Safe Routes to School

Survey Results of Students in Dilworth, Minnesota



North Dakota State Data Center at North Dakota State University, an Equal Opportunity Institution

October 2010

http://www.ndsu.edu/sdc/publications/research.htm

Cover photo courtesy of

Wilson Elementary School in Wilson, Wyoming

PREFACE

The Safe Routes to School study is part of the Becker, Clay, Otter Tail, and Wilkin County Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) initiative. The research findings presented in this report will give city leaders, policy makers, and school administrators in Dilworth, Minnesota, insight into student perceptions regarding safe routes to school and barriers that prevent students from walking or bicycling to and from school.

For more information about SHIP, please go to: http://www.health.state.mn.us/healthreform/ship/.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Safe Routes to School Study surveyed all 5th graders at Dilworth Elementary School in Dilworth, Minnesota, in May 2010. The goal of the study is to gain insight into the challenges and opportunities for enhancing exercise among school-aged children by walking and bicycling to school and the barriers that may be preventing them from walking and bicycling more often.

The majority of students in Dilworth travel to school by motorized vehicle (i.e., car or bus). However, when school gets out for the day, half of students walk home. In an average week, nearly one-third of students said they walk or ride their bicycle to school at least three times a week.

There are several barriers that prevent students from walking or riding their bicycle to and from school. The top concern among students is the weather being too cold in the winter and icy or snow-covered sidewalks. Other main concerns among students are that they have too much stuff to carry (e.g., books, equipment, instrument), the distance to school is too far, and scary people.

Students indicated that having fewer things to carry, sidewalks that are clean and not broken, more considerate drivers, and slower traffic speeds would help them to walk or ride a bicycle to and from school more often. Slightly less than one in six students said nothing would help them walk or ride bicycle to school because they live too far away.

Among students who walk or ride their bicycle to school, approximately half said they did not have a sidewalk or path for the whole trip on their most recent trip to school, they had to move off the sidewalk or path at least once because someone was in the way, and they crossed at least four streets to get to school. One-fourth of students said that upon arriving at school there were cars or buses in the way that made it difficult to enter the school grounds.

Insight gained from student perceptions and behaviors regarding walking and riding a bicycle to school will give city leaders, policy makers, school administrators, and other key stakeholders in Dilworth, Minnesota, opportunities to develop strategies that assist children in their travel to and from school. Most students prefer getting to school by car; however, one-fifth prefer to ride bicycle and one-fifth prefer to walk. Also, it is quite possible that students mainly prefer the car because that is their normal daily routine.

Barriers to walking or bicycling to school exist. Community support and engagement is essential in developing successful strategies (i.e., clear sidewalks, marked crosswalks, attentive drivers, and safe intersections) that address these barriers.

One goal of the Minnesota Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) is increasing children's physical activity by improving safety mechanisms for their movement to and from school. City leaders, school administrators, and community members in Dilworth are committed to this effort.

INTRODUCTION

STUDY OBJECTIVES

The goal of the Safe Routes to School Study is to gain insight into the challenges and opportunities for enhancing exercise among school-aged children by walking and bicycling to school. This study examines current behaviors of 5th grade students at Dilworth Elementary School in Dilworth, Minnesota, and the barriers that may be preventing them from walking and bicycling more often.

METHODOLOGY

The Safe Routes to School survey was conducted of all 5th graders at Dilworth Elementary School in Dilworth, Minnesota, in May 2010. The survey contained 15 questions and took approximately 15 minutes to complete. Information regarding how often students ride their bicycles or walk to school, barriers preventing them from walking or riding their bicycle more often, and what their experience is like when they do walk or bicycle to school was gathered. A total of 51 students completed the survey.

At the end of the survey, students were given an opportunity to provide additional comments they considered relevant to the study. These comments are provided in Appendix Table 14.

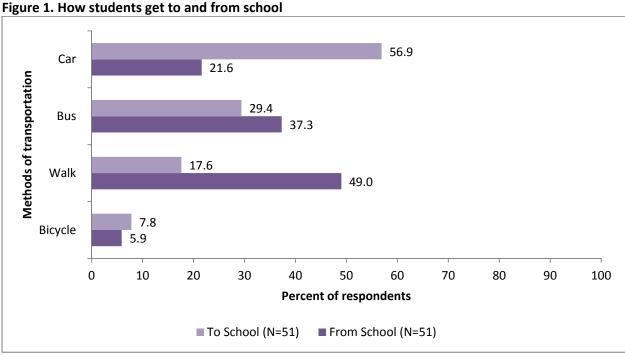
Getting to and from school

Students were asked how they usually get to and from school.

See Figure 1 and Appendix Table 1 for overall distributions.

Results

- Nearly three-fifths of students reported that they usually get a ride by *car* to school (56.9 percent); approximately one-fifth of students reported riding home in a *car* (21.6 percent).
- Nearly three-tenths of students said they get to school by *bus* (29.4 percent); nearly two-fifths said they get home by *bus* (37.3 percent).
- Nearly one-fifth of students reported that they get to school by walking (17.6 percent);
 however, nearly half get home by walking (49.0 percent).
- Less than one-tenth of students said they ride their *bicycle* to or from school (7.8 percent and 5.9 percent, respectively).



Preferred method of transportation

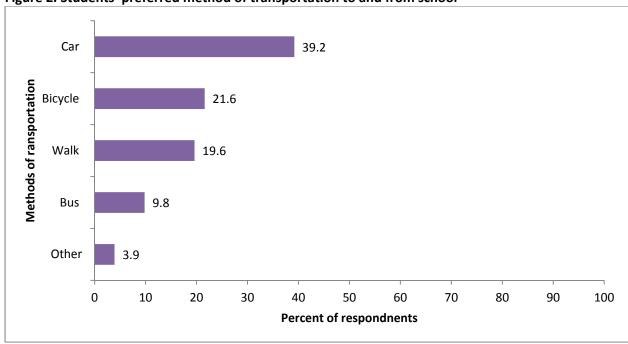
Students were asked how they would most like to get to and from school.

See Figure 2 and Appendix Table 1 for overall distributions.

Results

- Two-fifths of students prefer to travel to and from school by car (39.2 percent).
- Approximately one-fifth of students prefer traveling to and from school by bicycle or by walking (21.6 percent and 19.6 percent, respectively).
- One-tenth of students prefer the bus (9.8 percent).

Figure 2. Students' preferred method of transportation to and from school



N=51

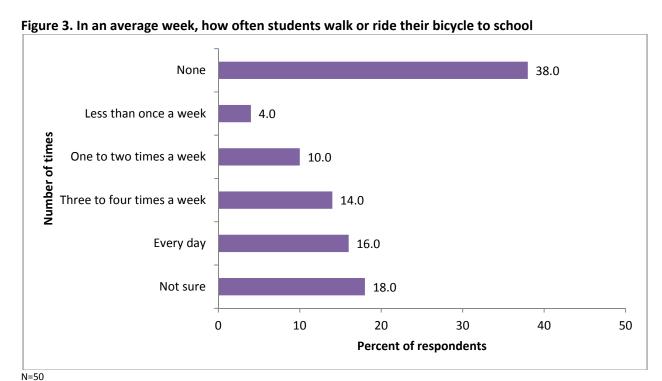
Amount students walk or ride a bicycle to school per week

Students were asked in an average week how many times they walk or ride their bicycle to school.

See Figure 3 and Appendix Table 2 for overall distributions.

Results

- Nearly two-fifths of students reported that they do not walk or ride their bicycle to school (38.0 percent). A small proportion of students said that they walk or ride their bicycle to school less than once a week (4.0 percent).
- Three-tenths of students said that they walk or ride their bicycle to school at least three times a week (30.0 percent).



Barriers going to and from school

Students were asked what things make it hard for them to walk or bicycle to and from school.

See Table 1 for overall distributions and Appendix Table 3 for additional barriers mentioned by students.

Results

- Nearly three-fifths of students reported the weather being too cold in the winter as a barrier to walking or riding a bicycle to and from school (58.8 percent); 33.3 percent reported icy or snowcovered sidewalks as a barrier.
- The next most common barriers include too much stuff to carry (29.4 percent), distance too far from school (29.4 percent), and scary people (27.5 percent).

Table 1. Barriers for students going to and from school by walking or riding a bicycle

Table 1. Burners for stadenes going to and from sensor by waiking or maing a bicycle	Students	(N=51)
Barriers	Number	Percent
Weather—too cold in winter	30	58.8
Weather—icy or snow-covered sidewalks	17	33.3
Too much stuff to carry (books, equipment, instrument)	15	29.4
Distance—too far from school	15	29.4
Scary people	14	27.5
Having to walk or ride bicycle by myself	10	19.6
Parent or other adult drops me off on their way to work or picks me up on their way home	10	19.6
Not having a safe place to leave my bicycle and helmet	9	17.6
My parents will not let me	8	15.7
Crossing intersections with lots of traffic	7	13.7
Cars that drive too fast in my neighborhood	7	13.7
Broken or missing sidewalks	7	13.7
Bullying/teasing from other kids	6	11.8
Scary dogs	6	11.8
Cars that drive too fast by my school	5	9.8
After school activities	5	9.8
I do not want to walk or ride a bicycle to school	5	9.8
Too dark outside	2	3.9
I do not have a bicycle (or one that works)	1	2.0
Getting sweaty	0	0.0
Other people don't think it's "cool"	0	0.0
Prefer not to answer	0	0.0
Other*	7	13.7

^{*}See Appendix Table 3 for other barriers.

Things that would help to walk or ride a bicycle more often

Students were asked what things would help them to walk or ride their bicycle to and from school more often.

See Table 2 for overall distributions and Appendix Table 4 for additional things that would help students walk or ride a bicycle to and from school.

Results

- One-third of students reported that having *fewer things to carry* would help them to walk or ride a bicycle to and from school more often (33.3 percent).
- More than one-fourth said that having *sidewalks that are clean and not broken* would help them to walk or ride a bicycle to and from school more often (27.5 percent).
- Approximately one-fifth of students reported that *more considerate drivers* (21.6 percent) and *slower traffic speeds* (19.6 percent) would help them to walk or ride a bicycle to and from school more often.

Table 2. Things that would help students to walk or ride a bicycle to and from school more often

	Students (N=51)	
Things that would help	Number	Percent
Fewer things to carry (books, equipment, instrument)	17	33.3
Sidewalks that are clean and not broken	14	27.5
More considerate drivers	11	21.6
Slower traffic speeds	10	19.6
Nothing, I live too far from the school	8	15.7
Nothing, I do not want to walk or ride my bicycle to school	5	9.8
A drop-off place closer to the school so I can walk part of the way	5	9.8
Sidewalk or path at this location*	5	9.8
No scary dogs	5	9.8
More parents and adults walking on my route	4	7.8
More help, such as a crossing guard or traffic signal, crossing the street		
at this location**	4	7.8
Nothing, I prefer to get a ride for convenience	3	5.9
Nothing, I prefer to get a ride for safety	1	2.0
Prefer not to answer	0	0.0
Other ***	5	9.8

^{*}Locations identified by students: 7th St. NE, 8th St. NE/ 7th St. NE, most of Woodbridge.

^{**}Locations identified by students: Highway 10.

^{***}See Appendix Table 4 for other things that would be helpful.

Bicycle training course

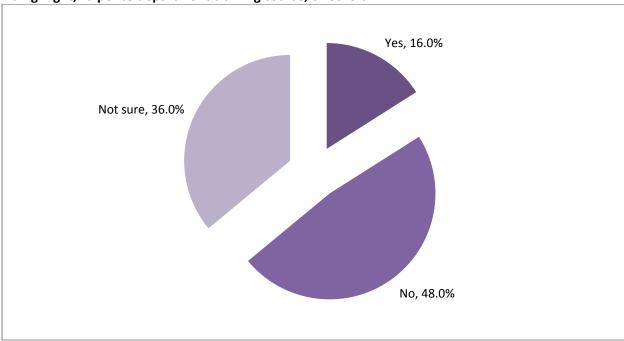
Students were asked if they had a bicycle training course such as "Rules of the Road," "McGruff-Riding Right," a police department training course, or others.

See Figure 4 and Appendix Table 5 for overall distributions.

Results

- Nearly half of students reported that they have not had a bicycle training course (48.0 percent).
- Approximately one-third of students were not sure (36.0 percent); 16.0 percent of students said that they have had a bicycle training course.

Figure 4. Whether students have had a bicycle training course such as "Rules of the Road," "McGruff— Riding Right," a police department training course, or others



N=50

SURVEY RESULTS OF STUDENTS WHO WALK OR RIDE THEIR BICYCLE TO SCHOOL

Sidewalk or path for whole trip

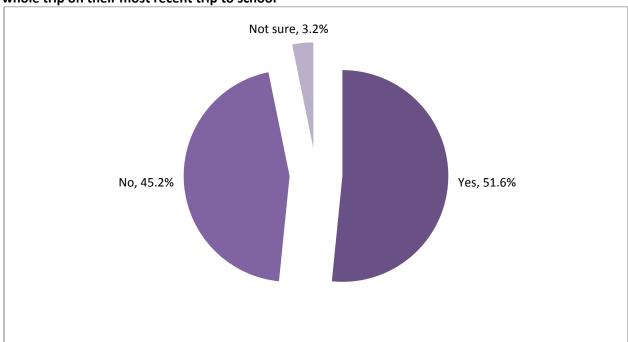
Students who walk or ride their bicycle to school were asked, based on their most recent time they walked or rode their bicycle to school, if they had a sidewalk or path for the whole trip.

See Figure 5 and Appendix Table 6 for overall distributions.

Results

• Slightly more than half of students reported they did have a sidewalk or path for the whole trip (51.6 percent), 45.2 percent reported that they did not have a sidewalk or path for the whole trip, and 3.2 percent were not sure.

Figure 5. Whether students who walk or ride their bicycle to school had a sidewalk or path for the whole trip on their most recent trip to school



N=31

Obstacles on sidewalk or path

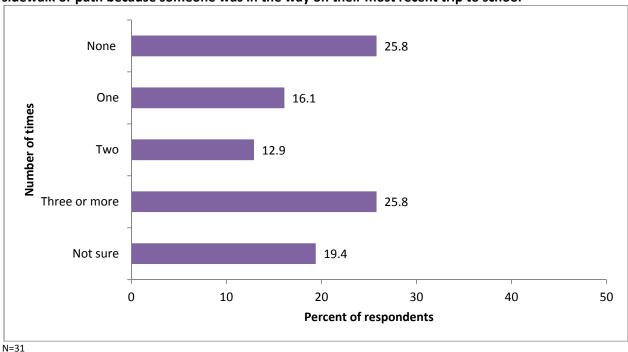
Students who walk or ride their bicycle to school were asked, based on their most recent time they walked or rode their bicycle to school, how many times they had to walk off the sidewalk or path because someone was in the way.

See Figure 6 and Appendix Table 7 for overall distributions.

Results

- One-fourth of students reported they did not have to walk off the sidewalk or path because someone was in the way (25.8 percent) and 19.4 percent were not sure.
- More than half of students had to move off the sidewalk or path at least once because someone was in the way (54.8 percent).

Figure 6. Number of times students who walk or ride their bicycle to school had to move off the sidewalk or path because someone was in the way on their most recent trip to school



Number of streets students crossed to get to school

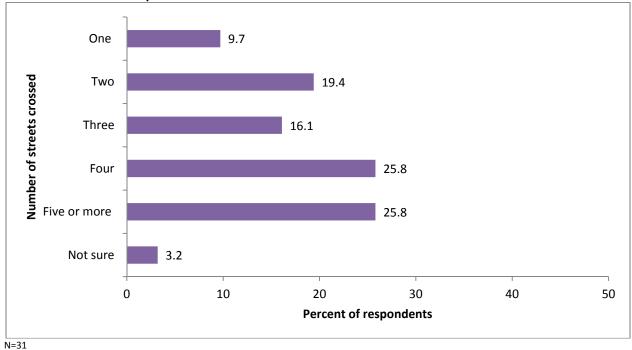
Students who walk or ride their bicycle to school were asked, based on their most recent time they walked or rode their bicycle to school, how many streets they crossed to get to school.

See Figure 7 and Appendix Table 8 for overall distributions.

Results

The vast majority of students crossed at least two streets to get to school (87.1 percent); onefourth of students crossed at least five streets (25.8 percent).

Figure 7. Number of streets students who walk or ride their bicycle to school crossed to get to school on their most recent trip to school



Who or what helped students cross the busiest street

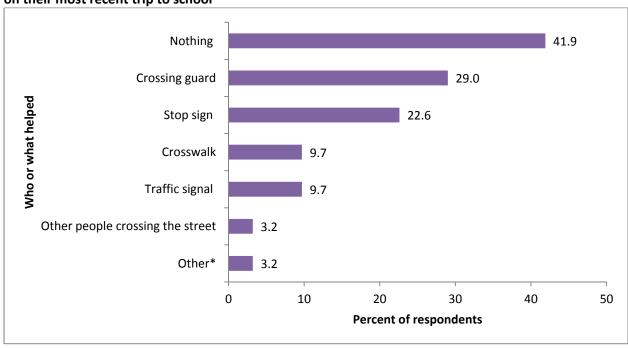
Students who walk or ride their bicycle to school were asked, based on their most recent time they walked or rode their bicycle to school, who or what helped them cross the busiest street.

See Figure 8 and Appendix Table 9 for overall distributions.

Results

- Approximately two-fifths of students reported that *nothing* helped them cross the busiest street (41.9 percent).
- The two most common things that helped students cross the busiest street were a crossing guard (29.0 percent) and a stop sign (22.6 percent).

Figure 8. Who or what helped students who walk or ride their bicycle to school cross the busiest street on their most recent trip to school



N=31

^{*}See Appendix Table 9 for a list of "other" things that helped.

Actions of drivers

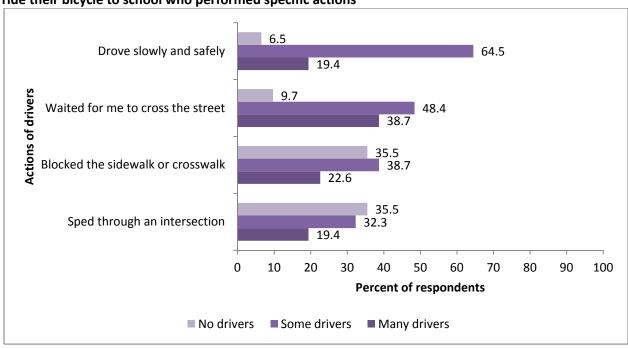
Students who walk or ride their bicycle to school were asked, based on their most recent time they walked or rode their bicycle to school, how many drivers drove slowly and safely, waited for them to cross the street, blocked the sidewalk or crosswalk, or sped through an intersection.

See Figure 9 and Appendix Table 10 for overall distributions.

Results

- Nearly two-thirds of students reported that *some* drivers drove slowly and carefully (64.5 percent) and 6.5 percent said *no* drivers drove slowly and carefully. Approximately half of students reported that *some* drivers waited for them to cross the street (48.4 percent) and 9.7 percent said *no* drivers waited for them.
- More than half of students reported that some or many drivers blocked the sidewalk or crosswalk (61.3 percent). More than half said that some or many drivers sped through an intersection (51.7 percent).

Figure 9. On their most recent trip to school, the number of drivers identified by students who walk or ride their bicycle to school who performed specific actions



N=31

Note: Percentages do not equal 100.0 due to multiple responses.

Students were also asked if there were other things that drivers did. Other things identified by students included reckless behavior (e.g., driving too fast, showing off, running red lights, not stopping). See Appendix Table 11 for other drivers' actions identified by students.

Difficulties entering school grounds

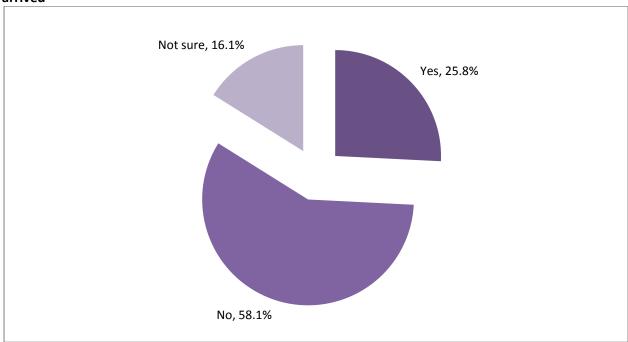
Students who walk or ride their bicycle to school were asked, based on their most recent time they walked or rode their bicycle to school, if there were cars or buses in the way that made it hard for them to enter the school grounds.

See Figure 10 and Appendix Table 12 for overall distributions.

Results

- One-fourth of students reported that there were cars or buses in the way that made it difficult to enter the school grounds (25.8 percent).
- Nearly three-fifths of students reported that there were no cars or buses in the way that made it difficult to enter the school grounds (58.1 percent) and 16.1 percent were not sure.

Figure 10. On their most recent trip to school, whether there were cars or buses in the way that made it hard for students who walk or ride their bicycle to school to enter the school grounds when they arrived



N=31

What students liked best about their most recent walk or bicycle ride to school

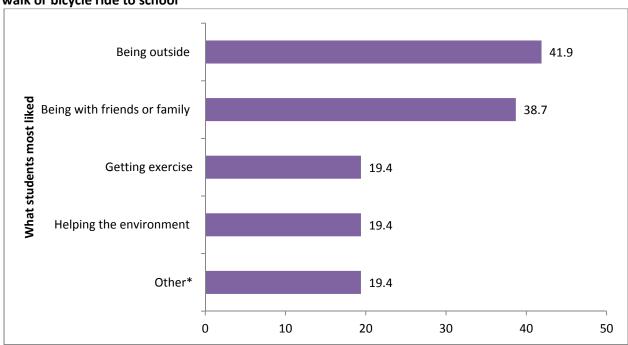
Students who walk or ride their bicycle to school were asked, based on their most recent time they walked or rode their bicycle to school, what they liked best about their most recent walk or bicycle ride to school.

See Figure 11 and Appendix Table 13 for overall distributions.

Results

The thing students said they most liked about their most recent walk or bicycle ride to school was being outside (41.9 percent) followed closely by being with friends and family (38.7 percent).

Figure 11. What students who walk or ride their bicycle to school most liked about their most recent walk or bicycle ride to school



N=31

Note: Percentages do not equal 100.0 due to multiple responses.

When given the opportunity to provide additional comments on walking and riding a bicycle to and from school, students expressed reasons why they enjoy it (e.g., being outside) as well as reasons why they don't walk or ride a bicycle to school even if they want to (e.g., safety concerns). See Appendix Table 14 for a complete list of these comments.

^{*}See Appendix Table 13 for "other" things that students most liked.

APPENDIX TABLES

Appendix Table 1. How students get to and from school and students' preferred method of transportation

Method of transportation	Students (N=51)	
Getting to school	Number	Percent
Car	29	56.9
Bus	15	29.4
Walk	9	17.6
Bicycle	4	7.8
Getting from school		
Walk	25	49.0
Bus	19	37.3
Car	11	21.6
Bicycle	3	5.9
Preferred method of transportation		
Car	20	39.2
Bicycle	11	21.6
Walk	10	19.6
Bus	5	9.8
Other (not specified)	2	3.9

Note: Percentages do not equal 100.0 due to multiple responses.

Appendix Table 2. In an average week, how often students walk or ride their bicycle to school

	Students (N=50)	
Number of times	Number	Percent
None	19	38.0
Less than once a week	2	4.0
One to two times a week	5	10.0
Three to four times a week	7	14.0
Every day	8	16.0
Not sure	9	18.0
Total	50	100.0

Appendix Table 3. "Other" barriers for students going to and from school by walking or riding a bicycle

Other barriers	Responses
Don't live in the township	1
I don't have enough time to feed horses before walking	1
I have to watch my cousin and sister and they can't ride bikes yet	1
I ride the bus because I live 5 miles away from school	1
No sidewalks	1
Nothing	1
People from jail come to clean the church	1
Total	7

Appendix Table 4. "Other" things that would help students walk or ride their bicycle to and from school more often

Other things that would help	Responses
Can't walk to Glyndon or ride my bike to Dilworth	1
Less scary people	1
Make the weather warmer	1
Not having bullying/teasing	1
People follow me but when I look back they take off	1
Put sidewalks on 7 th St and 8 th St. NE	1
Total*	6

^{*}Total "Other" responses in this table do not add up to "Other" in Table 2 due to respondents not checking "Other," but still writing a comment.

Appendix Table 5. Whether students have had a bicycle training course such as "Rules of the Road," "McGruff—Riding Right," a police department training course, or others

	Students (N=50)	
Response	Number	Percent
Yes	8	16.0
No	24	48.0
Not sure	18	36.0
Total	50	100.0

Appendix Table 6. Whether students who walk or ride their bicycle to school have a sidewalk or path for the whole trip on their most recent trip to school

	Students (N=31)	
Response	Number	Percent
Yes	16	51.6
No	14	45.2
Not sure	1	3.2
Total	31	100.0

Appendix Table 7. Number of times students who walk or ride their bicycle to school had to move off the sidewalk or path because someone was in the way on their most recent trip to school

	Students (N=31)	
Number of times	Number	Percent
None	8	25.8
One	5	16.1
Two	4	12.9
Three or more	8	25.8
Not sure	6	19.4
Total	31	100.0

Appendix Table 8. Number of streets students who walk or ride their bicycle to school crossed to get to school on their most recent trip to school

	Students (N=31)	
Number of streets crossed	Number	Percent
One	3	9.7
Two	6	19.4
Three	5	16.1
Four	8	25.8
Five or more	8	25.8
Not sure	1	3.2
Total	31	100.0

Appendix Table 9. Who or what helped students who walk or ride their bicycle to school cross the busiest street on their most recent trip to school

	Students (N=31)	
Who or what helped	Number	Percent
Nothing	13	41.9
Crossing guard	9	29.0
Stop sign	7	22.6
Crosswalk	3	9.7
Traffic signal	3	9.7
Other people crossing the street	1	3.2
Other	1	3.2
I had to wait for 15 minutes		_

Note: Percentages do not equal 100.0 due to multiple responses.

Appendix Table 10. On their most recent trip to school, the number of drivers identified by students who walk or ride their bicycle to school who performed specific actions

	Students by number of drivers identified									
Actions of	No drivers		Some drivers		Many drivers		Not sure		Total	
drivers	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	N	%
Drove slowly and safely	2	6.5	20	64.5	6	19.4	3	9.7	31	100.1
Waited for										
me to cross the street	3	9.7	15	48.4	12	38.7	1	3.2	31	100.0
Blocked the sidewalk or										
crosswalk	11	35.5	12	38.7	7	22.6	1	3.2	31	100.0
Sped										
through an										
intersection	11	35.5	10	32.3	6	19.4	4	12.9	31	100.1

Appendix Table 11. "Other" drivers' actions identified by students who walk or ride their bicycle to school

Other drivers' actions	Responses
Drove through a red light	1
Nothing	1
The teenagers drive really fast and try to show off	1
They went too fast	1
When school patrol came, I was crossing but the car did not stop!	1
Total	5

Appendix Table 12. On their most recent trip to school, whether there were cars or buses in the way that made it hard for students who walk or ride their bicycle to school to enter the school grounds when they arrived

	Students (N=31)	
Response	Number	Percent
Yes	8	25.8
No	18	58.1
Not sure	5	16.1
Total	31	100.0

Appendix Table 13. What students who walk or ride their bicycle to school most liked about their most recent walk or bicycle ride to school

	Students (N=31)			
What students most liked	Number	Percent		
Being outside	13	41.9		
Being with friends or family	12	38.7		
Getting exercise	6	19.4		
Helping the environment	6	19.4		
Other*	6	19.4		
All the above				
Feel the weather				
Get to school faster				
Nothing				

Note: Percentages do not equal 100.0 due to multiple responses.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Appendix Table 14. Comments from students on walking or riding a bicycle to and from school

Comments	Responses
I like to be outside	1
I think it's not safe	1
I wish we wouldn't have to lock up our bikes	1

^{*}The "Other" things specified in this table do not add up to the total "Other" respondents due to respondents checking "Other," but not writing a comment.

Safe Routes to School - Student Survey

You are invited to participate in a research study that is about safe ways to walk or bicycle to and from school. The research study involves a survey and your class was chosen to participate. This survey will help us understand reasons why you may or may not be walking or riding your bicycle to and from school. Your answers will help us understand ways in which changes can be made so that you can walk or ride your bicycle to and from school more often. You do not have to take the survey if you do not want to. If you decide to take the survey, you can leave blank any question that you do not want to answer and you may quit the survey at any time. Please do not write your name on the survey. If you have any questions, raise your hand and I will answer them.

Q1. What grade are you in?	5th 6th 7th 8th 9th			
Q2. How do you usually get TO and FROM school? TO school? Walk Bicycle Bus Car Car FROM school? Walk Bicycle Bus Car	Q3. If you had a choice, how would you most like to get to and from school? Walk Bicycle Bus Car Other (please tell us)			
Q4. In an average week, how many times do you walk None Less than once a week One to two times a week Not sure	four times a week			
Q5. Here is a list of things that may make it hard for yo Read through the list and fill in the bubbles of all the Bullying/teasing from other kids Bullying/teasing from other kids Scary people Scary dogs Cars that drive too fast in my neighborhood Cars that drive too fast by my school Crossing intersections with lots of traffic Having to walk or ride bicycle by myself Broken or missing sidewalks Weather - too cold in winter Weather - icy or snow-covered sidewalks Too much stuff to carry (books, equipment, instrument) Not having a safe place to leave my bicycle and helmet	u to go back and forth to school by walking or riding your bicycle things that may make it hard for you to walk or ride your bicycle. Parent or other adult drops me off on their way to wor or picks me up on their way home Distance - too far from school Too dark outside After school activities Getting sweaty Other people don't think it's "cool" My parents will not let me I do not have a bicycle (or one that works) I do not want to walk or ride a bicycle to school Other (please tell us) Prefer to not answer			
Q6. Which of the following things would help you to wa Fill in the bubbles of all that apply to you. More parents and adults walking on my route More help, such as a crossing guard or traffic Sidewalk or path at this location A drop-off place closer to school so I can wall Fewer things to carry (books, equipment, inst No scary dogs Sidewalks that are clean and not broken Slower traffic speeds More considerate drivers Nothing, I prefer to get a ride for SAFETY Nothing, I prefer to get a ride for CONVENIEN Nothing, I live too far from the school Nothing, I do not want to walk or ride my bicycother (please tell us) Prefer to not answer	signal, crossing the street at this location k part of the way rument)			
Q7. Have you ever had a bicycle safety training course a police department training course, or others? Yes No No Not sure	e, such as "Rules of the Road", "McGruff - Riding Right",			

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Q8. Did you have a sidewalk or path for the whole trip? Yes No Not sure	Q9. How many times did you have to walk off the sidewalk or path because someone was in your way? None One Two Three or more times Not sure				
to get to school? One Two Three Four Five or more Not sure	Q11. Who or what helped you cross the <u>busiest street</u> ? Fill in the bubbles of all that apply to you. Crossing guard Stop sign Crosswalk Traffic signal Other people crossing the street Nothing Other (please tell us)				
Q12. Fill in the oval in each row to show us h blocked the sidewalk or crosswalk, or sp		an intersection.		aited for you to cross the stree	
		How man	y drivers		
a. Drove slowly and safely	O Non	e O Some	Many	O Not sure	
b. Waited for me to cross the street	O Non		Many	O Not sure	
c. Blocked the sidewalk or crosswalk	O Non	e O Some	O Many	O Not sure	
d. Sped through an intersection	O Non	e O Some	O Many	O Not sure	
Q13. Please tell us if there were other things t	hat drivers o	lid			
Q14. When you get to school, are there cars buses in your way that make it hard for to enter the school grounds? Yes No Not sure		Q15. What did you like best about your most recent walk or bicycle ride to school? Fill in the bubbles of all that apply to you. Getting exercise Being outside Being with friends or family Helping the environment Other (please tell us)			
COMMENTS: Please feel free to commo	ent on walk	ing or bicycling t	to and from s	chool.	

For the following questions, please answer the questions based on the MOST RECENT time that you walked or