

Starmont Community School District

Safe Routes to School Plan

2016



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Prepared for:
Starmont Community School District

Prepared by:



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Acknowledgements

Iowa Department of Transportation
Starmont Community School District Administration and Staff
Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative

School Information

Starmont Community School District

The Starmont Community School District is located in Fayette County with a school building in rural Arlington. The school is dedicated to providing instructional service to over 600 students from early childhood through twelfth grade.

Mission Statement

Empowering all students with knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for responsible, productive, fulfilling lives.

Vision Statement

To improve student achievement through high expectations, academic emphasis, frequent monitoring of student progress, safe and orderly environment, instructional leadership and home/school partnership.

Contact Information

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Executive Summary

The Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program is promoted throughout the world to help children bike and walk to school safely. There are numerous benefits for students, schools and communities that participate in the SRTS Program. These benefits include reduced traffic in the vicinity of schools, improved pedestrian/bicycle access and safety, increased physical activity among students, as well as contributions to healthy lifestyles. By incorporating each of the five “E’s” – Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Engineering and Evaluation – SRTS addresses a wide variety of topics relevant to travel to and from school within a municipality or school district.

The SRTS movement started in Denmark in the 1970s and has since spread worldwide, reaching the United States in 1997. Since then, federal funds have been distributed to each state based on school enrollment. These funds have been used by communities and school districts to implement recommendations through infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects. Projects that are located within two miles of an elementary or middle school (Pre K–8) are eligible for infrastructure grant funding. Other projects which support SRTS in other ways besides infrastructure projects are eligible for non-infrastructure grant funding. Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission (UERPC) received a non-infrastructure planning grant through the Iowa Department of Transportation to develop SRTS plans for the elementary and middle schools within UERPC’s five county region (Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, Howard and Winneshiek).

The Starmont Community School District was analyzed in this SRTS study. Starmont is considered an “isolated” district because the school building is not located within a community or within a safe walking distance from a community. Although it is not safe for students to walk to/from school at Starmont, other SRTS activities can still happen throughout the school day to promote health and safety. Pedestrian and bicycle safety is also important for every child to learn, regardless of school location. This study aimed to propose recommendations that will improve safety and help educate students regarding bicycle and pedestrian laws.

The next steps for the school and community are to:

1. continue building support for and involvement in SRTS programs that are feasible for an isolated district
2. take action by making the recommended changes where applicable

Coordination assistance and funding opportunities for local SRTS projects may be available; contact Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission at 563-382-6171 to learn more.

Section I: Introduction

What is Safe Routes to School?

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is an international movement to enable and encourage students to safely walk and bike to school and in daily life. The movement refers to a variety of multi-disciplinary programs aimed at increasing the number of students walking and bicycling to and from school. Such programs and projects improve student health, traffic safety and air quality around schools through education, encouragement, law enforcement and engineering measures. SRTS programs typically involve partnerships among municipalities, school districts, community members, parent volunteers and law enforcement agencies. Comprehensive SRTS programs are developed using five complementary strategies commonly referred to as the “Five E’s”:

1. **Engineering:** Creating operational and physical improvements to the infrastructure surrounding schools that reduce speeds and potential conflicts with motor vehicle traffic and establish safer, more accessible crossings, walkways, trails and bikeways.
2. **Education:** Teaching children and parents about the broad range of transportation choices, instructing them in important lifelong bicycling and walking safety skills and launching driver safety campaigns in the vicinity of schools.
3. **Enforcement:** Partnering with local law enforcement to ensure traffic laws are obeyed within the vicinity of schools (this includes enforcement of speeds, yielding to pedestrians in crossings and proper walking and bicycling behaviors) and initiating community enforcement such as crossing guard programs.
4. **Encouragement:** Using events and activities to promote walking and bicycling.
5. **Evaluation:** Monitoring and documenting outcomes and trends through the collection of data.

Although each element can stand alone, the most successful SRTS programs have integrated elements from all approaches.

Why Safe Routes to School (SRTS)?

Although most students in the United States walked or biked to school prior to the 1980’s, the number of students walking or bicycling to school has sharply declined. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 42% of students between five and 18 years of age walked or bicycled to school in 1969 (with 87% living within a mile of school). In 2008, less than 16% of students walked or bicycled any distance to get to school.¹ This decline is due to a number of factors, including urban growth

¹U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Kids Walk-to-School: Then and Now—Barrier and Solutions. Available: http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/kidswalk/then_and_now.htm Accessed: January 17, 2006.

patterns and school siting requirements that encourage school development in outlying areas, increased traffic and parental concerns about safety among others. The situation is self-perpetuating: as more parents drive their children to school, there is increased traffic at the school site, resulting in more parents becoming concerned about traffic and driving their children to school.

A comprehensive SRTS program addresses the reasons for reductions in walking and biking through a multi-pronged approach. Such an approach uses education, encouragement, engineering and enforcement efforts to develop attitudes, behaviors and physical infrastructure that improve the walking and biking environment.

Benefits of Safe Routes to School Program

SRTS programs directly benefit students, parents and teachers by creating a safer travel environment near schools and reducing motor vehicle congestion at school drop-off and pick-up zones. Students who choose to walk or bike to school are rewarded with the health benefits of a more active lifestyle, as well as the responsibility and independence that come from being in charge of the way they travel. Students learn at an early age that walking and biking can be safe, enjoyable and good for the environment. SRTS programs offer additional benefits to neighborhoods by helping slow traffic and by providing infrastructure improvements that facilitate walking and biking for everyone. Identifying and improving routes for students to safely walk and bicycle to school are two of the most cost-effective means of reducing weekday morning traffic congestion and can help reduce auto-related pollution.

In addition to safety and traffic improvements, a SRTS program helps integrate physical activity into the everyday routine of school children. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, the number of children who are overweight in the United States has more than tripled since the 1970s.² Health concerns related to inactive lifestyles have become the focus of regional, statewide and national efforts to reduce health risks associated with being overweight. Children who walk or bike to school have an overall higher activity level than those who receive rides to school. Additionally, students benefit from safety education offered through SRTS programs.

Planning Process

Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission (UERPC) received a planning grant to develop regional Safe Routes to School Plans for school districts [K-8 schools] in the five county region. The focus of the plans is to identify existing conditions regarding adequacies and deficiencies for walking and bicycling to school, receive feedback from parents and school administration, develop solutions with cost estimates and provide

²National Center for Health Statistics Image source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics. Prevalence of Overweight Among Children and Adolescents: United States, 1999-2002. Available: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/pubs/pubd/hestats/overwght99.htm#Table%201>. Accessed: January 31, 2006.

information for education and public involvement. This plan includes background information, survey results, current conditions surrounding the facilities and community and recommendations for the Starmont Community School District. Recommendations include physical improvements as well as public outreach and education through awareness campaigns targeted at students and parents.

Section II: Education

Education is another key component of a SRTS Plan. A variety of educational components can be included in a plan. This refers not just to the education of students through curriculum changes and extracurricular activities, but the education of all parties involved in making the SRTS plan work. Students walking and biking to school and in daily life must know how to act responsibly as users of the public right-of-way. Parents can also be educated about school and other policies regarding student safety. Student bicyclists need to know appropriate bicycling skills. Parents, teachers and law enforcement officials all must thoroughly understand this information since they will be responsible for teaching it to students and reinforcing appropriate student behavior. Nationally, the following education programs have been identified as positive contributors to SRTS goals:

- Walk or Bike Across America
- Classroom Activities
- Guest Speakers
- Campus Walks
- Walking Education Programs
- Auto Emissions Exercises
- Walkability/Bikeability Audits

Recommended Projects

After reviewing the current conditions for the education program within the Starmont Community School District, the following educational activities should be considered for implementation:

- Assemblies and Guest Speakers
 - Bring in guest speakers to discuss bicycle and pedestrian safety, stranger danger or living healthy lifestyles. This could include local law enforcement, community advocates or groups, nurses, doctors or national experts on these topics.
- Increase Parent Education on bicycle, pedestrian and driving safety
 - Incorporate parent educational activities into school registration, conferences, newsletters, school website or other activities.
- Host an annual Bike Rodeo
 - Hosting an annual Bike Rodeo safety education event will reinforce the importance of knowing how to be a smart, safe bike rider and pedestrian.

Section III: Evaluation

Evaluation is important for assessing progress in implementing the plan, progress towards the completion of each element and progress in the achievement of the overall goals and objectives. This includes the development of a monitoring schedule as well as identifying who is responsible for carrying out the monitoring and evaluation. The monitoring and evaluation process can be the basis for establishing new goals and objectives and revising or updating existing ones. The first step involves collecting baseline data in the forms of travel mode surveys, attitudinal surveys, bicycle counts, walkability/bikeability audits and any other measurement tasks. Each of the selected tasks should be performed regularly to track the progress of the SRTS program as a whole.

Existing Conditions

Below is a list of the existing evaluation activities that have happened in the Starmont Community School District:

- Student Tally Forms
 - A tally sheet teachers use to document student arrival and departure methods

Parent Survey

One of the main evaluation tools used by SRTS is the Parent and Student Survey, which gathers input from parents. The survey obtains a baseline for measuring student travel behaviors and parental attitudes.

The survey asks by what means children travel to and from school and also asks questions regarding parental attitudes and children's safety en-route. No complete surveys were returned for West Central Community School District. Copies of the letter and the survey are included as Appendices I and II.

Student Tally Forms

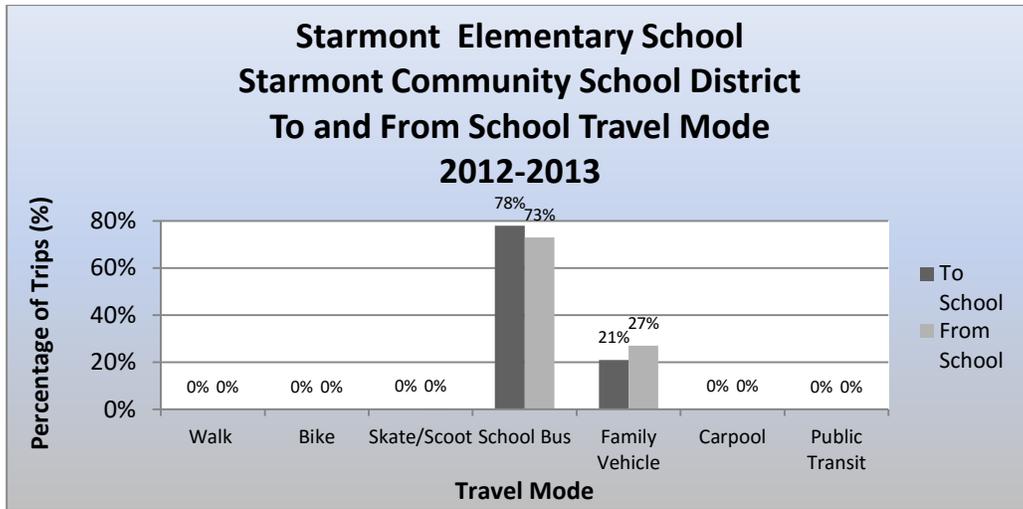
Another key step to figuring out student arrival and departure patterns is by having teachers complete a tally form during the fall or spring. The tally form is to be completed on three consecutive days in the spring and possibly the fall. Results are shared below.

The tally form asked by what means children traveled to and from school. Student travel tallies were conducted in grades K-8. A copy of the travel tally form is included in the Appendix.

Results from the tally forms will help the school see a shift over time in the number of students walking or biking to school as a result of SRTS efforts. The tally only offers a one-time, 3-day snap shot of school travel, which is meant to represent the entire school year. While this is not ideal, it is currently the best evaluation method available through SRTS.

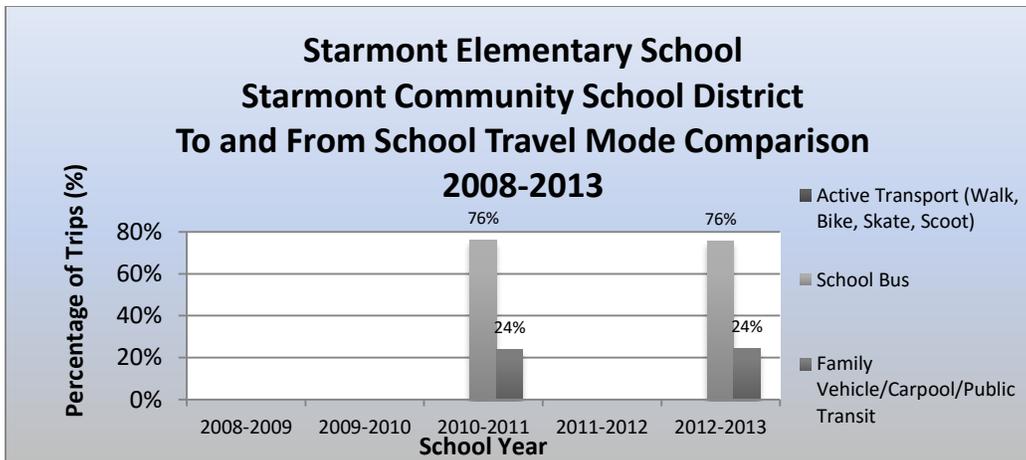
Student's Travel Mode To and From School

Figure 1: Transportation Modes Used by Students To and From the Starmont Elementary School



Student's Travel Mode Comparison

Figure 2: Travel Mode Comparison To and From the Starmont School between 2008 and 2013



Section IV: Engineering

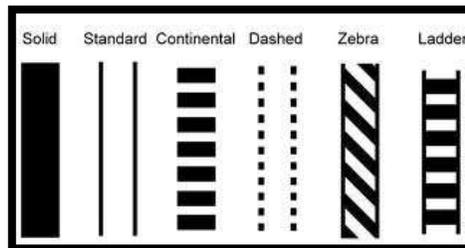
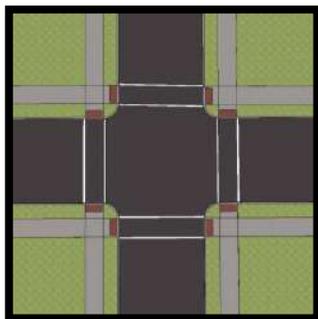
Engineering elements include physical improvements to the transportation infrastructure in the vicinity of the school or on school property. Improvements are intended to enhance access and safety for travel by walking and bicycling and minimize conflicts with motorized traffic. They are typically designed to address specific problems or needs that have been identified and can range from simple sidewalk replacement/repair to more complex traffic calming devices, such as roundabouts or speed bumps. The following engineering treatments have been identified as positive contributors to SRTS goals:

- Sidewalks
- Bike Lanes
- Bike Racks
- Crosswalks
- Advance Warning Signage
- Traffic Calming Measures
 - Curb Extensions
 - Speed Bumps
 - Raised Intersections

General Infrastructure Recommendations

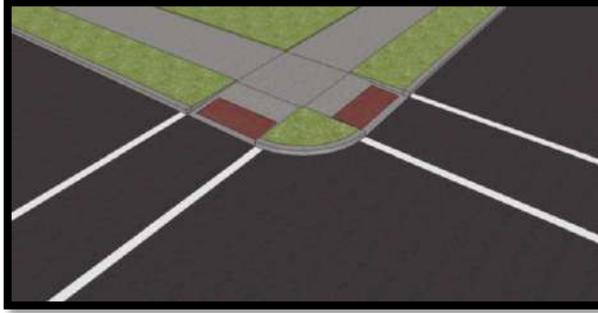
Recommendation #1: Replace all existing crosswalks with high visibility crosswalks and paint new crosswalks where needed.

- It is recommended that all existing crosswalks be repainted to draw attention to places where children may be crossing. Crosswalks could also be painted with diagonal or longitudinal markings to further increase visibility. Samples of crosswalks can be found below.



Recommendation #2: Replace existing sidewalk ramps and stairs with ADA accessible ramps.

- It is recommended that ADA accessible ramps be installed throughout the community and on all sidewalks on school grounds. An example of ADA



accessible ramps is located below.

Recommendation #3: Replace sidewalks around the school facility and throughout the community.

- Sidewalks around the school facilities and in all communities should be kept in good shape to benefit users of all ages, especially students

Recommendation #4: Designate primary walk/bike routes throughout the community.

- Designate the heavily traveled routes as official walking routes.
- Paint the school logo on sidewalks and/or post customized signs to designate the official routes. Examples are located below.



Section V: Enforcement

Enforcement generally involves three facets: police, community design and local government policies. First, local law enforcement is a valuable resource for both enforcement of the law and data collection. Local law enforcement officials understand travel patterns in the community and have access to crash data, which can be helpful in planning walking routes. Second, quality community design can guide and support desired behavior in an effort to develop a culture where pedestrians and cyclists are respected and their mobility is given priority. Finally, both school and municipal policies and procedures that pertain to walking, bicycling, busing, and parking with picking-up/dropping-off issues need to be supportive of the SRTS plan. Nationwide, the following enforcement programs have been identified as positive contributors to SRTS goals:

- School Safety Zones
- Speed Trailers
- Sidewalk, Building and Property Maintenance Laws
- Neighborhood Watch/Escort Programs
- Law Enforcement Presence
- Keep Kids Alive – Drive 25 (Speed Limit)
- Photo Enforcement (Red Light Camera)

Recommended Projects

After reviewing the existing conditions of enforcement activities in the Starmont Community School District, the following list of future enforcement projects should be considered:

- Use speed indicators around the school campuses
 - Speed indicators can help slow down traffic in and around each of the schools. This is a great method to enforce the speed limit to drivers near the schools.
- Start a “Catch’Em in the Act Rewards Program”
 - This program would involve law enforcement to write out tickets to children for walking or biking in a safe manner. The tickets could possibly be redeemed for a certain prize as encouragement to continue operating in a safe manner.

Section VI: Encouragement

Throughout the process of developing and implementing a SRTS program, it will be necessary to encourage participation in the SRTS activities. Many media tools can be used to do this, including posters, e-mail, newsletters, flyers and school notices (backpack mail). Existing school and community communication resources may include:

- School Newsletters
- Local Newspaper
- Community Newsletter
- Public Service Announcements
- School Public Relations Officer

A variety of contests, which have encouragement (and sometimes educational) aspects to them, can be incorporated into a SRTS program. Many of these contests are based on students tallying their miles for walking and biking to school to win points for prizes or recognition, either individually or as a class. Art contests and essay contests are also possibilities for independent or classroom activities. In northeast Iowa, the following SRTS activities help to increase physical activity among students and safety within our communities:

- Bike Rodeo
 - A Bike Rodeo is a popular and fun event teaching children how to properly and safely ride a bike.
- Mileage Club
 - Students earn rewards by walking a certain number of laps around a track, gym or school hallway. It could take place during gym class, recess or an after-school club.
- Active Classroom Learning
 - Sneak physical activity into classroom learning. One example is Stories in Motion, where students act out stories as they are read aloud.
- Walk on Wednesday (W.O.W.)
 - Every Wednesday of the school year (weather permitting), students have the opportunity to get involved by walking or biking at school.

Recommendations

After reviewing the existing conditions of the encouragement program in the Starmont Community School District, the following list of future encouragement activities should be considered:

- Start a Mileage Club at the elementary school

- This is where students earn foot tokens for walking a certain number of laps around the track, gym or school hallway. A Mileage Club can take place before/after school or during recess or PE.
- Host an annual Bike Rodeo
 - Hosting an annual Bike Rodeo will reinforce the importance of knowing how to be a smart, safe bike rider.
- Increase awareness of safety throughout the school district communities
 - Providing more awareness to parents/guardians about the program through PTO's, school newsletters, mailings, and parent/teacher conferences.
 - Notify parents of the wide range of safety topics included in the Safe Routes to School program.
- Start the Walk on Wednesday (W.O.W.) program
 - Every student can walk or bike at school each Wednesday of the school year.

Section VII: Implementation Strategy

The following implementation strategy is an approach that the Starmont Community School District can follow to implement education, encouragement, enforcement and evaluation techniques. This strategy can be used each year and updated as the safety needs of the school and students change.

AUGUST

- SRTS Community Coalition Meeting

SEPTEMBER

- Continue to Encourage Students with Educational Programs
- Have a guest speaker talk about SRTS
- Conduct fall Student Travel Tally
- Set date for spring Bike Rodeo

OCTOBER

- Participate in International Walk to School Day by hosting an event during the school day
- Provide SRTS information at Parent-Teacher Conferences

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER

- SRTS Community Coalition Meeting

JANUARY-FEBRUARY

- Have a nurse or other professional visit classes to talk about healthy eating and exercising.

MARCH

- Provide SRTS information at Parent-Teacher conferences
- Bring in local law enforcement to talk to students about walking/biking safety
- SRTS Community Coalition Meeting
- Begin planning for spring Bike Rodeo

APRIL

- Conduct annual sidewalk inspections
- Continue spring Bike Rodeo planning/Host spring Bike Rodeo

MAY

- Host spring Bike Rodeo
- Participate in National Bike to School Day/Week/Month
- Conduct Student Travel Tally

JUNE

- Evaluate SRTS Program from previous year
- Evaluate infrastructure around school facilities
 - Make a list of improvements that needs addressed
- SRTS Community Coalition Meeting
- Send thank you notes to SRTS volunteers

JULY

- Plan SRTS activities for coming school year

Appendix

Appendix I: Parent Survey Letter

Appendix II: Parent Survey

Appendix III: Student Travel Tally

Appendix I: Parent Survey Letter



Serving Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, Howard and Winneshiek Counties
325 Washington Street, Suite A, Decorah, IA 52101
PHONE: 563/382-6171, ext 214, FAX: 563/382-6311
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www.uerpc.org

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission (UERPC) recently received a planning grant to provide Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) plans for all schools (K-8) in the five county region and is in the process of establishing an order for these plans to be completed.

As you probably know, the SRTS Program is an opportunity to make safe routes to school for kids of all ages, whether they're walking or biking. National trends and statistics indicate that fewer children are walking and bicycling to school. At the same time, childhood health has declined, more children die in automobile crashes than by any other means, air quality has deteriorated, and land use practices have centered on automobile reliance. Completing a SRTS plan is the first step in receiving funding for needed infrastructure improvements.

These plans need cooperation from the parents in gathering your input on how your child/children go to and from school. There are two options for taking this survey, (1) Fill out the hard copy enclosed with this letter and return completed survey to the schools office, (2) Go to <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/srts-uerpc>. The results will be tabulated and recorded into the plan and your names will remain completely anonymous. The SRTS plans will not cost the School, City, or Citizens anything, just time and cooperation. Once a plan is in place, the schools will be eligible to apply for grants in assisting school administrators in creating safer routes for walking and bicycling.

Thank you for your time. If you have any questions at all or would like to help participate in the Safe Routes to School Program please contact me at (563)-382-6171 Ext. 212 or by email at cmai@uerpc.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Casey J. Mai".

Casey J. Mai,

Regional Planner

