Fiscal Year 2013 Report on

Safe Routes to School

November 2013

Prepared by

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Legislative Request

This report is in response to the legislative requirement that the Commissioner of Transportation report, by Nov. 1 annually, on the department's Safe Routes to School program. Minn. Stat. 174. 40, Subd. 8 requires that the report:

1) Summarize program implementation
2) Provide an overview of grant evaluation and criteria used in project selection
3) Provide a brief description of each project funded in the previous fiscal year, including the amount of money provided from each Safe Routes to School account under this section and the amount provided under the federal program
4) Summarize the status of the federal program or successor legislation
5) Identify any recommendations for legislative changes, including proposals to improve program effectiveness

The cost of preparing this report is under $5,000.

Executive Summary

This legislative report provides an overview of the Safe Routes to School program in Minnesota for 2013, which was a year of transition for the program.

- In 2013 MnDOT solicited for planning, infrastructure and non-infrastructure implementation grants using SAFETEA-LU funds.
- The federal transportation bill, SAFETEA-LU was replaced by MAP-21 in 2012. This changed SRTS from a stand-alone program to an eligible project category under the new Transportation Alternatives Program.
- MnDOT announced a TAP solicitation for greater Minnesota in October 2013. SRTS projects are eligible to apply for funding and are included in the solicitation.
- The remaining SAFETEA-LU funds will be used for statewide technical assistance and a 2014-2015 solicitation for planning assistance.
- The 2013 state transportation finance omnibus package included $500,000 in funding over the biennium for non-infrastructure SRTS activities.

The 2013 solicitation for SRTS received more than 100 applications requesting more than $16 million in funding. $3.5 million was awarded to 13 infrastructure projects statewide. An additional $800,000 went to non-infrastructure SRTS activities around the state, including planning and implementation of local SRTS programs. These non-infrastructure activities will reach more than 50,000 students during the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years by providing local coordination, purchasing bicycle fleets, implementing crossing guard programs and developing safety campaigns.

In addition, MnDOT continued to offer technical assistance to schools and communities statewide and worked with a contractor to develop a Minnesota bicycle and pedestrian safety curriculum for students. MnDOT also continued to partner and coordinate SRTS work with the Minnesota Department of Health's Statewide Health Improvement Program.

In 2013, the SRTS steering committee continued to guide the work of MnDOT staff on SRTS. This included beginning strategic planning exercises to determine priorities for the $500,000 appropriated for non-infrastructure activities over the biennium.

SRTS in Minnesota

Safe Routes to School is a comprehensive active transportation program to help children safely walk and bicycle to school through infrastructure improvements, education and promotional activities. The program follows the 5 "Es" of active transportation planning: evaluation, engineering, education, encouragement and enforcement. Examples of SRTS benefits include increased physical activity, students arriving at school focused and ready to learn and decreased congestion with improved air quality around schools statewide.

MnDOT's SRTS program began with passage of the federal transportation bill SAFETEA-LU in 2005. SAFETEA-LU provided funding to all 50 states to increase safety and opportunities for children in grades K-8 to walk and bicycle to school. All projects were funded entirely with federal funds, as SAFETEA-LU did not require a local match.

Since 2005, MnDOT has awarded more than $15 million to Minnesota communities for SRTS planning and implementation projects. These projects will impact more than 313 schools, with an annual school population of over 190,000 students in grades K-8. Eighty percent of funds have been allocated for infrastructure projects and 20 percent for non-infrastructure projects for the years 2006-13.

Since SAFETEA-LU ended, funding for SRTS has been changing in Minnesota. Under MAP-21, which took effect Oct. 1, 2012, SRTS became a discretionary program.

As of October 2013, MnDOT will use three separate funding sources for SRTS:

- Remaining SAFETEA-LU funds will be used through 2014 for SRTS planning assistance and statewide technical assistance.
- SRTS infrastructure projects are eligible for funding under MnDOT's new Transportation Alternatives Program. The first TAP solicitation was announced in October 2013. There is a soft target of 15 percent for SRTS projects statewide, selected at the MnDOT district level.
- The 2013 transportation finance omnibus bill included $500,000 in funding over the biennium for non-infrastructure SRTS activities under Minn. Stat 174.40, subd. 7a.

Federal Legislation: SAFETEA-LU

The federal transportation bill SAFETEA-LU passed in 2005. It created and funded SRTS programs in all 50 states. As part of this legislation, each state was required to have a full-time SRTS coordinator to manage the program, follow recommended program evaluation guidance and fund SRTS activities that supported the objectives outlined in the federal legislation.

- Minnesota's apportionments for 2005-12 are as follows:

Year	Apportionment
2005	$1,000,000
2006	$1,441,000
2007	$1,897,225
2008	$2,324,104
2009	$2,906,875
2010	$2,906,875
2011	$3,383,120
2012	$2,713,764
Total 2005-12	**$18,573,023**

SAFETEA-LU Spending in 2013

In 2013, MnDOT announced a $4 million solicitation for local SRTS planning and implementation projects. Awards were announced in May 2013. Appendix A provides details.

SAFETEA-LU Spending in 2014-2015

Approximately $1.3 million in federal funding remains from the above apportionment. In 2014-2015, MnDOT plans to announce a planning assistance solicitation and provide additional statewide technical assistance, as recommended by the SRTS steering committee.

Federal Legislation: MAP-21

Under MAP-21, which took effect Oct. 1, 2012, SRTS is no longer a required federal program. Instead, SRTS is now an eligible program under the federal Transportation Alternatives Program. MnDOT's TAP program is administered through the Area

Transportation Partnerships in Greater Minnesota and the Metropolitan Council in the Twin Cities metro area. The TAP program now requires a 20 percent local match for SRTS projects and provides less funding overall for SRTS infrastructure projects than in previous years. A solicitation of approximately $13 million for TAP projects around the state opened October 2013.

State Legislation

In 2012, a state SRTS program was established in Minn. Stat. 174.40 "to provide assistance in capital investments for safe and appealing non-motorized transportation to and from a school." The law establishes a SRTS account in the bond proceeds fund, as well as an SRTS account in the general fund, although no state funds were allocated for the program at that time. The Minnesota program follows many of the guidelines established in the federal SRTS legislation. The law also provides specific program administration requirements and evaluation criteria, which MnDOT staff has implemented.

In 2013, the transportation finance omnibus bill included $500,000 in general funds over the biennium for Safe Routes to School non-infrastructure activities.

Program demand

Since the beginning of the program, MnDOT has received 623 applications totaling $104,471,835 in SRTS projects. MnDOT has funded approximately 30 percent of these applications.

2013 Grant Evaluation and Project Selection Criteria

In 2013, MnDOT made SRTS grants available for planning and implementation (infrastructure and non-infrastructure) activities using federal SAFETEA-LU funds. The 2013 solicitation used the same requirements, applications and timeline as developed for the 2012 solicitation. The solicitation opened in fall 2012 with an application deadline of February 2013, and awards were announced in May 2013.

SRTS projects are evaluated by application type using the following criteria:

- All project applicants are required to submit a resolution of support from the appropriate decision-making body (i.e., city council or school board) to ensure that there is knowledge of and support for the application.

- SRTS planning assistance applicants are scored based on:
  - Existence of an SRTS team and champion to lead the work
  - Capacity to collect needed information and identify goals
  - Evidence that the plan will be implemented and there is a commitment to evaluating the program over time

- SRTS non-infrastructure implementation grants are evaluated based on:
  - Quality of the identified project, including the potential for statewide application
  - Existence of a local SRTS team and champion to lead the work
  - Evidence that the proposed project will address identified barriers to walking and bicycling to school
  - Commitment to evaluating the program over time

- SRTS infrastructure implementation grants are evaluated based on:
  - Evidence of planning and evaluation
  - Feasibility of implementing the proposed project
  - Evidence that the proposed project will address identified barriers to walking and bicycling to school
  - Evidence of supporting programs that will encourage use of the new infrastructure or safety improvement

Funded Projects

A list of 2013 funded projects is available in Appendix A, and a map of projects funded statewide and in each MnDOT district is in Appendix B. Since 2005, MnDOT has awarded $15 million to Minnesota communities for SRTS projects. These projects will reach more than 313 schools with an annual school population of over 190,000 students in grades K-8. Since the program began, MnDOT has received 623 applications for $104,471,835 in local SRTS projects and has funded 190 (30 percent) of these applications.

In 2013, MnDOT received applications and awarded the following for local SRTS projects:

	Funding Announced	# of Applications Received	Funds Requested	# of Applications Selected
Infrastructure	$3.2 million	63	$15 million+	13
Non-infrastructure Implementation	$800,000 total	15	$950,000	9
Planning Assistance		24	$400,000+	22

2013 infrastructure improvements selected included improved sidewalks and street crossings at multiple schools, secure bike storage lockers, shared use paths or trails and traffic calming improvements.

Non-infrastructure implementation activities included SRTS regional and site coordinators, crossing guard supplies and staff support, incentives and supplies for events and district-wide bike fleets for bike safety education.

The awarded SRTS plans will be completed at 37 schools during the 2013-2014 school year:

- Six of the nine regional development commissions will complete plans in their region
- The 11 schools not in a RDC area will work with a planning consultant hired by MnDOT

Current Projects & Priorities

In addition to the 2013 solicitation, MnDOT has worked on several initiatives in 2013 that will continue into 2014.

Safe Routes to School Steering Committee

In October 2011, MnDOT established an SRTS steering committee to provide guidance and oversight for the program. The steering committee has 27 members representing cities and counties, regional planning organizations, non-profit organizations, educators and health professionals. A member list is provided in Appendix C.

Strategic Planning

Steering committee members are actively engaged in setting goals for the program, as well as serving on selection committees and providing feedback on statewide initiatives. In 2013, the committee began a strategic planning process to determine the future of the Minnesota state SRTS program. The priorities and goals established during those planning exercises are being used to determine where the new non-infrastructure funds from the state will be spent over the biennium. Top priorities for the state funds include:

- Implementing the new Walk! Bike! Fun! pedestrian and bicycle safety curriculum statewide
- Providing access to bicycle fleets statewide to implement the curriculum
- A statewide resource center, technical assistance and trainings
- Safety and encouragement campaigns targeted to children

Statewide Technical Assistance

Since 2012, MnDOT has contracted with Blue Cross Blue Shield, the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota and the local planning firm Community Design Group to provide technical assistance to schools and communities statewide that support K-8 students' walking and bicycling to school. They offer the following technical assistance activities:

- Development and implementation of bicycle and pedestrian safety curriculum
- Individualized support and resources to schools and communities statewide
- Regional training and workshops

Safe Routes to School Plans

SRTS planning became a MnDOT SRTS priority at the direction of the steering committee in 2011. SRTS plans are one of the most effective ways that Minnesota schools and their partners have used to make walking and bicycling to school an option for more families. The planning process allows schools to identify existing conditions around schools, evaluate assets in the community and develop specific goals for the next 1-5 years to support more children walking and bicycling to school. These action plans include all 5 "Es" - encouragement, enforcement, evaluation, education and engineering.

- 70 SRTS plans were funded and completed during the 2012-2013 school year
- An additional 37 schools will complete plans during the 2013-2014 school year
- MnDOT will use remaining SAFETEA-LU funds for a planning solicitation and technical assistance in 2014-2015

Inter-agency Coordination

MnDOT works closely with Minnesota Department of Health and other partners to leverage SRTS efforts supported by local public health agencies across Minnesota. MDH began supporting SRTS in 2009 through the Statewide Health Improvement Program. SHIP is a comprehensive set of strategies and health care practices for schools, communities and worksites to reduce chronic disease, reducing the estimated $2.8 billion spent on obesity-related health care costs annually in Minnesota. During 2012-2013, SHIP 2 reached at least 150 schools and 89,444 students across the state to implement SRTS. During the 2012-2013 SHIP grant cycle, many MnDOT SRTS grantees also were partnering with their local SHIP coordinators on SRTS activities. MDH also offered SRTS regional training and participated in the bicycle and pedestrian safety curriculum development.

The 2013 Legislature appropriated $35 million for SHIP. MDH predicts that every applicant who requests funding will receive some SHIP support. The next round of SHIP grants will be announced and begin work in November. In anticipation, MnDOT has worked to align evaluation requirements, coordinate regional training, and encourage local partnerships between schools, regional planners and public health agencies. MnDOT and MDH will continue to work closely to support SRTS statewide.

Legislative Recommendations

Safe Routes to School has been popular with schools and local communities, as demonstrated by the number of applications received each year.

Funding approved in 2013 for non-infrastructure activities allowed the program to meet many needs. Over the course of the program, demand (largely for infrastructure projects) has exceeded funding, with grants awarded to only 30 percent of applicants. The most recent solicitation provides an example, with $3.2 million awarded to 12 infrastructure projects out of 63 applications totaling more than $15 million.

In addition, with the changes in MAP-21, future funding levels for SRTS in Minnesota are uncertain.

If the legislature wants to ensure a certain level of funding for SRTS infrastructure projects, state funding could be provided to supplement the federal funds available through the Transportation Alternatives Program.

Appendix A: SRTS FY 2013 Project List

Figure 1: Infrastructure Grants

MnDOT District	County	City	Description	Federal SRTS Award*
1	Itasca	Grand Rapids	SRTS Infrastructure: Construction of sidewalks to fill gaps	$157,968
2	Marshall	Argyle	SRTS Infrastructure: Engineering and construction of sidewalks and crossing improvements	$300,000
3	Crow Wing	Brainerd	SRTS Infrastructure: Engineering and construction of sidewalks and curb extensions	$300,000
3	Wright	Delano	SRTS Infrastructure: Engineering and construction of path	$292,110
3	Mille Lacs	Princeton	SRTS Infrastructure: Engineering and construction of sidewalks and crossing improvements	$299,019
3	Benton	Sauk Rapids	SRTS Infrastructure: Engineering and construction of sidewalk and crossing improvements	$300,000
3	Wadena	Wadena	SRTS Infrastructure: Engineering and construction of sidewalk and curb extensions	$297,418
4	Clay	Barnesville	SRTS Infrastructure: Engineering and construction of sidewalks and crossing improvements	$300,000

MnDOT District	County	City	Description	Federal SRTS Award*
4	Clay	Dilworth	SRTS Infrastructure: Construction of shared-used path and crosswalk improvements	$300,000
6	Olmsted	Byron	SRTS Infrastructure: Engineering and construction of sidewalks to fill gaps	$296,370
7	Le Sueur, Nicollet, Blue Earth	Mankato	SRTS Infrastructure: Engineering and construction of sidewalk and curb extensions	$200,647
8	Pipestone	Pipestone	SRTS Infrastructure: Engineering and construction of path	$245,719
M	Hennepin	Minneapolis	SRTS Infrastructure: Engineering and construction of sidewalks and crosswalk improvement	$296,610

*Not total project cost, federal funds only

Figure 2: Non-Infrastructure Implementation Grants

MnDOT District	County	City	Description	Federal SRTS Award
1	Carlton	Multi	SRTS (NI) - Carlton County: Grant to increase student access to bicycles and bicycling education in Carlton County with the purchase of a bicycle fleet and trailer	$25,300
3	Stearns & Benton	Multi	SRTS (NI) - CentraCare Health Systems: Grant to hire a coordinator for two years to assist five schools in implementing education and enforcement activities	$96,000
6	Goodhue	Red Wing	SRTS (NI) - Red Wing: Grant to fund a part-time SRTS coordinator for two years to implement education and encouragement activities	$27,700
6	Olmsted	Rochester	SRTS (NI) - Olmsted County: Grant for education and encouragement materials and for a coordinator for two years	$83,000
7	Blue Earth	Mankato	SRTS (NI) - Mankato Public Schools: Grant to hire part-time SRTS coordinators to manage education and encouragement activities at nine schools	$52,000
4 & 8	Region 6W	Region 6W	SRTS (NI) - Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission: grant to hire a regional coordinator for two years to provide support for education, encouragement, and school patrol safety campaigns	$71,000
M	Hennepin	Minneapolis	SRTS (NI) - Minneapolis Public	$96,000

MnDOT District	County	City	Description	Federal SRTS Award
			Schools: Grant to hire a SRTS coordinator for two years and purchase education and encouragement materials in Minneapolis	
M	Washington County	Multi	SRTS (NI) - South Washington County Schools: Grant to hire a SRTS coordinator for two years and purchase program materials for schools in Woodbury and Cottage Grove	$62,000
M	Anoka	Columbia Heights	SRTS (NI) - Columbia Heights Public Schools: Grant to provide access to bicycles and bicycle education through the purchase of a bike fleet, bike maintenance and tools for bicycle repair	$12,000

Figure 3: Planning Assistance Grants

Planning Agency	Community	Number of Schools	Federal SRTS Award
Arrowhead Regional Development Commission			**$65,000**
	Bigfork, Itasca County	1	
	Carlton, Carlton County	1	
	Cromwell, Carlton County	1	
	Floodwood, St. Louis County	1	
	Wrenshall, Carlton County	1	
Headwaters Regional Development Commission			**$27,690**
	Blackduck, Beltrami County	1	
	Kelliher, Beltrami County	1	
Region Five Development Commission			**$12,000**
	Crosby, Crow Wing County	2	
Region Nine Development Commission			**$49,000**
	Lake Crystal, Blue Earth County	1	
	Montgomery, Le Sueur, and Lonsdale; Le Sueur & Rice counties	4	
	Le Sueur, Le Sueur County	2	

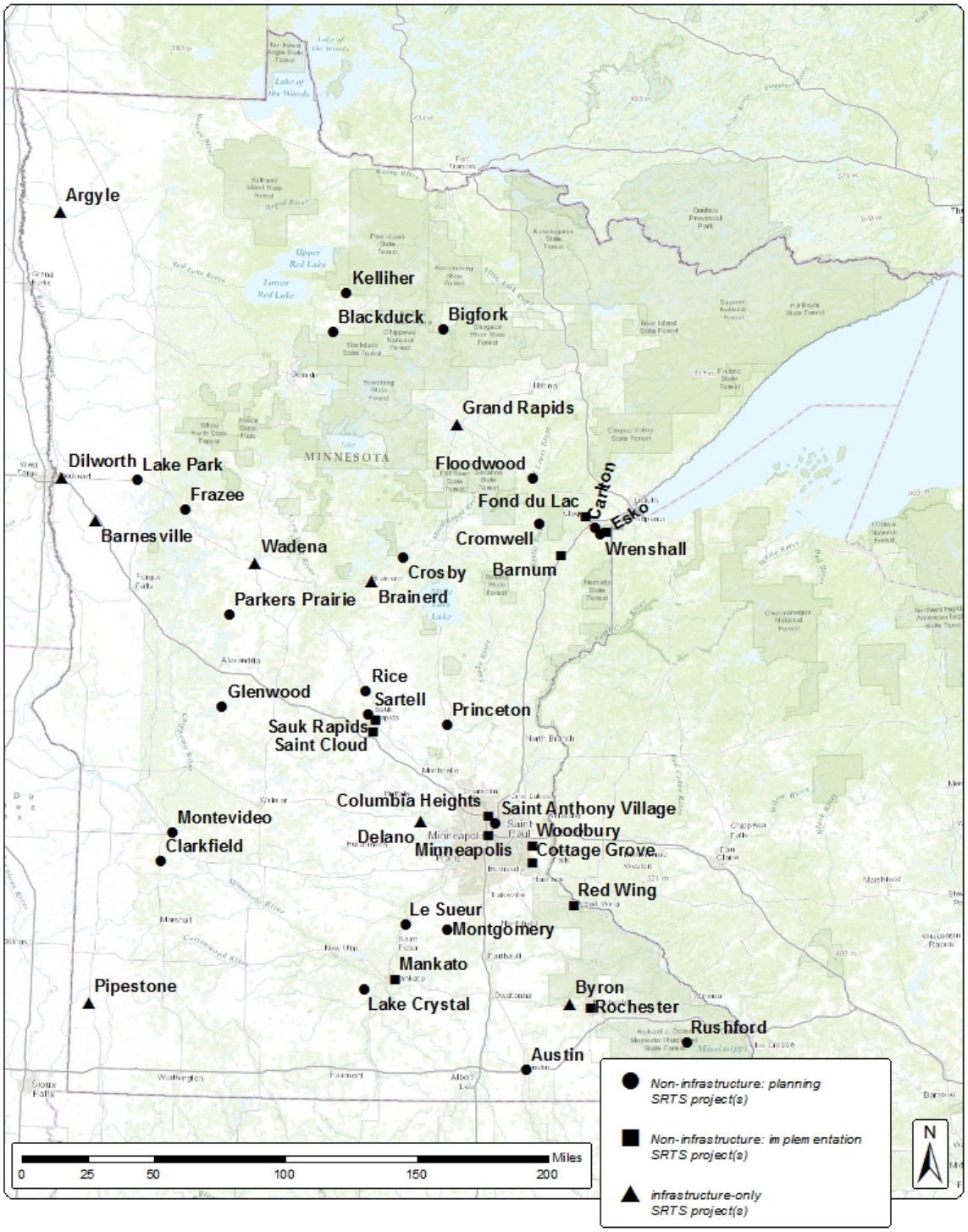
Planning Agency	Community	Number of Schools	Federal SRTS Award
Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission			**$30,016**
	Clarkfield, Yellow Medicine County	1	
	Montevideo, Chippewa County	2	
West Central Initiative			**$41,800**
	Frazee, Becker County	2	
	Glenwood, Pope County	1	
	Lake Park, Becker County	2	
	Parkers Prairie, Otter Tail County	2	
MnDOT Planning Consultant (areas not covered by RDC)			**$170,000**
	Austin, Mower County	6	
	Rice, Benton County	1	
	Rushford, Fillmore County	1	
	Sartell, Stearns & Benton counties	2	
	St. Anthony Village, Hennepin County	1	

Appendix B: Maps of SRTS Projects by MnDOT District 2006-2013

The following maps show SHIP communities with SRTS activities from 2009-2011. 2013-2015 SHIP communities with SRTS priorities will be announced November 2013.

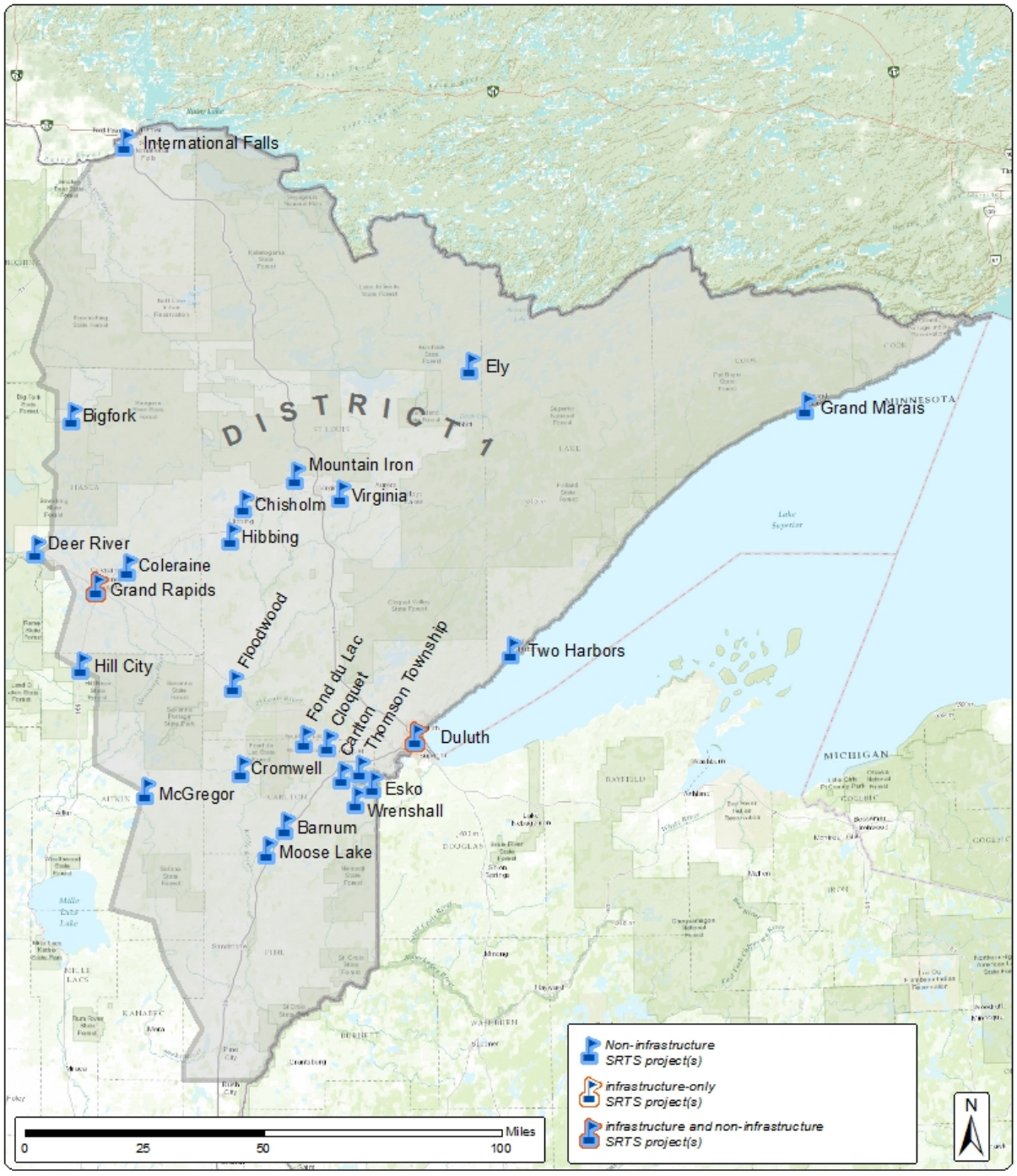
MnDOT Safe Routes to School:
2013 Statewide Participation in Safe Routes to School

Statewide Projects in 2013



MnDOT Safe Routes to School:
District 1 participation in Safe Routes to School
between 2006 and 2013

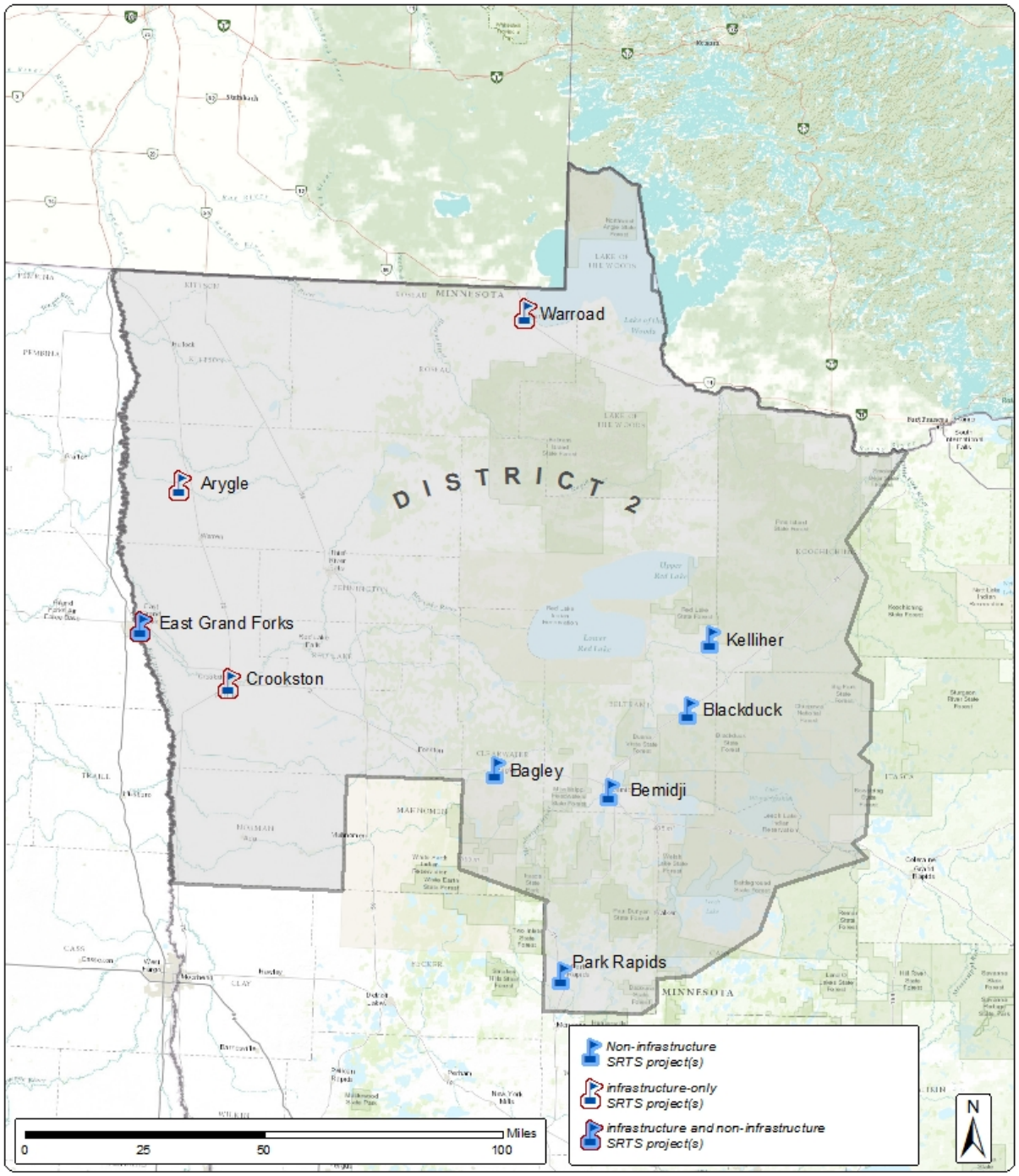
District 1



Map 1: Locations of SRTS efforts in District 1, 2006-2013

MnDOT Safe Routes to School:
District 2 participation in Safe Routes to School between 2006 and 2013

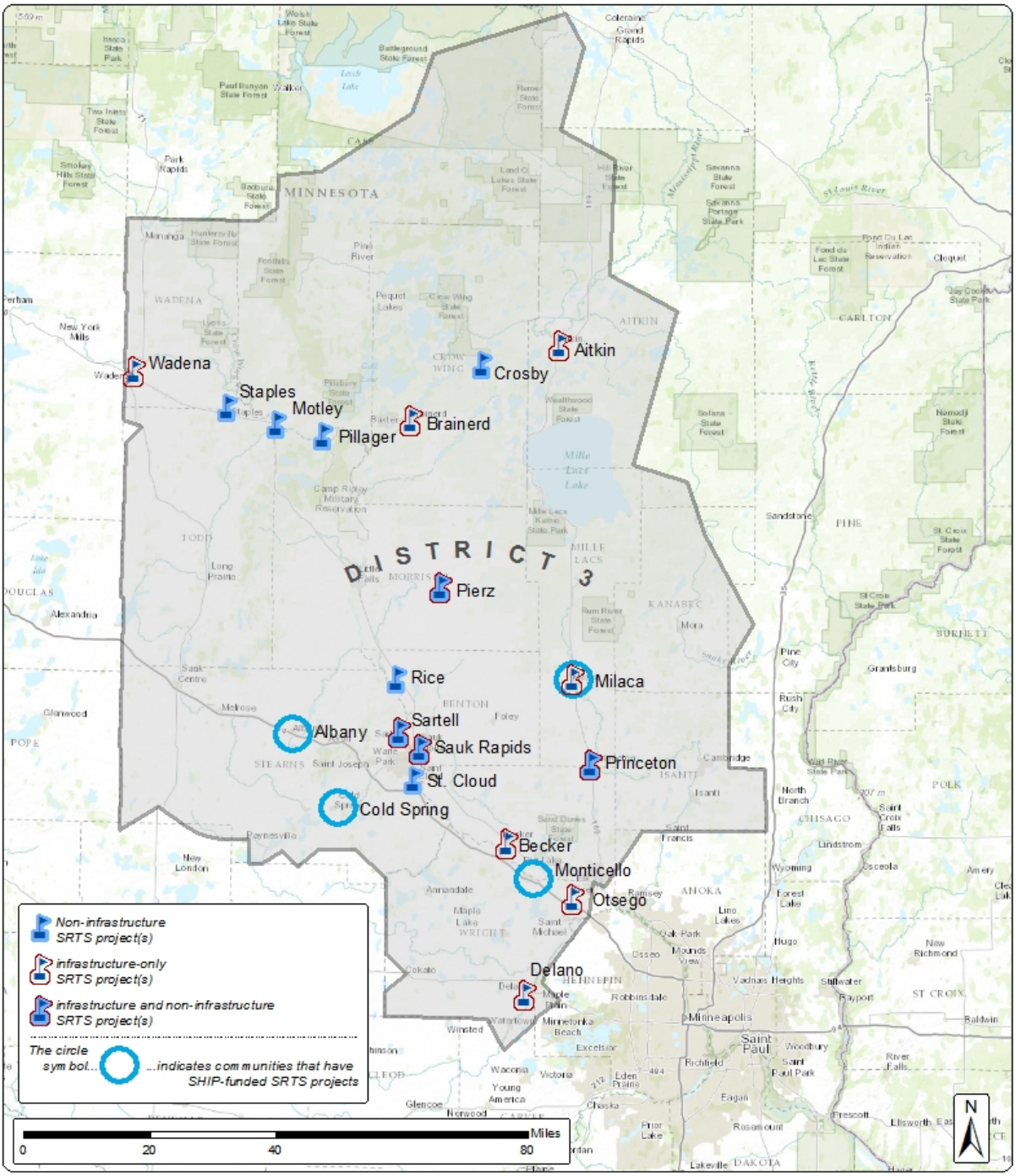
District 2



Map 2: Locations of SRTS efforts in District 2, 2006-2013

MnDOT Safe Routes to School:
District 3 participation in Safe Routes to School between 2006 and 2013

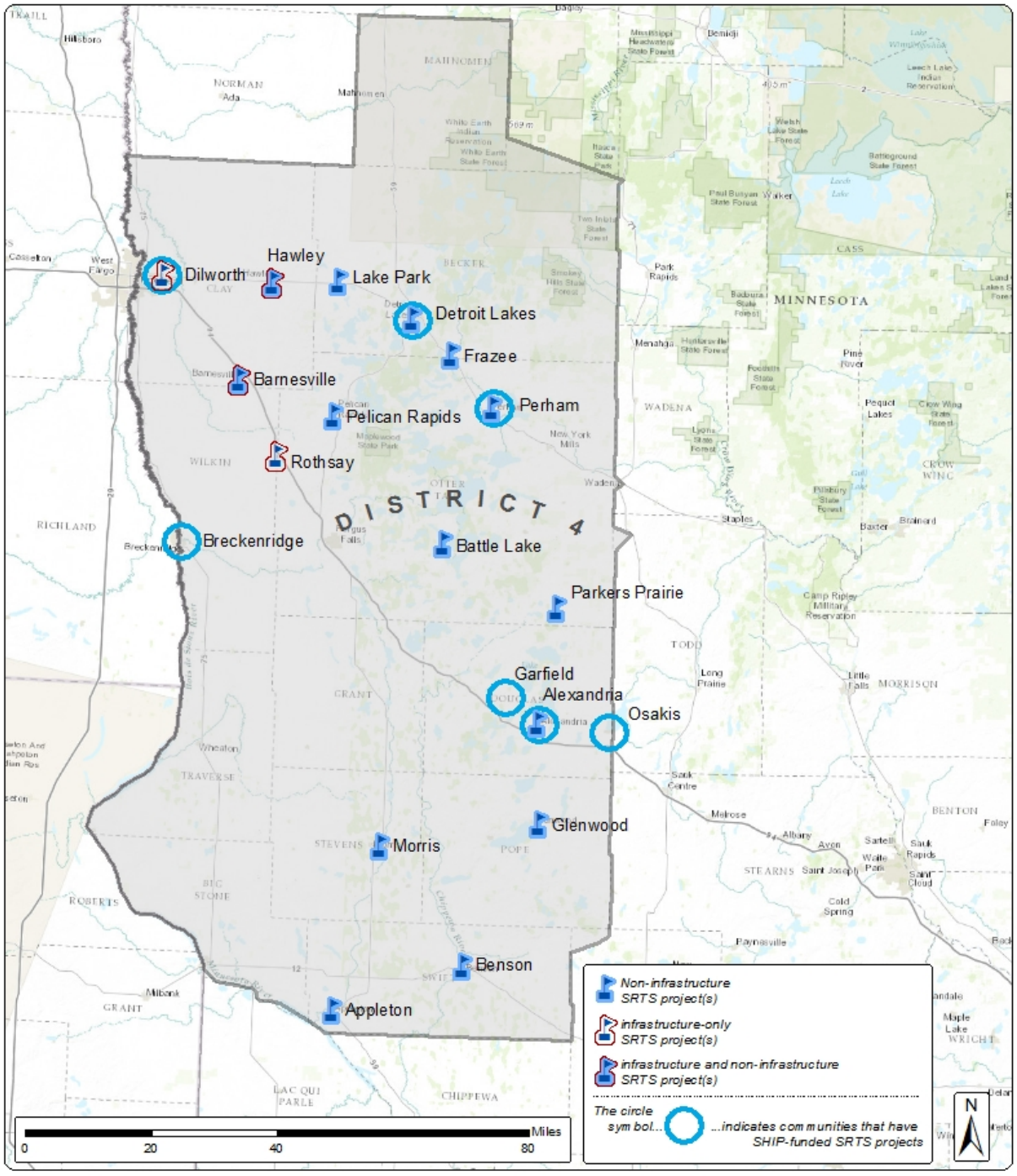
District 3



Map 3: Locations of SRTS efforts in District 3, 2006-2013

MnDOT Safe Routes to School:
District 4 participation in Safe Routes to School between 2006 and 2013

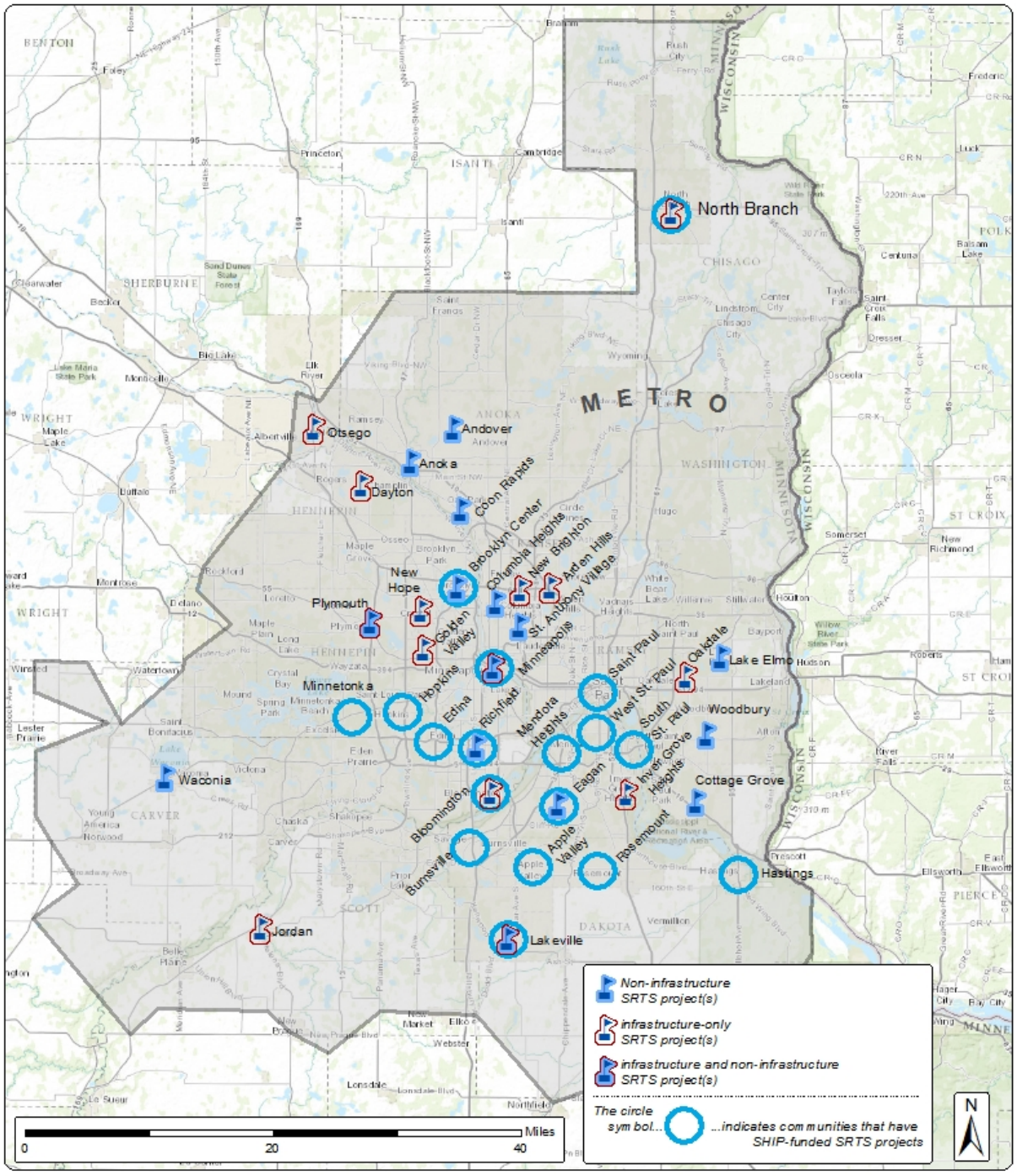
District 4



Map 4: Locations of SRTS efforts in District 4, 2006-2013

MnDOT Safe Routes to School:
Metro participation in Safe Routes to School
between 2006 and 2013

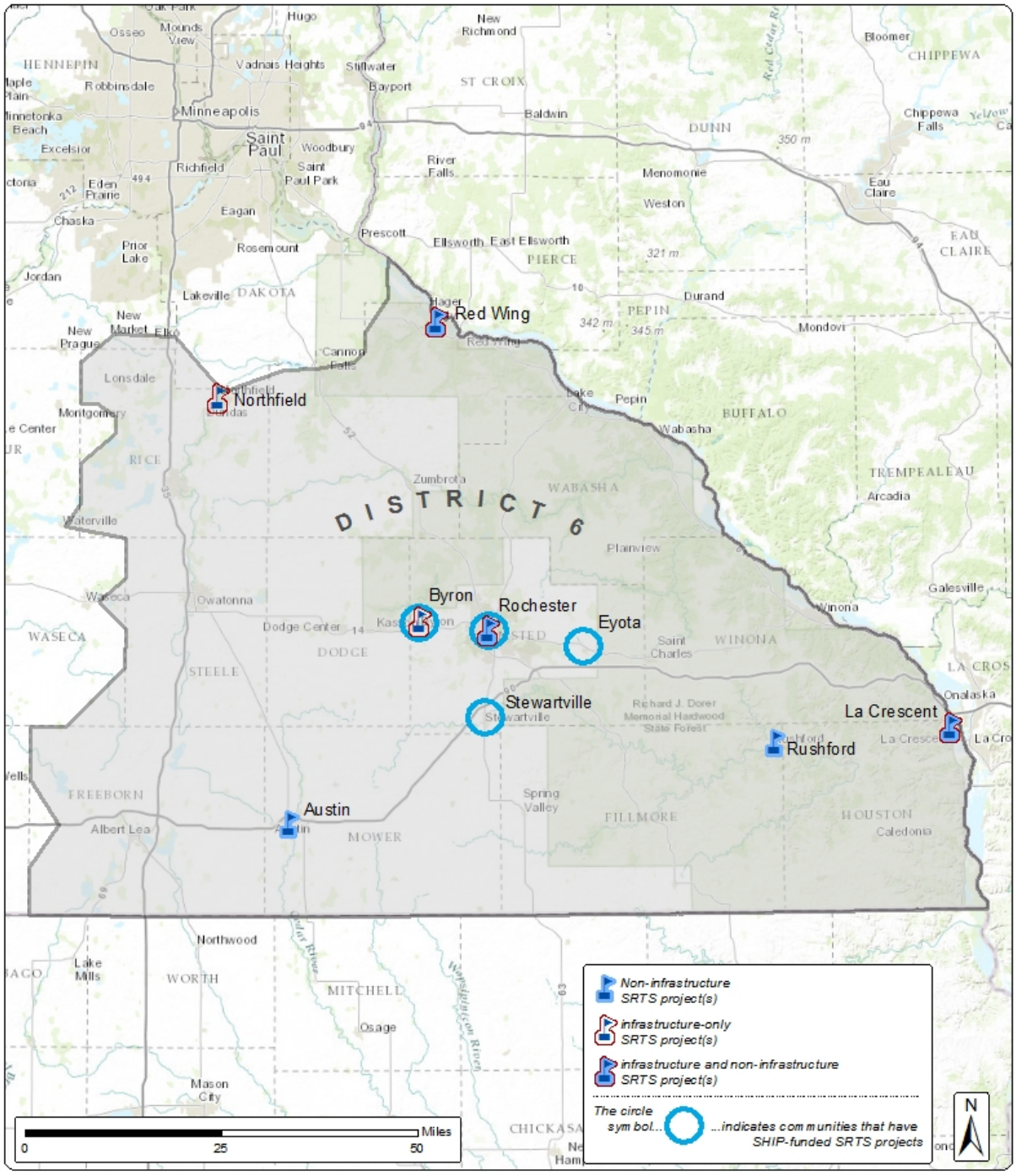
Metro



Map 5: Locations of SRTS efforts in Metro District, 2006-2013

MnDOT Safe Routes to School:
District 6 participation in Safe Routes to School between 2006 and 2013

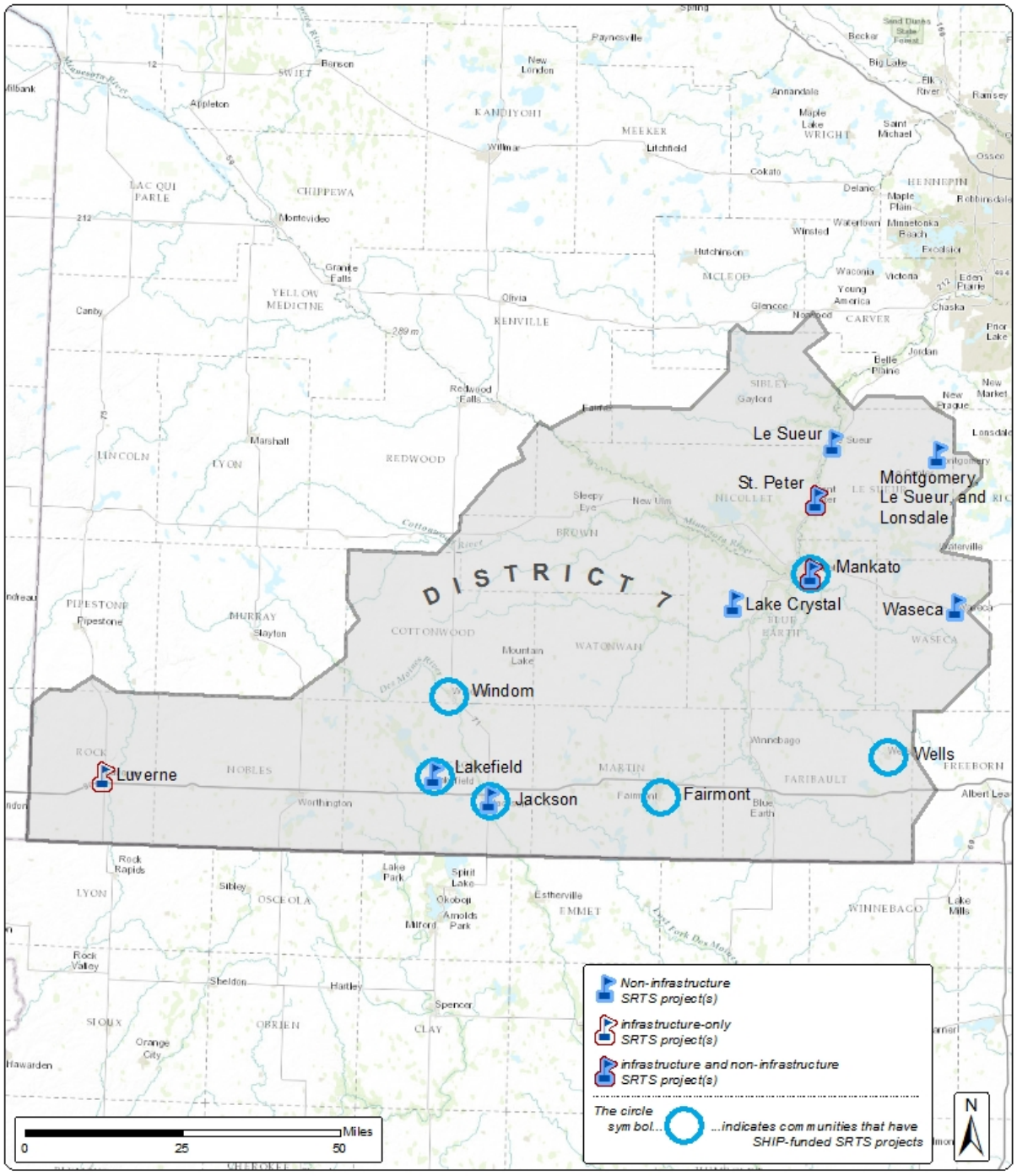
District 6



Map 6: Locations of SRTS efforts in District 6, 2006-2013

MnDOT Safe Routes to School:
District 7 participation in Safe Routes to School between 2006 and 2013

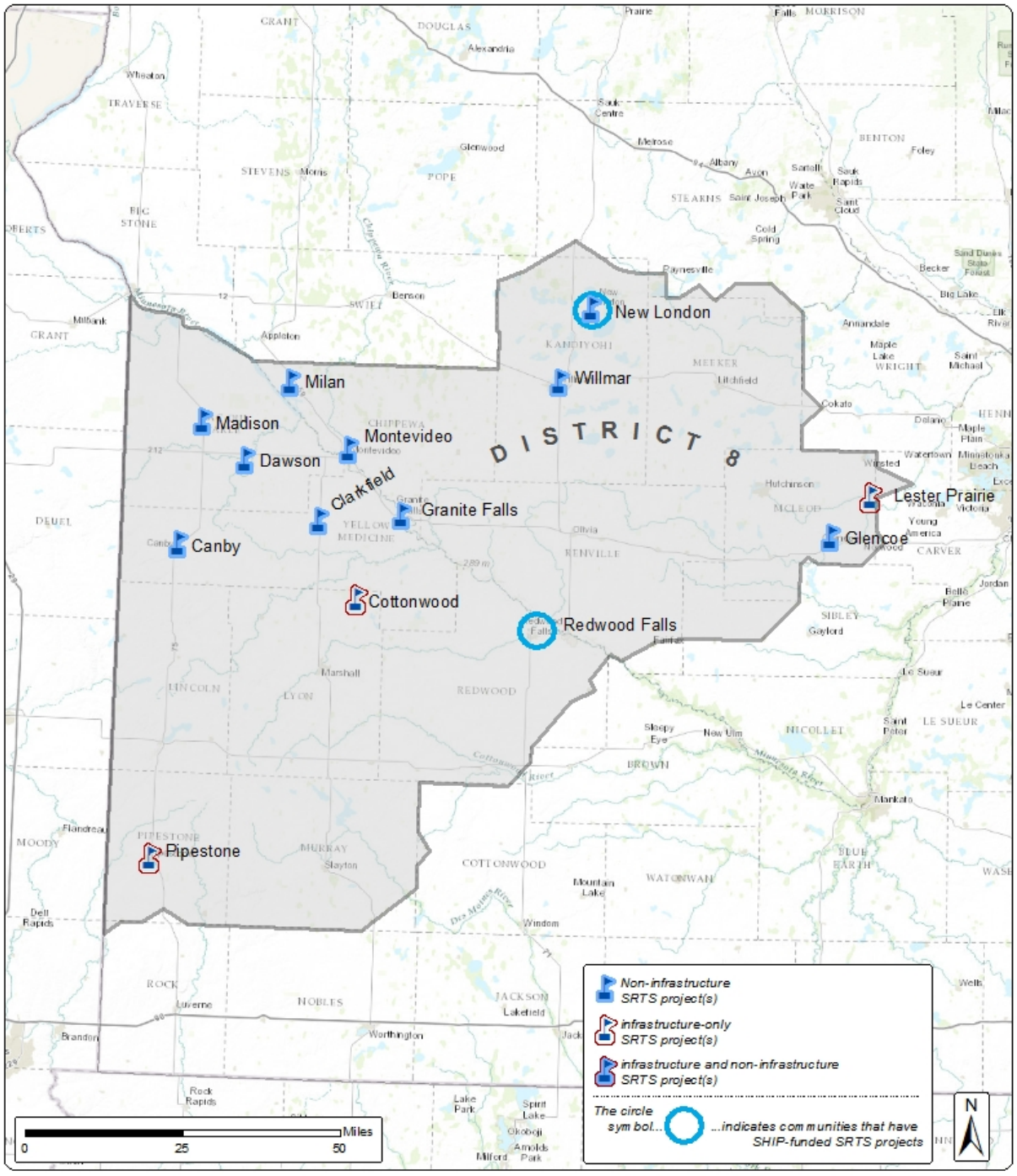
District 7



Map 7: Locations of SRTS efforts in District 7, 2006-2013

MnDOT Safe Routes to School:
District 8 participation in Safe Routes to School between 2006 and 2013

District 8



Map 8: Locations of SRTS efforts in District 8, 2006-2013

Appendix C: 2013 SRTS Steering Committee

Figure 1. Agency representation on steering committee

MnDOT SRTS Steering Committee	
American Cancer Society	MnDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian section
American Heart Association	MnDOT District 1
Anoka - Hennepin Schools	MnDOT District 3
Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota	MnDOT Office of Traffic Safety and Technology
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota	MnDOT State Aid
City of Alexandria	Minneapolis Public Schools
City of Mankato	Olmsted County Public Health
Department of Public Safety	Pollution Control Agency
Federal Highway Administration	Public Health Law Center
Fond du Lac Reservation	Red Pine Elementary School
Minnesota Dept. of Education	St. Cloud MPO
Minnesota Dept. of Education / Health	Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission
Minnesota Dept. of Health	Minnesota Safety Council