

**CITY OF LA CROSSE, WISCONSIN
CITY PLAN COMMISSION
REPORT
October 4, 2021**

➤ **AGENDA ITEM – 21-1276 (Jack Zabrowski)**

Resolution adopting the City of La Crosse Safe Routes to School Plan 2020.

➤ **ROUTING:** F&P 10.7.2021

➤ **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

In 2007, La Crosse was the first city in Wisconsin to adopt a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) plan. Our current plan is 14 years old, mostly completed and decreasing in relevance. Nationally, walking and bicycling to school has declined dramatically, from 50% of K-8th grade students in the 1960s to 11% in 2017. Recently, a troubling new trend has emerged: a steady increase in the number of pedestrian and bicycle crashes with cars. Our Safe Routes to School (SRTS) plan seeks to reverse the decline of walking and bicycling and increase safety through a set of strategies known as the five “Es” — Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Engineering, and Evaluation. Recently SRTS programs have added a sixth E, Equity, recognizing that low-income residents are more likely to walk to school and are disproportionately exposed to traffic and personal safety challenges. This plan uses equity considerations to prioritize investments around schools in La Crosse that have both high numbers of students eligible for free and reduced lunch, and a high percentage of students that live nearby.

The public engagement process took place before and during the initial outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and our Consultant, Toole Design, and City staff had to be flexible and innovative to gather as much feedback as possible. In December of 2019 Toole Design staff traveled to La Crosse, during this time they; conducted field observations of the drop-off/pick up traffic patterns around every school in La Crosse, surveyed school principals on problem areas, facilitated a public meeting, and lead four La Crosse student focus groups. In May 2020 a parent/guardian survey was published that elicited feedback on draft plans. The information from all of the above outreach was then integrated into the final draft document.

At the December 14, 2020 Safe Routes to School Plan Steering Committee meeting the plan was approved and the committee designated the City of La Crosse Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory committee to oversee its implementation. One temporary demonstration project has already been completed on 8th Street and one Capital Improvement Project for traffic calming around Northside Elementary has been funded in the City of La Crosse 2022 budget. Projects prescribed in this plan will be submitted as part of the Capital Improvement Project process.

➤ **GENERAL LOCATION:**

The entire city of La Crosse with a traffic-calming infrastructure focus; around schools, connecting schools to other nearby schools, and connecting residential concentrations of

students to schools.

➤ **RECOMMENDATION OF OTHER BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS:**

Approved by Safe Routes to School Plan Steering Committee December 14, 2020

➤ **CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:**

Adoption and implementation of this plan would be consistent with the smart growth guiding principles of our Comprehensive Plan, specifically, creating walkable neighborhoods and providing a variety of transportation choices.

➤ **PLANNING RECOMMENDATION:**

The City of La Crosse Safe Routes to School Plan 2020 is recommended for adoption.