

2011

NORTHEAST IOWA SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL SPRING TRAVEL TALLY REPORT



The data included in this report is a compilation of research conducted by the Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D), the Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative (FFI) and the Iowans Walking Logistics Kit (I-WALK). Through these three organizations, schools from six counties in Northeast Iowa—Allamakee, Chickasaw, Clayton, Fayette, Howard and Winnebago—have access to how student travel to and from school from 2008-2011.

Background

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs are sustained efforts by parents, schools, community leaders and local, state, and federal governments to improve the health and well-being of children by enabling and encouraging them to walk and bicycle to school. As a result, these programs help make bicycling and walking to school safer and more appealing transportation choices thus encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age. Evaluation allows SRTS program to track progress over time. The Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative examines student travel mode collection such as the Student Travel Tally, as well as participation in education and encouragement events to track a community's progress to providing a built environment that supports abundant opportunities for physical activity, play and active transportation.

Safe Routes to School Data Collection

Within this report, you will find the regional and school survey results conducted during the 2010-2011 school year as well as comparison data retrieved from previous school years. Each participating school completed the Student Travel Tally classroom survey, provided and processed by the National Center for SRTS. The surveys were compiled into reports in the form of tables and graphs. The National Center's database provided the opportunity to compare Northeast Iowa's data with existing data from previous school years as well as other data gathered from across the nation. More information on Evaluation and SRTS can be found at <http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/>.

2008-2011 Student Travel Tally Data Collections

The Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) applied for funding from the Iowa Department of Transportation (I-DOT) to conduct the *Northeast Iowa Regional Safe Routes to School: Initiative for Healthier Students* project during the 2008-2009 school year. As a result of the I-DOT grant, RC&D conducted baseline data collection in five counties in Northeast Iowa via student travel tallies, parent survey and GIS mapping. The project resulted in Iowa's first Regional Safe Routes to School Plan. The plan, data and maps are available on the RC&D website at <http://northeastiowarc.org/>.

The Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative (FFI) piloted six SRTS schools in the 2009-2010 school year. The pilot schools were awarded modest funds and community members and school leaders attended two workshops hosted by state and national bicycling and walking advocates. As a result, schools initiated bike rodeos, crossing guard training, walk-to-school days, road races, bike and pedestrian education and helmet sales. The schools were also assisted in the Student Travel Tally in the spring of 2010. Six elementary, middle, high and/or parochial schools participated in the collection. The report can be found online at www.iowafoodandfitness.org.

Two movements occurred during the 2010-2011 school year that reinforced SRTS programs in Northeast Iowa. First of all, FFI initiated, launched and supported school wellness teams (SWT) in 14 out of 20 schools in the region. A school wellness team works together to support changes in student health and school environments by means of school gardens, local foods in the cafeteria and advocating active transportation to and from school. As a result, a SWT supports all SRTS programming and nine teams conducted the Student Travel Tally data during the spring of 2010. The second movement, Iowans Walking Logistics Kit (I-WALK) derived from a grant and partnership with Iowa Department of Public Health, Iowans Fit for Life and the Iowa Department of Transportation. The I-WALK program conducted the parent survey and student travel tally to 3rd-5th graders in twelve communities throughout the state. Two communities in Northeast Iowa, Riceville and West Union, were selected for I-WALK and were also mapped by ISU Extension GIS specialists. The map, data and report for Riceville and West Union can be found at www.i-walk.org.

How many children walk and bike to school?

Only a generation ago, children routinely moved around their neighborhoods by foot or by bicycle and that was often how they traveled to and from school. That is no longer the case. The US Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports:

- In 1969, 42 percent of children 5 to 18 years of age walked or biked to school.
- In 2001, 16 percent of children 5 to 18 years of age walked or biked to school.
- In 1969, 87 percent of children 5 to 18 years of age who lived within one mile of school walked or biked to school.
- In 2001, 63 percent of children 5 to 18 years of age who lived within one mile of school walked or biked to school.

Source: National Center for Safe Routes to School,
www.saferoutesinfo.org



About the SRTS Travel Tally

The Safe Routes to School Travel Tally is conducted by classroom teachers who keep track of the amount of student walkers, bikers, family vehicle and bus riders as well as carpool users for three consecutive school days. The students are assessed by raising their hands at the beginning of class to tell their teacher their mode of transportation to and from school and the teacher records the number on the Student Travel Tally data sheet. The data sheets are then collected by the SRTS Liaison of the NE Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative and collectively sent to the National Center for Safe Routes to School for processing. Thanks to the effort by the RC&D, FFI and I-WALK, we have comparative data for the 2010-2011 Student Travel Tally participants. The numbers and averages from this year reflect only the participating schools. For a copy of the SRTS Travel Tally, go to saferoutesinfo.org.



The following chart exhibits participating school districts in the Safe Routes to School Travel Tally for the past three school years. The amount of school district participation of the travel tally has decreased since the baseline data was taken during the 2008-2009 school year.

Participating School Districts in the SRTS Travel Tally Comparison, 2008-2011

Community School District	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
Public Schools:			
Allamakee CSD	X	X	
Eastern Allamakee CSD	X		
Postville CSD	X		
Central CSD*	X	X	X
Guttenburg CSD	X		
MFL Mar Mac CSD	X		
North Fayette CSD	X		X
Oelwein CSD	X		
Starmont CSD			X
Valley of Elgin CSD*	X	X	X
West Cenral CSD			X
Howard-Winneshiek CSD	X		X
Riceville CSD*	X		X
Decorah CSD	X		X
South Winneshiek CSD*	X	X	
North Winneshiek CSD			X
New Hampton CSD		X	X
Parochial Schools:			
St Patrick's, Waukon	X		
St. Mary's Grade School	X		
Sacred Hearth Elementary	X		
Notre Dame Elementary	X		
DeSales School	X	X	
CFS Catholic School	X		
St. Joseph's School			X

Regional Student Travel Tally Results

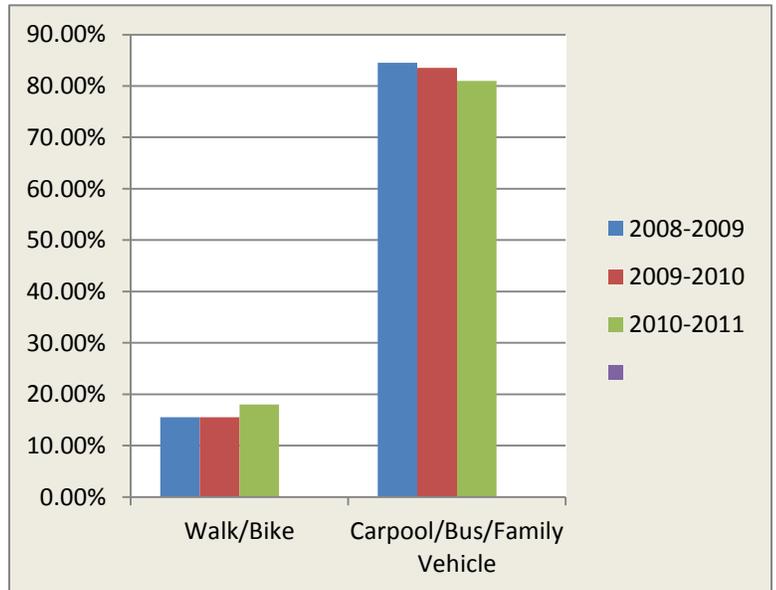
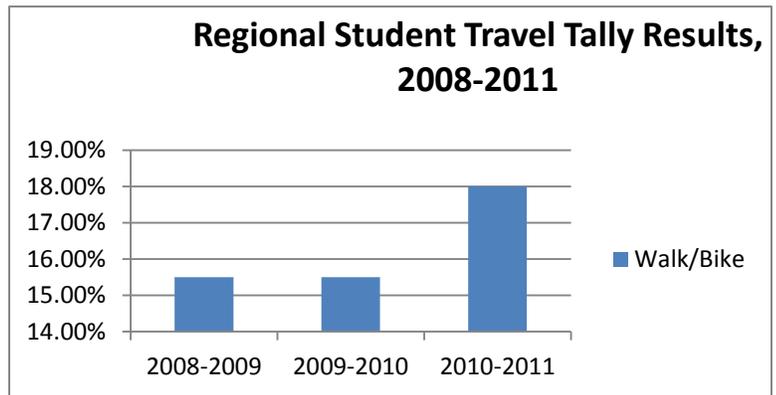
According to SRTS Student Travel Tally data from the 2008-2009 school year¹, 15.5% of students walked or biked in the morning and afternoon en route to school or their homes. 84.5% of students traveled to and from school via a family vehicle, school bus or carpool. There was no noticeable change in walkers and bikers due to weather.

According to the SRTS Student Travel Tally data from the 2009-2010 school year², 15.5% of students walked or biked in the morning and afternoon en route to school or their homes. 83.5% of students traveled to and from school via family vehicle, school bus or carpool and 1% of students took public transit or other modes of transportation. As much as a 5% decrease in walkers and bikers occurred due to rain.

Unlike previous years, The Student Travel Tally data collection from the 2010-2011 school year included schools that are currently unfit for active transport. Isolated rural schools such as Starmont and North Winneshiek are sited between small towns five to six miles away on county and state roads. In order for a child to safely walk or bike to school, major infrastructure needs to be in place, as was done at Valley of Elgin. However, these schools need to be included in data collection in order to grasp the reality of a rural Safe Routes to School model. Even though no child can walk or bike to school safely, data can still assist school administrators and parents to plan effective carpooling and decongest traffic at school pick-up and drop-off times.

According to SRTS Student Travel Tally from the 2010-2011 school year, results from the eleven school wellness teams³ that submitted student travel tally information demonstrate that 13% of students walked or biked in the morning and afternoon en route to school or their homes. 86.5% of students traveled to and from school via family vehicle, school bus or carpool. There was no noticeable change in walkers and bikers due to weather.

Of the eight walkable and bikeable schools⁴ that submitted data, 18% of students walked or biked in the morning and afternoon en route to school or their homes during the 2010-2011 school year. 81% of students traveled to and from school via family vehicle, school bus or carpool. There was no noticeable change in walkers and bikers due to weather.



¹ Schools include Allamakee Junior High School, Carrie Lee, Central Community Schools, CFS Catholic School, Clayton Ridge Elementary, Crestwood Elementary, Crestwood Junior High, De Sales School, Decorah, Waukon East & West Elementary, Elma Elementary Charter, John Cline, Lansing Middle School, Lime Springs, MFL Mar Mac Elementary and McGregor Center, Notre Dame School, Riceville, Ridgeway Elementary, Sacred Heart Elementary, South Winneshiek, St Mary IC School, Valley Community School District, Wings Park Elementary, Yeshiva (Postville).

² Schools include Central School District, DeSales School, New Hampton Elementary School, South Winneshiek Elementary and Middle School, Valley Community School District, Waukon East & West Elementary.

³ Schools include Central School District, Elma Elementary, John Cline, New Hampton Elementary, North Winneshiek, St. Joseph's Community School, West Central School, Starmont, Valley Community School District, West Union Community School District, Riceville.

⁴ Excluding North Winneshiek Starmont and Valley of Elgin from 2010-2011 collection.

Regional Student Travel Tally Explanation

Results demonstrate a steady **increase** of walkers and bikers to school in the past three years due in large part to the collaborative efforts of school wellness teams, stakeholders, parents and Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative's resources. FFI supported the following Encouragement and Education events in our region's communities in order to build capacity and engage a new generation of walkers and bikers:



Encouragement

- *International Walk to School Day*: An all-school walking event held in October
- *Walking School Bus*: A group of students walking together to school with adults. Decorah and New Hampton are the two communities in the region who currently have walking school buses. Decorah's WSB program developed from one route to three and also involves afternoon routes to childcare centers and art studios. New Hampton piloted the WSB this past spring and continued to engage parents over the summer for a more sustainable program in the fall.
- *Bike Rack Challenge*: A region-wide competition that challenged tech. ed. classrooms to create a bike rack for their school utilizing recycled materials. Six schools participated in the Bike Rack Challenge and five judges across the state choose Valley of Elgin as the winner.
- *Bike to Work Week*: A week-long promotion of riding a bicycle to work or school. The Winneshiek Energy District and FFI organized Bike to Work Week in Decorah, IA. The Energy District promoted the events as a means of saving energy and reducing our carbon footprint while FFI focused on the health and wellness benefits of riding a bike to and from work.
- *Go the Distance Day*: An all-school walking event held in May.
- *Team Rides*: As part of Discovery Camp, middle school students participated in an organized bike ride with adults on the Trout Run Trail.
- *GIS Community Mapping*: Twelve students from Luther College partnered with FFI to map six communities (Decorah, Waukon, New Hampton, Valley of Elgin, Elkader and Ossian) to locate safe walking and biking routes and infrastructure assessment. These posters were shared with community members.
- *Community Mapping Forums*: Decorah and New Hampton both accepted the invitation to host a community-mapping forum in which FFI staff engaged community members around GIS maps and safe routes initiatives. Community members included hospital staff, city council members, parks and recreation, parents, teachers, and school administration.

Education

- *Bike Rodeo*: Sixteen second-graders at North Winneshiek Elementary School participated in this bicycle safety event. It included a talk from local law enforcement about bicycle safety on the road as well as a bike and helmet check. The students ventured on seven bike stations to practice their bike safety skills.
- *SRTS Instructor Training*: In Denver, CO, Heidi Skildum attended the National SRTS Instructor Training Course and became one of only 200 certified instructors in the United States. She joins Mark Wyatt of the Iowa Bicycle Coalition as Iowa's certified instructors.
- *Iowa Bicycle Coalition Bike Summit*: The workshop (held January 28-29) was geared towards grassroots bicyclists who want to better their communities. Topics included design innovation in transit model bike networks, safe routes to school, long-term trail and safe streets planning, innovations in bicycle bridges, green street infrastructure, promoting sustainable food and physical activity with youth, community biking clubs, cycling safety, bicycle injury rehabilitation, new marketing ideas, and urban dirt.
- *Sole Power Presentation*: Sole Power spoke on the power of walking throughout history to high school youth. Students learned how walking has empowered (such as civil protests and the Tarahumara Running Tribe) and abused (such as the Trail of Tears and Bataan Death March) people throughout history. Students learned about each event while on a scavenger hunt outside their school so they were learning about walking as they walked or ran.



The following chart documents school district participation in SRTS Education and Encouragement activities from Nov. 2010-Oct. 2011.

Comm. School District	SRTS Activity	Community GIS Mapping	Community Mapping Forum	Walking School Bus	Walk-Ing Weds.	Mileage Club	Youth Crossing Guard	Bike Rack Challenge	Go the Distance Day	Bike Rodeo	SRTS Travel Tallies	Trail Infrastructure	Intern. Walk to School Day, 2011	Other
Public Schools:														
Allamakee CSD		X						X	X				X	
E. Allamakee CSD														
Postville CSD												(X)	X	Tour de Allamakee County; Fitness Trail
Central CSD*		X					X	X	X		X		X	Staff Gov.'s Challenge; Youth 5k
Clayton Ridge CSD									X					
MFL Mar Mac CSD						X							X	
N. Fayette CSD		X				X			X		X		X	I-Walk site, Amazing Race
Oelwein CSD									X				X	Safety Fair; Fitness Fridays
Starmont CSD									X		X		X	Fitness Trail; Staff Walking Club; Triathlon
Valley of Elgin CSD*		X				X		X	X		X	X	X	
W. Central CSD					X	X					X			Open gym
Howard-Winn. CSD											X	(X)	X	
Riceville CSD*		X			X						X	X	X	I-Walk site, 5k
Decorah CSD			X	X	X	X		X			X	X	X	Sharrows; Bike to Work Week; Sole Power
Turkey Valley CSD									X				X	
S.Winneshiek CSD*		X						X				(X)	X	
N. Winneshiek CSD										X	X			Bus Drop-Off Day
New Hampton CSD			X	X	X			X			X		X	
Parochial Schools:														
St Patrick's, Waukon		X												
St. Joseph's, NH		X	X						X		X		X	
St. Ben's, Decorah		X	X	X								X	X	Sharrows; Bike to Work Week

(X) Trail infrastructure already in existence in this community.

School Summaries

Allamakee County

No schools from Allamakee County submitted Student Travel Tally data. FFI continues to build capacity within school wellness teams and celebrates their growth in encouragement events such as Postville's Tour de Allamakee County and Waukon's Bike Rack Challenge runner-up finish.

Chickasaw County

New Hampton Elementary School: In 2010, 18.5% of children reported walking and biking to and from school. During the 2010-2011 school year, the elementary principal initiated two Walking School Bus programs and hosted a pedestrian safety class with local law enforcement. The middle school principal also initiated a weekly walk for the entire middle school. The high school youth participated in the regional Bike Rack Challenge. New Hampton also hosted a community mapping forum attended by school administrators, city officials, parents and park and recreation staff. As a result, an increase of 22% of children reported walking and biking to and from school in 2011 and 76% of students take the bus, a family vehicle or carpool.

St. Joseph's Community School: St. Joe's collected baseline data during the 2010-2011 school year. The school found that 21% of children walk or bike to school and 79% of students take the bus, a family vehicle or carpool.

Clayton County

Central Community School District: Central has conducted the Student Travel Tally for the past three consecutive school years. In 2008, 46% of students live within two miles of their school. At this time, 25% of students walked or biked to school with the rest of the school population taking the bus, a family vehicle or carpool. During the 2009-2010 school year, 22% of children walked or biked to school. During the 2010-2011 school year, 18.5% of children walked or biked to school and 81% of children relied on the bus, a family vehicle or a friend to get to school. Central continues to innovate new ways to encourage students to walk and bike to school. The community was mapped in 2010, the school participated in various walk-to-school activities and the regional Bike Rack Challenge, and established a youth crossing guard program. The elementary principal is currently gathering bicycles for a class-sized bike fleet for their PE program.

Fayette County

Starmont: Starmont collected baseline data in the 2010-2011 school year. No students walk or bike to Starmont because it is centrally located between three towns. It is not advised for students to walk or bike the 6 miles from any of the towns due to the busy state and county roads a student would need to travel to get to school. 76% of students take the bus, 21% ride in a family vehicle and 3% carpool. It is recommended for Starmont to allocate safe routes to pick-up/drop-off points in the surrounding communities to encourage a walk to the bus stop. Students and staff can also walk while at school on Starmont's Fitness Trail.

Valley School District: Valley has conducted the Student Travel Tally for the past three consecutive school years. In 2008, 39% of students lived within two miles of their school yet were unable to safely walk or bike to school due to unsafe infrastructure. In 2010, school policy forbade students to walk or bike. Consequently, the amount of students walking and biking to Valley of Elgin has steadily declined in the past three years. During the 2008-2009 school year, close to 8% of students walked or bike to school. The population of walkers and bikers decreased to 6% during the 2009-2010 school year and again to 0% during the 2010-2011 school year. The good news is that the students who live within two miles of Valley will be able to walk and bike safely to school due to the finalization of a connecting trail between Clermont, Valley of Elgin School and Elgin. Valley of Elgin's school wellness team is already preparing for more walkers by hosting Go the Distance Day at their school as well as running Tiger Tracks, a mileage club for elementary age students. The high school youth won the regional Bike Rack Challenge.

Celebrate with our rural schools!

Despite being sited on county and state roads unsuitable for safe walking and biking, isolated rural schools are still active in their SRTS programming.

- **North Winneshiek**, located five miles from the nearest towns of Hesper and Burr Oak, conducted their first bike rodeo on campus in May 2011.
- **Starmont** students cannot walk to school but they can walk while at school! The school is located centrally between three communities so they celebrated Go the Distance Day by walking on their developing Fitness Trail. Starmont also borrows bikes from a nearby Lutheran camp for bicycle safety week in PE class.
- This might be the last year **Valley of Elgin** reports zero walkers and bikers. Fayette County Trails Committee and the Turkey River Recreational Corridor, with assistance from Fayette County Conservation Board and Northeast Iowa RC&D, secured funding for a new trail has been constructed to connect the school with two communities, Elgin and Clermont. Thanks to their efforts, safe active transportation to and from school is now accessible for families and students!

CARPOOL? Jump in!

On average, only 1-4% of students carpool to school in our region. When walking and biking is not safe for a family, consider carpooling! It is good for your **health** because it reduces the amount of CO₂ around the school. Carpooling increases **safety** around the school by reducing the amount of cars and traffic at drop-off and pick-up times. It also is good for the **environment** by reducing the amount of gas used to transport our children.

West Central: West Central collected baseline data during the 2010-2011 school year. The school found that 13.5% of children walk or bike to school and 85.5% of students take the bus, a family vehicle or carpool.

West Union: In 2008, three out of every four students lived within 2 miles of West Union Elementary School. At this time, 22.5% of children walked or biked to school while 77% of students rode the bus, a family vehicle or carpooled. A couple years later, West Union was selected as one of two I-WALK communities in Northeast Iowa. I-WALK tallied 3rd-5th graders at the elementary school and discovered an increase of walkers and bikers. I-WALK reported that 31% of students walked or biked to school and 68% rode the bus, a family vehicle or carpooled. West Union also participated in walk-to-school day events, weekly walks at the middle school, mapping and SRTS workshops.

Howard County

Elma Elementary School: In 2008, 59% of children live within two miles from Elma Elementary. In the same year, 11% of children walked or biked to school. Three years later, we see an increase of walkers and bikers with 18% of students walking and biking in 2011 and 82% of students take the bus, a family vehicle or carpool.

Riceville: In 2008, 36% of children live within two miles from Riceville Elementary and Middle School. In the same year, 13% of students walked or biked to school. Three years later, the I-WALK project reported a decrease in the number of children walking and found that 11% of all 3-5th grade students actively transport themselves to school. The rest of the students take the bus, a family vehicle or carpool. Riceville continues to participate in Walking Wednesdays, walk-to-school activities, mapping and SRTS trainings.

Winneshiek County

John Cline Elementary (Decorah): In 2008, 37% of students lived within 2 miles of John Cline Elementary School. At this time, only 2% of students walked or biked to and from school while the rest of the school's population rode the bus, a family vehicle or carpooled. Since 2008, the elementary school has participated in walk-to-school day events, Striders (a mileage club), mapping and community forums. The high school youth were very competitive in the regional Bike Rack Challenge. Decorah is also home to the region's first Walking School Bus and now six WSB routes help students walk safely to school and afterschool activities. As a result, during the 2010-2011 school year, the number of students walking to and from school increased to 7.5% while the rest of the population continues to ride the bus, a family vehicle or carpool.

North Winneshiek: North Winneshiek collected baseline data in the 2010-2011 school year. No students walked or biked to North Winneshiek because it is centrally located between two towns. It is not advised for students to walk or bike the 5 miles from either of the towns due to the busy two-lane county roads a student would need to travel to get to school. 80% of students take the bus and 20% ride in a family vehicle. Second graders at North Winneshiek participated in a bike rodeo and received free helmets. It is recommended that North Winneshiek to allocate safe routes to pick-up/drop-off points in the surrounding communities to encourage a walk to the bus stop as well as walk while at school on North Winneshiek's track and ultimate Frisbee course.



For more information, please contact **Heidi Skildum**, Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative's Safe Routes to School Liaison:

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