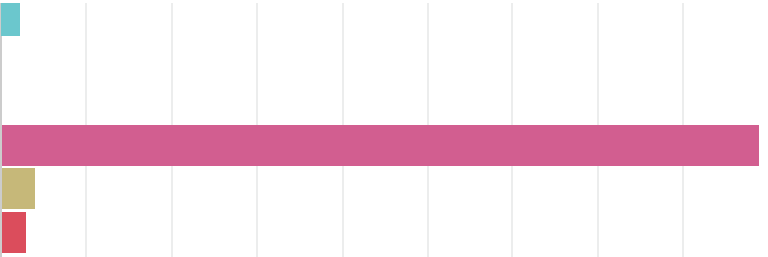
Safe Routes to School - Parent/Caregiver Survey (Thief River Falls)



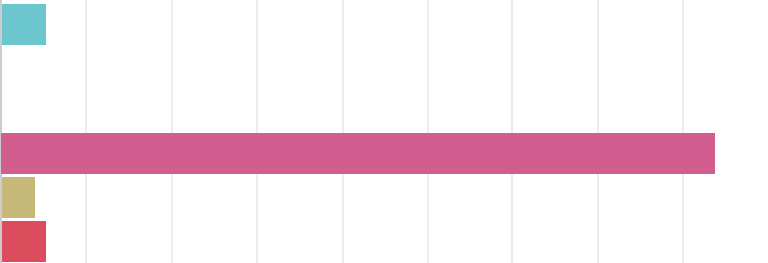
Safe Routes to School - Parent/Caregiver Survey (Thief River Falls)

Race/Ethnicity

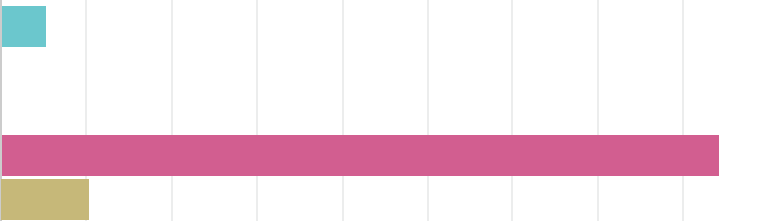
Student 1



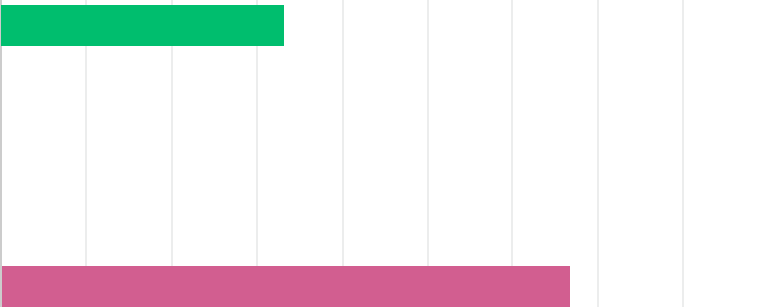
Student 2



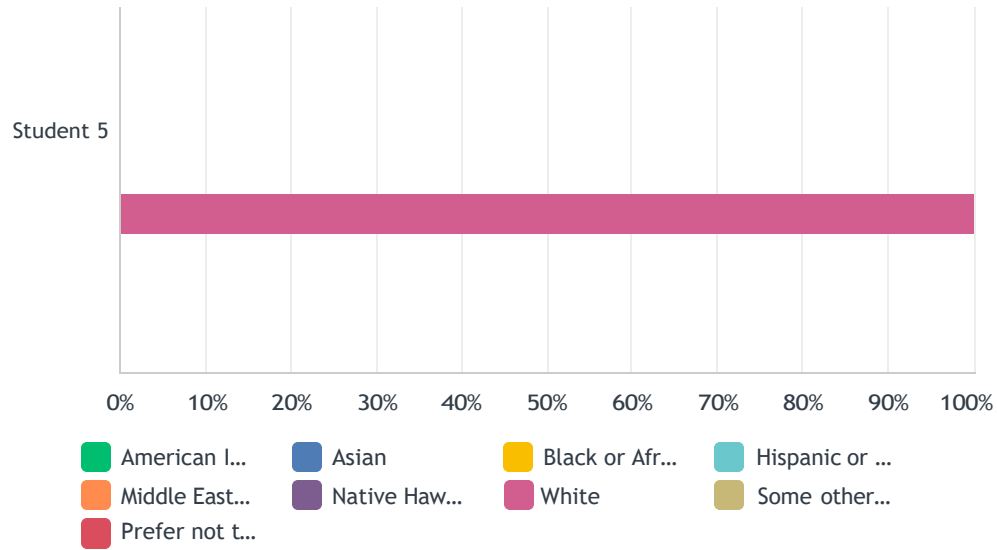
Student 3



Student 4



Safe Routes to School - Parent/Caregiver Survey (Thief River Falls)



Grade										
	PRE-KINDERGARTEN	KINDERGARTEN	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Student 1	3.96% 9	10.57% 24	6.17% 14	6.61% 15	5.73% 13	7.93% 18	10.57% 24	8.37% 19	12.33% 28	9.69% 22
Student 2	7.00% 7	3.00% 3	13.00% 13	12.00% 12	6.00% 6	10.00% 10	7.00% 7	7.00% 7	6.00% 6	11.00% 11
Student 3	13.04% 3	8.70% 2	8.70% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	4.35% 1	17.39% 4	0.00% 0	8.70% 2	4.35% 1
Student 4	25.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Student 5	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 1	0.00% 0

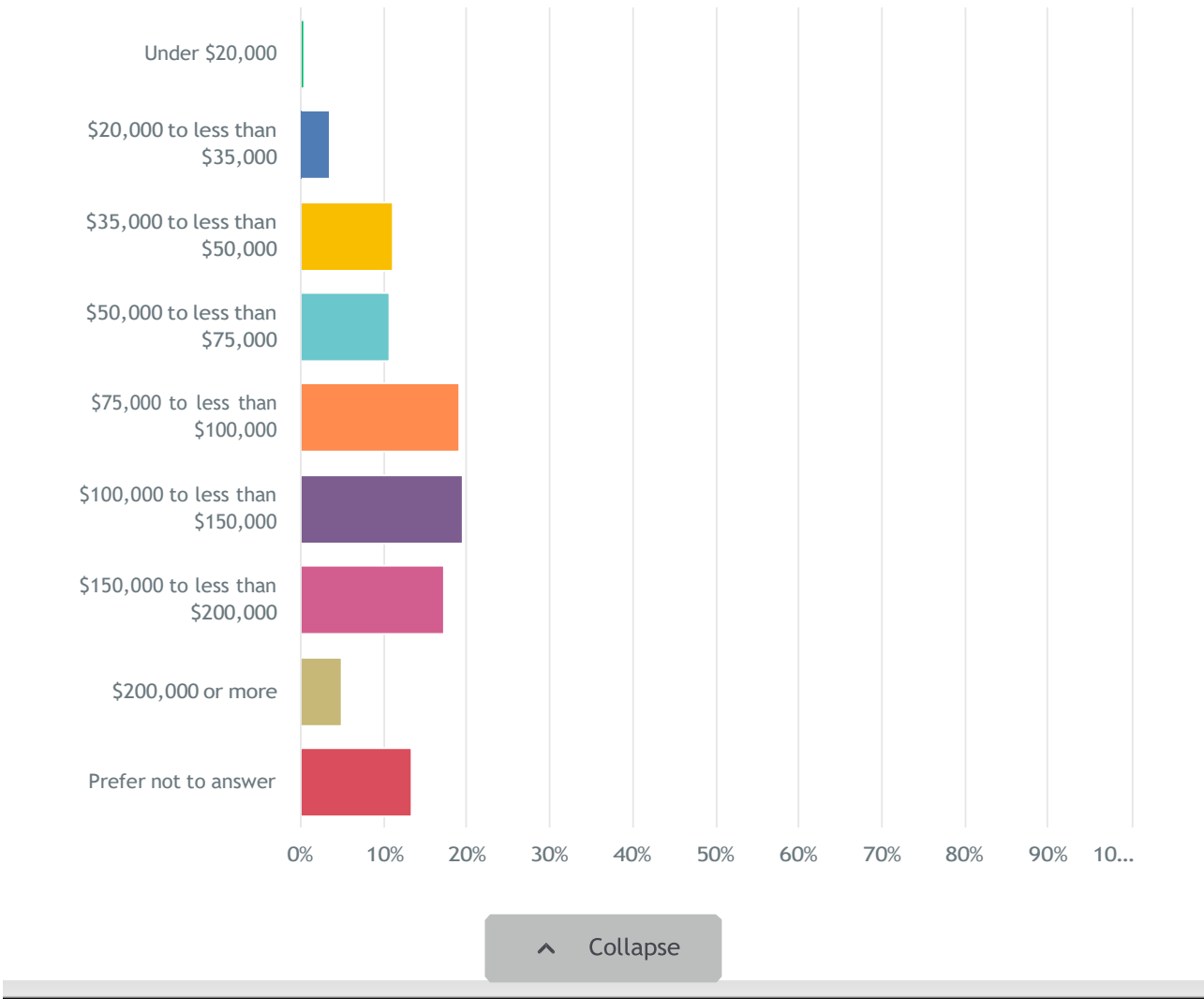
Gender						
	MALE	FEMALE	TRANSGENDER	NON-BINARY	PREFER NOT TO ANSWER	TOTAL
Student 1	48.04% 98	50.98% 104	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.98% 2	204
Student 2	53.93% 48	44.94% 40	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	1.12% 1	89
Student 3	71.43% 15	28.57% 6	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	21
Student 4	25.00% 1	75.00% 3	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	4

Safe Routes to School - Parent/Caregiver Survey (Thief River Falls)

Race/Ethnicity									
	AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE	ASIAN	BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN	HISPANIC OR LATINO OR LATINX	MIDDLE EASTERN OR NORTH AFRICAN (MENA)	NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER	WHITE	SOME OTHER RACE/MORE THAN ONE RACE	PREFER NOT TO ANSWER
Student 1	1.17% 2	0.58% 1	0.00% 0	2.34% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	88.89% 152	4.09% 7	2.92% 5
Student 2	1.35% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	5.41% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	83.78% 62	4.05% 3	5.41% 4
Student 3	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	5.26% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	84.21% 16	10.53% 2	0.00% 0
Student 4	33.33% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	66.67% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Student 5	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0

Q3 What is your household income?

Answered: 225 Skipped: 4



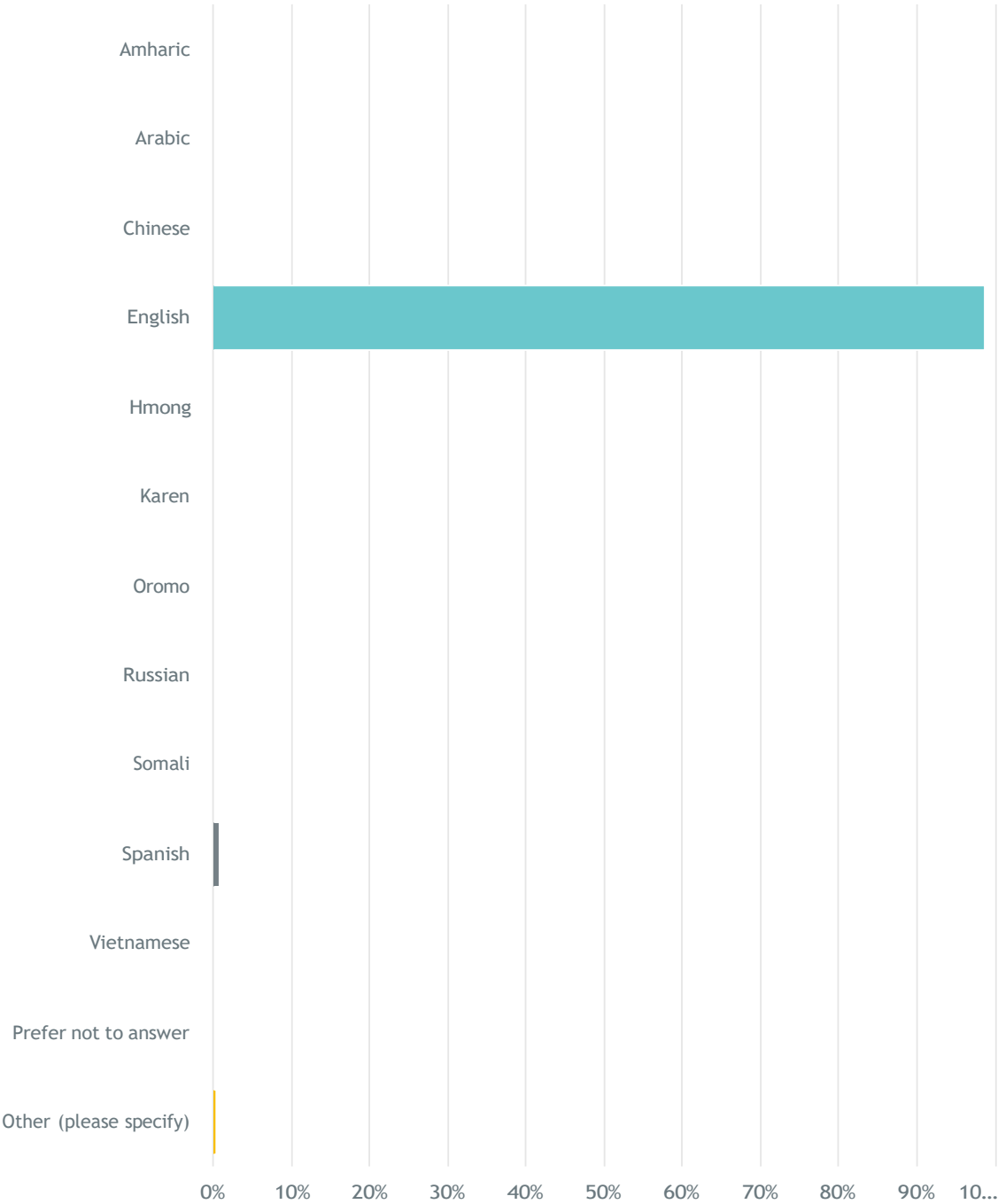
Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Under \$20,000	0.44%	1
\$20,000 to less than \$35,000	3.56%	8
\$35,000 to less than \$50,000	11.11%	25
\$50,000 to less than \$75,000	10.67%	24
\$75,000 to less than \$100,000	19.11%	43
Total		225

Safe Routes to School - Parent/Caregiver Survey (Thief River Falls)

Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
 \$100,000 to less than \$150,000	19.56%	44
 \$150,000 to less than \$200,000	17.33%	39
 \$200,000 or more	4.89%	11
 Prefer not to answer	13.33%	30
Total		225

Q4 What is the primary language spoken in your home?

Answered: 226 Skipped: 3



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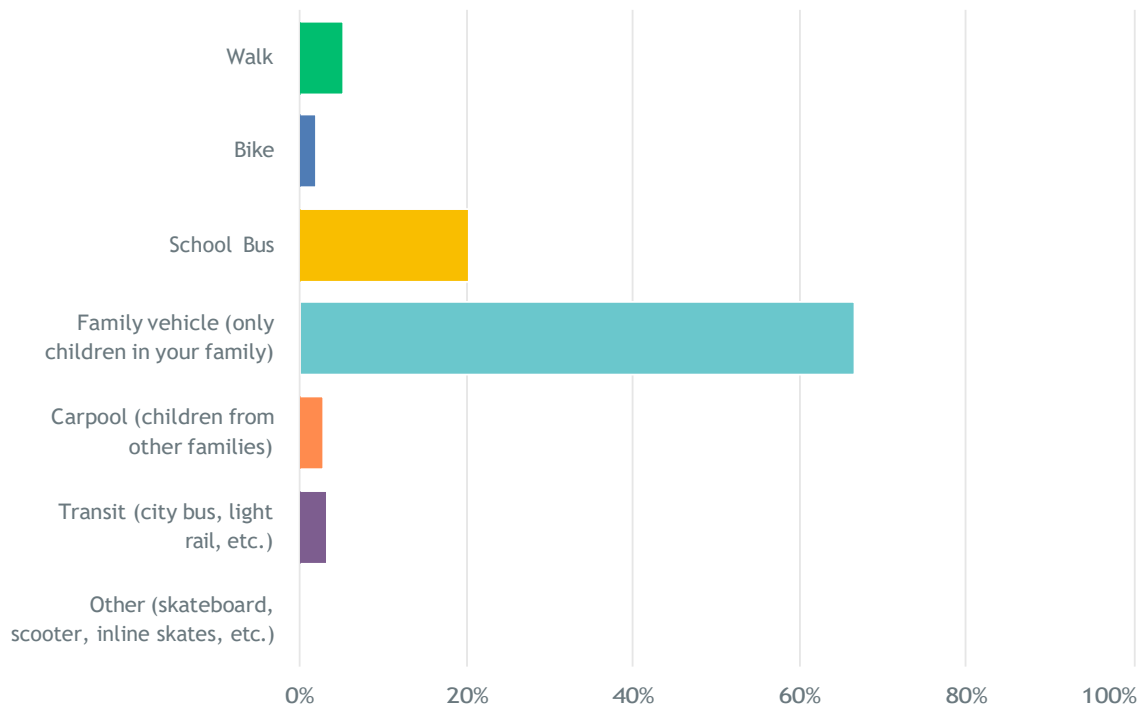
Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
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Safe Routes to School - Parent/Caregiver Survey (Thief River Falls)

Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
 Amharic	0%	0
 Arabic	0%	0
 Chinese	0%	0
 English	98.67%	223
 Hmong	0%	0
 Karen	0%	0
 Oromo	0%	0
 Russian	0%	0
 Somali	0%	0
 Spanish	0.88%	2
 Vietnamese	0%	0
 Prefer not to answer	0%	0
 Other (please specify) Show responses	0.44%	1
Total		226

Q5 On most days, how does your child travel to school?

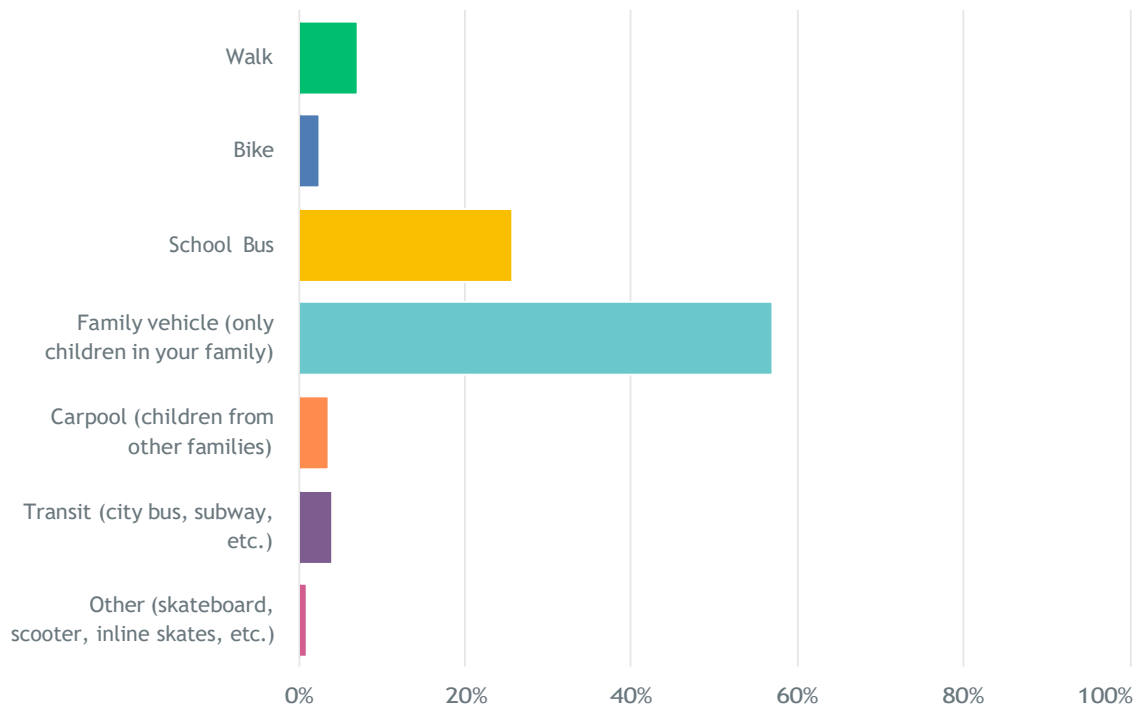
Answered: 228 Skipped: 1



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Walk	5.16%	13
Bike	1.98%	5
School Bus	20.24%	51
Family vehicle (only children in your family)	66.67%	168
Carpool (children from other families)	2.78%	7
Transit (city bus, light rail, etc.)	3.17%	8
Other (skateboard, scooter, inline skates, etc.)	0%	0
Total		252

Q6 On most days, how does your child travel from school?

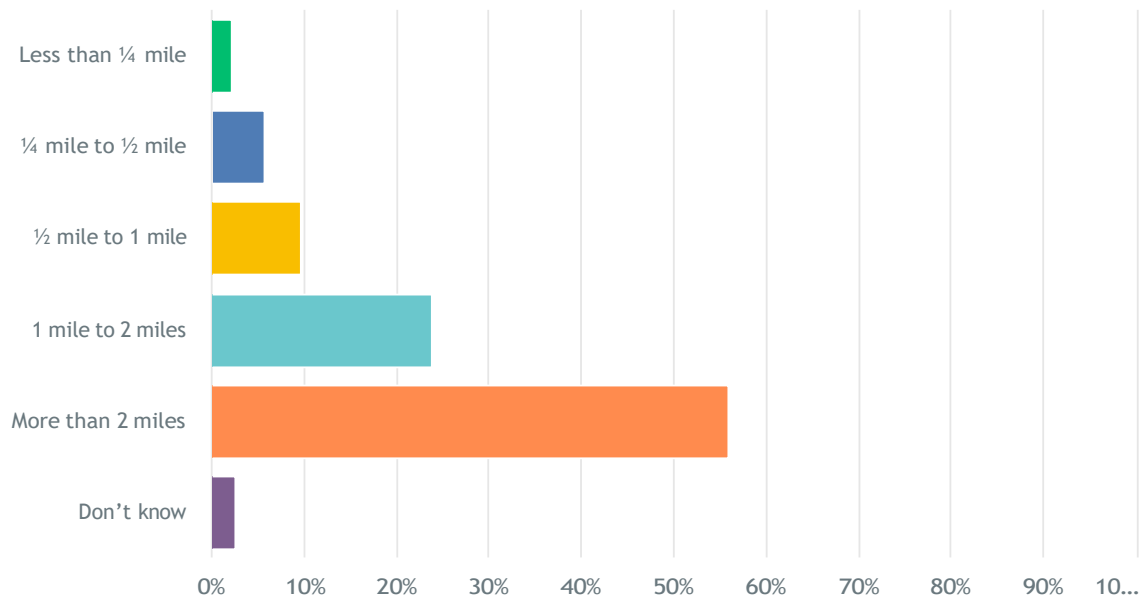
Answered: 228 Skipped: 1



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
● Walk	6.98%	18
● Bike	2.33%	6
● School Bus	25.58%	66
● Family vehicle (only children in your family)	56.98%	147
● Carpool (children from other families)	3.49%	9
● Transit (city bus, subway, etc.)	3.88%	10
● Other (skateboard, scooter, inline skates, etc.)	0.78%	2
Total		258

Q7 How far does your child live from school?

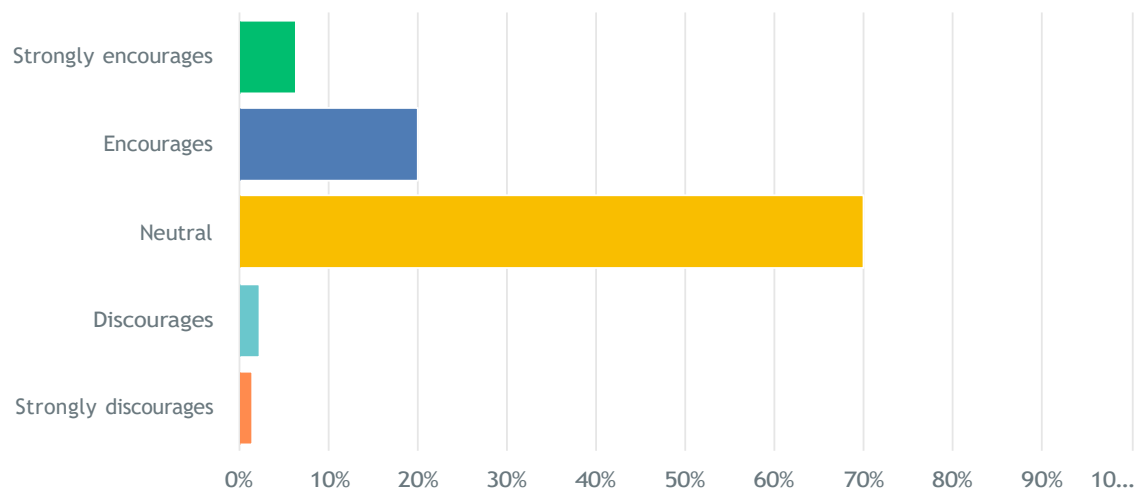
Answered: 227 Skipped: 2



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Less than ¼ mile	2.20%	5
¼ mile to ½ mile	5.73%	13
½ mile to 1 mile	9.69%	22
1 mile to 2 miles	23.79%	54
More than 2 miles	55.95%	127
Don't know	2.64%	6
Total		227

Q8 How much does your child’s school encourage walking and biking to/from school?

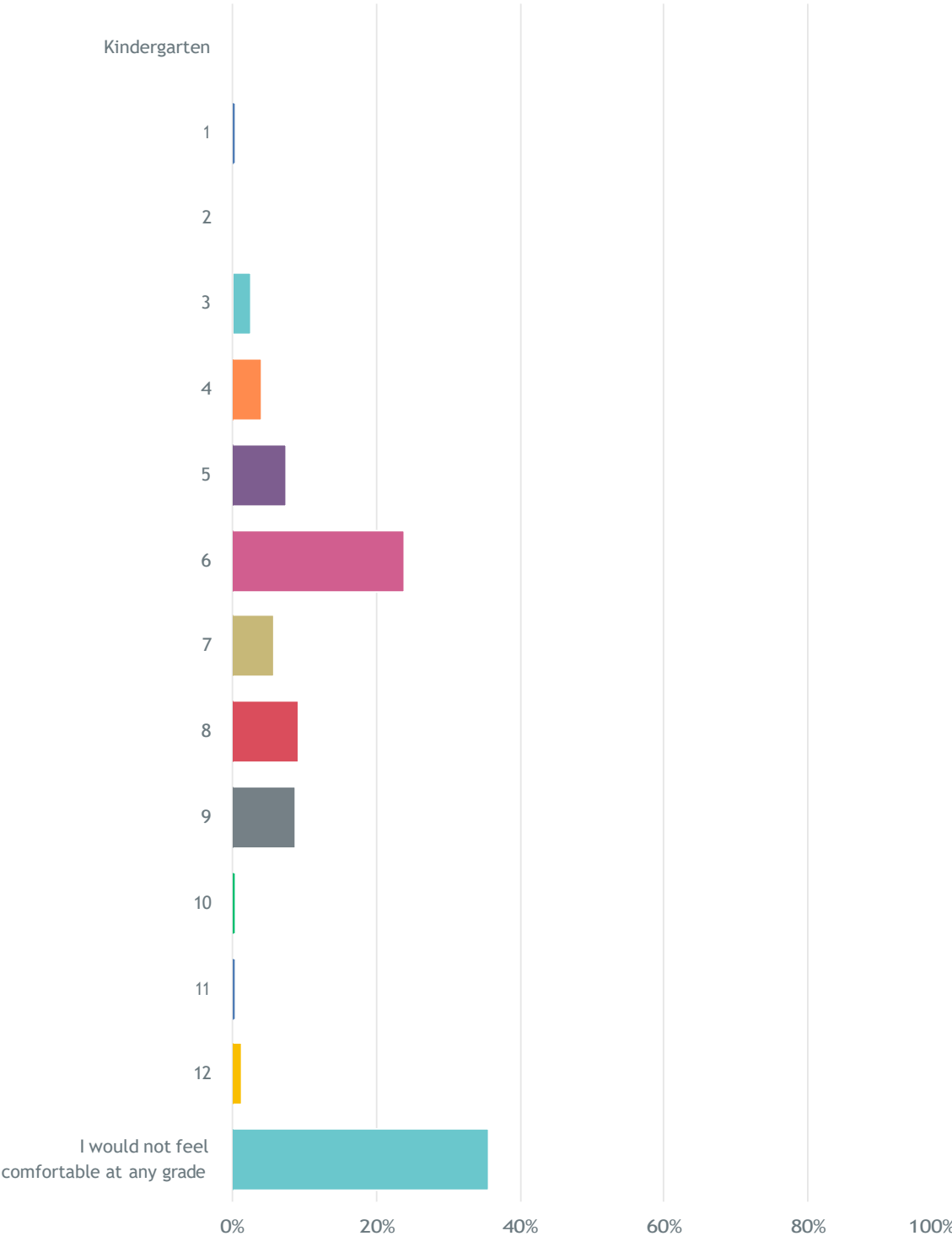
Answered: 224 Skipped: 5



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Strongly encourages	6.25%	14
Encourages	20.09%	45
Neutral	70.09%	157
Discourages	2.23%	5
Strongly discourages	1.34%	3
Total		224

Q9 At what grade would you allow your child to walk or bike to/from school without an adult?

Answered: 227 Skipped: 2



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Safe Routes to School - Parent/Caregiver Survey (Thief River Falls)

Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
 Kindergarten	0%	0
 1	0.44%	1
 2	0%	0
 3	2.64%	6
 4	3.96%	9
 5	7.49%	17
 6	23.79%	54
 7	5.73%	13
 8	9.25%	21
 9	8.81%	20
 10	0.44%	1
 11	0.44%	1
 12	1.32%	3
 I would not feel comfortable at any grade	35.68%	81
Total		227

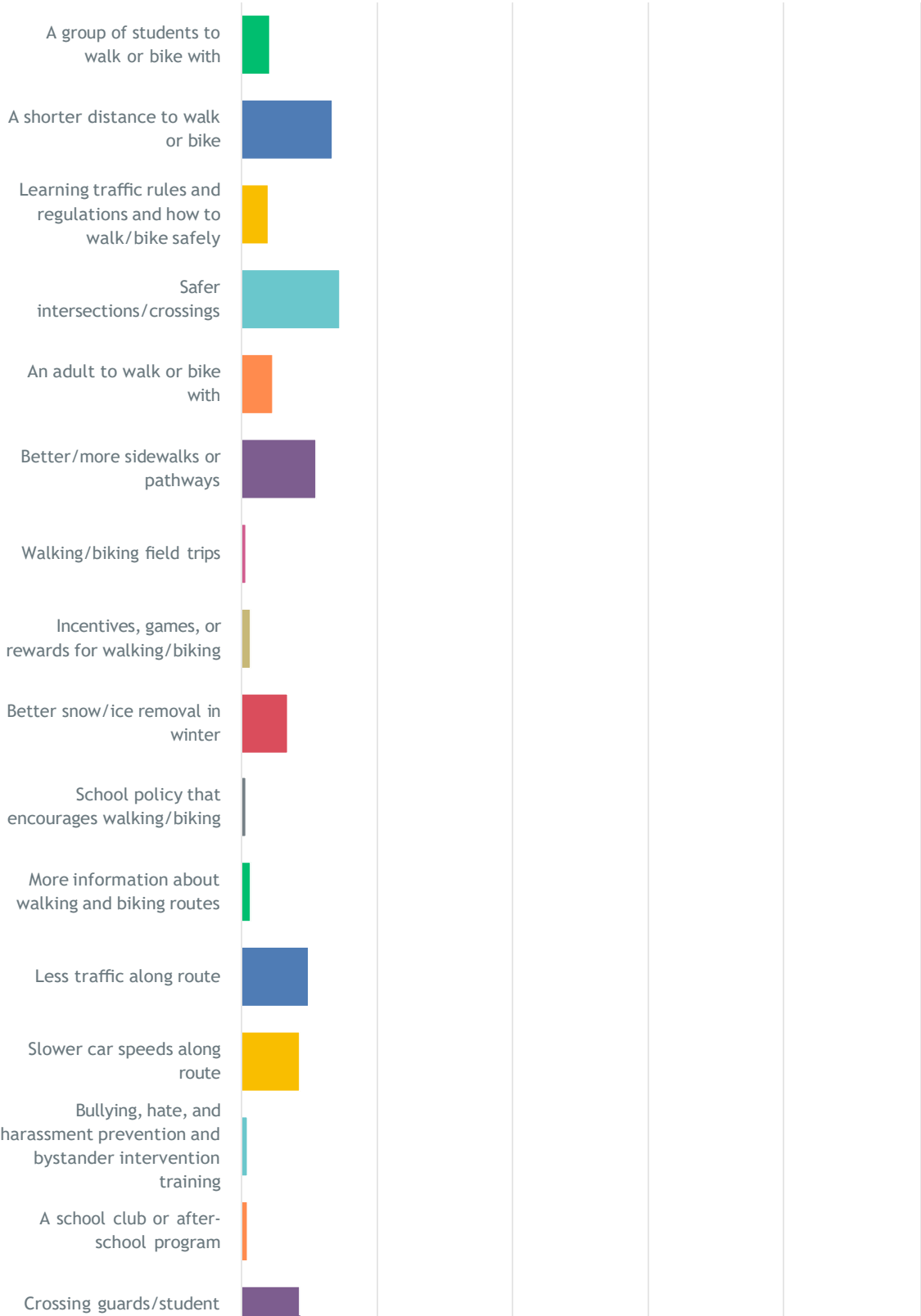
Q10 Which of the following issues prevent your child from walking or biking to/from school? Select all that apply.

Answered: 228 Skipped: 1

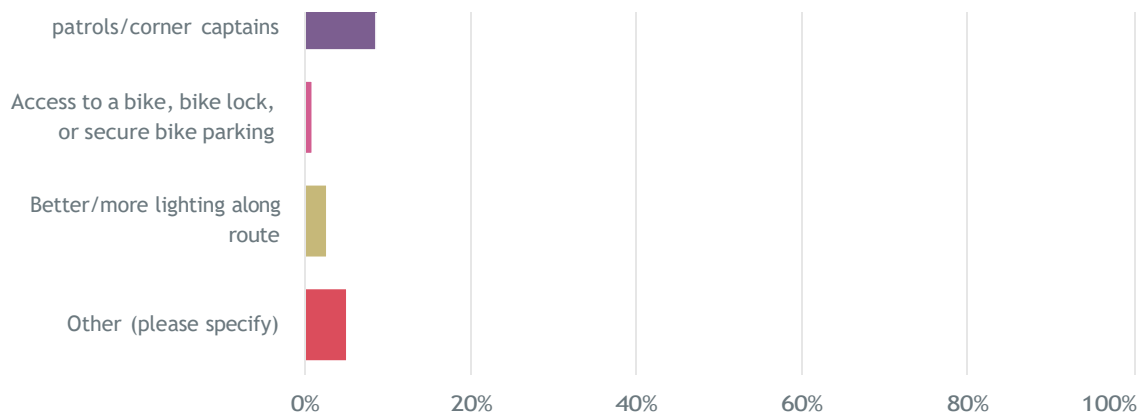
Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
 Distance or time it take to walk/bike	17.25%	181
 Convenience of driving	3.05%	32
 Before or after-school activities	6.29%	66
 Traffic speeds along route	10.96%	115
 Amount of traffic along route	14.87%	156
 Adults to walk or bike with	2.10%	22
 Fear of hate or street harassment based on race, ethnicity, and/or gender identity	0.57%	6
 Other students to walk or bike with	1.24%	13
 Lack of sidewalks or pathways	9.53%	100
 Safety of intersections and crossings	13.63%	143
 Bullying	1.62%	17
 Fear of violence or crime	3.24%	34
 Weather or winter maintenance of sidewalks/pathways	12.49%	131
 School policy discourages/prohibits walking/biking	0.10%	1
 Access to a bike or bike lock	0.57%	6
 Other (please specify) Show responses	2.48%	26
Total		1049

Q11 What would help your child walk or bike to/from/at school more often?
Select your top 3.

Answered: 210 Skipped: 19



Safe Routes to School - Parent/Caregiver Survey (Thief River Falls)



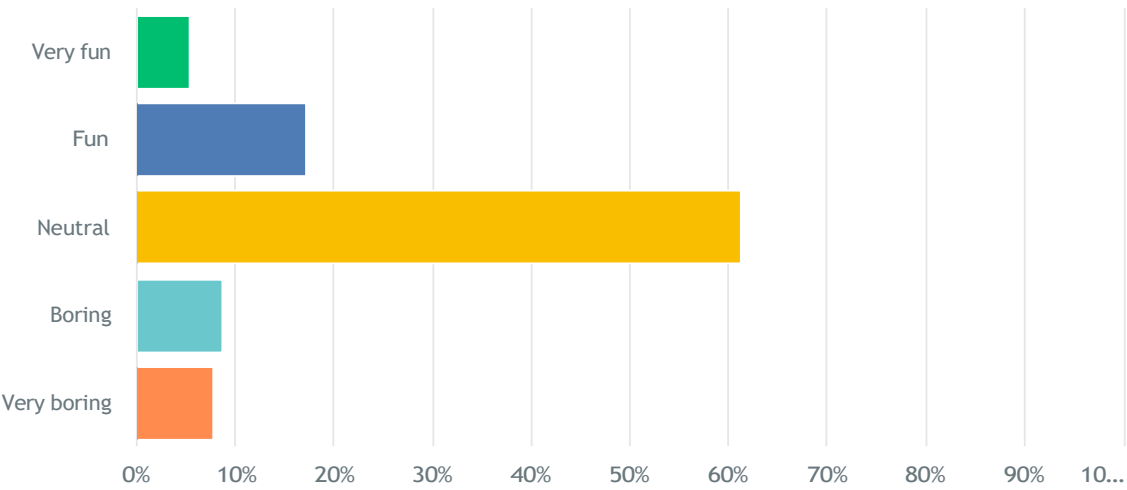
Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
● A group of students to walk or bike with	4.18%	31
● A shorter distance to walk or bike	13.50%	100
● Learning traffic rules and regulations and how to walk/bike safely	4.05%	30
● Safer intersections/crossings	14.44%	107
● An adult to walk or bike with	4.72%	35
● Better/more sidewalks or pathways	11.07%	82
● Walking/biking field trips	0.67%	5
● Incentives, games, or rewards for walking/biking	1.21%	9
● Better snow/ice removal in winter	6.88%	51
● School policy that encourages walking/biking	0.67%	5
● More information about walking and biking routes	1.21%	9
● Less traffic along route	9.99%	74
● Slower car speeds along route	8.50%	63
● Bullying, hate, and harassment prevention and bystander intervention training	0.81%	6
Total		741

Safe Routes to School - Parent/Caregiver Survey (Thief River Falls)

Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
 A school club or after-school program	0.81%	6
 Crossing guards/student patrols/corner captains	8.64%	64
 Access to a bike, bike lock, or secure bike parking	0.94%	7
 Better/more lighting along route	2.56%	19
 Other (please specify) Show responses	5.13%	38
Total		741

Q12 How much fun is walking or biking to/from school for your child?

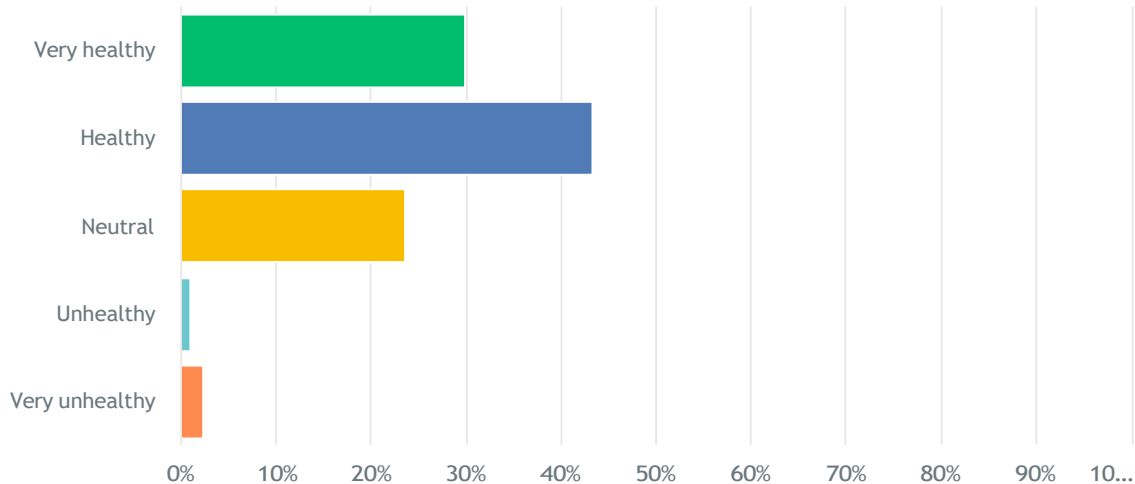
Answered: 209 Skipped: 20



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Very fun	5.26%	11
Fun	17.22%	36
Neutral	61.24%	128
Boring	8.61%	18
Very boring	7.66%	16
Total		209

Q13 How healthy do you think walking and biking to/from school are for your child?

Answered: 217 Skipped: 12



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
● Very healthy	29.95%	65
● Healthy	43.32%	94
● Neutral	23.50%	51
● Unhealthy	0.92%	2
● Very unhealthy	2.30%	5
Total		217



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