



Merrill High School SRTS Action Plan

Merrill Area Public School District
Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program

2020

School Demographics:

Enrollment: 584

Grades: 9th-12th grade

Start Time: 7:50 a.m.

End Time: 3:20 p.m.

Principal:
Mr. Shannon Murray

1201 North Sales Street,
Merrill, WI

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Safe Routes to School Background Information

The purpose of the SRTS program is to provide safe pedestrian and bicycle facilities that encourage healthier lifestyles. Programs can be established to educate students, parents, and the community on the benefits of walking and bicycling to school and provide tips to do so safely. Major SRTS goals are:

- To enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bike to school.
- To make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age.
- To facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools.

SRTS Planning efforts assess the facilities and conditions near school, examine how students are currently traveling to /from school, and identify safety concerns/issues raised by parents and the community. Infrastructure and non-infrastructure recommendations are then created and implemented, sometimes with grant funding assistance, by the SRTS Task Force and other community members. SRTS Plans focus on projects within two miles of an elementary or middle school (Kindergarten-8th grade) and address the 5 E's:

- ⇒ Engineering
- ⇒ Enforcement
- ⇒ Education
- ⇒ Encouragement
- ⇒ Evaluation



The main goal of SRTS programs is to get children safely walking and biking to school.

Merrill High School Background Information

Merrill High School serves roughly the southern half of Lincoln County—the whole school district.

The majority of students travel to and from school in the family vehicle (58%) or on the school bus (22%). In comparison, about 4% of students travel to and from school on foot.

The top three concerns of parents who do not allow their children to walk or bike to school are distance from school, the amount of traffic along the route, and speed of traffic along the route. Over the last 5 years, sidewalks have been constructed that now connect to the high school directly from the closest neighborhoods.



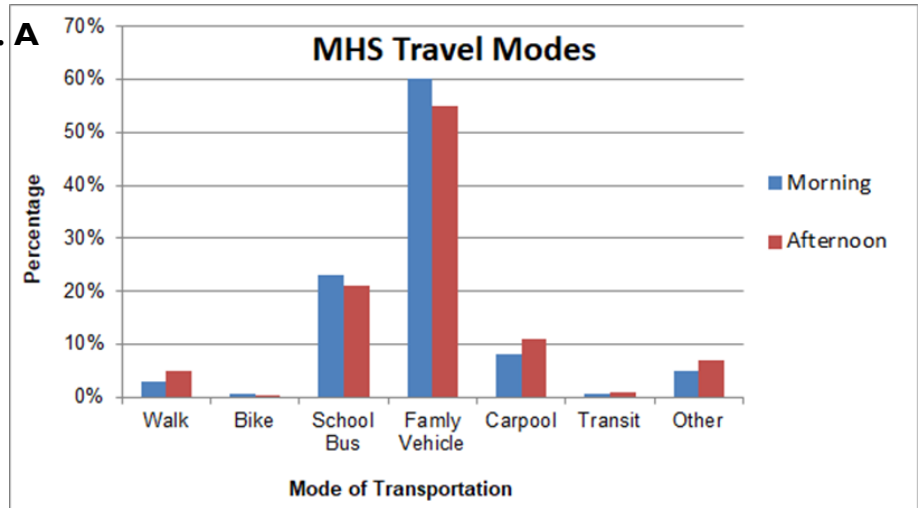
The vast majority of students arrive and depart in the family vehicle (60 & 55%, Fig. A), followed by the school bus (23 & 21%), and carpooling (8 & 11%), with some walkers (3 & 5%).

“MHS Travel Modes” bar chart (Fig. A) shows that 5% more parents are driving their kids to school in the morning & 2% more students ride the school bus to school; but those kids get home by carpool (3%), walking (2%), and other ways (2%).

“Distance” is the most commonly cited barrier by parents (Fig. B).

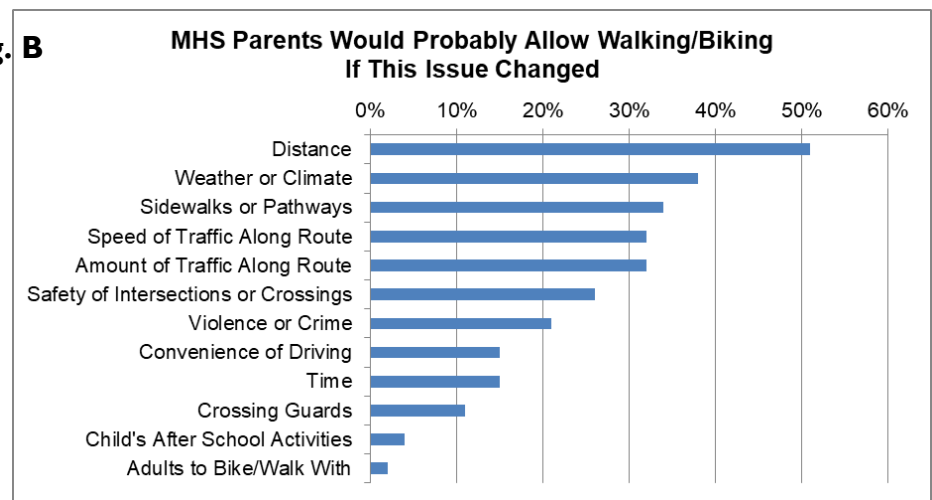
Fig. C shows about 18% living within a mile of MHS and only four (5.4%) walkers; therefore the potential to increase walking & biking may be about 12%.

Fig. A



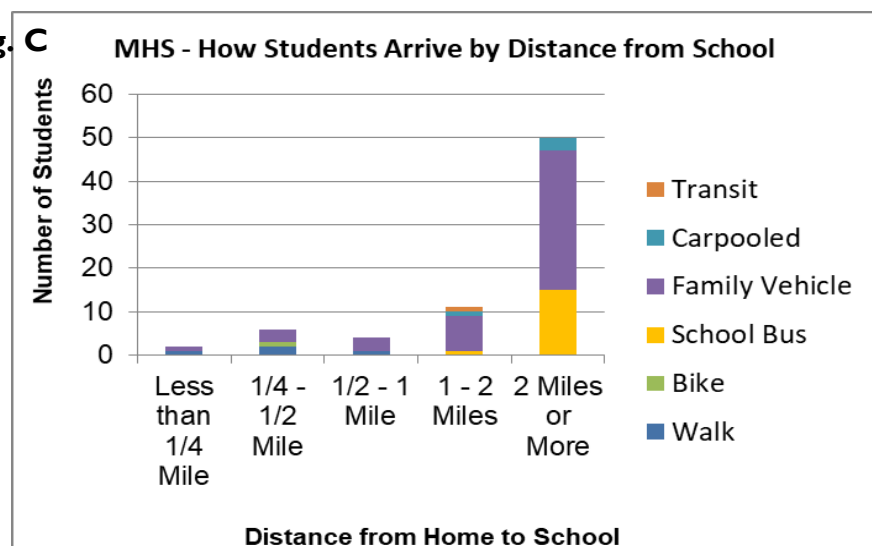
Student Tallies, October 2019

Fig. B



Parent Surveys, October 2019

Fig. C



Parent Surveys, October 2019

Community/Task Force

BACKGROUND

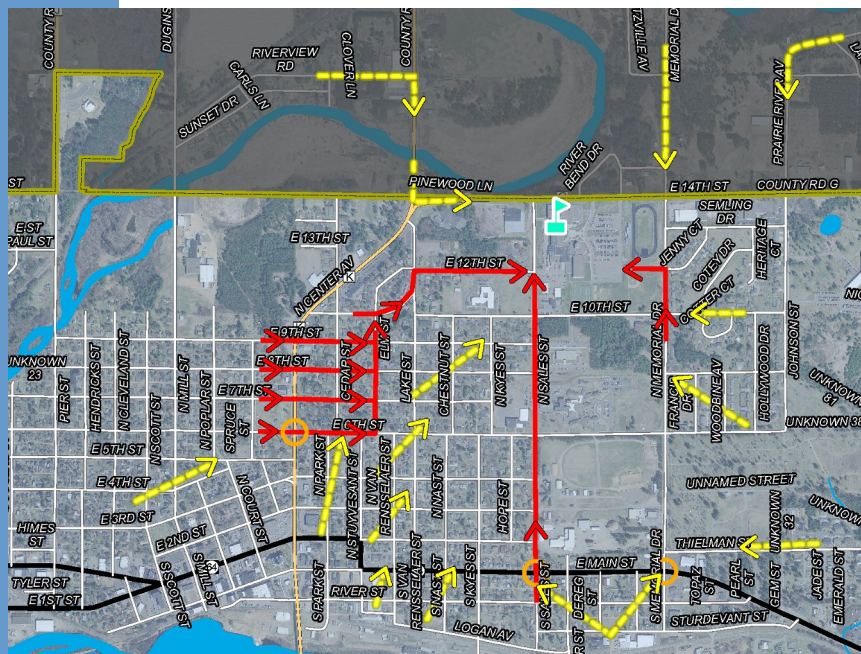
Many positive attributes make Merrill a great place to walk or bike for daily trips and for recreation. Historic downtown buildings and houses in some neighborhoods, surrounded by rivers and towering white pines provide scenic beauty to travel through. Distances are short to walk or bike. Many destinations are within a 3.5-mile, 20-minute, bicycling distance of most residents. Topography in Merrill is generally flat with gradual hills that are convenient to climb on a bike or to walk. All of these reasons make Merrill a good place to walk and bike.

Bicycling education in Merrill is multifaceted. The police department has been providing bicycle education in 3rd and 4th grades. The Merrill Optimist Club along with Merrill Park and Recreation Department and the Merrill Police Department provides bicycle safety training at the annual Children’s Festival, which targets toddlers up to 5th grade.

TASK FORCE

The Merrill SRTS Tasks Force began meeting in the fall of 2019. An overarching issue was identified as the limiting factor to getting more walkers and bikers – parental convenience. Additional issues were reviewed at each school as basic air photo audits were conducted of each school.

School Route Maps: The City of Merrill and NCWRPC created school route maps (Maps 5A-5E) to show the major and minor feeder routes that children use to get to school. As part of the school route map development, recommendations were created.



Map 5E
School Routes

Merrill High School

Legend

- Merrill High School
- Feeder Route
- Main Route
- Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacon Crosswalk
- U.S. Highway
- State Highway
- Local Roads
- Minor Civil Division
- Water

Map 3E Site Assessment

Merrill High School

Merrill Safe Routes To School

Legend

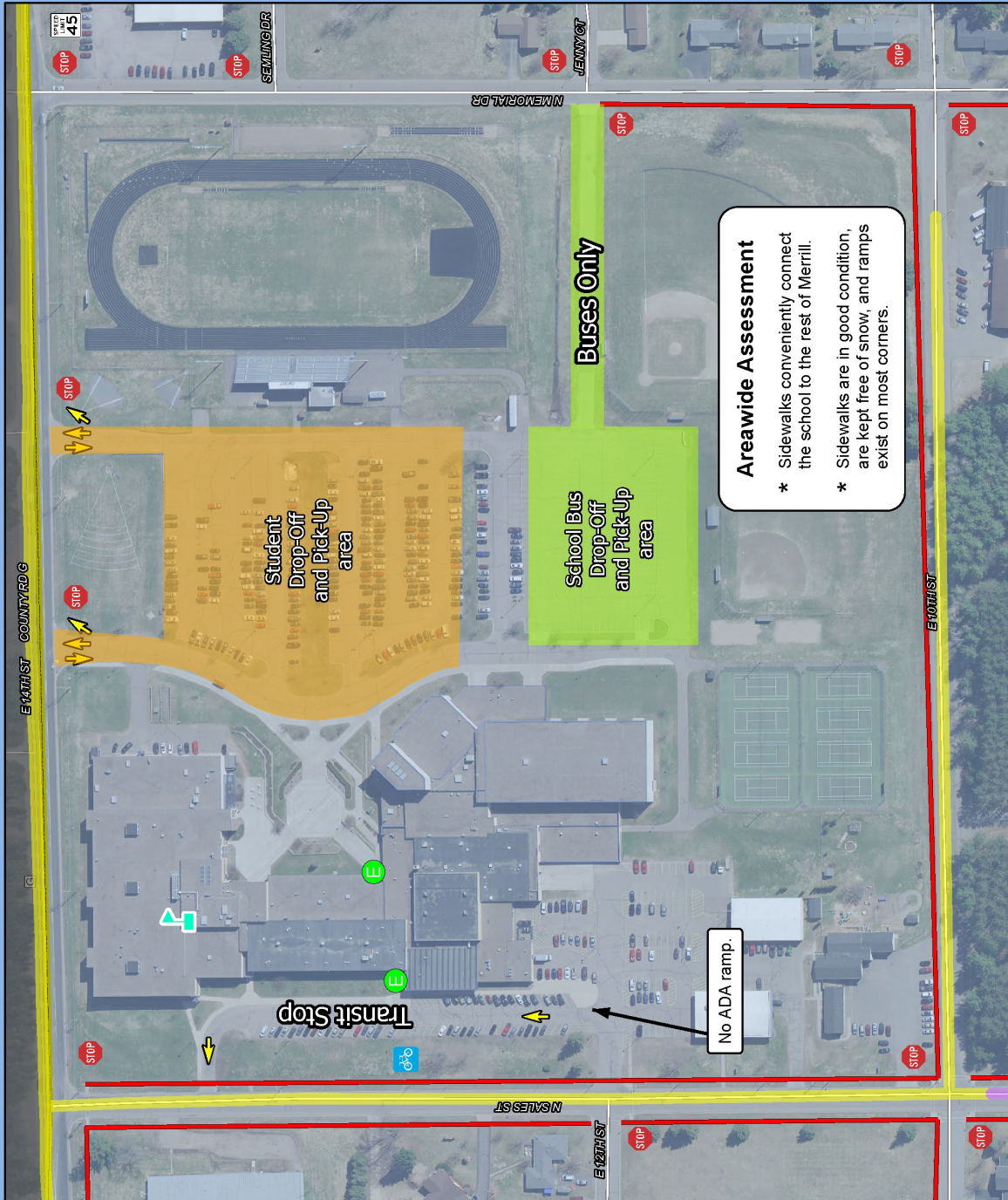
- Merrill High School
- Bike Rack
- School Entrance
- Stop Sign
- Speed Limit
- 15 MPH School Speed Limit (Includes Higher Fine Zone)
- Higher Fine Zone
- Sidewalks
- County Highway
- Local Roads
- Minor Civil Division
- Water



Source: WIDNR, NCWRPC, City of Merrill
 This map is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey. It is intended only for informational purposes and should not be used for any other purpose. NCWRPC is not responsible for any inaccuracies herein contained.



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Map 6E Recommendations

Merrill High School

Merrill Safe Routes To School

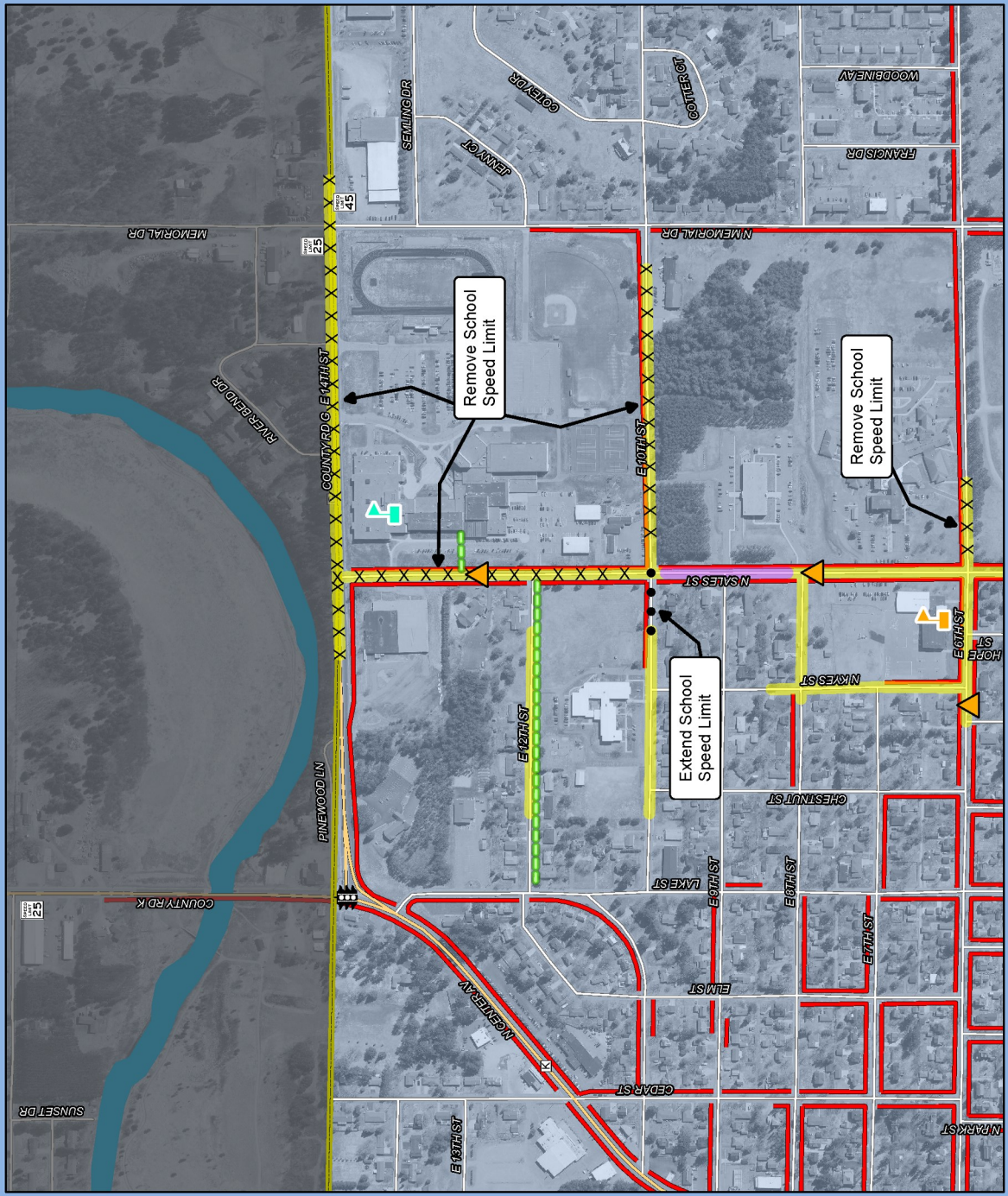
Legend

- Merrill High School
- Washington Elementary
- Proposed Sidewalk
- 15 MPH School Speed Limit (Includes Higher Fine Zone)
- Higher Fine Zone
- Crossing Guard
- Traffic Light
- Speed Limit
- In-Street School Crossing Sign
- Sidewalks
- County Highway
- Local Roads
- Minor Civil Division
- Water



Source: WISCONSIN MAPS, INC. (WISDOT, NCTRPC, City of Merrill). This drawing is a compilation of records, information and data used for planning purposes. It is not responsible for any inaccuracies herein contained.

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RECOMMENDATIONS for Merrill High School

ACTIVITY	LOCATION	FUNDING	LEAD AGENCY (BOLD)	TIME FRAME
Engineering				
Add sidewalks on at least one side of several streets.	See Map 6E.	WisDOT (Up to 80%), local taxes	City	Medium term (TAP application every other year)
Replace all bike racks. See Att. C guidance.	West side of school.	Local taxes	School Dist.	Short term
Remove all school zone signs.	See Map 6E.	Local taxes	City	Short term
Education				
Provide materials to student's families about how to walk or bike with your kids.	School families	Local taxes	School Dist., Nat'l SRTS, NCWRPC, WI Bike Fed	Annually or as needed
Consider starting an additional bicycle training event.	Community	Local taxes	School Dist., City	Short term
Consider school field trips that integrate safe walking and biking practices into the curricu-	MHS	Local taxes	School Dist.	Short term
Encouragement				
Create a "Walk to School Week" every fall.	Communi-tywide	Current staff	School Dist., Police, City	Annually in fall
Review creating a walking/biking club.	MHS	Current staff	School Dist., NCWRPC	Short term Ongoing
Enforcement				
Continue enforcing regular speed limits.	MHS	Local taxes	Police, School Dist.	Ongoing
Evaluation				
Conduct student tallies to see if walking and biking have increased.	MHS	Current staff	School Dist., NCWRPC	After initial changes and as new modifications are
If walking or biking have not increased after all Engineering actions have occurred, then review various educational programming on "Resources" webpage and implement one	MHS	Current staff	School Dist.	After student tally information has been collected