

# **Student Walk Areas in Minneapolis Public Schools: History, Assessment and Recommendations for the Future**

**Sponsored by the Minneapolis Department of Health through  
The Statewide Health Improvement Program  
Spring 2016**

During school year 2014-15 and into 2015-16, Minneapolis Public Schools' Operational & Security Services and Transportation departments worked in partnership to review the Minneapolis Public Schools model for student walk areas. Funding was provided by the Minnesota Department of Health's Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) and was administered through the Minneapolis Health Department. Walk areas are the geographical areas in which students live and walk to school. School bus service is not offered in these areas except for students who have special needs.

The following report examines the current walk area model, identifies concerns, looks at the practices of other urban, similarly sized school districts, and offers recommendations for updating current and establishing future student walk areas.

## **Project context and purpose**

Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) has had "official" walk areas for students living within specific distances from school for as long as it has had busing. Throughout the years, the MPS Transportation Department has established specific, geographic areas near schools within which students do not receive district bus transportation. When new schools were built, walk areas were established around them. Current walk zone distances are one-half mile for elementary, one mile for middle school and two miles for high school students. In areas where walk areas include streets with high volumes of car traffic, walk area boundaries have been modified to avoid hazardous street crossings. Since the 2012-13 school year, MPS high school students have used Metro Transit Go-To Cards to ride public transportation. Because high school students use public transportation, this report focuses on elementary and middle school walk areas.

The purpose of this project has been to assess the current model of walk areas at Minneapolis schools, determine a process and clear factors for determining walk areas, and offer suggestions to strengthen and expand healthy walking for Minneapolis students.

### **Project structure and process**

The walk area project was venued in the MPS Department of Operational & Security Services and administered through Safe Routes to School, one of the initiatives of Safe & Healthy Students. Julie Danzl, Safe & Healthy Students Coordinator, and Lynne Krehbiel, consultant and former Student Support Services staff, led the project team, which met regularly to formulate direction, review learning and finalize recommendations. The team included:

- Scott James, Director of Transportation
- Frank Zeman, Assistant Director of Transportation
- Roy Hallanger, Transportation Information Analyst
- David Smith, consultant and former Transportation Department staff

The team consulted with district colleagues familiar with issues related to walk areas. Those interviewed were Transportation safety managers Alonzo Anthony, Harry Bolkom, Steve Crenshaw, and Roger Martinez, who work directly with school sites and have firsthand knowledge of walking and busing issues at their assigned schools; Martha Swanson, Coordinator at the New Families Center; Jason Matlock, Director of Operational & Security Services; Kevin Klecker, Operational & Security Services Specialist; and Jenny Bordon, MPS Safe Routes to School Specialist. These interviewees work directly with schools, bus routes, school staff, parents, families, school resource officers and community members.

The team's work focused on the walk area model rather than concerns about walking to and from school. Because of this focus, students and families were not directly involved in the work.

The project team identified four clear outcomes:

1. A transparent process for determining and modifying walk areas
2. A review and compilation of national practices — informed by the practices of other urban school districts — of ways to design school walk areas
3. A census of information families currently receive about walk areas — what the areas are; how they are determined; and how walking is important for students both physically and academically
4. A historical understanding of the development of walk areas in Minneapolis

### **A brief history of walk areas and school bus transportation in the Minneapolis Public Schools**

The creation and evolution of walk areas in Minneapolis Public Schools is relatively new, arising in the early 1970s. Their development resulted in great part from changing social roles, Minneapolis immigration and housing patterns, establishment of freeways and urban renewal, city planning, and changes in local and national law seeking to end racial segregation.

Special School District No. 1 (Minneapolis Public Schools) was established in 1878. In the first two-thirds of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, schools were distributed throughout residential neighborhoods, usually with no more than two miles between them. Location was driven by immigration and residential housing patterns. Children walked to school and returned home for lunch. Most mothers worked in the home, not in the public workforce. There was no school-provided food service or school-sponsored transportation. In the 1920s, in response to children walking to school and the growth of automobile traffic, the American Automobile Association established School Safety Patrols. The patrols were primarily situated on street corners adjacent to school buildings.

In ensuing years, immigration increased, housing patterns shifted, and the school district moved, opened, and closed schools based on population patterns. Underlying the housing patterns were often racially motivated policies and practices that effectively barred some racial groups from parts of Minneapolis.

A critical year in legal and social history was 1954. *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* outlawed racial segregation in public education and declared “separate but equal” segregated schools to be unconstitutional. In the Twin Cities, as in other cities nationally, segregated schools reflected segregated neighborhoods. School district decisions such as size and location of schools and attendance boundaries increased racial segregation, as later found in *Booker v. Special School District No. 1*.

In the early 1960s, The Citizens’ League of Minneapolis and Hennepin County recommended that the Board of Education address segregation. Also during that time, the Committee for Integrated Education was formed. In 1967, Minneapolis began its first busing for integration. In 1971, the case *Booker v. Special School District No. 1* was filed in federal court, seeking equal educational opportunities free of racial discrimination. The court found that policy decisions made by Minneapolis Public Schools aggravated and increased racial segregation and ordered MPS to desegregate. For twelve years, the school district remained under court supervision. Busing was one of several methods Minneapolis Public Schools used to respond to the court ruling.

Throughout the years, MPS Transportation has accommodated changes in school attendance areas due to magnet schools, shortages of classroom space in particular areas, and English language learner programs. In the 1997-98 school year, MPS shifted start times for high school students back one hour to accommodate teen sleep patterns. Beginning with a 2011 pilot program, MPS transitioned to transporting high school students on public transit buses and trains.

In the early 2000s, public health officials and public attention turned to concerns about childhood obesity. Programs were launched to address this health crisis, including former First Lady Michelle Obama’s *Let’s Move!* initiative, which is dedicated to solving the challenge of childhood obesity within a generation. Safe Routes to School also gained momentum at this time. Safe Routes to School is a national and international movement to create safe, convenient and fun opportunities for children to bicycle and walk to and

from school. According to the Safe Routes to School National Partnership, in 1969, approximately 50 percent of children in the United States walked or bicycled to school, with approximately 87 percent of children living within one mile of school walking or bicycling. Today, fewer than 15 percent of children walk or bicycle to school. As a result, children today are less active, less healthy and less independent.

Early Minnesota Safe Routes to School work began in 2006 after the federal transportation bill, SAFETEA-LU, was passed in 2005. For the first time, federal funds were appropriated to all 50 state Departments of Transportation to implement both infrastructure and non-infrastructure Safe Routes to School projects.

In 2007-08, a planning group representing Minneapolis agencies, departments and organizations gathered input from the community about Safe Routes. The resulting document, “Minneapolis Safe Routes to School, Helping Minneapolis Youth be Lean & Green,” (September 2008) summarizes the group’s work and offers a Safe Routes Strategic Plan for the City of Minneapolis. Since that time, Safe Routes to School efforts in Minneapolis Public Schools have grown exponentially across the district.

### **Current state of Minneapolis Public Schools walk areas**

During its 2014-15 school year, MPS had 33 elementary schools and seven middle schools. Each school has a walk area based on walk distance from school and proximity to hazardous streets.

- Elementary schools – .5 miles
- Middle schools – 1 mile
- “Hazardous” streets, defined by average daily traffic, are used to modify walk area boundaries. Since the 1970s, that figure has been 1,500 vehicles in 24 hours. This is a lower threshold compared to some other school districts in the area.
- Each fall, families in walk areas receive a postcard with basic pedestrian and bicycle safety information from the Transportation Department.
- Walk areas have not been comprehensively reviewed for years.
- Availability of busing is one factor strongly considered by families choosing schools for their children.
- People have strong concerns about neighborhood safety for students walking to school.
- Families new to the city or new to a neighborhood, especially from other countries, are reluctant to let their children walk through an unfamiliar neighborhood.
- Where walk areas have been successfully modified in MPS, Transportation safety managers have worked together with school communities, especially taking advantage of changes in street infrastructure that improve walkability.

The State of Minnesota requires that school districts provide transportation at no cost to families for students residing inside the attendance area of their school who live more than one mile from school (elementary) or two miles from school (secondary). School districts have discretion to transport students living closer to school due to traffic or safety hazards.

### Information from other public school districts

The project team was interested in learning what other urban school districts, similarly situated and in similar weather climates, do about busing and walking students. To that end, the team researched the following school districts: Buffalo, NY; Chicago; Milwaukee; Omaha; Ottawa, Ontario; Seattle; St. Paul; and Duluth, MN. The appendix of this report offers detailed information from each of the districts surveyed.

**Walk zone comparisons (in miles)**

School District	Elementary	Middle	State policy distance
Buffalo, NY	0.7	1.5	n/a
Chicago	1.5	1.5	1.5
Duluth, MN	0.7	1.5	2.0
Milwaukee	1.0	2.0	2.0
Omaha, NE	1.5	2.0	n/a
Ottawa, Ontario	0.994	0.994	0.994
St. Paul, MN	0.5	1.0	2.0
<b>Minneapolis</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>2.0</b>

- All districts have some form of Safe Routes to School programming
- Every district except Ottawa has student crossing guards.
- Chicago, Ottawa and Milwaukee have police or city-hired, adult crossing guards (paid). St. Paul, Omaha and Ottawa have adult crossing guards (unpaid).
- Minneapolis does not have a system of adult crossing guards, paid or unpaid.

### Current MPS initiatives to encourage walking and biking

Since 2006, MPS has developed and expanded [MPS Safe Routes to School](#) programming to encourage and support active routes to school.

- **Seasonal Walk/Bike to School days** — MPS coordinates and promotes fall, winter and spring events each year. These days are a great way to begin or strengthen walk/bike-to-school efforts, conduct safety education, and create enthusiasm for walking and biking to school.
- **Bus Stop & Walk** — This is an innovative strategy that allows many more children to experience the joys and reap the benefits of walking to school. In a Bus Stop & Walk, school buses unload children away from school so they can walk a half-mile to school along a designated route with classmates, staff and volunteers.
- **Walking School Bus** — This is a group of children walking to school with one or more adults. It can be as informal as two families walking together or more formal with a designated route and scheduled stops along the way for children to join the walking bus.

- **Walk! Bike! Fun!** — This helps children ages 5 to 13 develop lifelong skills through fun classroom activities and on-foot and on-bike skills practice. Students 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.
- **MPS Traveling Bicycle Fleet** — A fleet of 40 bicycles is available to MPS physical education teachers trained in Walk! Bike! Fun! to use while teaching the bicycle safety unit.
- [Minneapolis Walking Routes for Youth Map](#) – helps students and families navigate their neighborhoods in a new way. The map shows the location of traffic signals, pedestrian short cuts, and other improvements that help users cross barriers and get to where they need to go. Maps are available in English, Spanish, Hmong, and Somali and can be found at schools, park recreation centers, and libraries within Minneapolis.
- **Safety Patrol** — This is a partnership between the Minneapolis Police Department, AAA and MPS that provides young people leadership opportunities, safety training, and citizenship and community service understanding. Safe Routes has worked with several schools to strengthen its safety patrol programs.
- MPS staff represents the District on the City of Minneapolis Bicycle Advisory Committee and Pedestrian Advisory Committee. These committees meet on a monthly basis to review plans by the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board and the Minneapolis Public Works Department to improve conditions and encourage walking and biking in the city. Both committees are especially committed to the needs of children who are actively commuting to schools.

## Recommendations

Some are specific to **Minneapolis Public Schools**; others involve coordination between the District and the City of Minneapolis.

1. Use this guidance for assessing current walk areas and determining new walk areas for new school sites. Criteria is adapted from the [New Mexico Standards for Determining Hazardous Walking Conditions](#).

### Criteria for Determining Student Walk Areas for Schools

Elementary school (Pre-K–5) walk areas are .5 miles

Middle school (6–8) walk areas are 1.0 mile

Walk areas may be modified by MPS Transportation Department if:

1. Walking alongside or parallel to a roadway if total traffic volume is greater than 120 vehicles per hour while students are en route or there is not an adequate walking path or sidewalk
  2. Crossing street at an UNREGULATED intersection and motor vehicle traffic is greater than 180 vehicles per hour at times students are en route to school
    - Unregulated: A crossing site where, for the street or roadway being crossed, no crossing guard, traffic enforcement officer, stop sign, or traffic control signal is present, or the crossing site is not designated or marked as a reduced-speed school crossing zone.
  3. High volume intersection
    - Elementary students: 55 vehicles per minute during en route times
    - Middle and secondary students: 70 vehicles per minute during en route times
  4. Major traffic arteries: High traffic volume and posted speed limits of 40 mph or high accident frequency and if Transportation Department determines that traffic signals or crossing guards are not adequate
  5. Railroad crossings: Crossing a main line at grade
  6. Temporary transportation service may be provided for construction or other disruptions, as determined by Transportation Director
2. Expand and diversify ways families receive and access walk zone information. Include the definition of walk areas and the physical and academic benefits of walking or biking to and from school. Offer suggestions of how parents can be involved. Send information when bus stop information is mailed in August. Provide information at school sites, plus the New Families Center and Welcome Center.
  3. Continue to work with Site Councils to promote walking and biking. Assist schools to better publicize walk areas and further involve parents. Promote establishing walking school buses or Bus Stop & Walk.
  4. Work with schools and the Minneapolis Police Department to strengthen Safety Patrol involvement, presence and prestige.
  5. Define a process for handling disputes about walk distances or hazardous crossings.

Some recommendations are best implemented when the City of Minneapolis and Minneapolis Public Schools work together.

1. Undertake a comprehensive study of all school walk areas, in cooperation with the City of Minneapolis and other partners with expertise in traffic safety studies.
  - a. Meet with City of Minneapolis Public Works to identify current traffic data collected, understand existing resources and explore expanded partnership.
  - b. Identify areas where additional mechanical or visual inspections are needed to determine vehicle counts.
  - c. Create a prioritized list for reviewing school walk areas that gives priority to schools based on the number of students in and around walk areas and the infrastructure in the walk areas. For example, a school with large numbers of students crossing higher-volume streets might be chosen first.
  - d. Pilot the program at the first school on the list, documenting the methods used and time taken for utilizing the rubric above.
  - e. Create a plan to conduct school walk area reviews (estimated completion in the 2019-2020 school year).
2. Provide information to school communities prior to the scheduled walk area study, and work on a plan for engaging parents and communities in the study.
3. Provide a method for school communities to request a walk area study, especially if traffic or street infrastructure changes.
4. Integrate similar methods to deal with urgent walk area changes required by road construction or natural disasters.
5. Continue to work with the city to identify infrastructure changes that may impact walk areas. Develop system for Transportation Department to track improvements and implement the appropriate geographic or boundary changes.
6. Connect Community Crime Prevention Specialists to schools when there are safety concerns in walk areas.
7. Provide school bell time and walk route information to the Minneapolis Police Department and other groups that can be on the lookout for children actively commuting to school.
8. Pilot paid adult crossing guards along walk routes and at busy crossings.

As the City of Minneapolis grew during the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, public schools expanded to meet student and family needs. As the community developed and underwent legal, cultural and demographic changes, in addition to changes in educational philosophy, public schools reflected those changes. All of these changes affected the ways students traveled from home to school. Each school community presents unique challenges for student commuters, whether they travel by bus, in the family car, by bicycle, or on foot. This study focused on establishing walk area criteria appropriate for all schools and all street conditions and on offering recommendations that can improve the walking environment for all Minneapolis residents.

## **APPENDIX**

### **Information on Other Similarly-Situated School Districts**

#### **Buffalo Public Schools**

Buffalo, New York

31,359 students

716.816.3500

#### Transportation provided

- K–8 (public and non-public) yellow school bus. ~28,000 students
- 9–12 (public and non-public) public transit vouchers. ~10,000 students

#### Walk distances

- .7 miles for K–8
- 1.5 miles for 9–12

#### Other walk zone criteria

- Hazard barriers like expressways. Arterials are not considered hazard barriers if designated crosswalks are available.
- Student exceptions to walk requirement are for medical with documentation.

#### Walk zone definition and eligibility

- Transportation Department

#### Crossing guards

- Student Safety Patrol — always paired with adult crossing guards at intersections.
- Adult crossing guards — civil service positions hired and trained by the police department. Administered and assigned through individual precincts. There are 189 guards at present. Schools request guards at specific intersections at beginning of school year and then adjust per changing student crossing needs. Police officers substitute as needed. Program began in 1952.

#### Safe Routes to School

- Administered through Go Buffalo and Go Bike Buffalo in cooperation with public and private schools. [www.gobikebuffalo.org](http://www.gobikebuffalo.org)
- Walk/bike maps linked to specific schools. Walk distance of 5 and 10 minutes, crossing guards, arterials and more indicated. Maps accessed through school websites. Maps do not indicate defined walk zones (ex: <http://gobikebuffalo.org/images/SRTS/PS6BEST.pdf>)
- Organize and train the "bus drivers" for the Walking School Buses.
- Award-winning Recycle-A-Bicycle (RAB) program provides students with the opportunity to build their own bicycles from salvaged parts while learning how our transportation choices affects our environment, our communities and our health. This program is offered in a few schools throughout the city.
- Organized bike rodeos on school grounds during the summer to assist children with proper bike maintenance and safety gear.

#### Documentation

1. Buffalo City School District Transportation Policy 5730
2. Go Buffalo Safe Routes to School
3. [State of New York's guide for pedestrian safety](#)
4. [Buffalo City School District Report Card](#) (2012-13)

## Chicago Public School District

Chicago, Illinois  
392,285 students  
773.553.1600

### Transportation provided

- Neighborhood and magnet school system. All students live within walking distance of a neighborhood K–8 school. Magnet school buses pick up at neighborhood schools. About 22,000 students receive transportation.

### Walk distances

- 1.5 miles — all students. Distance determined by proscribed CPS [MAGSCH](#) program

### Other walk zone criteria

- Hazards like lack of sidewalks or crossing railroad tracks, according to the State of Illinois statutes and guidelines.

### Walk zone definition and eligibility

- Bureau of Student Transportation Services

### Crossing guards

- School Safety Patrol unknown.
- Adult crossing guards — Administered through the Chicago Police Department. Assigned to intersection crossings and supervised by district commanders

### Safe Passage (Alternative to Safe Routes to School)

- Safe Passage is designed to provide safe routes for students while traveling to and from school. Each identified school will have a uniquely tailored strategy, which will take into consideration that school's community, popular modes of student transportation, arrival and dismissal times, and student residences.
- Safe Passage-paid "Community Watchers" are hired by various vendors and stationed on designated routes to supervise students traveling to and from school (beginning one hour before the first bell and until 30 minutes after the first bell, and every afternoon, beginning 30 minutes before the dismissal bell until approximately 3½ hours after the dismissal bell).
- Enlisted city agencies — police, fire, buildings, streets and sanitation — to help along the Safe Passage routes; the city's 311 operators have been given the routes as well.
- Maps on CPS website have links to school area maps with the Safe Passage patrolled routes indicated. No other pedestrian/bike information (signals, crossing guards, etc.).
- Safe Havens — designated establishments and institutions in which children can find shelter and assistance.
- Walking School Bus
- Parent Patrol

- Safe Passage link on CPS website has guidelines for various student transportation modes

#### Safe Routes Ambassadors (Chicago Department of Transportation)

- Education and outreach team for the Chicago Department of Transportation, teaching pedestrian and bicycle safety to students across Chicago. Services provided free of cost by Chicago's Safe Routes Ambassadors:
  - Up to two classroom visits for 2nd and 5th grades:
    - 2nd grade — 45-minute follow-up outdoor workshop
    - 5th grade — 60-minute follow-up outdoor workshop
- Classroom presentations for high school driver's education classes
- Workshops for parents and community members
- Walk and Bike to School Day toolkit
- Student and parent safety publications
- Teacher and administrator resources and lesson plans

#### School reduced speed zones

- 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.: 20 mph speed limit when children are present in the safety zone and 30 mph when no children are present in the safety zone
- 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.: 30 mph speed limit
- The Children's Safety Zone Program protects children and other pedestrians by reminding motorists to slow down and obey speed laws — especially in school and park zones. It uses automated safety cameras to identify and ticket motorists who are breaking the law by exceeding the speed limits. The registered owner of the speeding vehicle will be issued the speeding ticket.

#### Documentation

1. [Student Transportation Eligibility Distance Measurement Instructions for preparing application for determination of a serious safety hazard](#)
2. [Crossing Guards Directive 1987](#)
3. [Crossing Guard Agreement 2011](#)
4. [Safe Passage guide](#)
5. [Safe Haven Safe Routes Ambassadors](#)
6. [Chicago Tribune: Database shows average walks will nearly double](#)
7. [School District Snapshot](#)
8. Chicago Department of Transportation, [Automatic Speed Enforcement Frequently Asked Questions](#)

## **Duluth Public Schools**

Duluth, Minnesota

218.336.8700

### Transportation provided and walk distances

- K–5 elementary — .7 miles
- 6–8 middle — 1.5 miles
- 9–12 high — 2 miles

### Other walk distance criteria

- Hazard determination: Committee as needed (including, but not limited to, Transportation Manager, Police, Principal)

### Walk zone definition and eligibility

- Transportation Department

### Crossing guards

- No adult crossing guards
- Student Safety Patrol. Operates only within one block of school. Each school has a School Patrol Advisor, Police liaison and school staff

### Safe Routes to School — Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council

- Reorganizing due to school construction after the initial 2006 study

### School reduced speed zones

- Proposed but not in effect (James Gittemeier, SRTS Senior Planner, 218.529.7556)

### Documentation

1. [Transportation website](#)
2. [MDE Data Reports and Analytics](#)

## Milwaukee Public Schools

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

414.475.8393

### Transportation provided:

- The elementary schools in Milwaukee Public Schools are divided into eight transportation regions. The regions are coded according to high school areas. Regions run north-south through the city. If you select a school outside of your attendance area but in your region, you will be provided transportation if you live outside of the walk zone, a one-mile radius from the school. If you select a school outside of your region, you must provide transportation unless the school is citywide. Citywide schools transport children from all regions. Charter schools have their own transportation rules.
- High schools in your transportation region — Transportation is provided as follows: Attendance Area School — You must live more than two miles from the school, in the school's region and outside of the school's attendance area but inside the school's transportation area  
Citywide School — You must live more than two miles from the school to be provided transportation.  
Charter School — Charter schools set their own transportation rules. Students eligible for transportation either ride a yellow bus or receive a weekly bus pass for Milwaukee County Transit System. Students may have to walk up to one mile to a yellow bus stop.

### Walk distances to school

- 2 miles maximum — all grades per State of Wisconsin
- ½ mile — elementary “cluster” schools
- 1 mile — elementary and middle, Milwaukee Public Schools
- 2 miles — high school, Milwaukee Public Schools

### Walk distances to bus stop

- ¼ mile — K–5
- ½ mile — 6–12 (except some charter high schools up to 1 mile)

### Other walk zone criteria

- “When conditions of unusual hazard exist, transportation service may be provided to Milwaukee resident students enrolled in grades K–8 to and from the schools which they attend and for those students enrolled in grades 9–12 where public transportation is not available.”
- “Designated areas of unusual hazard shall be reviewed periodically by the hazards review board ... composed of representatives from the transportation committee of the Milwaukee Public Schools, the City Safety Commission, the City Bureau of Traffic Engineers, the County Bureau of Traffic Engineers, and the city police department shall conduct investigations and prepare recommendations to be submitted to the transportation committee of the Milwaukee Public Schools. ... The school principal or administrator may designate an area within the school's attendance area as a condition of unusual hazard, in which case transportation may be provided out of that school's funds. The principal or administrator shall contact the Office of Pupil Transportation Services to schedule the service.”

- If you move outside of your elementary or middle school transportation region, your child will be provided transportation only if a bus stop for the school currently exists near your new home. If there is no existing bus stop, you must either provide transportation or change your child's school. You will be asked to select a new school for your child for the following year or to sign a contract that says you will provide transportation.

#### Walk zone definition and eligibility

- Student Transportation Appeals Committee rules on appeals

#### Crossing guards:

- Adult crossing guards, Milwaukee Police Department Safety Division. Two hundred crossing guards are placed at locations selected by assessment after intersection requests by citizens/schools. Assessment set at 30 students/time measure and 40 percent or less gap ratio.
- Student Safety Cadets

#### Safe Routes to School (administered through the Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin)

- Ten-hour bike and pedestrian curriculum to 4th through 6th grades
- Six-hour pedestrian safety curriculum targeted at 2<sup>nd</sup>- and 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade students.
- Schools receive GIS-based map for a one-mile radius around each school with locations for all crossing guards, traffic controls and crosswalks.
- Hazard/barrier analysis and written recommendations for facility improvements to enhance safe routes to each school.

#### Neighborhood Schools Initiative (Milwaukee Public Works, Milwaukee Public Schools, Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin)

- Goal: Grow school enrollment in high-density neighborhoods and encourage walking and biking to nearby schools instead of bus to more distant schools. Strategies include improved crossing such as added pedestrian refuge islands, pedestrian activated signals, countdown timers, in-street yield signs, etc.

#### Pedestrian and bicycle resources of Milwaukee Police Department, Safety Division

- Driver guides to safety around pedestrians and bikers
- Teacher guides – traffic and walking
- Grade-appropriate student educational materials
- Parent guides

#### Documentation

1. [Transportation website](#)
2. [Milwaukee Police Safety Division](#)
3. [Case Statement for Active Transportation](#)
4. [Crossing Guard Gap Assessment — Guard placement \(New Jersey\)](#)
5. [Intro to SRTS](#) (not Milwaukee-specific)

## Omaha Public Schools

Omaha, Nebraska

402.557.2222

### Transportation provided

- [K–12 yellow school buses](#)

### Walk distances:

- [Elementary \(K–6\)](#)
  - Home Attendance School: 1.5 miles driving distance
  - “School of Choice” that is not also Home Attendance School: 1 mile driving distance and (a) brings socioeconomic diversity, or (b) is eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.
- Middle (6–8)
  - Home Attendance School: 2 miles driving distance
  - “School of Choice” that is not also Home Attendance School: 1 mile driving distance and (a) brings socioeconomic diversity, or (b) is eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.
- High (9–12)
  - Home Attendance School: No transportation unless school is also a magnet
  - Magnet School: 3 miles (bus stop distance may be up to 2 miles)

### Other walk zone criteria

- (Hazard) none
- School Transfer Students “... eligible for transportation if the student's placement adds to the socio-economic diversity of the school AND there is an existing route for a bus to the transfer school with an existing stop located within a safe walk distance AND there is room on the bus.”

### Walk zone definition and eligibility

- Transportation Department; informal process using *EduLog* distance calculations

### Crossing guards

- Adult guards provided through schools
- Student Safety Patrol. Omaha Police Department, Community Resource Center provides training by officers twice yearly

### Safe Routes to School

- Through “Live Well Omaha” — Douglas County sponsored collaboration of institutions on health issues

### School reduced speed zones

- School zones posted at 25 mph. Regular (non-school hours) speed limits may be as much as 40 or 45. The default residential speed limit is 25 mph.

### Documentation

1. [OPS, Transportation links](#)
2. [Nebraska Pupil Transportation](#)

## Ottawa-Carleton District

Ottawa, Ontario

613.721.1820

### Transportation provided and walk distances

- Kindergarten (two levels): 0.8 kilometers (~.5 mile) or more from their home school
- Grades 1–8: 1.6 kilometers (~1 mile) or more from their home school
- Grades 9–12: 3.2 kilometers (~2 miles) or more from their home school
- Grades 5–12: Students use OC public transit where service is available and cost-effective. Grade 5 students will not be required to use public transit if any transfers are required. Grade 6 students will not be required to use public transit if more than one transfer is necessary. Grades 9–12 will not be required to use public transit one-way time not more than 1.5 hours. Public transit passes to 6,143 students.

### Walk distance measurement

- “Distances are measured by the shortest roadway or by municipal pathways and walkways approved by the Ottawa Student Transportation Authority. Distance is measured as the shortest distance by road or approved pathway from the nearest point of public access to the student’s property to the nearest point of access to school property. Under extreme and extenuating circumstances, OSTA may override distance measurements at its discretion.”
- “As part of OSTA’s route optimization, a review of bell times, in conjunction with new mapping infrastructure to calculate eligibility distances...”

### Other walk criteria

- Hazard exceptions: Morrison Hershfield, a consulting engineer, was contracted by OSTA to create a set of hazard criteria and assessment methodology in 2011.
- Review teams use data collection forms in assessing various elements and evaluating hazards during site visits. They then assign points to individual criteria, the total of which becomes the determining factor on whether the certain areas need to be deemed hazardous or not. Some hazard criteria may immediately warrant busing, regardless of total points, while other assessments may require combination warrants to a point threshold. The point thresholds for specific grades are established by the OSTA Board of Directors and its Member Boards.

The proposed point thresholds are:

Grades K–3 — 60 points warrants bus transportation

Grades 4–6 — 100 points warrants bus

### Crossing guards

- No student patrol
- Adult crossing guards: City of Ottawa, Ottawa Safety Council employs and trains. Location is based on a request from the public to the city for an assessment of a given location. The city performs the assessment annually to determine whether

the location warrants a crossing guard. There were 153 crossing guard locations in the 2013-14 year.

#### New School Active Transportation Network and Charter (SRTS equivalent)

- Statement: The Ottawa Student Transportation Authority (OSTA) joined with its member school Boards (OCSB and OCDSB) to sign a School Active Transportation Charter in October 2013. This represents the first step toward the creation of a new School Active Transportation Support Network that will strengthen collaboration with the City of Ottawa and Green Communities Canada to support active travel initiatives (walking, cycling, skateboarding, etc.) while making the journey to and from school safer and more convenient for more families. This is part of a cross-Canada movement dedicated to children's mobility, health and happiness.
- Walking School Bus through OSTA partnering with Ottawa Public Health, Green Communities Canada, Ottawa Safety Council and City of Ottawa Transportation Planning. Walking School Bus involves a paid, trained, screened and first-aid certified leader who guides a group of children to school using a pre-determined route every day. Pilot at area schools in the fall 2014. Extended to end of school year.
- Ottawa Active & Safe Routes Newsletter

#### School reduced speed zones

- 50 km/h (31 mph) default residential speed limit. 40 km/h (24.8 mph) school zones. Current movement, as of January 2015, to reduce each by 10 km/h (24.8 mph & 18.6 mph).

#### Documentation

1. [OCDSB's transportation website](#)
2. [SRTSC Ontario website](#)
3. [Ottawa Citizen crossing guards story](#)
4. [CBC News story](#)

## Seattle Public Schools

Seattle, Washington

### Transportation provided

- K–8 Elementary — yellow bus (6–8 optional ORCA/public transit card)
- Middle — yellow bus (optional ORCA/public transit card)
- High — ORCA card

### Walk distances

- Elementary (K–5, K–8) 1 mile by practice (no policy)
- Middle (6–8) 1.25 miles by practice (no trans policy)
  - 1.25-2 miles = Metro Pass; 2+ miles = yellow bus
- High (9–12) — 2 miles by practice and policy

### Walk distance to bus stops

- 1-mile maximum policy — all grades
- Elementary — .25 miles by practice

### Walk distance measurement

- Per-Scheduling Software (VirsaTrans)

### Other walk criteria

- Hazard thresholds — minor or major arterial
- Hazard determination — City Board that meets yearly at this time. City of Seattle School Traffic Safety Committee

### Crossing guards

- Adult crossing guard placement shall be reviewed to maximize all K–8 recommended one-mile walk boundaries.

### Safe Routes to School City of Seattle School Traffic Safety Committee

- Annual mode-choice counts (Using the Safe Routes to School Center mode choice survey) shall be conducted at each K–8 school during the first week of June.
- In 2015-16, each elementary and K–8 school may operate a Walking School Bus that will be identified within the District’s recommended walk maps. Walking School Bus routes shall be identified at all K–8 schools in partnership with the Transportation Department, City of Seattle Traffic Safety Committee and school principals.

- School Walking Maps
- Walking School Bus — volunteer parent leaders (organized with school assistance)
- Bike Trains — organized like above with volunteer leaders

### School reduced speed zones

- SDOT operates more than 60 sets of school zone flashing beacons around the city. When the light is flashing, the speed limit is 20 mph, even if children are not present. Website includes interactive map, link to list of intersections and beacon schedules.

- SDOT has partnered with the Seattle Police Department to install and operate speed cameras in school zones to enforce the 20 mph speed limit in effect while school zone beacons are flashing. Tickets issued per videos. Videos viewable online.

#### Documentation

1. [Seattle DOT SRTS page](#)
2. [Seattle DOT SRTS projects page](#)
3. [Example of a Bike Train](#)
4. [Seattle DOT SRTS Enforcement](#)

## **St. Paul Public Schools**

Saint Paul, Minnesota

### Transportation provided

- K–12

### Walk distances

- St. Paul School Board Policy #707: 1 mile
- K–5: ½ mile (established 2013. Funding approved but not written policy as of interview), 6–12: 1 mile

### Other walk zone criteria

- Policy Statement: “hazardous traffic conditions while walking to or from school as determined by using uniform criteria established by the administration”
- Application: Evaluation of Extraordinary Hazardous Crossing Situations (SPS Transportation Dept.)

### Walk zone definition and eligibility

- Transportation Department

### Crossing guards

- Adult guards are employees of SPPS hired by Transportation Department. About 20 guards are budgeted. Requests for guards at intersections are made by schools. Public Transportation Department uses evaluation process and assigns.
- Student Safety Patrol: Administered through the Transportation Department, training is provided by St. Paul Police School Patrol Coordinator.

### Safe Routes to School

- SPPS has received funds “awarded February 2014 that will be used to install bicycle racks at up to eight schools districtwide. Any remaining funds will be used to promote “Bike and Walk to School Day” events and to purchase bicycle helmets for students.”

### School reduced speed zones

- Yes

### Documentation

1. Saint Paul Public Schools Policy 707.00
2. [Eligibility online information](#)
3. Evaluation of Extraordinary Hazardous crossing situations PDF (in files)
4. [SRTS general introduction](#) with St Paul Ref on page 16
5. [MDE Data Reports and Analytics](#)
6. [St. Paul Public Schools transportation webpage](#)