

Safe Routes to School Letter of Support for HF 1108

2/22/2021

RE: Support for House File 1108

To: Representative Fue Lee, Chair, Capital Investment Committee, Minnesota House of Representatives

The Friends of the Jackson County Trails Committee formed in 1998 to help develop a trail system throughout Jackson County, improve the way of life in our area, with dreams of bringing families, friends and communities together, and provide a safer means of outdoor activity.

Since 2012, Friends of the Jackson County Trails Committee has supported Safe Routes to School programming for Jackson County School Districts. Over the past several years, we have developed sustainable relationships with communities and schools in Jackson County, including Jackson County Central Schools and Heron Lake-Okabena School District, local public health (Statewide Health Improvement Partnership), the City of Jackson, the City of Lakefield, the City of Heron Lake, Bike Alliance of Minnesota, and the Southwest Regional Development Commission.

During the 2012/2013 school year, Jackson County Central School districts were awarded funding to create Safe Routes to School Plans for Riverside Elementary (Jackson, MN), Jackson County Middle School (Lakefield, MN), and Pleasantview Elementary (Lakefield, MN). Since then, the cities of Jackson and Lakefield have seen enhancements in engineering, education, encouragement, enforcement, evaluation, and as of recently—equity.

The School Districts SRTS Planning has shown positive outcomes including, but not limited to:

- Implementing safer intersection crossing for not just students, but for community residents.
- Creating safer school zones for alternative transportation users and motorists.
- Enhancing busing efficiency to promote a more active lifestyle.
- Develop creative encouragement activities for schools at school, including “Moving to School Days.”
- Helping reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality, and complete streets.
- A revitalized bicycling and walking culture that has helped create healthy lifestyles and behavioral changes for all ages.
- Creating a sense of independence for youth to walk and bike to school, which helps get them to reach the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity daily.
- Create opportunities for students, regardless of ethnicity and disability, to learn and participate in Walk/Bike/Fun Education programming.
- Building a community where individuals want to live, learn, work, play, and age in place.

The Friends of the Jackson County Trails views Safe Routes to Schools as an opportunity to engage school districts and communities across Minnesota to enhance evaluation, education, encouragement, engagement, engineering, health equity, and now focusing on new ways to incorporate enforcement activities into our SRTS for not just students, but all residents and visitors of Jackson County, Minnesota.

Respectfully,

Luke Ewald, Friends of the Jackson County Trails Secretary



C: Members of the House Capital Investment Committee