

# Safe Routes to School

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

June 23, 2023 Saint Cloud, Minnesota Westwood Elementary School



## **The Vision**

Walking, biking, and rolling to school is safe, comfortable, and fun for all students at Westwood Elementary School.

## 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.

#### ENGAGEMENT

Working with students, families, school staff, and community members and organizations, especially those from priority Equity groups, to create and implement Safe Routes to School initiatives.

#### ENGINEERING

Developing Equity-focused changes to the built environment, designed and prioritized through Community Engagement.

#### **EDUCATION**

Providing students and other community members, especially those from priority Equity groups, 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 Equity groups.

#### EVALUATION

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



## Acknowledgments

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

#### SRTS PLANNING TEAM

Alex McKenzie Saint Cloud Area Planning Organization

**Charlotte Merchlewicz** CentraCare

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#### SRTS PLANNING TEAM

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**Derek Branton** Westwood Elementary School

**Tom Cruikshank** Minnesota Department of Transportation District



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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 Saint Cloud, including students, caregivers, teachers, school administrators, public works staff, elected officials, and county and state employees. To help make the body of this report relevant to all readers—while also documenting all of the participation, analysis, and deliberation that went into development of the plan—some content has been moved to the Appendices.



## SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

A smart investment for our kids and communities

Safe Routes to School has many benefits for Minnesota, but **less than 1 percent of the state's transportation budget** is currently dedicated to it. **Demand across the state is growing:** in 2015, grant applications exceeded available funding by three to one.

## SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL CAN:

## Reduce the risk of PEDESTRIAN INJURY BY

Help build desirable communities by making it **EASIER AND SAFER FOR FAMILIES** and neighbors to walk and bike to school together.

**BRING MORE RESOURCES** to Greater Minnesota communities.

In 2015, **THREE OUT OF FOUR** Safe Routes to School state-funded **INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS** were awarded to communities in Greater Minnesota.



Students who start walking or biking to school benefit from 47 MORE MINUTES OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PER WEEK.



Help reduce vehicle congestion & IMPROVE AIR QUALITY around schools.

Traffic-related air pollution INCREASES a child's risk of developing ASTHMA.

## WHAT A \$6 MILLION STATE INVESTMENT IN SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL COULD MEAN FOR MINNESOTA



Leverage an additional \$2.6 MILLION in federal funds 

## Support implementation

## **IN 96 SCHOOLS,**

reaching 24,400 students in grades K-8



FROM VEHICLE USE over 10 years



For references and more information, visit www.health.mn.gov/saferoutestoschool



Figure 1. Westwood Elementary School students at dismissal.

## **Equity in SRTS**

Particular groups and communities in the U.S. have disproportionate access to resources such as highquality jobs, schools, parks, healthcare, food, and bike and pedestrian infrastructure. Meanwhile, other groups of people have limited access to these resources, negatively impacting their health and wellbeing. These differences are not random—they are the results of government policy in the past and present, which has worked to the benefit of some and to the disadvantage of others, often along race, income, and gender lines. These group-based differences are forms of inequity.

Equity in Safe Routes to School is impacted by transportation system inequities—such as limited access to high-quality walking and biking infrastructure or the presence of highways in lowerincome and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) neighborhoods—as well as inequities in related systems. For example, racial wealth inequities and racial discrimination in housing mean that BIPOC students may live further away from schools than their white peers from higher-income families.

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

#### SCHOOL CONTEXT:

## Westwood Elementary School

#### **PRINCIPAL:**

Derek Branton

#### **ENROLLMENT:**

387

**GRADES SERVED:** 

PK-5

#### SOCIO-ECONOMIC:

63.3% of students eligible for free or reduced lunch.2.8% of students are experiencing homelessness.

#### **DEMOGRAPHICS\***

American Indian/Alaska Native, 0.3% Asian, 6.5% Black/African American, 24.8% Hispanic or Latino, 10.6% Two or More Races, 12.7% White, Non-Hispanic, 45.2%

## TOP 5 LANGUAGES SPOKEN BY STUDENTS IN DISTRICT\*

English	5,80 <sup>-</sup>
Somali	2,584
Spanish	419
Vietnamese	72
Anuak	62

Total Languages Spoken: 57

Percent English Learners: 19.4%

\*Source: Minnesota Department of Education



Figure 2. School bus on Rilla Road.



*Figure 3. Houses in a new development on River's Edge Drive.* 



Figure 4. Shared use path along Veterans Drive.



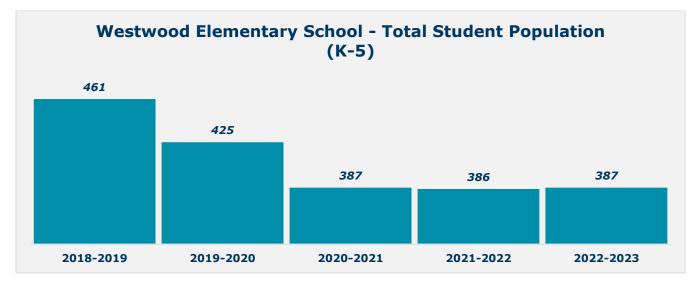
## **Student Demographics - Attendance Boundary**



Figure 5. Westwood Elementary School exterior back entrance.

#### ATTENDANCE BOUNDARY

Westwood Elementary School is located at 5800 Ridgewood Road in Saint Cloud, Minnesota. The school's enrolled population of 387 students is spread across kindergarten through fifth grade. The school offers pre-kindergarten, but the Minnesota Department of Education's enrollment data for this grade level was unavailable. Figure 7 shows that the school attendance boundary follows Division Street (Stearns County Road 75) in Waite Park to the west into Saint Joseph. Once in Saint Joseph, the boundary follows Stearns County Road 133 to the north, roughly to Stearns County Road 4. The boundary then zig-zags to the east and includes residential neighborhoods in southern Sartell until it meets up to MN 15. From MN 15, the boundary proceeds north to the Mississippi River and loops back around to the south, following the Sauk River. The boundary then follows MN 15 again to the south into Waite Park, where it heads west along Third Street N.



*Figure 6. Total student population (K-5). courtesy of the Minnesota Department of Education.* 

\*Data



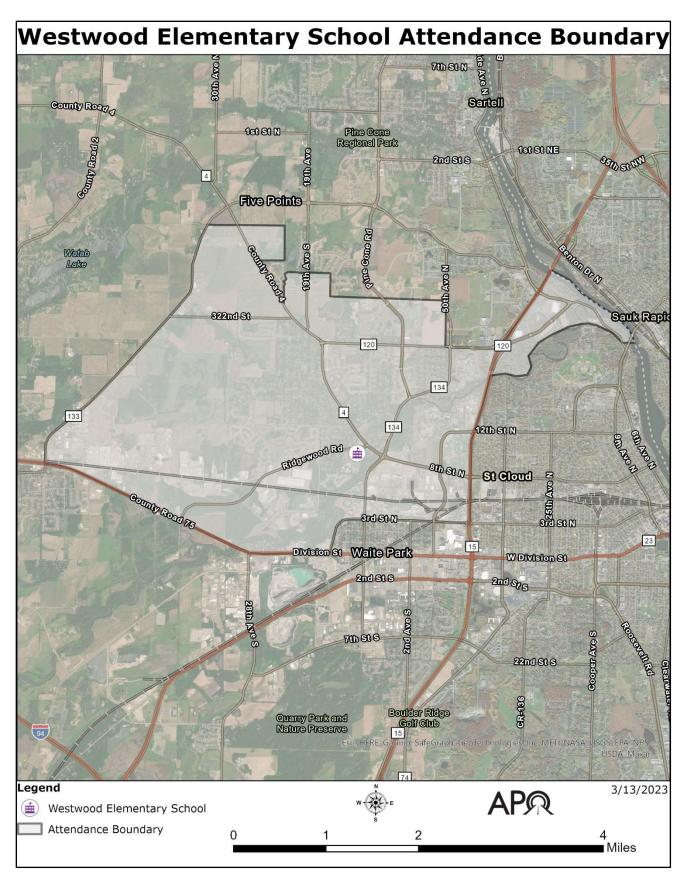


Figure 7. Westwood Elementary School attendance boundary.



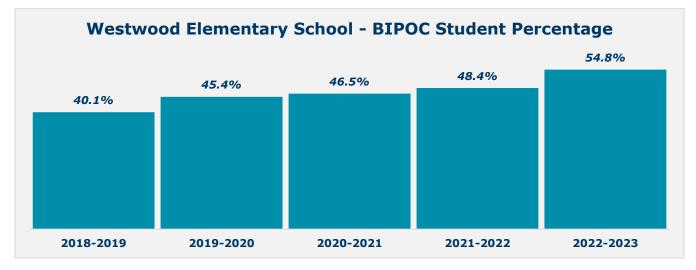
## **Student Demographics – BIPOC Population**



Figure 8. Westwood Elementary School students boarding school buses.

## **BIPOC POPULATION**

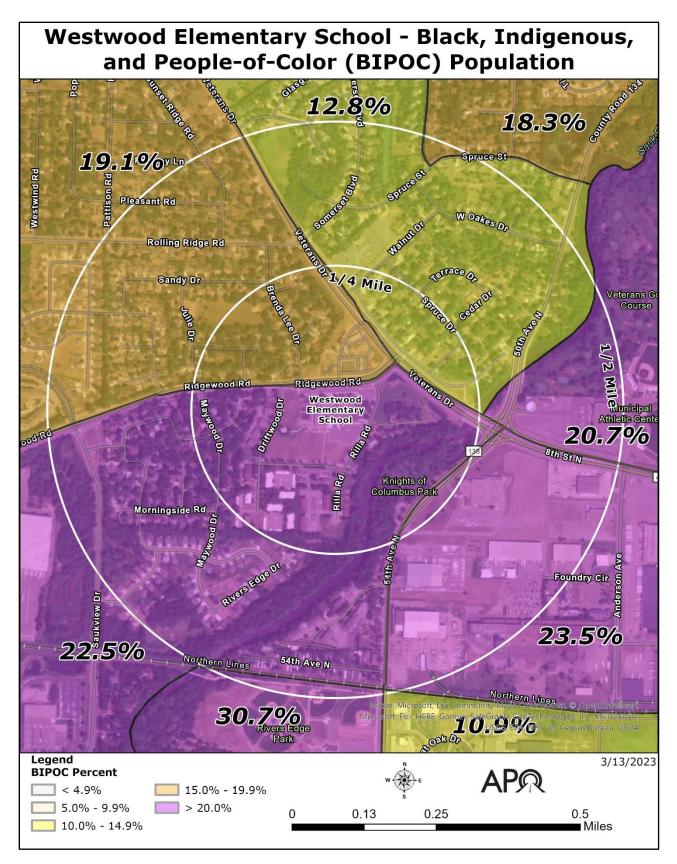
The student population at Westwood Elementary School encompasses children and families from a range of demographic groups, with 54.8% identifying as BIPOC in the 2022-2023 school year. Since the 2018-2019 school year, the student BIPOC population has gradually increased by 14.7 percentage points. Compared to the City of Saint Cloud's BIPOC percentage population of 32.2%, the Westwood student population is 22.6 percentage points above, according to the 2020 U.S. Decennial Census. As shown in Figure 10, the BIPOC population around the school ranges from 10.9% to 30.7%. At least one in five residents identifies as a member of the BIPOC community in the majority of the census block groups.



*Figure 9. Student BIPOC population by school year. courtesy of the Minnesota Department of Education.* 

\*Data





*Figure 10. Westwood Elementary School - BIPOC Populations.* \* *Data courtesy of the 2020 U.S. Decennial Census.* 



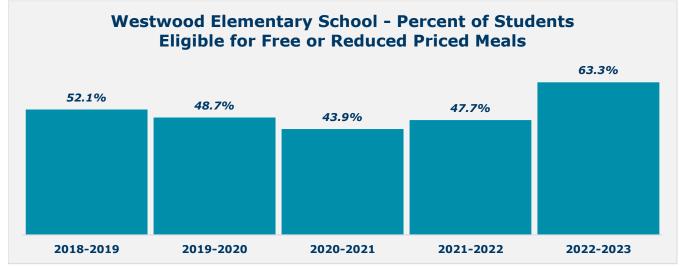
## **Student Demographics – Low-Income Households**



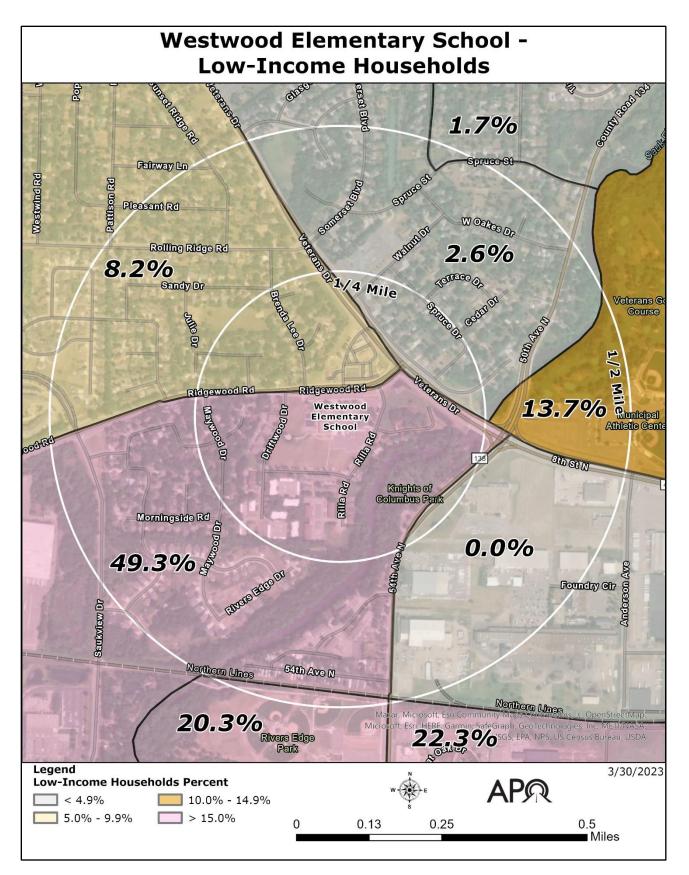
Figure 11. Example of apartments near Westwood Elementary School

## LOW-INCOME POPULATION

The surrounding neighborhoods around Westwood Elementary School contain a range of household income levels, as shown in Figure 13. According to the 2020 Decennial Census, the percentage of lowincome households ranges from zero to 49.3%. The highest levels of low-income households are in block groups south of Ridgewood Road and west of Stearns County Road 138. The remaining block groups fall under the City of Saint Cloud's average number of low-income households of 19.7%. The percentage of students eligible for free or reducedpriced meals has increased, as shown in Figure 12. From the 2021-2022 to 2022-2023 school year, the percentage of eligible students has increased by 15.6 percentage points.



*Figure 12. Percent of students eligible for free or reduced priced meals by school year. \*Data courtesy of the Minnesota Department of Education.* 



*Figure 13. Westwood Elementary School - Low-Income Households.* \*Data courtesy of the 2020 U.S. Decennial Census.



## **Community in Context – Land Use**



Figure 14. Example of apartments near Westwood Elementary School.

#### SURROUNDING LAND USE

The land use around Westwood Elementary School is primarily single-family residential, as shown in Figure 16. Immediately around the school site are several apartments. To the north across Ridgewood Road are a variety of neighborhood commercial spaces such as a gas station, bank, and food assets. Industrial businesses are located along Saukview Drive and Stearns County Road 138. The area has a couple of parks, such as Ridgewood Park and Black Walnut Park, to the north. Across the Sauk River are Knights of Columbus Park, and Rivers Edge Park, further south. Westwood Park splash pad is connected to the school site. Other recreational facilities along Veterans Drive include the Municipal Athletic Complex, Veterans Golf Course, and Joe Faber Field.

In the fall of 2022, the school was granted 3.5 acres of land adjacent to the Sauk River. The future use of this land is still undetermined.



Figure 15. Example of neighborhood commercial spaces across from Westwood Elementary School.



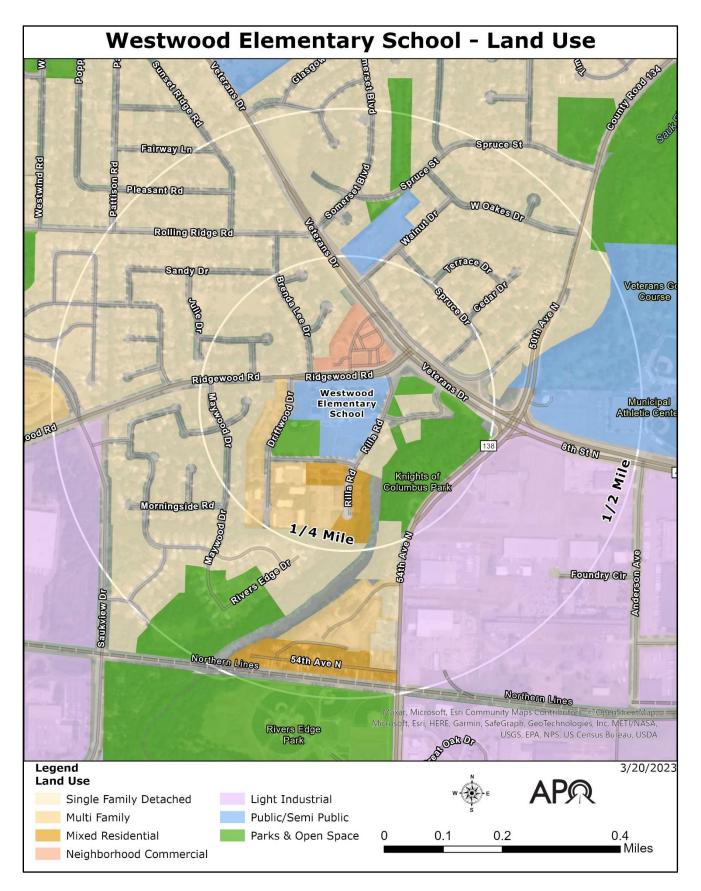


Figure 16. Westwood Elementary School Surrounding Land Use.



## **Community in Context – Public Transit**



Figure 17. Example of Metro Bus shelter at Flintwood Road stop.

## **METRO BUS**

Metro Bus operates fixed routes 1, 2, and 10 in the half-mile buffer around Westwood Elementary School. In this buffer, there are 14 bus stops, of which two have shelters. Routes 1 and 2 follow similar paths, starting at the downtown Transit Center in Saint Cloud and following roughly an eastto-west route. There is a deviation in route 1 when servicing the spur to Westwood Elementary School. The shorter Route 10 services the industrial park's east and west of the school along with neighborhoods along Ridgewood Road and into the Westwood neighborhoods.



Figure 18. Example of a Metro Bus.

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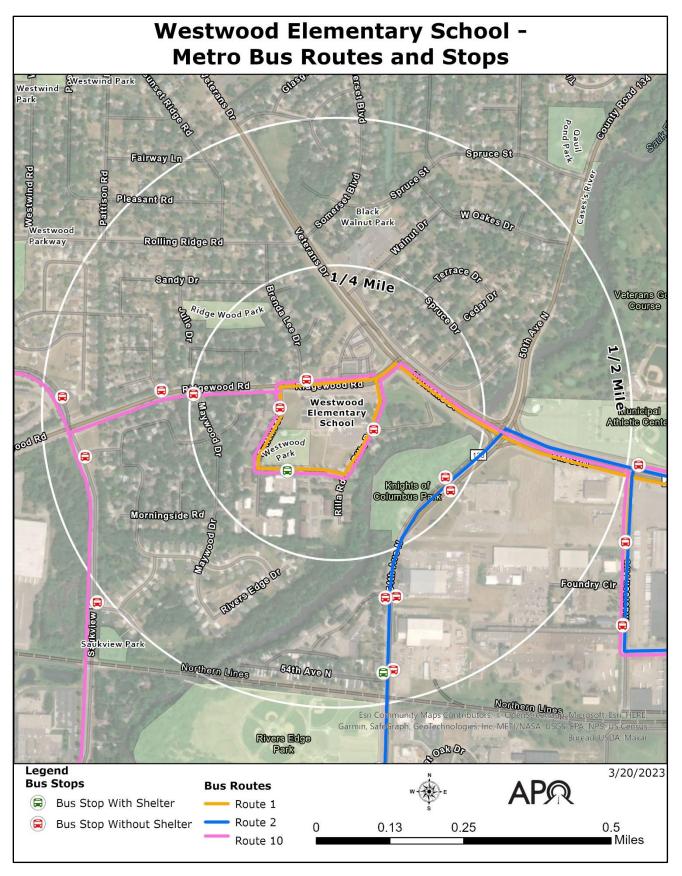


Figure 19. Metro Bus Routes and stops near Westwood Elementary School.



## **Community in Context – Crashes**



Figure 20. Person walking on Ridgewood Road shared use path.

## CRASHES

Crash history is reviewed to determine locations where crashes appear to be more likely to occur and whether there may be an engineering solution or partial solution to help mitigate the crashes.

Over the 10-year period between 2013-2022, there have been three crashes within the half-mile buffer involving an active transportation user. All three crashes involved a bicyclist and a motorized vehicle. Two crashes resulted in a possible injury, and one involved property damage only. None of the people who cycle were elementary-aged, but one crash involved a minor.

Two of the crashes occurred at an intersection. The first occurred at Veterans Drive and Ridgewood

Road, and the other at Veterans Drive and Stearns County Road 134/138. The third crash occurred on Fairfield Court. No factors, such as the person's physical condition, weather, or light conditions, seem to play a factor.

Narratives were reviewed in order to see if a common theme was occurring. Based on the three instances, two involved disagreements between the driver and cyclist. The parties contested over who had the right-of-way. The other crash involved the driver not seeing the cyclist on the roadway. Overall, no infrastructure deficiencies appeared to be a factor in the crashes.



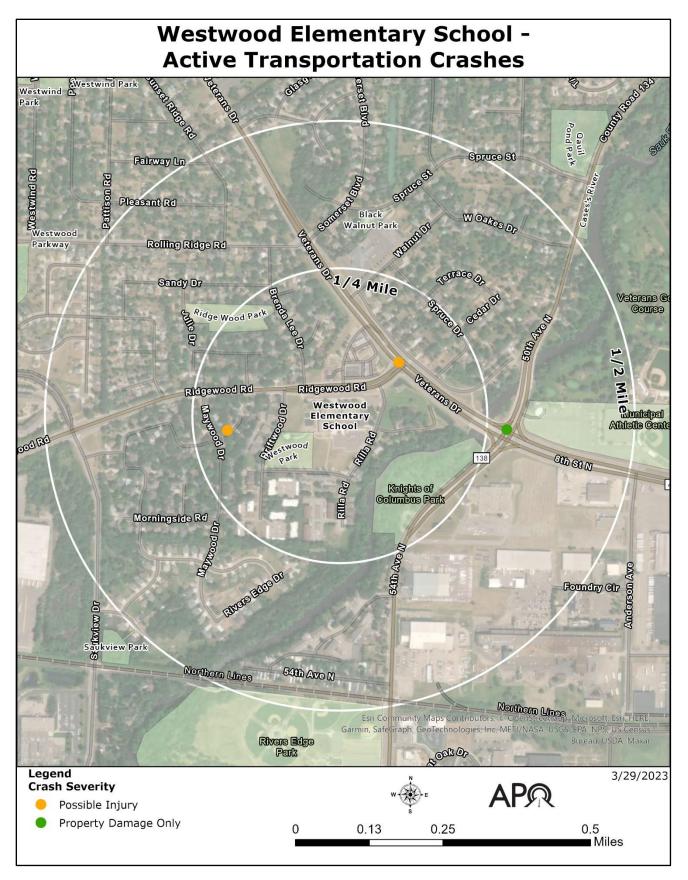


Figure 21. Active Transportation Crashes.



## **Community in Context – Student Zones**



Figure 22. School bus in front of Westwood Elementary School during morning arrival.

#### **MORNING ARRIVAL - BUSES DROP-OFF**

Westwood Elementary School buses enter the bus chute shortly before the 7:30 a.m. start time at the front west entrance (Brenda Lee Drive) off Ridgewood Road and exit at Rilla Road, as shown in Figure 24.

During the Saint Cloud Area Planning Organizations (APO's) observations, we observed approximately 10 buses dropping off students and one staff member welcoming students in front of the school. The employee had no safety vest or other identifying clothing that would have identified them as a staff member.

Occasionally, school buses congest the left turning lane on Ridgewood Road as they wait to turn into the school entrance. This would cause the westbound left lane of Ridgewood Road to be blocked, reducing capacity on the roadway to one lane. Due to the heavy traffic in the morning, buses attempting to cross Brenda Lee Drive into the school entrance had a difficult time. During the observation period by APO staff, there often was not enough of a gap in traffic to cross the intersection safely, so buses were forced to pull out in front of traffic.

For students who walk and bike to school, the crosswalk at Ridgewood Road and Brenda Lee Drive is hard to cross safely. There are visibility issues due to the buses blocking the left lane, many turning movements, and heavy traffic.

When vehicles travel westbound on Ridgewood Road, there is no left turn lane directly onto Rilla Road. Non-school vehicles are turning into the bus chute and using it to access Rilla Road. This is a safety hazard to have vehicles using a school driveway as a roadway, especially considering that APO staff observed some of these vehicles traveling at relatively high speeds.

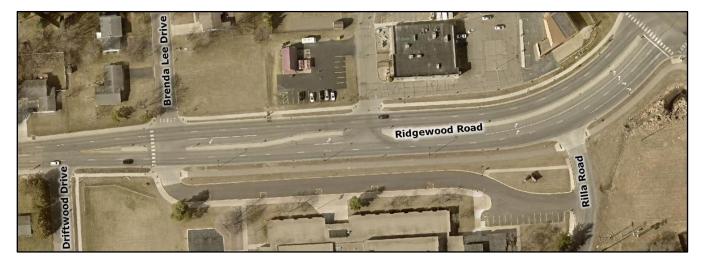


Figure 23. Aerial of Ridgewood Road.

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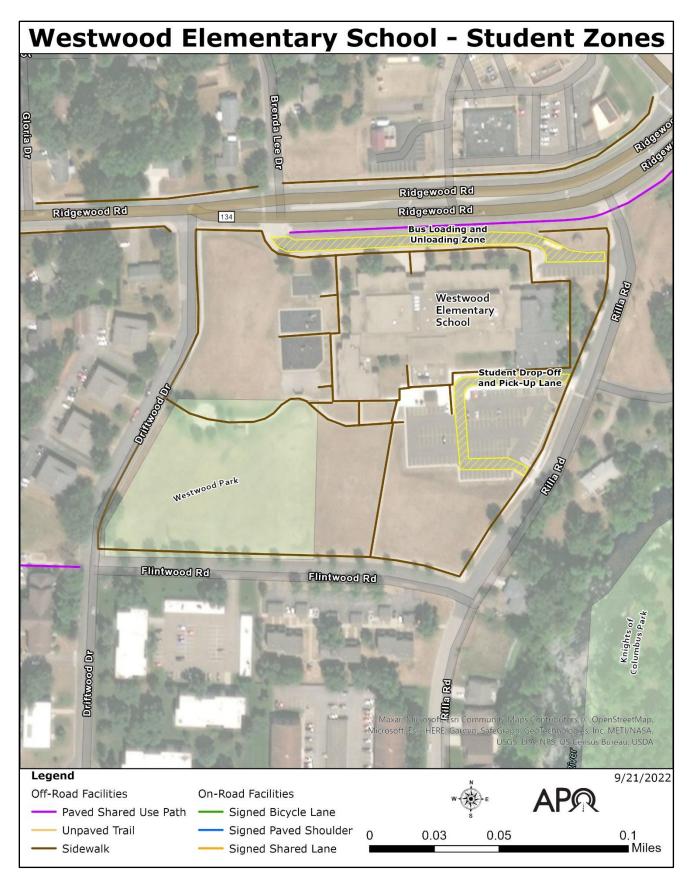


Figure 24. Westwood Elementary School - Student Zones.



## **Community in Context – Student Zones**



Figure 25. Example of vehicle backing up onto Rilla Road during student drop-off.

## **MORNING ARRIVAL - STUDENT DROP-OFF**

Student drop-off is at the rear entrance of the school off Rilla Road. The APO observed vehicles starting to queue for drop-off around 7 a.m. and vehicles backing up onto Rilla Road in both directions before students were let into the building.

Around 7:15 a.m., the doors to the school were opened, and staff started to initiate the drop-off process. Staff members assist in directing vehicles in and out of the school parking lot. None of the staff have safety vests or flags. When exiting the parking lot, vehicles are directed to travel south on Rilla Road and use Driftwood Drive to exit onto Ridgewood Road. This is to prevent traffic from getting in the way of vehicles entering the drop-off zone or buses leaving the bus chute. The APO observed traffic backing up onto Flintwood Road nearly to Driftwood Drive, with almost 100 vehicles dropping-off students. The congestion makes it difficult for locals to access or exit their homes since no alternative routes exist.

There is one driving lane when students are dropped off at the school's back entrance; however, parents who have dropped their kids off further down in the queue can bypass other parents to exit the parking lot. Once a student leaves, the vehicle's staff members walk them to the main door. Staff sometimes have difficulty moving vehicles past the main entrance to take advantage of the entire dropoff lane.



Figure 26. Vehicles entering the student drop-off lane.

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## **Community in Context – Student Zones**



Figure 27. Student bus picking up Westwood Elementary School students. AFTERNOON DISMISSAL – STUDENT PICK-UP

Buses line up single file in front of the school for student pick-up starting at 2:00 p.m. Staff members lead students out of the school from various doors and direct each student onto their assigned bus. The process was observed as being fast and efficient.

At the rear of the school, vehicles were queuing up by 1:30 p.m., waiting for dismissal. Parents are assigned a number corresponding to their student while waiting to be picked up. Staff are informed of the number and radio to their team members inside to instruct students to head to the pick-up area. The staff calls out the student numbers from the beginning of the pick-up lane down to the street.

Similar to drop-off, the bypass lane is used

walking between cars to get to the parking lot. One staff member was almost hit by a parent vehicle attempting to exit the pick-up lane. Several parents were observed having to get out of their vehicles to assist in properly securing their students into the car. One student needed to enter the vehicle on the driver's side – again putting them at risk of oncoming traffic from the bypass lane.

Staff had difficulty communicating with drivers to advance to the end of the pick-up lane. Many drivers remained parked at the main door and waited for their students. Overall, parent pick-up was done in approximately 15-20 minutes after school was dismissed at 1:50 p.m.



Figure 28. Students at afternoon pick-up.

## Infrastructure – Roadways



Figure 29. The shared use path along Veterans Drive.

#### AVERAGE ANNUAL DAILY TRAFFIC AND ROADWAY FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

Active transportation facilities should be designed with functional classification, average annual daily traffic (AADT), speed limits, number of lanes, and land use context in mind. These characteristics help determine which active transportation facilities are warranted and how they should be designed.

The functional classification system of roadways is the process of grouping streets into classes based on their characteristics and how they intend to function. For example, Veterans Drive is an arterial designed to quickly move vehicles from one place to another, while Ridgewood Road is a collector route linking arterials and local roadways.

AADT measures the total number of vehicles using a roadway daily and can indicate a need for active transportation facilities along roads. High AADTs can create barriers for students crossing busy streets or create unsafe on-road bicycling conditions.

Based on MnDOT's most recent count data from 2013-2021, found in Figure 30, Veterans Drive has

the highest AADT ranging from 9,800 to 22,600, with the lowest counts north of Somerset Boulevard and the highest near the Municipal Athletic Complex. Stearns County Road 134/138 has the next highest AADT ranging from 13,600 to 18,900. Ridgewood Road, directly found in front of the school, averages 12,800 vehicles per day, while Rolling Ridge Road and Westwood Parkway experience significantly fewer vehicles per day at 2,400 and 2,500, respectively.

Speed limits are set with the goal of keeping everyone safe. Faster-moving vehicles reduce the comfort and safety of the active transportation user. The highest speed limit in the half-mile buffer is 45 mph on Ridgewood Road west of Cory Lane. Veterans Drive has the next highest speed limit of 40 mph, followed by Stearns County Road 134/138 at 35 mph. All other roadways have a posted speed limit of 30 mph.



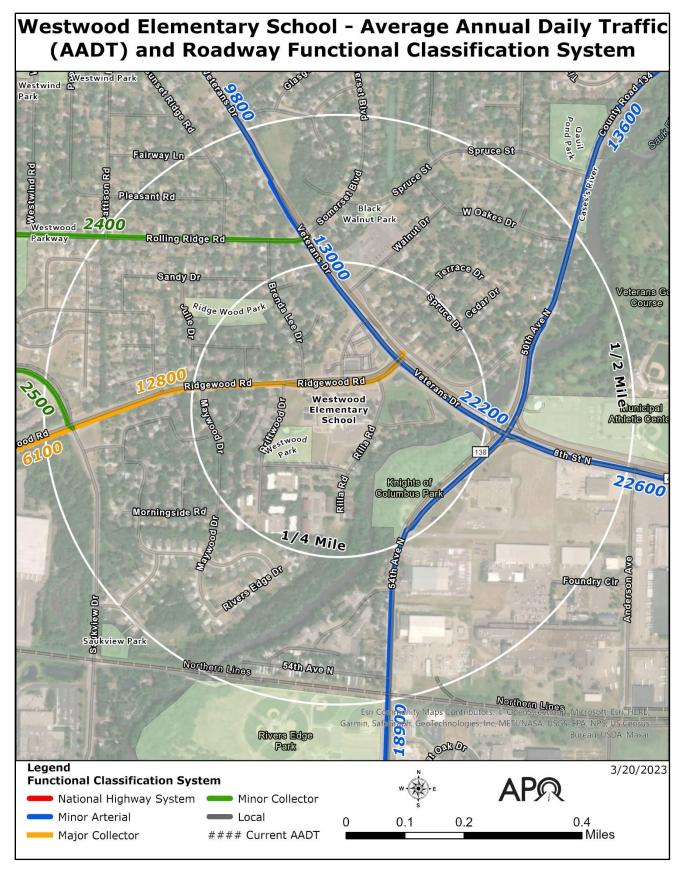


Figure 30. AADT and Functional Classification around Westwood Elementary School.



## **Infrastructure – Active Transportation Facilities**



Figure 31. Sidewalk along Cory Lane.

#### **ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES**

Active transportation users (pedestrians and bicyclists) can utilize multiple facilities near the school, as shown in Figure 32. These facilities include shared use paths, sidewalks, and signed paved shoulders for bicyclists. Shared use paths are separated facilities typically along a roadway that can accommodate both pedestrian and bicyclist twoway travel. A signed paved shoulder must have designated signage indicating it is a bike route.

Immediately around the school are sidewalks connecting to Ridgewood Road's active transportation network. These sidewalks are on both sides of Ridgewood Road, except for a shared use path directly in front of the school. The facilities on the western end of Ridgewood Road connect to a network of sidewalks in the northern neighborhoods near Ridge Wood Park.

There is a shared use path that serves as a connection between Driftwood Drive and Maywood Drive. The shared use path doesn't connect to any active transportation facilities on Maywood Drive. Though there is a gap in the sidewalk network, further south, sidewalks are along the newer Sauk River Estates residential development. New homes are currently being constructed along Rivers Edge Drive that, includes sidewalks.

To the north, a signed paved shoulder for bicyclists on Rolling Ridge Road connects to a shared use path along Veterans Drive. The shared use path links to sidewalks on Somerset Boulevard. There is a gap in the Veterans shared use path as one side stops at Walnut Drive and the other stops near the Holiday convenience store.

The Veterans Drive shared use path continues east of Ridgewood Road, connecting to Stearns County Road 138 sidewalks. These sidewalks connect to important destinations to the south, such as the Knights of Columbus Park, Rivers Edge Park, and various apartments and prefabricated homes along the Sauk River.

The shared use path and sidewalk along Stearns County Road 134 ends just north of the Sauk River. The Veterans Drive active transportation facilities end at Anderson Avenue and connect to the Municipal Athletic Complex.



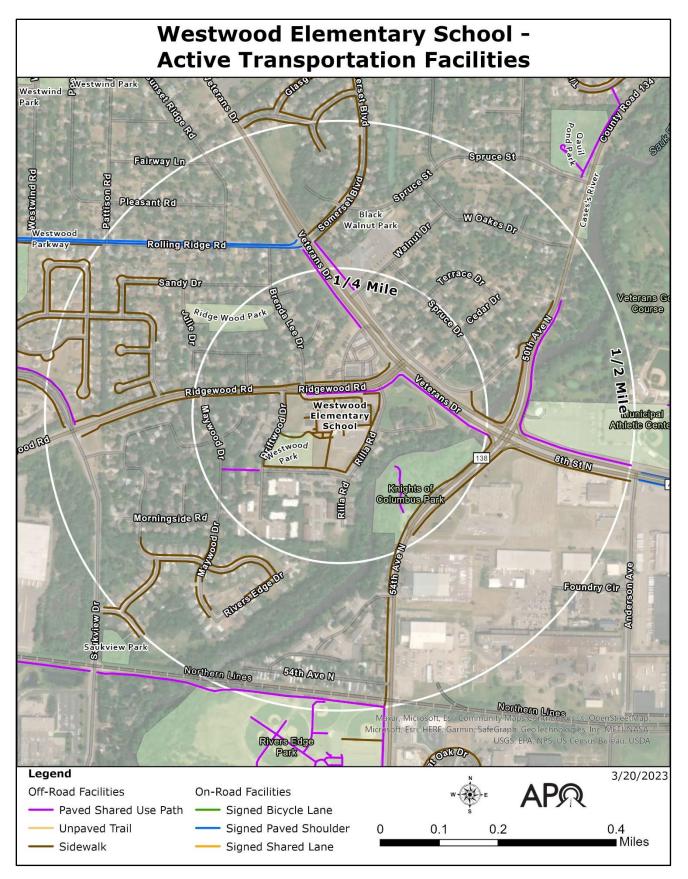


Figure 32. Active Transportation Facilities around Westwood Elementary School.



## **Infrastructure – Shared Use Path Pavement Condition**



Figure 33. Example of pavement in need of repair between Maywood Drive and Driftwood Drive.

#### SHARED USE PATH PAVEMENT CONDITION

Shared use paths, sidewalks, and on-road bike facilities require regularly scheduled maintenance to remain usable. Potential maintenance includes but is not limited to; repainting, seal coating, crack sealing, resurfacing, reconstruction, and vegetation removal.

The APO hired the Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota to complete a pavement condition assessment of paved shared use paths in 2020. As shown in Figure 34, the majority of shared use paths within a half mile around the school have pavement conditions in the very smooth to smooth category. The exceptions are that the path between Maywood Drive and Driftwood Drive is in fair condition, and the path in Knights of Columbus Park was rated in rough condition.





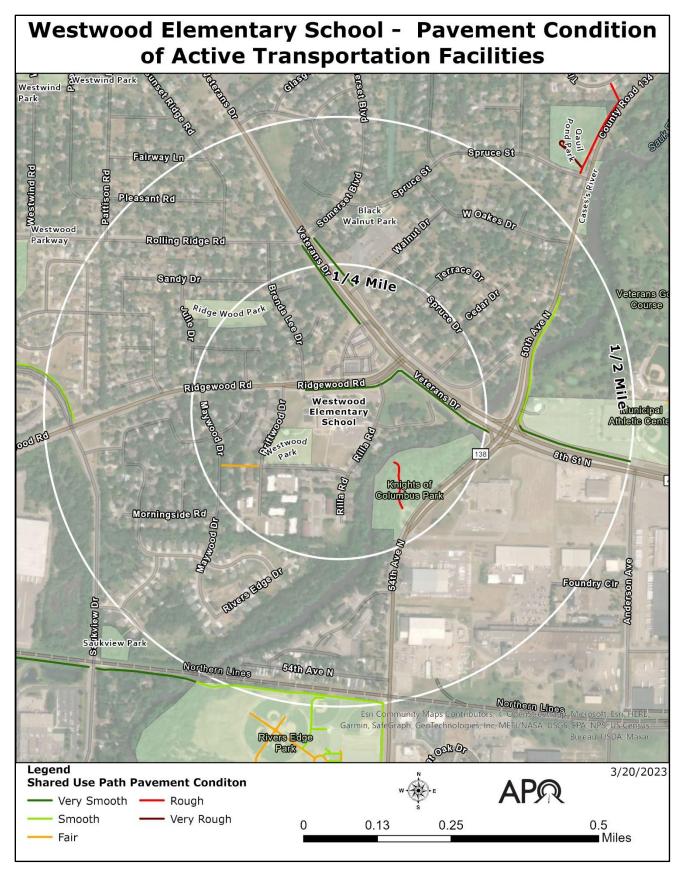


Figure 34. Shared Use Path Pavement Condition around Westwood Elementary School.



## **Infrastructure - Crosswalk Pavement Markings**



Figure 35. Example of marked crosswalk on Ridgewood Road.

#### CROSSWALKS

A marked crosswalk can benefit pedestrians by directing them to cross at locations where appropriate traffic control exists, including traffic signals or stop signs. Crosswalks do not slow traffic or reduce pedestrian crashes but can alter drivers' behaviors. There are 11 crosswalks within the half-mile buffer around Westwood Elementary School, as shown in Figure 37. These locations exist primarily on highvolume roads such as Veterans Drive and Ridgewood Road. Crosswalks across Veterans Drive at Rolling Ridge Road, and at Brenda Lee Drive are faded.



Figure 36. Example of a marked crosswalk on Veterans Drive.

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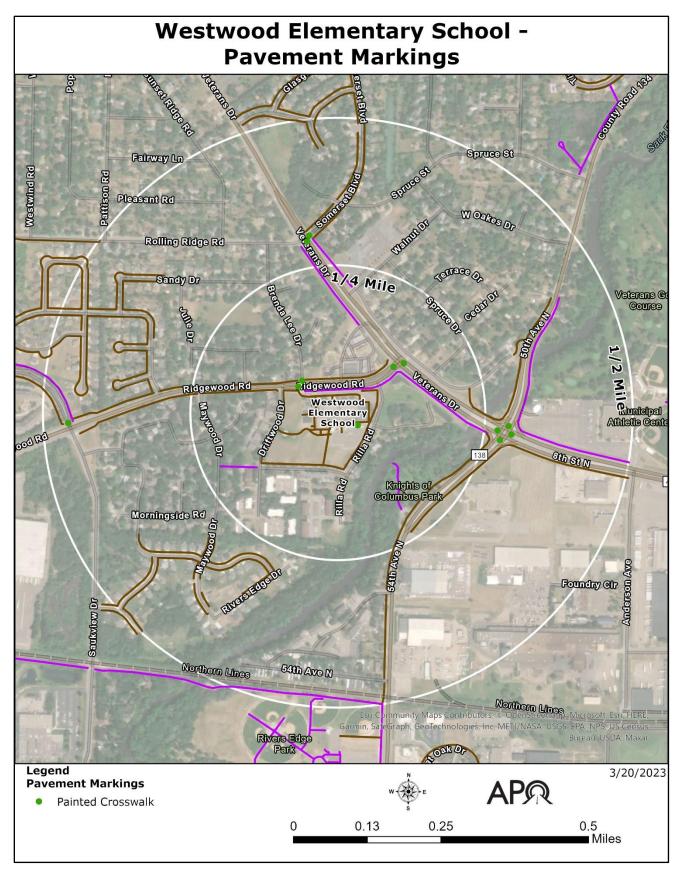


Figure 37. Painted Crosswalk Locations around Westwood Elementary School.



## **Infrastructure - Detectable Warning Surfaces**



*Figure 38. Example of a detectable warning surface on a curb ramp.* 

#### DETECTABLE WARNING SURFACES

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became law in 1990. This law protects disabled persons against discrimination and allows them to experience the same opportunities of mainstream life that all Americans enjoy. In this act are specific infrastructure designs to help those with a disability use the transportation system safely.

One infrastructure design is a detectable warning surface with truncated domes designed to be felt through shoes or with a walking cane to alter those with visual impairment of any potential upcoming dangers, such as a curb drop or entry into a traffic roadway. Within the half-mile buffer around the school, there are 58 curb ramps with a detectable warning surface present and 45 curb ramps with none present. Another infrastructure design used for ADA compliance is audible pedestrian push buttons. These buttons provide visually impaired users audible information about the WALK and DONT WALK signals at signalized intersections. The two signalized intersections; (Ridgewood Road and Veterans Drive) and (Veterans Drive and Stearns County Road 134/138) both include these audible push buttons.

Traditionally as roadways and active transportation facilities are reconstructed or have major construction work done, curb ramps and audible push buttons are brought up to ADA compliance.

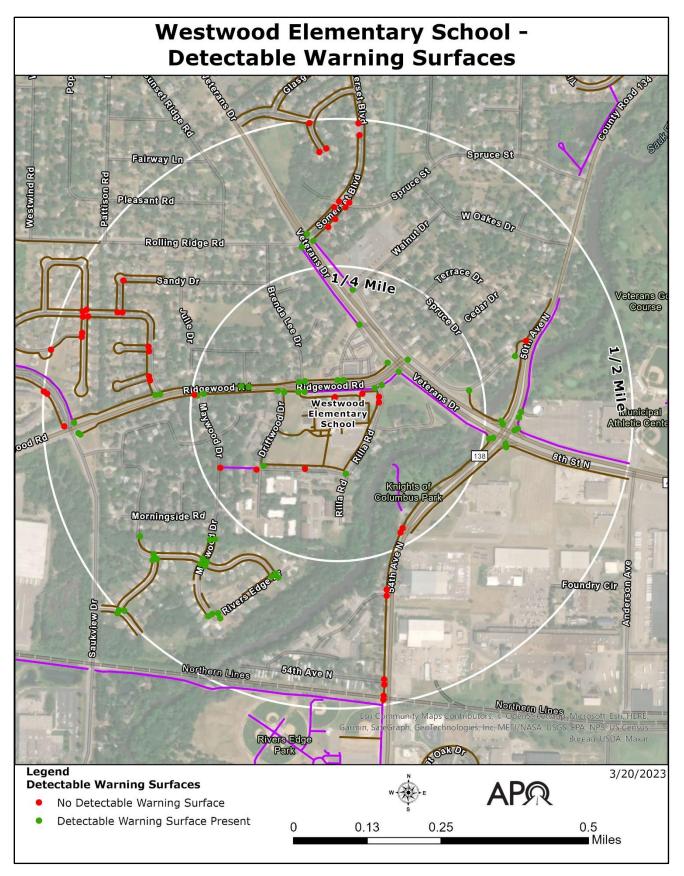


Figure 39. Detectable Warning Surfaces Around Westwood Elementary School.



## Infrastructure – Regulatory Signs



Figure 40. Example of a speed feedback sign along Ridgewood Road.

## **REGULATORY SIGNS**

Regulatory signs provide information about road rules and traffic laws. This includes parking restrictions on school days between 7 a.m. and 4 p.m., such as those along Rilla Road near the school. There is other no parking during school hour signs in the bus chute. At the rear of the school, no parking signs are posted in the by-pass lane for parents.

On Ridgewood Road, there are two-speed feedback signs (SFS). An SFS gives drivers feedback about their speed in relation to the posted speed limit. One is located for westbound travel before Brenda Lee Drive, and the other sign is for eastbound travel before Driftwood Drive. Both housing units for the sign electronics are rusted and damaged.

The other type of sign is located towards the southern section of Stearns County Road 138 for the railroad crossing. Burlington Northern Santa Fe operates the northern lines railway. Signs that warn of a rail crossing are posted for northbound and southbound traffic. In 2020 the crossing had safety upgrades to include crossing gates.

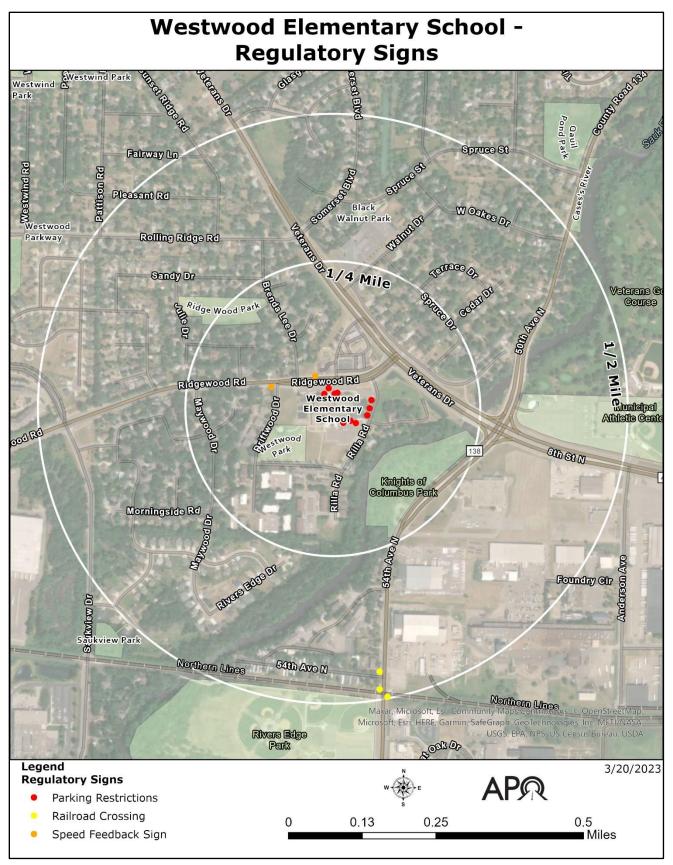


Figure 41. Regulatory Signs.



### Infrastructure – School Zone Signs



Figure 42. Example of a school advance warning sign along Ridgewood Road.

#### SCHOOL ZONE SIGNS

School advance warning signs are generally used in advance of the first school crosswalk sign encountered by each direction of traffic. School crosswalk signs should not be used at crossings other than those adjacent to schools or on established pedestrian routes.

There are two school advance warning signs on Ridgewood Road. One sign is for eastbound traffic before Gloria Drive, and the other is for westbound traffic after Veterans Drive. The sign's surface for eastbound traffic is starting to crack but is still legible. Another school advanced warning sign is located on the school property on the bus shoot's east end. This sign is severely discolored and cracked but still legible.

There are two crosswalk signs at the Brenda Lee Drive intersection. The eastbound traffic sign is slightly cracked. The other two crosswalk signs are in the student drop-off and pick-up lane on the school property.

There are four signs for 15-minute parking in the pick-up and drop-off-only lane.



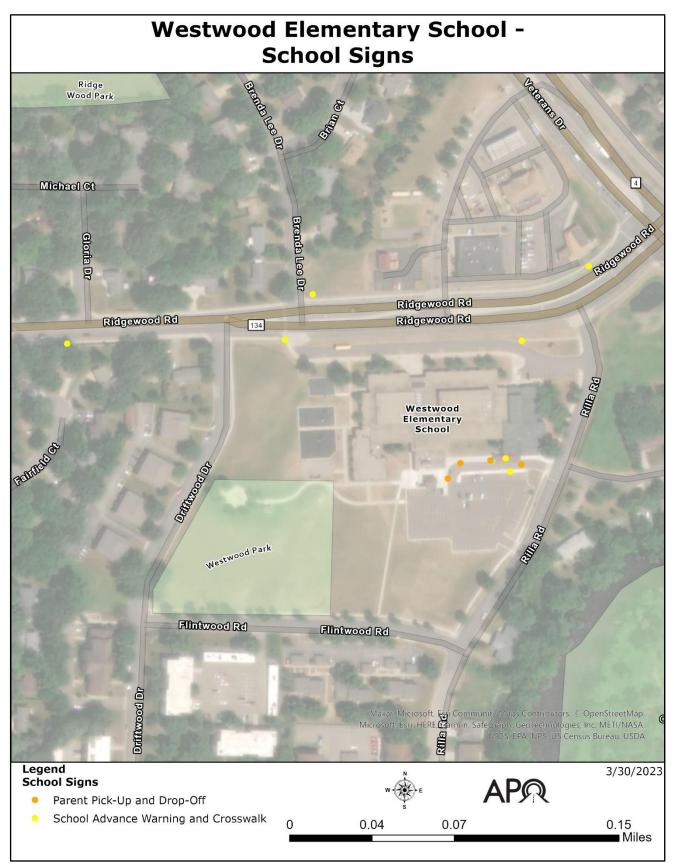


Figure 43. School Zone Signs.



### Infrastructure – Future Projects



Figure 44. Example of poor pavement condition on Glad View Court.

#### **FUTURE PROJECTS**

Generally, City and County governments annually approve a five-year capital improvement plan (CIP) containing programmed projects they expect to implement.

The City of Saint Cloud has one programmed project in the half-mile buffer. Saukview Drive (project 2025-07) from Old Highway 52 to Ridgewood Road is receiving a full-depth mill, and bituminous replacement that will occur in 2025, with no active transportation facilities being added or impacted. Stearns County will upgrade signal heads and pedestrian countdown timers at two intersections within the half-mile buffer: project 2023-52. The intersections include Veterans Drive/Ridgewood Road and Veterans Drive/Stearns County Road 134/138.

Barely touching the half-mile buffer is Waite Park's project number 2024-03. This project is within Rivers Edge Park and includes constructing and expanding parking lots, trails, and trail lighting.



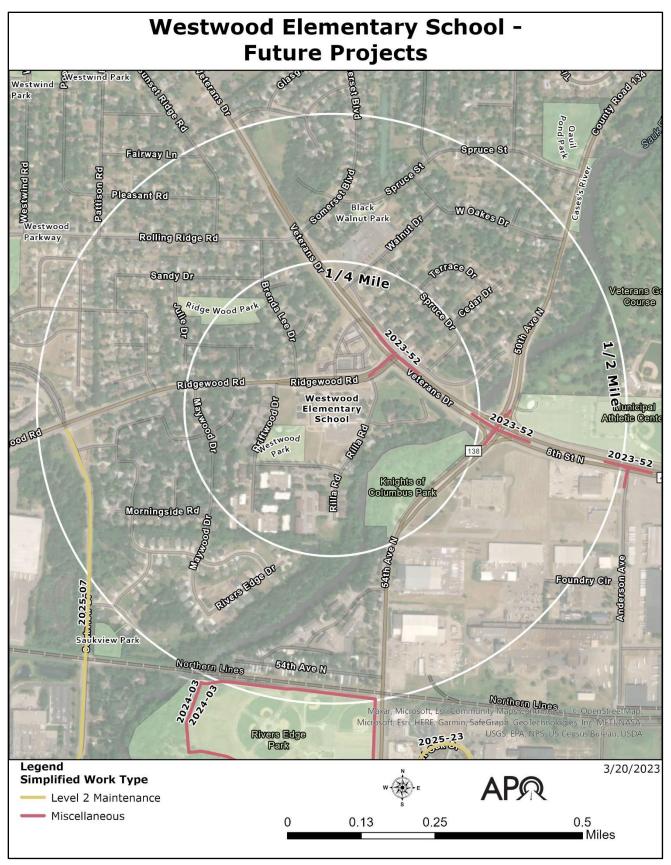


Figure 45. Programmed Future Projects.





Figure 46. Crosswalk at Westwood Parkway intersection.

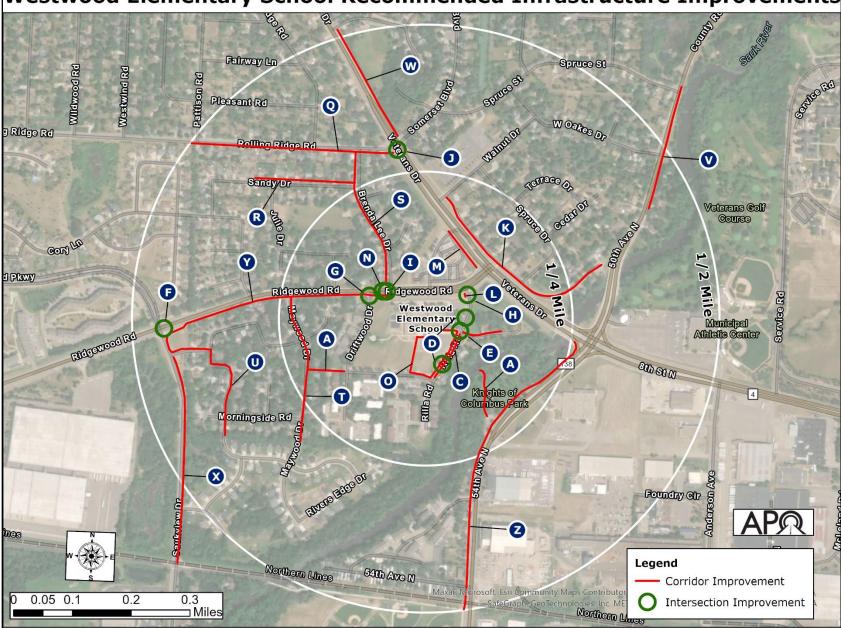
## Recommendations

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

An in-person walking and biking audit helped to inform specific recommendations to address the key identified barriers to walking and bicycling in Saint Cloud. Discussions with the Safe Routes to School Team and conversations with school and district staff, caregivers, students, community members, and city and county staff led to additional recommendations. Recommendations were prioritized based on community and stakeholder input, traffic and roadway conditions, proximity to schools, and proximity to and use by equity-priority populations. This plan does not represent a comprehensive list of every project that could improve conditions for walking and bicycling in the neighborhood. Instead, it calls attention to key conflict points and potential improvements. Recommendations range from simple striping changes and signing to more significant changes to the streets, intersections, and school infrastructure.

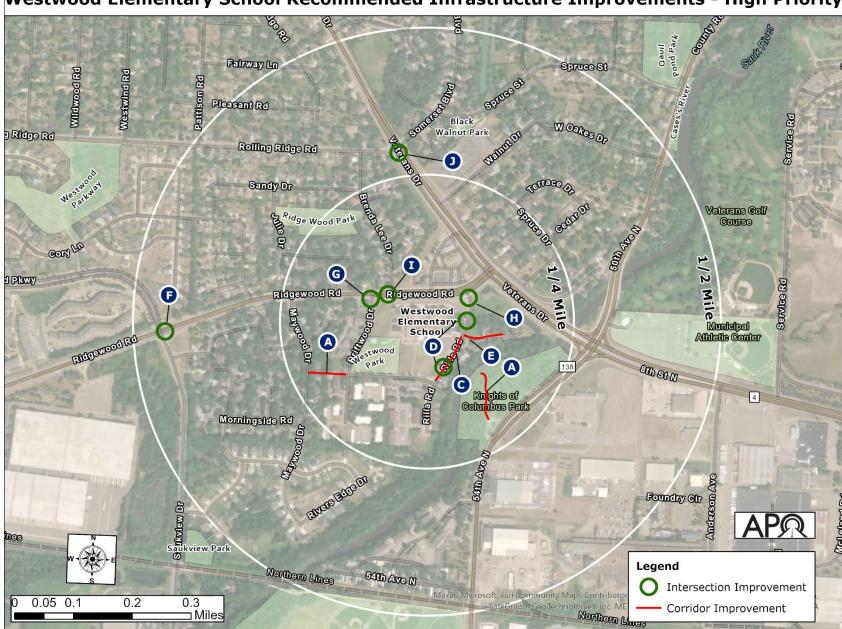
Engineering recommendations are described on the following pages. Recommendations are planninglevel concepts and will require additional study to confirm the feasibility and to finalize project prioritization.





### Westwood Elementary School Recommended Infrastructure Improvements

*Figure 47. Recommended infrastructure improvements.* 



Westwood Elementary School Recommended Infrastructure Improvements - High Priority

Figure 48. High Priority Recommended Infrastructure Improvements.

## A: Repair shared use paths in poor condition.

#### **PRIORITY: High**

#### RECOMMENDATION

Reconstruct or perform preventative maintenance to shared use path pavement in fair to rough conditions. Upgrade to include ADA-compliant curb ramps.

#### WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

Based upon the APO's off-road pavement study in 2020, two sections of shared use path pavement are in fair to rough condition.

#### WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

The City of Saint Cloud.

#### HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improving shared use path pavement conditions makes walking, biking, and rolling easier and safer for people with disabilities. Both shared use paths are in disadvantaged areas.



Figure 49. Pavement in fair condition.

## **B:** Replace signs in poor condition and repaint faded crosswalks.

#### PRIORITY: High (Not Mapped)

#### RECOMMENDATION

Numerous signs are beginning to fade or crack. They should be factored into the city's and county's replacement schedules. Painted crosswalks should be repainted at least once a year or as needed.

#### WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

Based on the APO's walking audit, signs, and crosswalks were observed to be in poor condition.

#### WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

The City of Saint Cloud and Stearns County.

#### HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improving the conditions of signs and crosswalks makes walking, biking, and rolling easier and safer for students and motorists. Signs are located in disadvantaged areas.



Figure 50. Example of an advanced school crossing sign.



#### C: Rilla Road.

#### **PRIORITY: High**

#### RECOMMENDATION

Add striping or signage on Rilla Road to delineate where overflow traffic should be waiting. This will help keep the road open for thru traffic.

#### WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

Based upon the APO's observations of the student drop-off and pick-up process.

#### WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

The City of Saint Cloud and Westwood Elementary School.

#### HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improving safety for users of Rilla Road. Project located within a disadvantaged area.



Figure 51. Example of vehicles backing up on Rilla Road.

#### D: Rilla Road.

**PRIORITY: High** 

#### RECOMMENDATION

Install traffic-calming infrastructure and deploy a portable speed trailer.

#### WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

Based on the APO's observations of the student drop-off and pick-up process, along with talking with staff from Westwood Elementary School, speeding on Rilla Road is a concern. Portable speed trailers visually display drivers' real-time speeds compared to the speed limit. These devices may effectively reduce speeds and increase awareness of local speed limits.

#### WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

The City of Saint Cloud and Westwood Elementary School.

#### HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Traffic calming measures will slow vehicle speeds, making it safer for students to walk, bike, and cross the roadway safely. Project located within a disadvantaged area.



*Figure 52. Example of a portable speed trailer. \*Photo courtesy of All Traffic Solutions.* 



#### E: Elbow Lane.

#### **PRIORITY: High**

#### RECOMMENDATION

Add a crosswalk and appropriate signage at the intersection of Rilla Road and Elbow Lane. Paint a pedestrian walkway for students accessing future Sauk River outdoor education space.

#### WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

No active transportation facilities connect the school and future educational outdoor space.

#### WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

City of Saint Cloud and Westwood Elementary School.

#### HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improved safety for students with disabilities and others needing to access the educational space through walking, biking, and rolling. Project located within a disadvantaged area.



*Figure 53. Example of a pedestrian walkway.* \**Photo courtesy of Port Washington News* 

## F: Intersection of Ridgewood Road and Saukview Drive/Westwood Parkway.

#### **PRIORITY: High**

#### RECOMMENDATION

Install signage, a marked crosswalk, a median refuge island, and ADA-compliant curb ramps at the intersection of Ridgewood Road and Saukview Drive/Westwood Parkway. In the long term, an intersection control evaluation report should be conducted to determine if the intersection warrants a signal.

#### WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

Ridgewood Road is a four-lane major collector roadway with nearly 13,000 vehicles per day, with limited gaps in traffic flow. At unsignalized intersections, median refuges provide a storage area for pedestrians to wait for acceptable gaps in traffic flow before completing the street crossing.

#### WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

Stearns County.

#### HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improved safety for students with disabilities and others needing to cross the roadway by walking, biking, or rolling. Project located within a disadvantaged area.



Figure 54. Aerial of Ridgewood Road intersection.



#### **G: Driftwood Drive.**

#### **PRIORITY: High**

#### RECOMMENDATION

Install a marked crosswalk with signage across Driftwood Drive.

#### WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

Driftwood Drive is used to access Westwood Elementary School for student drop-off and pick-up. Many vehicles use this intersection during the morning and afternoon, making this intersection very busy.

#### WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

The City of Saint Cloud.

#### HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improved safety for students with disabilities and others needing to access the school through walking, biking, and rolling. Project located within a disadvantaged area.



Figure 55. Driftwood Drive intersection.

#### H: Rilla Road intersection.

**PRIORITY: High** 

#### RECOMMENDATION

Install a marked crosswalk with signage across Rilla Road.

#### WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

Rilla Road is used to access Westwood Elementary School for student drop-off and pick-up. Many vehicles and buses are using this intersection during this time.

#### WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

The City of Saint Cloud.

#### HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improved safety for students with disabilities and others needing to access the school through walking, biking, and rolling. Project located within a disadvantaged area.



Figure 56. Crossing at Rilla Road.



#### I: Intersection of Ridgewood Road and Brenda Lee Drive.

#### **PRIORITY: High**

#### RECOMMENDATION

Add a median refuge island, a rectangular rapid flashing beacon (RRFB), and appropriate signage at the intersection of Ridgewood Road and Brenda Lee Drive.

#### WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

Ridgewood Road is a four-lane major collector roadway with almost 13,000 vehicles daily, and crossing can be challenging. Median refuge islands provide a storage area for pedestrians to wait for acceptable gaps in traffic flow before completing the street crossing. RRFBs flash with an alternating high frequency when activated to enhance the visibility of pedestrians at the junction to drivers.

WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN? Stearns County.

#### HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improved safety for students with disabilities and others needing to access the school through walking, biking, and rolling. Project located within a disadvantaged area.

#### J: Veterans Drive and Rolling Ridge Road/Somerset Boulevard intersection.

#### **PRIORITY: High**

#### RECOMMENDATION

Install a median refuge island at Veterans Drive/Stearns County Road 4 and Rolling Ridge Road/Somerset Boulevard intersection.

#### WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

Veterans Drive is a four-lane minor arterial roadway with almost 13,000 vehicles per day. Median refuge islands provide a storage area for pedestrians to wait for acceptable gaps in traffic flow before completing the street crossing.

#### WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

Stearns County.

#### HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improved safety for students with disabilities and others needing to cross the roadway by walking, biking, or rolling.

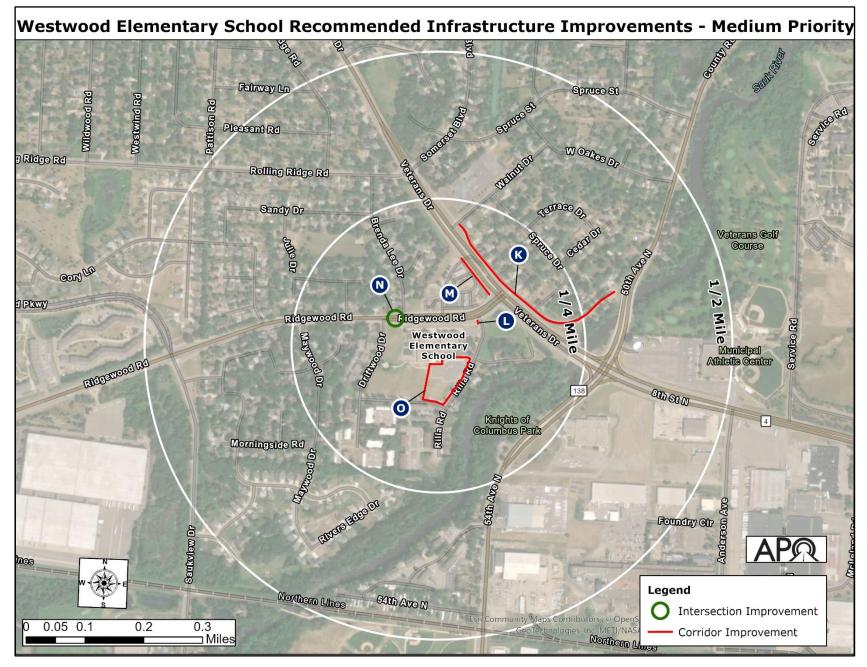


Figure 57. Example of a RRFB.



Figure 58. Crossing at Veterans Drive intersection.





*Figure 59. Medium priority recommended infrastructure improvements.* 



#### **K: Chestnut Court.**

#### **PRIORITY: Medium**

#### RECOMMENDATION

Install shared lane bike markings and signage on Chestnut Court from Walnut Drive to the end of the cul-de-sac.

#### WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

The shared use path along the eastern side of Veterans Drive ends at Walnut Drive. This recommendation will connect the shared use path used by people who cycle to Ridgewood Road and Stearns County Road 134/138.

#### WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

City of Saint Cloud and Stearns County.

#### HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improved safety for students with disabilities and others needing to access the school through walking, biking, and rolling.



Figure 60. Example of a shared lane bike marking.

#### L: Rilla Road.

PRIORITY: Medium

#### RECOMMENDATION

Fill the sidewalk gap between Rilla Road and Ridgewood Road.

#### WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

There is a small sidewalk gap.

#### WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

The City of Saint Cloud and Westwood Elementary School.

#### HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improved safety for students with disabilities and others needing to access the school through walking, biking, and rolling. Project located within a disadvantaged area.



Figure 61. Aerial of Rilla Road sidewalk gap.



#### **M: Veteran Drive.**

#### **PRIORITY: Medium**

#### RECOMMENDATION

Construct a shared use path on the west side of Veterans Drive.

#### WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

There is a gap in the active transportation network from the Holiday Station Convenience Store driveway to the Ridgewood Road sidewalk.

#### WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

The City of Saint Cloud and Stearns County.

#### HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improved safety for students with disabilities and others needing to access the school through walking, biking, and rolling.

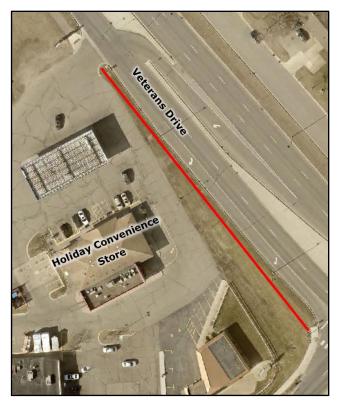


Figure 62. Aerial of Veterans Drive.

## N: Driftwood Drive, Brenda Lee Drive, and western school entrance.

#### **PRIORITY: Medium**

#### RECOMMENDATION

Conduct a study of how to improve operations of the intersections of Driftwood Drive, Brenda Lee Drive, and the western school entrance.

#### WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

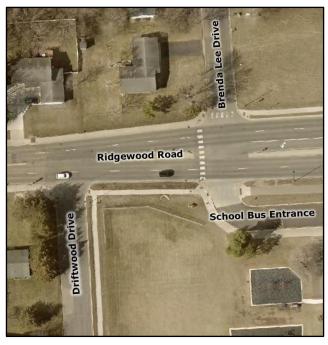
There are safety concerns during student drop-off and pick-up because of the number of vehicles and school buses making turning movements in and out of the three intersections.

#### WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

The City of Saint Cloud, Stearns County, and Westwood Elementary School.

#### HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improved safety for students and vehicles needing to access the school through driving or other active transportation modes. Project located within a disadvantaged area.



*Figure 63. Aerial image of Driftwood Drive, Brenda Lee Drive, and western school entrance.* 



#### **O: Student Drop-Off and Pick-Up Lane.**

#### **PRIORITY: Medium**

#### RECOMMENDATION

Conduct study to reconfigure and extend student drop-off and pick-up lanes and create an entrance at Flintwood Road. This study could be included in project N study.

#### WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

Nearly 100 vehicles are dropping off and picking up students. This causes the vehicles to overflow onto Rilla Road and Flintwood Road. Adding an extended lane and reversing the direction of traffic flow to clockwise could help with fewer vehicles backing up on nearby roadways and help facilitate a faster process and allow more students to exit/enter vehicles.

#### WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

Westwood Elementary School.

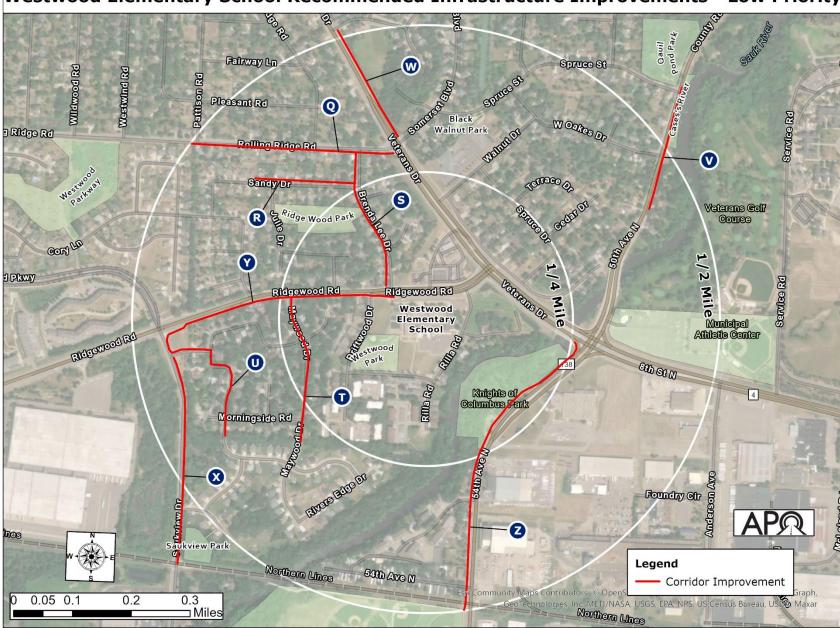
#### HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improved traffic flow and increased efficiency of the drop-off and pick-up process. Project located within a disadvantaged area.



Figure 64. Aerial of student drop-off and pick-up lane.





Westwood Elementary School Recommended Infrastructure Improvements - Low Priority

*Figure 65. Low priority recommended infrastructure improvements.* 

## P: Detectable warning surfaces in various locations.

#### **PRIORITY: LOW**

#### RECOMMENDATION

Install detectable warning surfaces where there aren't currently any. Conduct an ADA Transition Plan in the half-mile buffer around the school.

#### WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

Updated active transportation facilities should include detectable warning surfaces.

#### WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

The City of Saint Cloud and Stearns County.

#### HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improved safety for students with disabilities and others needing to access the school through walking, biking, and rolling. Project located within a disadvantaged area.



*Figure 66. Detectable warning surface at Maywood Drive and Pebble Creek Drive intersection.* 

#### **Q: Rolling Ridge Road.**

#### PRIORITY: LOW

#### RECOMMENDATION

Construct a sidewalk on the south side of Rolling Ridge Road from Pattison Road to Veterans Drive.

#### WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

A pedestrian network gap exists between the sidewalk ending at Pattison Road and Veterans Drive shared use path.

#### **WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?** The City of Saint Cloud.

The City of Saint Cloud.

#### HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improved safety for students with disabilities and others needing to access the school through walking and rolling.

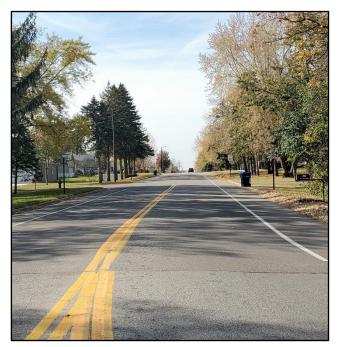


Figure 67. Rolling Ridge Road.



#### **R: Sandy Drive.**

#### **PRIORITY: LOW**

**RECOMMENDATION** Construct a sidewalk along Sandy Drive west of Julie Drive to Brenda Lee Drive.

#### WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

This will help create an active transportation network in this neighborhood.

#### WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

The City of Saint Cloud.

#### HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improved safety for students with disabilities and others needing to access the school through walking, biking, and rolling.



Figure 68. End of sidewalk along Sandy Drive.

#### S: Brenda Lee Drive.

**PRIORITY:** Low

#### RECOMMENDATION

Construct a sidewalk along Brenda Lee Drive between Rolling Ridge Road and Ridgewood Road.

#### WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

No active transportation facilities go north/south through the northern neighborhoods that connect directly to the school. This facility would also connect to Ridgewood Park.

#### WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

The City of Saint Cloud.

#### HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improved safety for students with disabilities and others needing to access the school through walking and rolling.



Figure 69. Brenda Lee Drive.



#### T: Maywood Drive.

#### **PRIORITY: LOW**

#### RECOMMENDATION

Construct a sidewalk along Maywood Drive between Ridgewood Road to the existing sidewalk south of Morningside Road.

#### WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

There is a shared use path connecting Flintwood Road to Maywood Drive, but no receiving active transportation facilities. There is a sidewalk further south on Maywood Drive. Maywood Drive is also directly linked to Ridgewood Road's active transportation facilities.

#### WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

The City of Saint Cloud.

#### HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improved safety for students with disabilities and others needing to access the school through walking, biking, and rolling. Project located within a disadvantaged area.



Figure 70. End of sidewalk on Maywood Drive.

#### U: Pebble Creek Drive and Fairfield Lane.

PRIORITY: Low

#### RECOMMENDATION

Construct a sidewalk along Pebble Creek Drive and Fairfield Lane from the existing sidewalk south of Morningside Road to Saukview Drive.

#### WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

There are no active transportation facilities along these roadways.

**WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?** The City of Saint Cloud.

#### HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improved safety for students with disabilities and others needing to access the school through walking and rolling. Project located within a disadvantaged area.



Figure 71. Fairfield Lane.



#### V: Stearns County Road 134.

#### **PRIORITY: LOW**

#### RECOMMENDATION

Continue shared use path north along Stearns County Road 134 to Spruce Street.

#### WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

There is a gap in the active transportation network. The existing shared use path ends just north of the Sauk River, and the other side starts at Spruce Street. In the APO's Mapping 2045 Plan, Stearns County Road 134 is listed as a mid-range (2024-2029) expansion project and will include a shared use path on one side of the roadway. This shared use path is identified as a regional bikeway in the APO's Regional Active Transportation Plan.

#### WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

The City of Saint Cloud and Stearns County.

#### HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improved safety for students with disabilities and others needing to access the school through walking, biking, and rolling.



*Figure 72. Shared use path along Stearns County Road 134.* 

#### W: Stearns County Road 4/Veterans Drive.

**PRIORITY:** Low

#### RECOMMENDATION

Extend shared use path from Somerset Boulevard north to Westcliffe Road.

#### WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

This area of Saint Cloud has many residential homes in the area with no active transportation facilities along this portion of the arterial roadway.

#### WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

The City of Saint Cloud and Stearns County.

#### HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improved safety for students with disabilities and others needing to access the school through walking, biking, and rolling.



*Figure 73. Veterans Drive and Westcliffe Road intersection.* 



#### X: Saukview Drive.

#### **PRIORITY: LOW**

#### RECOMMENDATION

Construct a shared use path along Saukview Drive from Ridgewood Road to the Lake Wobegon Trail.

#### WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

This corridor is a direct north/south connection between the regional Lake Wobegon Trail (U.S. Bike Route 45) and the neighborhoods around Westwood Elementary School.

#### WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

The City of Saint Cloud.

#### HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improved safety for students with disabilities and others needing to access the school through walking, biking, and rolling. Project located within a disadvantaged area.



Figure 74. Saukview Drive.

#### Y: Ridgewood Road.

PRIORITY: Low

#### RECOMMENDATION

Upgrade one side of Ridgewood Road from the existing sidewalk to a shared use path. Preferably the shared use path would be on the south side of the roadway from Westwood Parkway/Saukview Road to Brenda Lee Drive.

#### WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

No active transportation facilities on this corridor are dedicated to students who cycle.

#### WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

The City of Saint Cloud and Stearns County.

#### HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improved safety for students with disabilities and other students needing to access the school through biking. Project located within a disadvantaged area.



Figure 75. Ridgewood Road sidewalk.



#### Z: Stearns County Road 138.

#### **PRIORITY: LOW**

#### RECOMMENDATION

Upgrade the sidewalk along Stearns County Road 138 to a shared use path from Lake Wobegon Trail connection to Veterans Drive.

#### WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

There are no active transportation facilities for people who cycle along this corridor, and it serves as a connection to the regional Lake Wobegon Trail. This shared use path is identified as a regional bikeway in the APO's Regional Active Transportation Plan.

#### WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

The City of Saint Cloud and Stearns County.

#### HOW WILL THIS ADDRESS EQUITY?

Improved safety for students with disabilities and others needing to access the school through walking, biking, and rolling. Project located within a disadvantaged area.



Figure 76. Sidewalk along Stearns County Road 138.



## Programs

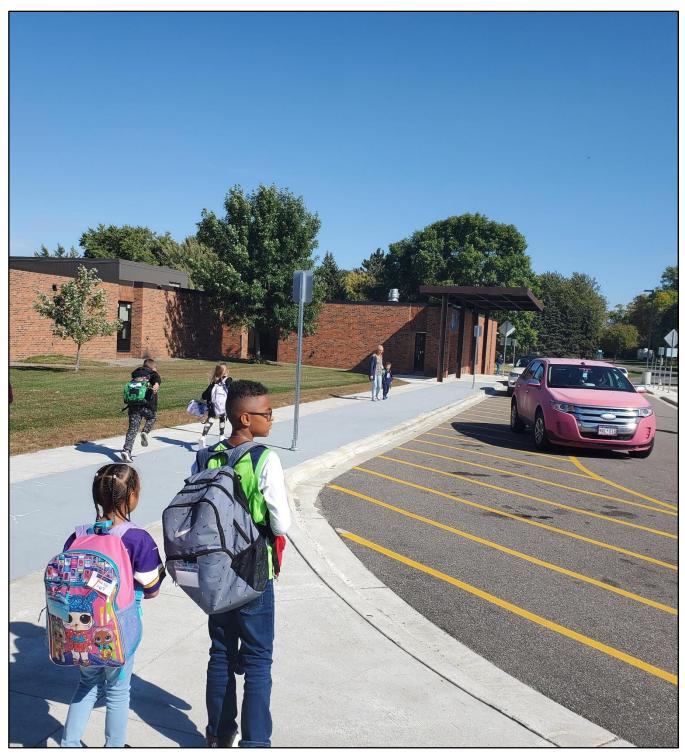


Figure 77. Students Waiting for Pick-Up.



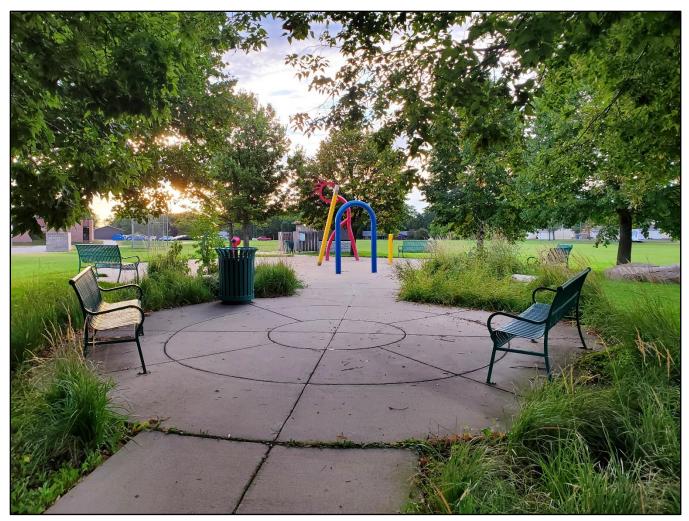


Figure 78. Westwood Park Splash Pad.

## 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**

Westwood Elementary School and Saint Cloud School District 742 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 OAK HILL COMMUNITY SCHOOL:

- District 742 Safe Routes to School Strategic Action Plan.
- Collaboration with local law enforcement.
- Arrival and dismissal policy.
- Staff members directing traffic.

#### **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:**

- Parent Workshop.
- Walk! Bike! Fun!
- Safety Equipment for Staff.

- School Safety Campaign.
- Community Encouragement.
- Walk/Bike School Day.



Figure 79. Example of a parent workshop.

#### **PARENT WORKSHOP**

Since parents are usually the ones deciding whether their children walk or bike to school, a workshop designed for them can provide the tools, resources, and support needed to begin walking or biking for transportation. Topics could include starting a walking school bus, carpool matching, launching a safety campaign, community discussion on how to be responsible drivers, or organizing an event, such as Walk and Bike to School Day.

When, where, and how will this be implemented? Ongoing discussion.

#### Why is this relevant and recommended?

Many parents do not feel comfortable allowing their children to walk or bike without an adult present.

#### How will this address transportation inequities?

This informational workshop would answer questions, address concerns, and provide information and resources to parents to help them decide whether to permit their children to transport themselves to school or not.

#### How will this be evaluated?

A parent survey and feedback from school leaders.

#### Who needs to be involved to make this happen?

School and district staff, PTSA/parents, local government and law enforcement, Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota, advocates/volunteers, League Cycling Instructors (League of American Bicyclists).

#### What is the timeline for implementation? Short term (1-2 years)



Figure 80. Students participating in an activity.

#### WALK! BIKE! FUN!

Pedestrian and Bike Safety Curriculum is a two-part curriculum designed specifically for Minnesota's schools. It is structured to meet Minnesota education standards and is an important part of the Safe Routes to School Program in Minnesota. Walk! Bike! Fun! helps students ages 5 to 13 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? Ongoing discussion.

#### Why is this relevant and recommended?

This program will encourage students to have a positive reaction to walking and biking to school.

#### How will this address transportation inequities?

Safety Curriculum can promote excitement for active transportation by providing the skills and confidence to travel independently. Students can not be expected to transport themselves to school if they are not taught how to do so safely.

#### How will this be evaluated?

A parent and student survey as well as feedback from school leaders.

#### Who needs to be involved to make this happen?

School and district staff, PTSA/parents, local government, Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota, advocates/volunteers.

What is the timeline for implementation? Short term (1-2 years)





Figure 81. Example of safety equipment for staff.

#### SAFETY EQUIPMENT FOR STAFF

Currently, at least two staff members direct traffic into and out of the school parking lot on Rillia Road for student drop-off and pick-up. Staff members at the school entrances also assist with the student drop-off and pick-up process. No staff members are wearing safety vests or using safety equipment.

When, where, and how will this be implemented? Ongoing discussion.

#### Why is this relevant and recommended?

It is hazardous to be directing traffic without a proper safety vest, flags, and other equipment. Staff members should wear safety vests to be easily identified.

**How will this address transportation inequities?** Provide safety for staff and students.

#### How will this be evaluated?

If staff members are using safety equipment.

Who needs to be involved to make this happen? School and district staff.

What is the timeline for implementation? Short term (1-2 years)



*Figure 82. Example of a school safety campaign.* 

#### SCHOOL SAFETY CAMPAIGN

A safety campaign is an effective way to build awareness around students walking and biking to school and to encourage safe driving behavior among parents and passersby. A School Traffic Safety Campaign can use media at or near schools such as posters, business window stickers, yard signs, and/or street banners - to remind drivers to slow down and use caution in school zones. This type of campaign can also address other specific hazards or behaviors, such as walking or bicycling to school, school bus safety, and/or parent drop-off and pick-up behavior.

When, where, and how will this be implemented? Ongoing discussion.

#### Why is this relevant and recommended?

Parents often indicate safety of intersections and crossings; traffic speed along the route; the amount of traffic, and driver behavior as barriers to allowing their kids walk or bike to school..

#### How will this address transportation inequities?

A school safety campaign might facilitate awareness of irresponsible driver behavior in the community.

#### How will this be evaluated?

A parent and student survey as well as feedback from school leaders.

#### Who needs to be involved to make this happen?

School and district staff, local government and law enforcement, PTSA/parents, advocates/volunteers, students.

What is the timeline for implementation? Medium-term (2-4 years)





Figure 83. Community engagement liaison.

#### **COMMUNITY ENCOURAGEMENT**

Community encouragement is aimed at ensuring compliance with traffic and parking laws in school zones. Encouragement activities help reduce common poor driving behavior, such as speeding, failing to yield to pedestrians, turning illegally, parking illegally, and other violations. Encouragement actions include School Zone Speeding Administration and Crosswalk Stings. Other implementation actions can be led by the school administration, such as parking lot 'citations

#### When, where, and how will this be implemented? Ongoing discussion.

#### Why is this relevant and recommended?

Parents often indicate safety of intersections and crossings; traffic speed along the route; the amount of traffic, and driver behavior as barriers to allowing their kids walk or bike to school.

#### How will this address transportation inequities?

Law enforcement patrolling nearby roadways might facilitate awareness of irresponsible driver behavior in the community.

#### How will this be evaluated?

A parent survey, feedback from PTSA leaders.

Who needs to be involved to make this happen? School and district staff, local government and law enforcement, PTSA/parents, advocates/volunteers.

What is the timeline for implementation? Medium-term (2-4 years)



Figure 84. Example of a walk/bike to school day event.

#### 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 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 if there's interest and capacity..

When, where, and how will this be implemented? Ongoing discussion.

#### Why is this relevant and recommended?

Parent and student often indicated walking and biking are healthy.

#### How will this address transportation inequities?

For parents to allow their children to transport themselves to and from school, education and engagement programs must first be in place. Then the school can provide encouragement programs such as Walk and Bike to School Days to increase walking and biking while empowering the youth.

#### How will this be evaluated?

A parent and student survey, feedback from PTSA leaders, and tallies of participating students.

Who needs to be involved to make this happen? School and district staff, local government and law enforcement, PTSA/parents, advocates/volunteers.

What is the timeline for implementation? Long term (4+ years)



# Working for Change



Figure 85. Vehicles lined up during student pick-up.



Figure 86. Example of Sidewalk Ending on Sandy Drive.

## **Action Steps**

This plan and planning process provide two critical ingredients for creating a more equitable transportation system in Saint Cloud: a prioritized set of infrastructure and program recommendations, and a network of caregivers, school staff, local government employees, and community members committed to improving walking and biking.



Figure 87. Knights of Columbus Park.

#### FOR ALL COMMUNITY MEMBERS

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, extend 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 OR CAREGIVER

Students and their families can have incredible influence when advocating for change in their school and broader community. For example, students and caregivers 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

## WRITE'S CROSSING

THIS RIVER CROSSING WAS THE FORD USED IN THE 1850'S BY THE RED RIVER OX GARTS OF THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY WHEN THEY EDGAGED IN INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING DETWEEN CENTRAL CANADA AND ENGLAND BY WAY OF SAINT CLOUD

THE BRIDGE ERECTED IN THE SAME VEAR AS THIS MORUMENT, 1950 IS BT LEAST THE 5TH ON THE SITE PRECEDED BY THE TRESTLE BRIDGES OF THE 1860S AND EARLIER BY A COVERED, BRIDGE & 1870, AND IN 1902, BY A STEEL TRUSS BRIDGE

THIS STORE PERCED HERE UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE STEARNS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS BY GIFT OF THE DORTH STAR GRANITE CORPORATION

RELUCATED AND DEDICATED DOVERTBER II 1987

Figure 88. Knights of Columbus Park Plaque.

#### DATA GATHERING TOOL

Multiple tools were administered while gathering the Westwood Elementary School Safe Routes to School Plan data. Each instrument focused on collecting data for the six E's (evaluation, education, encouragement, equity, engagement, and engineering). This process used quantitative and qualitative data to formulate informed program and infrastructure recommendations.

#### WALKING AND BIKING AUDIT

A walking and bicycling audit were conducted around Westwood Elementary School in the fall of 2022. This process involved gathering data about environmental conditions (social, built, and natural) that affect walking and bicycling. One objective of the audit is to document factors that help or hinder safe walking and bicycling. These factors include but are not limited to street lighting, sidewalk width, condition, traffic volume, bike lanes, topography, and presence of dogs, trash, and debris.

#### SCHOOL ZONE HAZARD OBSERVATIONAL ASSESSMENT

The School Zone Hazard Observational Assessment was conducted by in-person observation by multiple community volunteers at AM arrival and PM dismissal in the fall of 2022. This is a way to track hazards that decrease safety around schools. It. The tool separately tracks different travel modes and corresponding behaviors (i.e. distractions, illegal parking/pick up, unsafe crossing, or helmet usage.

