

July 2010

Brown Deer Village and School District Safe Routes to School Plan



(working draft —8-10-10)



Safe Routes to School (SRTS)

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is an international movement that has taken hold in communities throughout the United States. The concept is to increase the number of children who walk or bicycle to school by funding projects that remove the barriers that currently prevent them from doing so. Those barriers include lack of infrastructure, unsafe infrastructure, lack of programs that promote walking and bicycling through education/encouragement programs aimed at children, parents, and the community.

SRTS programs enable community leaders, schools and parents across the United States to improve safety and encourage more children, including children with disabilities, to safely walk and bicycle to school. As a result, these programs help make bicycling and walking to school safer and more appealing transportation choices thus encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age.

Why is SRTS Important?

Thirty years ago, 60% of children living within a 2-mile radius of a school walked or bicycled to school. Today, that number has dropped to less than 15%. Roughly 25% commute by school bus, and well over half are driven to or from school in vehicles. And back then, 5% of children between the ages of 6 and 11 were considered to be overweight or obese. Today, that number has climbed to 20%. These statistics point to a rise in preventable childhood diseases, worsening air quality and congestion around schools, and missed opportunities for children to grow into self reliant, independent adults. Safe Routes to School Programs are intended to reverse these trends by funding projects that improve safety and efforts that promote walking and bicycling within a collaborative community framework. It is through local champions working with a coalition of parents, schools, professionals in transportation, engineering, health, and law enforcement, that the most sustainable projects are expected to emerge.

Brown Deer Facts and Figures—Did you know?

Dean Elementary—Grades K4-4th

505

70

6

73%

Enrollment

Walkers (as of May 2010)

Bike Riders (as of May 2010)

Percentage of Students Living
within two miles of school

Brown Deer Middle School—Grades 5th-8th

583

40

8

41%

SRTS

Parent Online
Survey
Coming this
September

Brown Deer
SRTS Activities

- Surveys of parents and students and full report of results
- Walking and Biking Audits
- Walking and Bike Safety Programs
- Improved access and safety for pedestrians and vehicle traffic
- Promoting healthy and active lifestyles
- Improved environment through reduced carbon emissions -cars and busses
- New and improved infrastructure to support goals of program
- Enhanced partnerships with community organizations

Proposed SRTS Brown Deer/Village Project

SRTS Plan Online

The Village and School District of Brown Deer are collaborative partners in developing successful students and community members who value life-long learning, wellness, and healthy lifestyles. This SRTS project supports improved pedestrian, bike and handicap access to our school campus through construction of a sidewalk and multi-modal paved year-round campus trail.

www.browndeerschools.com

How this SRTS Plan was Initiated...

Our first priority is the creation of a .75 mile long, 6 foot wide sidewalk along Dean Road from Teutonia Avenue to the school campus at 55th Street (see Map 1A on our website) in order to allow access for students and parents to safely walk or bike to their respective schools. This will provide a safe separate place for walkers and bikers that does not exist today. The second priority is construction of a paved 10 foot-wide one mile loop campus trail providing access to all schools, recreation activities, rain gardens, and outdoor classroom education along a portion of Southbranch Creek, a tributary of the Milwaukee River (see Map 1B on our website). The campus trail will serve as an internal circulation trail leading to each school and the community library located on the school campus and provide connections to the sidewalk network off of school property. The Village has agreed to assist the school district in writing the request for proposal for the engineering survey. These two projects would provide safer access to our school campus as well as improve handicap accessibility (especially for our special needs children), increase our children's physical activity which helps prevent childhood obesity and diabetes, and improve our environment. Pedestrian/bike training/education for special needs children and our school community will occur because of these new facilities. The school district is committed to maintaining this trail for year-round use.

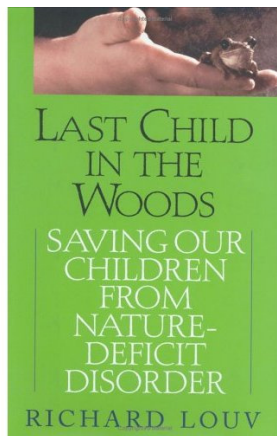
In August 2008, the Brown Deer School District organized a Transportation Task Force (TTF) to study possible ways to reduce bussing costs as well as update student transportation policies. Most of our students live within 1.5 miles of our school campus and ironically can't walk to school due to the lack of sidewalks and areas designated as hazardous zones. The TTF of community members, Village employees, School Superintendent, and district staff studied student transportation issues as well as options for students/families to walk or ride their bikes to school. With the Elementary, Middle, and High Schools all located on one campus, walking and bike riding are very viable options to provide safer access from points along 60th Street, Dean Road, 55th Street, and Bradley Road. The sidewalk and campus trail will significantly address the issue of bus and parent vehicular traffic and congestion at arrival and dismissal times. Safety will be enhanced. After nine months of careful study, the lack of sidewalks as well as areas considered hazardous zones - combined with a lack of funding - allowed the district to only slightly reduce transportation costs by consolidating bus stops. If sidewalks are constructed, further reduced bussing costs could result from the discontinuation of two or more bus routes. Reducing two bus routes would not only save the district \$80,000 annually but would also reduce the carbon footprint from bus idling and emissions. In addition to the revision of transportation policies, the TTF recommended application for a SRTS grant as well as further study to expand bike and pedestrian access to the campus. The TTF viewed the SRTS grant as a possible option for funding; however, applications were not taken during the 2009-2010 school year. In spite of the economic downturn and lack of funding, the TTF used this time to work with the Village to gain support for future sidewalks. This improvement would allow more than 200 students accessibility to their schools in a safe manner. In January 2010, the Village made a commitment to support expansion of the sidewalk along Dean Road through preliminary engineering work and a survey scheduled this summer. The School District and Village have further developed partnerships through the Green and Healthy Schools focus on recycling, and shared Park and Recreational activities through a Carol M. White Physical Education Program (PEP) grant - as part of an increased focus on safety, health and environmental awareness.

Brown Deer School District STRS Plan

This past July 2010, the Superintendent of Schools recruited a a very committed group of parent and community enthusiasts to draft the first SRTS plan. This plan is a work in progress as we collaborate with our school community, Brown Deer Police Department, Village Trustees, and School Board of Education.



The SRTS Committee evolved from a 2009 school district class entitled, "Living in Your Backyard." The class used Richard Louv's 2005 publication "Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder" to highlight the



importance of experiencing nature and improving the environment. The course spurred an effort by parents, school board members, and the School Superintendent to develop a district campus trail. Ultimately, representatives from the Village of Brown Deer, MMSD, DNR and private landscape architects, engineers and geologists joined in the work to create a preliminary vision for the trail. Through this collaboration, as well as the TTF directive to explore funding for SRTS, a Committee for Safe Routes to School was formed. The first meeting was held this summer to develop a SRTS plan using the 5 E's. Goals and objectives were discussed. The final draft of the plan will be completed by early August in an effort to launch SRTS activities at school registration on August 12. The plan will be posted on the School

District website (www.browndeerschools.com) in time for the opening of school on September 1, 2010. A tentative outline of SRTS activities include: August Registration Awareness Campaign; Walk/Bike Safety literature at registration; presentations at Back to School Nights in September; Bicycle Rodeo sponsored by the Brown Deer Police Department; incentive programs to promote safe walking/biking to school - punch cards; poster contest; parent/student surveys; involvement of the Student Councils and National Junior Honor Society; campus audit for safety of walking/biking completed by our senior citizen volunteers, parents, students, and faculty; monthly meetings to update the committee; quarterly presentations to the Board of Education; host Walk/Ride to School event when sidewalks/campus trail are complete; continued audit to monitor participation; posting of information on school district website with photos, survey results, and other resource materials. Through matching funds from the school district, a SRTS Project Manager will be hired to oversee the work of the SRTS Committee and serve as a liaison to the Board of Education and Village. This .2 FTE assignment will support data collection, further development of the SRTS plan, day to day management of the grant implementation, facilitating the SRTS committee meetings and all communications for the next three years. With the engagement of all parents, faculty, and staff during this process, we intend to sustain our efforts through the continued celebration of attainment of our goals as well as with the collaborative leadership of the Parent Teacher Organizations (PTO's) and inspired staff at each building.

Teaching children about the natural world should be treated as one of the most important events of their lives.

Thomas Berry

SRTS Program Goals

- 1) Within the next three years, provide access and enable all school children including those with disabilities to walk and bicycle to school as evidenced by 50% increase in safe walking and bicycling to school as evidenced by base-line assessments.
- 2) Reduce traffic congestion by 25% around Dean Elementary and Brown Deer Middle school as evidenced by Student Arrival and Departure audits conducted each fall and spring.



Local Conditions

1) School Information

- ◆ Half of school enrollment lives within a mile of school
- ◆ School District currently has no special programs encouraging a walking or bicycling
- ◆ All Three Schools are centrally located and on the same Campus Entire Village area is four square miles

2) Walking and Bicycling Statistics

- ◆ 12% Dean Elementary students walk or bicycle to school
- ◆ 10 % of Middle School students walk or bicycle to school



3) Safety Issues

- ◆ Dean Elementary (K4-4th)-hazardous conditions for walking due to lack of sidewalks and limited access for parents dropping off children at arrival/departure times - over 50% of students live south of Brown Deer Road
- ◆ Middle School (5-8th) - 60th Street and Dean is dangerous intersection for walkers and bikers even with crossing guards - several accidents on 60th street due to excessive speed -two pedestrians were hit by cars on 60th Street this past year
- ◆ Principals indicated the need for better signage to calm traffic and reinforce safety expectations
- ◆ Police stated that speeding was a problem; placing officers along 60th street in morning and afternoon when possible
- ◆ Observation of school campus during morning arrival showed traffic congestion around drop-off area to be a problem for walkers and bicyclists and motorists.
- ◆ Bike racks not located in safe areas for visibility



4) Attitudes affecting walking and bicycling

- ◆ Parents and students indicated in interviews that safety as main concern and deterred them from walking or biking to school - follow up online survey for staff and students is planned
- ◆ Discussions with parents showed interest in their children being able to walk to school if adult supervision provided
- ◆ Students interviews indicate need for safe place to park their bicycles -security seems to be an issue

Brown Deer School District STRS Plan—(continued)

5) Other Assets that will benefit our program

- ◆ Opportunity to receive grant to fund program
- ◆ Collaborative partnership with Village of Brown Deer, local organizations, and businesses that promote walking and biking to school
- ◆ Parents and Senior other village residents willing to provide volunteer help
- ◆ All school buildings are located on the same campus



Promoting the SRTS Five (5) E's

Education Strategy:

- 1) Provide bicycle and pedestrian safety classroom lessons (Walking Wisdom and Bike Drivers Ed) to school children using community organizations reinforced by take-home safety sheets for parents.
- 2) Distribute map of existing safe walking and biking routes - hand out at Fall Open House
- 3) Increase walking and bicycling to school strategies include on-going safety review of campus and improvements, educational programs promoting safety expectations for walking and biking, and community support through volunteer efforts that promote safe routes to school.

Encouragement Strategy:

- 1) Launch the SRTS Initiatives at August registration by distributing safety tips for walking and biking to school. Organize raffle of various prizes that support SRTS (pedometers, bike helmets, water bottles, etc.) to create interest and enthusiasm.
- 2) Pass out information promoting parent online survey in September.
- 3) Engage Student Councils from each school to survey students and share results
- 4) Create website for SRTS to enhance communication and promote safety expectations
- 5) Collaborating with PE staff, promote fitness as a part of SRTS using punch cards to record participation - offer prizes and incentives through a drawing of completed punch cards every month.



Engineering Strategy:

- 1) Improve safety and accessibility to school site through construction of sidewalks directly across from both schools. Work towards creating physical improvements such as additional sidewalks, safer crosswalks and improved signage.
- 2) Explore all crosswalks adjacent to the schools and suggest changes.
- 3) Solicit RFP for Engineering Survey for multi-modal paved year round Campus Trail.
- 4) Create map of existing safe walking and biking routes - publish on website
- 5) Audit and improve signage to better manage pedestrian and bicycle traffic and regulate/calm vehicle traffic

SRTS Five (5) E's -(continued)



Enforcement Strategy:

- 1) Working with our BDPD, meet annually to review hazardous routes along with suggestions to calm traffic on main roads to school campus. Efforts are needed to reduce speeds around the school and congestion around the campus during all school activities and events
- 2) Improve parent drop-off and pick-up areas at each school. And enforce new expectations
- 3) Develop a Parent Driver Safety Campaign that includes a school zone speed enforcement program and a clear enforcement messages
- 4) Incorporate new signage to better create public awareness of school safety zone
- 5) Collaborate with BDPD to display speed trailer during first weeks of school and periodically throughout the school year

Evaluation Strategy:

- 1) Collect baseline information during the September 2010 and early June 2011 and share with school community at Parent-Teacher Conferences and post on website.
- 2) Monitor progress and identify challenges and areas of improvement
- 3) At the end of three years, identify changes in behavior attitudes/safety



Final Thoughts

The SRTS Committee will meet monthly and updated information will be posted on the SRTS website.—www.browndeerschools.com. Go to this site and then click on the tab on the left side of page—Safe Routes to School. Findings from our audits and survey results will be published on the website and presented at School and Village Board meetings.

Please take a few moments to review the SRTS plan and make suggestions or share your ideas on the web site or with the Safe Routes to School Committee.

People need nature - really need nature, not merely enjoy nature or benefit from nature. Children need experiences with nature just as they need sleep or healthy food.