2014-2015 Report on

Safe Routes to School

September 2015

Prepared by

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Legislative Request

This report is issued to comply with Minnesota Statutes 174.40, subdivision 8.

174.40 SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM.

Subd. 8. Legislative report.

By November 1 of each odd-numbered year, the commissioner shall submit a report on the safe routes to school program to the chairs and ranking minority members of the house of representatives and senate committees with jurisdiction over transportation policy and finance. The report must at a minimum:

(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; and

(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 the 2014-2015 biennium.

During 2014-2015, MnDOT provided funding for five SRTS solicitations:

- 2014 SRTS planning assistance (federal funds)
- 2015-2016 infrastructure implementation (federal funds)
- 2015 infrastructure implementation (state funds)
- 2015 mini-grants (state funds)
- 2015 bicycle fleets (state funds)

Since 2005, MnDOT awarded more than $20 million to Minnesota communities for SRTS projects. These projects will reach more than 538 schools. Since the program began, MnDOT received 815 applications for $119,587,238 in local SRTS projects and funded approximately 30 percent of these applications. Thirty percent of the overall funding awarded went to non-infrastructure projects.

MnDOT also provided funding for new and existing statewide programs:

- 2015-2020 MN SRTS Strategic Plan (new in 2015): In late 2014, the steering committee and more than 70 individuals from partner organizations began work on a five-year strategic plan for SRTS in Minnesota. The strategic plan will be used by MnDOT and partners organizations to determine program priorities.
- Minnesota SRTS Resource Center (new in 2015): A Minnesota resource center was identified as a need during the 2013 strategic planning sessions and was confirmed as a priority during the 2015 strategic planning process. The new resource center can be found at www.mnsaferoutestoschool.org.
- Walk! Bike! Fun! pedestrian and bicycle safety K-8 curriculum: Walk! Bike! Fun!, the Minnesota pedestrian and bicycle safety curriculum, continued to expand its reach in 2014-2015. Teachers trained by the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota will reach 4,000 students in 11 school districts in the first year.
- Safe Routes to School plans: SRTS plans continue to be a SRTS program priority. In 2014, a record number of schools applied and more than 100 schools received planning assistance provided by a regional development organization or the statewide SRTS planning consultant.

MnDOT also continues to partner and coordinate SRTS work with the Minnesota Department of Health's Statewide Health Improvement Program.

In 2016, the MnDOT SRTS program will continue to offer statewide programs and grants for local projects.

Safe Routes to School in Minnesota

Safe Routes to School is a comprehensive program to help children safely walk and bicycle to school through infrastructure improvements, education and promotional activities. The program follows the 5 "E's" of active transportation planning, which includes the following:

- 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 formally named "The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users," but referred to as 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 because SAFETEA-LU did not require a local match.

The federal program under SAFETEA-LU ended in 2012 and was replaced with different federal legislation called, "The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act," otherwise referred to as MAP-21. In 2012, the legislature created the state SRTS program and provided funding for non-infrastructure activities. Since 2013, the SRTS program had the following funding sources:

- Remaining SAFETEA-LU funds will be used through 2016 for SRTS planning assistance and statewide technical assistance.
- SRTS infrastructure projects are eligible for funding under MnDOT's Transportation Alternatives Program. MnDOT also used TAP funding for SRTS solicitations in 2014 and will do so once more in 2016.
- The 2013 transportation finance omnibus bill increased existing state funding to $1 million over the biennium for non-infrastructure SRTS activities under Minn. Stat 174.40, subd. 7a.
- In 2015, the state legislature made a one-time $1 million investment in state infrastructure funding for SRTS

Since 2005, MnDOT awarded more than $20 million to Minnesota communities for SRTS planning and implementation projects. These projects will impact more than 538 schools across Minnesota.

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.

Table 1: Minnesota's SAFETEA-LU apportionments for 2005-12

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 2014-2015

In 2014, MnDOT awarded nearly $1 million in federal SAFETEA-LU spending for SRTS planning assistance grants. More than 100 schools developed, or will develop, SRTS plans from this solicitation.

Additional SAFETEA-LU funding was used for program administrative costs and to develop an engineering pilot study to look at SRTS plan implementation.

SAFETEA-LU Spending in 2016

In 2015, there is $500,000 remaining in SAFETEA-LU funding. The remaining funding will be used for program administration and to supplement the 2016 planning assistance grant solicitation.

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 requires a 20 percent local match for SRTS projects. SRTS projects have been successful in securing funding through TAP in both the Metropolitan Council's regional solicitation and in the Greater MN ATP TAP solicitations.

MAP-21 Spending in 2016

In addition to the regional TAP solicitations, MnDOT leadership set aside a portion of the TAP funding in 2014 for a 2015-2016 SRTS statewide infrastructure solicitation. Another statewide SRTS solicitation using TAP funds will take place in 2016 for 2017 projects.

State Legislation

In 2012, a state SRTS program was established in Minn. Stat. 174.40, subd. 2(a), "…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. In 2014, this was increased to $1 million for non-infrastructure activities. Additionally, $1 million from the general fund was invested by the state legislature for SRTS infrastructure projects. A solicitation for $1 million was held in 2015.

State Spending in 2016

The state program has $1 million for non-infrastructure activities in the 2016-2017 biennium. The funding will continue to support the statewide programs and grants from 2014-2015.

Funding Summary

Table 2: Summary of Funding for SRTS by Type and Year

Funding Type & Year	SAFETEA-LU	MAP-21*	State non-infrastructure	State infrastructure
2014	$1 million in planning grants	$4 million for 2015-2016 infrastructure projects	$250,000	
2015	$112,000 program admin		$500,000	$1 million
2016	$150,000 program admin, planning grants, engineering pilot study	$1.7 million for 2017 projects	$500,000	

*lists SRTS designated funding

Program Demand

Since the beginning of the program, MnDOT received 815 applications totaling $119,587,238 in SRTS projects. Thirty percent of the funding goes to non-infrastructure projects and nearly $20 million is awarded to local projects.

2014-2015 Grant Evaluation and Project Selection Criteria

In 2014-2015, MnDOT made SRTS grants available for planning and implementation (infrastructure and non-infrastructure) activities using a mix of federal and state funds. The solicitation timelines, schedules and applications varied by funding source and grant type.

During 2014-2015, MnDOT provided funding for five SRTS solicitations:

- 2014 SRTS planning assistance (federal funds)
- 2015-2016 infrastructure implementation (federal funds)
- 2015 infrastructure implementation (state funds)
- 2015 mini-grants (state funds)
- 2015 bicycle fleets (state funds)

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 a 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 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

SRTS mini-grants are evaluated based on:

- Number of students a grant will reach
- Evidence that it supports existing or new SRTS programs
- Ability to deliver a project quickly

SRTS bicycle fleet grants are evaluated based on:

- Number of students a grant will reach
- The plan to maintain and share the use of the bike fleet with students, staff, community groups and other schools.

Funded Projects

A list of funded projects is available in Appendix A. Maps showing the projects funded in each MnDOT district for 2014 and 2015 are available in Appendix B and Appendix C. Since 2005, MnDOT awarded more than $20 million to Minnesota communities for SRTS projects. These projects will reach more than 538 schools. Since the program began, MnDOT received 815 applications for $119,587,238 in local SRTS projects and funded approximately 30 percent of these applications. Thirty percent of the funding was awarded to non-infrastructure projects.

In 2014-2015, MnDOT received applications and awarded the funding for local SRTS projects.

Table 3: Summary of Available Funding, Requests and the Number of Selected Projects

	Funding Amount Announced	# of Applications Received	Total Amount of Funds Requested	# of Applications Selected
Infrastructure (state)	$1 million	22	$3.3 million	4
Infrastructure (federal)	$4 million	39	$10.3 million	20
Planning	$800,000	123 schools	$1 million+	103 schools
Mini-grants	$125,000	69	$135,000	64
Bicycle fleets	$125,000	16	$400,000	4

Infrastructure improvements selected included improved sidewalks and street crossings at multiple schools, shared use paths or trails and traffic calming improvements.

Mini-grants supported crossing guard supplies and training, incentives and supplies for walking and biking events and materials to support bike safety education.

The awarded SRTS plans are in process at 103 schools beginning during the 2014-2015 school year:

- Eight of the 10 regional development commissions will complete plans in their region
- The 30 schools not in a RDC area work with a planning consultant hired by MnDOT

Current Projects & Priorities

In addition to the five solicitations in the last biennium, MnDOT worked on several initiatives that will continue into 2016.

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 D.

2015-2020 Minnesota SRTS Strategic Plan

Steering committee members are actively engaged in setting goals for the program, 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.

In late 2014, the steering committee and more than 70 individuals from partner organizations began work on a five-year strategic plan for SRTS in Minnesota. 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 and where resources should be prioritized. Top priorities for the state include:

- Continuing support for the Walk! Bike! Fun! pedestrian and bicycle safety curriculum statewide
- A statewide resource center, technical assistance and trainings
- SRTS planning and implementation grants

Program Evaluation

Program evaluation and implementation of the plan is important to advancing the efforts of the statewide program. The strategic plan is evaluated annually and reviewed by the SRTS steering committee to ensure successful implementation of statewide program priorities.

Further efforts to coordinate with Minnesota Department of Health to evaluate local program performance will also be explored during the 2016-2017 biennium and is identified as an objective in the strategic plan.

Minnesota SRTS Resource Center

A Minnesota resource center was identified as a need during the 2013 strategic planning sessions and identified as a priority during the 2015 strategic planning process. The goal of the resource center is to raise awareness, provide resources and tools for practitioners, and to share successes and information from around the state. The resource center can be found online at the Minnesota Safe Routes to School website.

Tools and highlights from the resource center include:

- Tip sheets and resources to launch SRTS programs
- Contact information and regional resources
- Success stories and how to get started on SRTS
- Templates, branded materials and free resources for schools or local coordinators to use for events, programs and more

Walk! Bike! Fun! Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Curriculum

In 2013, MnDOT contracted with Blue Cross Blue Shield and the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota to develop safety curriculum for youth about biking and walking that meets state standards. BikeMn trains teachers and school-related staff and provides technical assistance to schools and communities.

The goal of the curriculum training is to prepare trainers who can teach children the skills needed for pedestrian and bicycle safety. Since supporting the curriculum, 11 school districts participated in the training. People who participated in the training reported feeling more knowledgeable about pedestrian and bicycle safety skills, and more confident in their ability to teach the curriculum. As a result of the trainings, more than 1,500 adults were reached by BikeMn. The curriculum will be implemented to reach more than 4,000 youth in the 2014-15 academic school year.

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 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 one to five years to support more children walking and bicycling to school. A total of 103 SRTS plans were funded and completed during the 2014-2016 school years.

MnDOT will use a mix of remaining SAFETEA-LU funds and state funds for a planning solicitation and technical assistance in 2016.

Interagency Coordination

MnDOT works closely with the 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 evidence-based strategies for schools, communities, health care and worksites to reduce chronic disease, reducing the estimated $2.8 billion spent on obesity-related health care costs annually in Minnesota.

During 2013-2015, 53 locations across the state worked on implementing SRTS and reached a combined 598,050 students. During the 2013-2015 SHIP grant cycle, many MnDOT SRTS grantees also partnered with their local SHIP coordinators in SRTS activities. MDH also offered SRTS regional trainings and participated in the bicycle and pedestrian safety curriculum development.

The 2013 Legislature appropriated $35 million for SHIP. Every Community Health Board applicant that applied received funding. The next iteration of SHIP grants will begin in November 2015. 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 is 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.

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

Appendix A: Funded Project List

Figure 1: 2014 infrastructure grants

MnDOT District	County	City	Description	Federal SRTS Award
1	Carlton	Cloquet	Path connection and crossing improvements for local schools	$113,400
1	Itasca	Deer River	Sidewalk connections to Elementary and High School	$203,600
1	Lake	Two Harbors	Path and Crossing Improvements for High School and Kelly Schools	$165,500
2	Marshall	Grygla	Sidewalk, lighting and crossing improvements to Grygla School	$144,960
3	Stearns	Sartell	Sidewalk and crossing improvements for schools	$435,287
4	Otter Tail	Battle Lake	Sidewalk connection along main street to the school	$283,888
4	Becker	Frazee	Multi-use trail connection to Frazee Elementary & High School	$196,032
4	Otter Tail	Perham	Sidewalk and crossing improvements for schools	$216,800
6	Goodhue	Red Wing	Reconstruction of intersection and improvements to crossings	$343,575
6	Olmstead	Stewartville	Sidewalk connection for Elementary and Middle School	$140,000
7	Jackson	Lakefield	Path connection and crossing improvements for local schools	$157,766
7	Faribault	Wells	Sidewalk connections and crossing improvements for School	$262,086
M	Washington	Forest Lake	Path connections for local schools	$471,795
M	Scott	Jordan	Sidewalk and crossing improvements for schools	$80,600
M	Ramsey	Maplewood	Multi-use trail and crossing improvements for local schools	$392,800
M	Dakota	Rosemount	Sidewalk and crossing improvements for schools	$213,000
M	Ramsey	West Saint Paul	Sidewalk/path connections and crossing improvements	$125,200

Figure 2: 2014 non-infrastructure grants

MnDOT District	County	City	Description	Federal SRTS Award
1	St. Louis	Duluth, Grand Marais, Moose Lake, Fond du Lac, Esko , Brunum, Hermantown, Proctor	SRTS Planning Assistance- Arrowhead Regional Development Commission	$105,300
2	Beltrami	Bemidji, Park Rapids	SRTS Planning Assistance-Headwaters Regional Development Commission	$22,700
3	Morrison, Cass	Cass Lake, Little Falls	SRTS Planning Assistance- Region 5 Development Commission	$31,600
3	Kanabec	Mora, Hinkley, Ogilvie	SRTS Planning Assistance- East Central Development Commission	$38,000
3	Nobels, Jackson	Okabena, Worthington, Heron Lake	SRTS Planning Assistance- Southwest regional Development Commission	$17,900
4	Grant, Clay, Otter Tail, Becker	Ashby, Glyndon, New York Mills, Ogema, Rothsay	SRTS Planning Assistance- West Central Initiative	$42,600
7	Faribault, Martin, Watonwan, Nicollet, Brown	Blue Earth, Fairmont, Madelia, Mankato, New Ulm, St. James	SRTS Planning Assistance- Region 9 Development Commission	$89,000
8	Meeker, McLeod, Renville	Dassel, Hutchinson, Olivia, Bird Island	SRTS Planning Assistance- Mid-Minnesota Regional Development Commission	$69,900

Figure 3: 2015 bike fleet grants

MnDOT District	County	City	Description	State SRTS Award
1	St. Louis	Duluth	Duluth Area Family YMCA	$31,520.00
3	Otter Tail	Battle Lake & Perham	Perham-Dent Public Schools District and Battle Lake Public School District	$31,520.00
6	Winona	St. Charles	St. Charles Public Schools	$31,520.00
M	Hennepin	Plymouth	Three Rivers Park District	$31,520.00

Figure 4: 2015 mini-grants

MnDOT District	County	City	Description	State SRTS Award
1	St. Louis, Aitkin, Itasca, Carlton, Lake, Cook	Two Harbors, Grand Marais, Cloquet, Duluth, Silver Bay, Moose Lake, Carlton, Esko, Myers Wilkins, Aitken, Hill City	Arrowhead Regional Development Commission	$29,949.00
3	Kanabec	Mora, North Branch	East Central Regional Development Commission	$6,754.00
3	Benton, Stearns	Rice, Sauk Rapids, Sartell, Melrose	CentraCare Health Foundation, BLEND	$9,769.00
3	Cass	Pine River	Pine River-Backus School District	$2,491.00
4	Otter Tail	Rothsay	West Central Initiative	$2,000.00
6	Goodhue	Red Wing	Live Healthy Red Wing	$3,900.00
7	Blue Earth	Lake Crystal	Lake Crystal Wellcome Memorial School District	$2,500.00
8	Cottonwood, Jackson, Nobles, Pipestone	Jackson, Windom, Worthington, Pipestone, Lakefield, Lake	Southwest Regional Development Commission	$17,917.00

MnDOT District	County	City	Description	State SRTS Award
8	Kandiyohi, McLeod	Glencoe, Willmar, New London	Mid-Minnesota Development Commission	$8,625.00
8	Big Stone, Swift, Yellow Medicine, Lac qui Parle	Dawson, Murdock, Clarkfield, Ortonville	Upper Minnesota Valley RDC	$8,985.00
M	Ramsey	St. Paul	St. Paul Public Schools	$7,000.00
M	Ramsey	St. Paul	St. Marks School	$1,200.00
M	Ramsey	St. Paul	St. Anthony Park Elementary School	$2,430.00
M	Hennepin	Minneapolis	Minneapolis Public Schools	$21,020.00

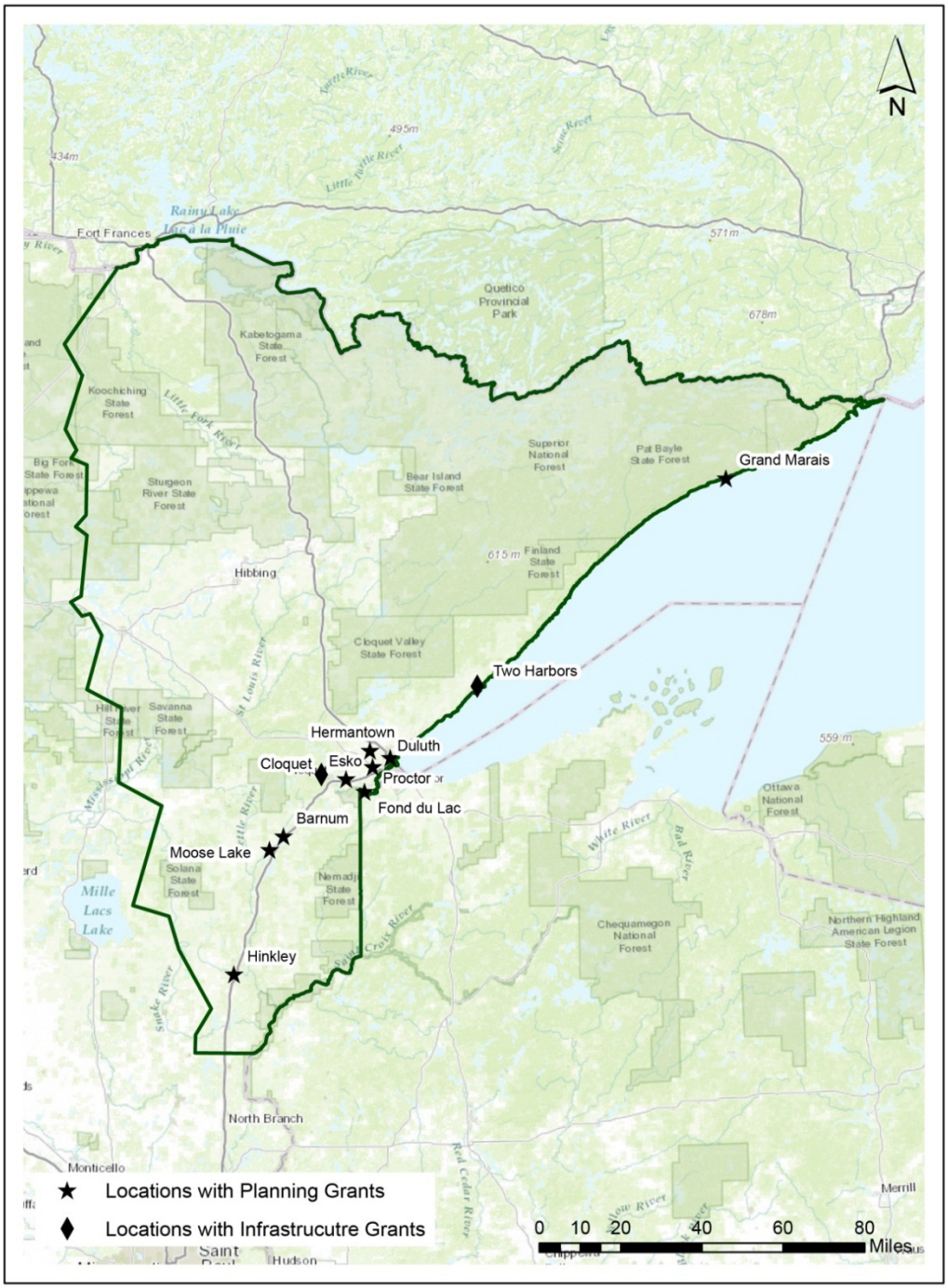
Figure 5: 2015 infrastructure grants (state and federal)

MnDOT District	County	City	Description	SRTS Award
1	Itasca	Grand Rapids	Sidewalk improvements for Robert J Elkington Middle School and Murphy Elementary School	$261,000.00
2	Pennington	Thief River Falls	Multi-Use Trail and traffic calming improvements for Franklin Middle School and Challenger Elementary School	$185,000.00
3	Mille Lacs	Milaca	Crossing improvements for Milaca Elementary School	$84,400.00
7	Blue Earth	Mankato	Sidewalk and crossing improvements for Roosevelt Elementary School	$319,000.00
M	Hennepin	Minneapolis	Crossing Improvements for Lyndale Elementary School	$235,000.00
M	Hennepin	Bloomington	Sidewalk and crossing improvements for Hubert Olson Elementary School, Hubert Olson Middle School, and Thomas Jefferson High School	$185,059.00
M	Hennepin	Edina	Sidewalk and crossing improvements along Cornelia Drive for Cornelia Elementary School	$209,307.00

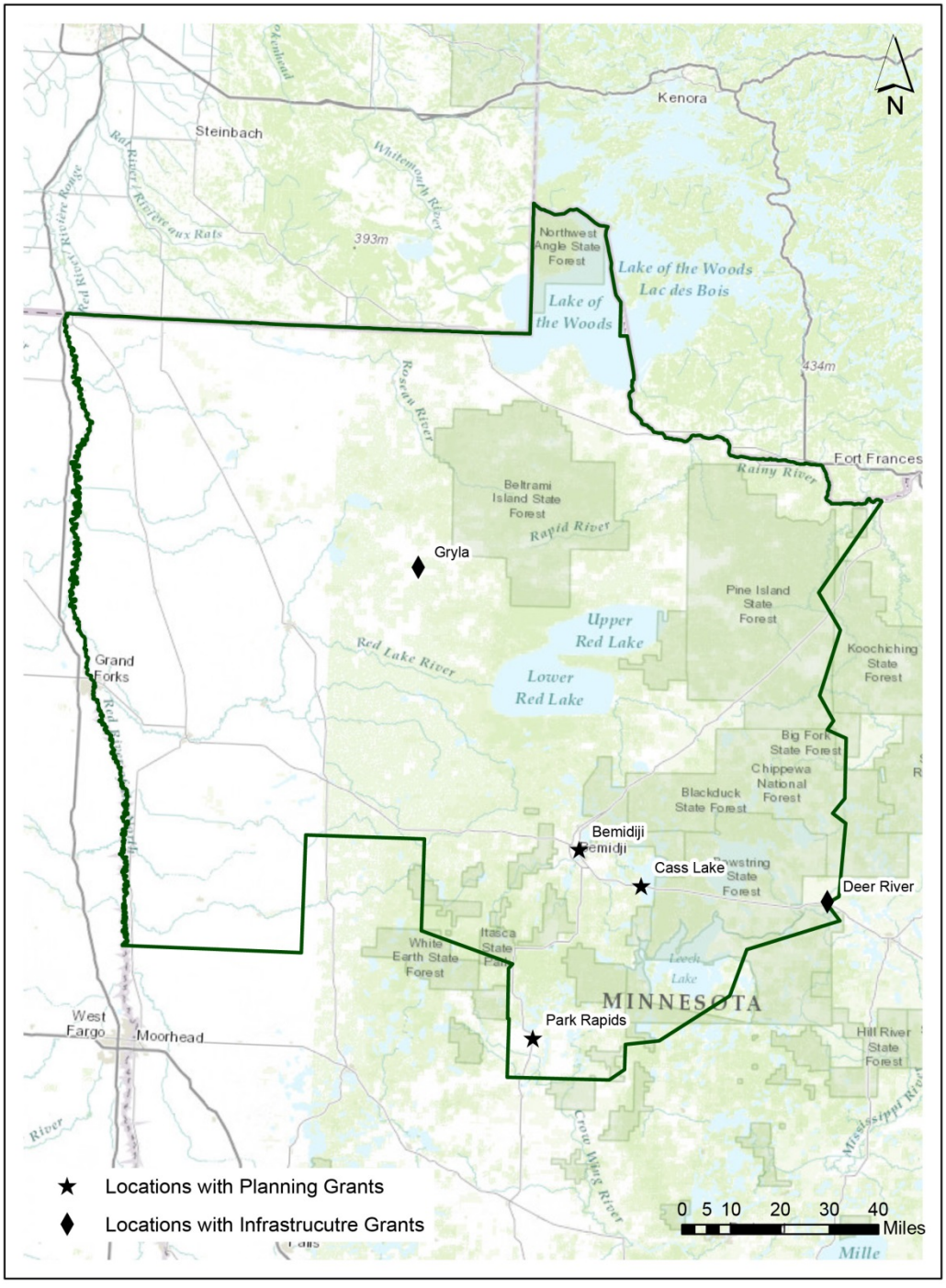
Appendix B: 2014 Maps

The following maps show SRTS projects by MnDOT district in 2014.

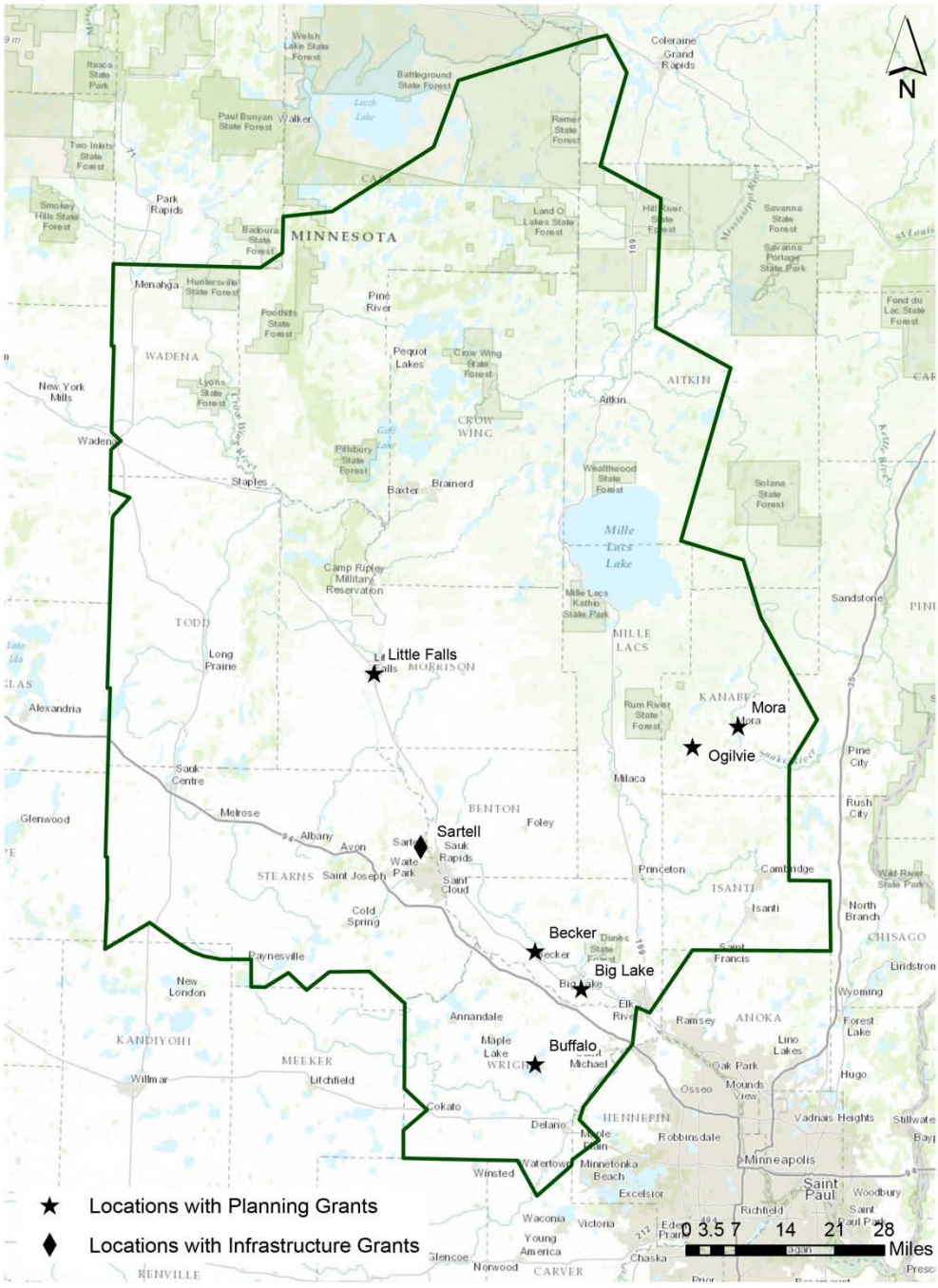
District 1 Safe Routes to School Locations 2014



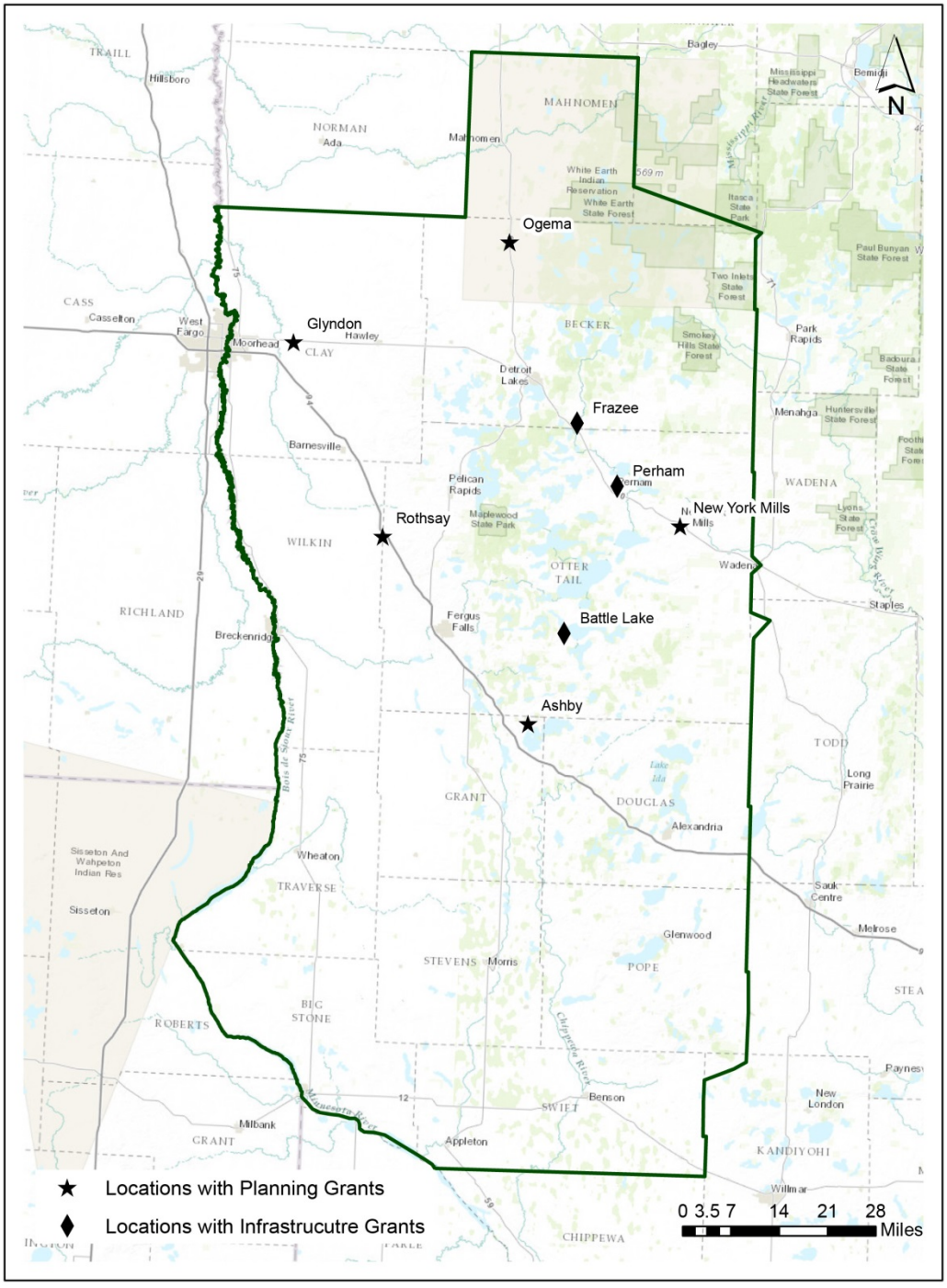
District 2 Safe Routes to School Locations 2014



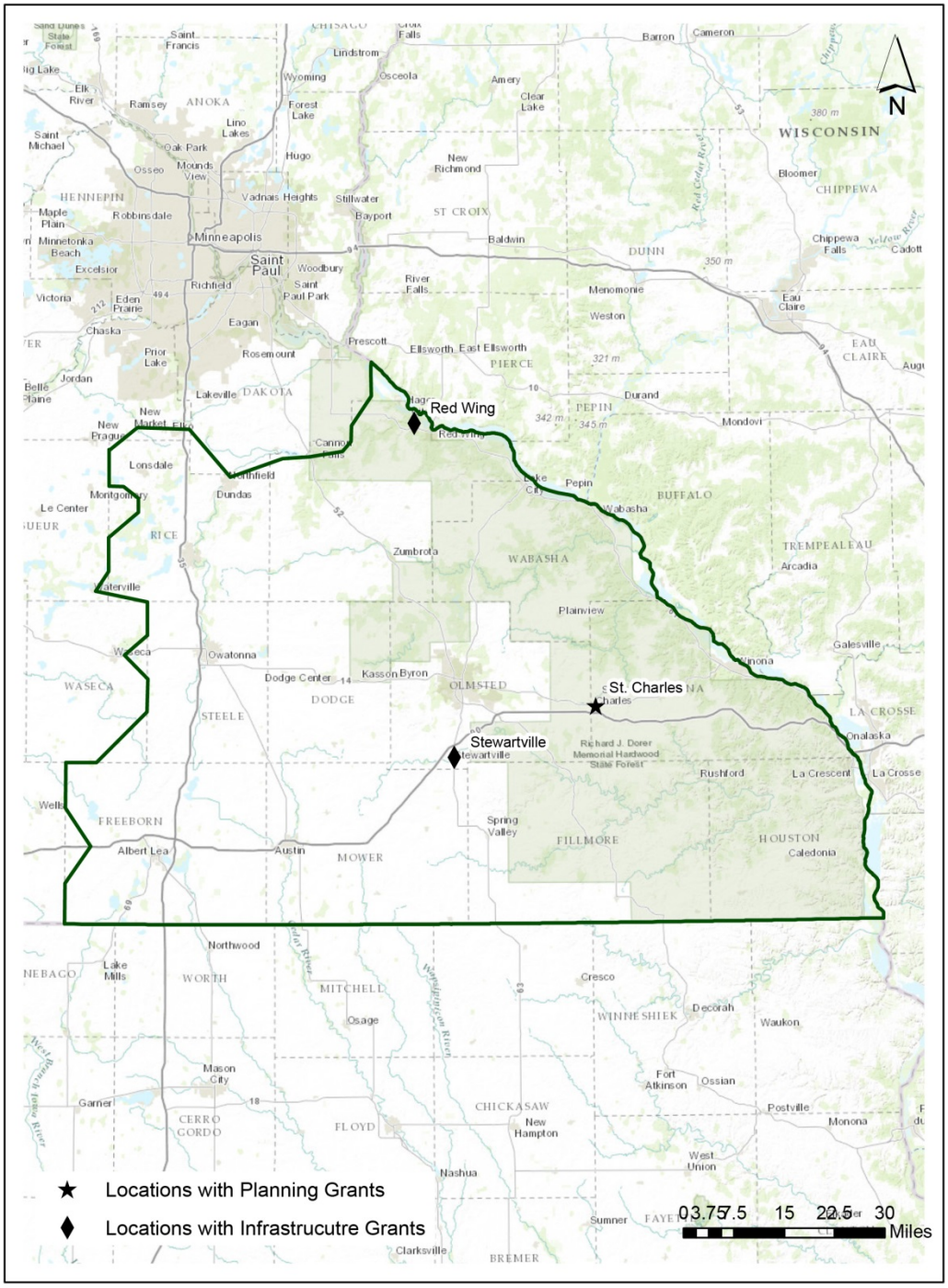
District 3 Safe Routes to School Locations 2014



District 4 Safe Routes to School Locations 2014



District 6 Safe Routes to School Locations 2014



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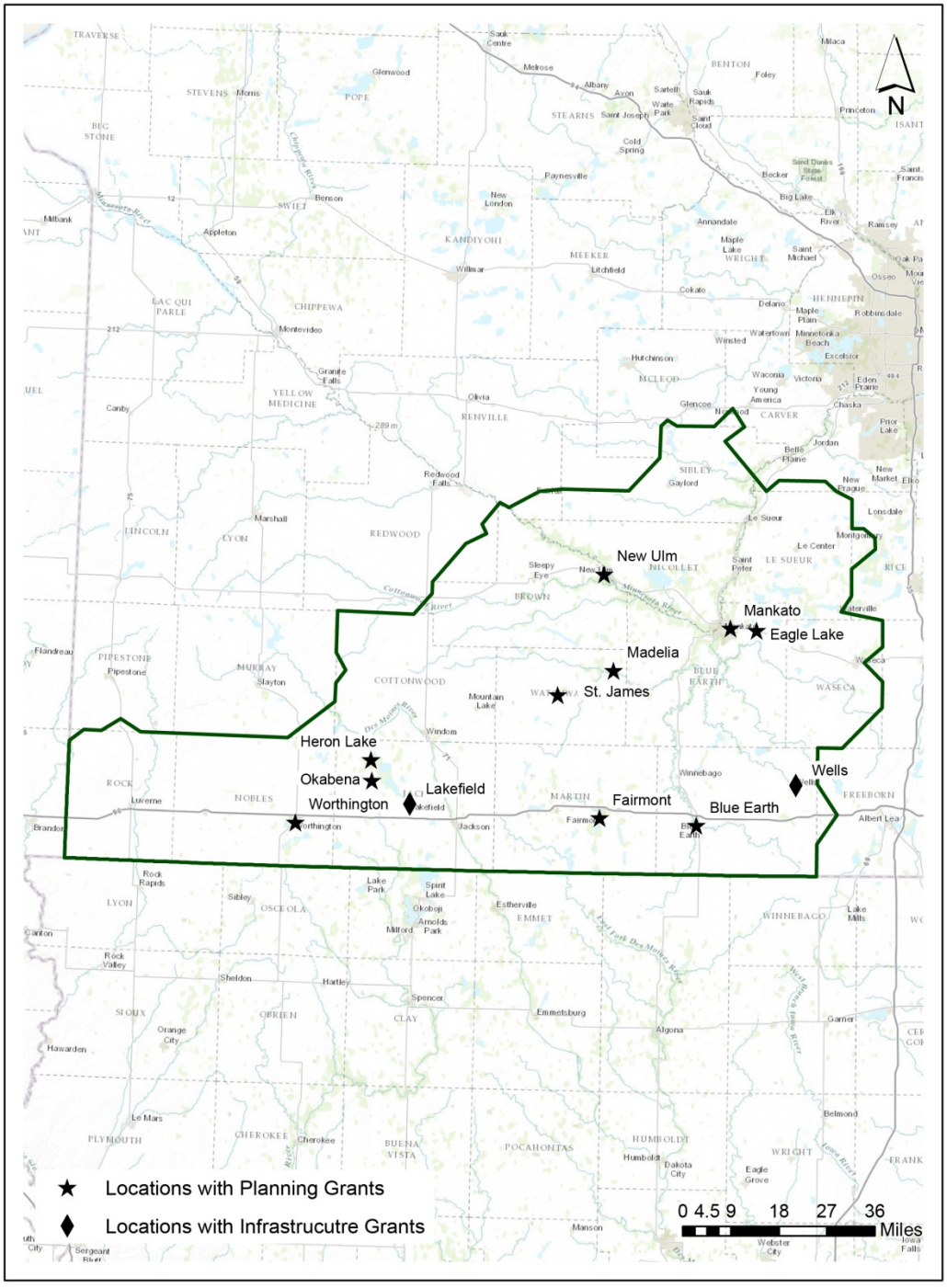
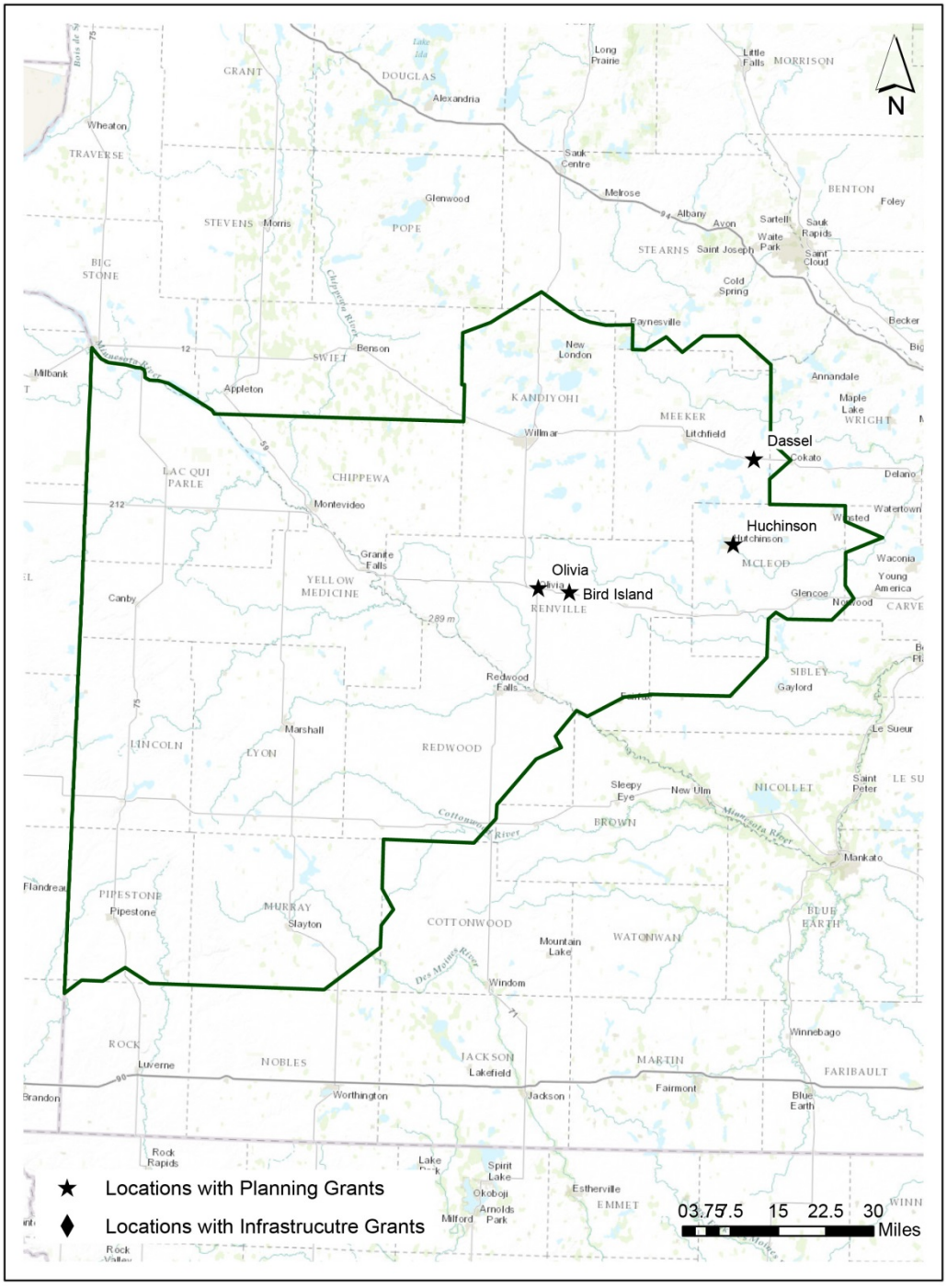
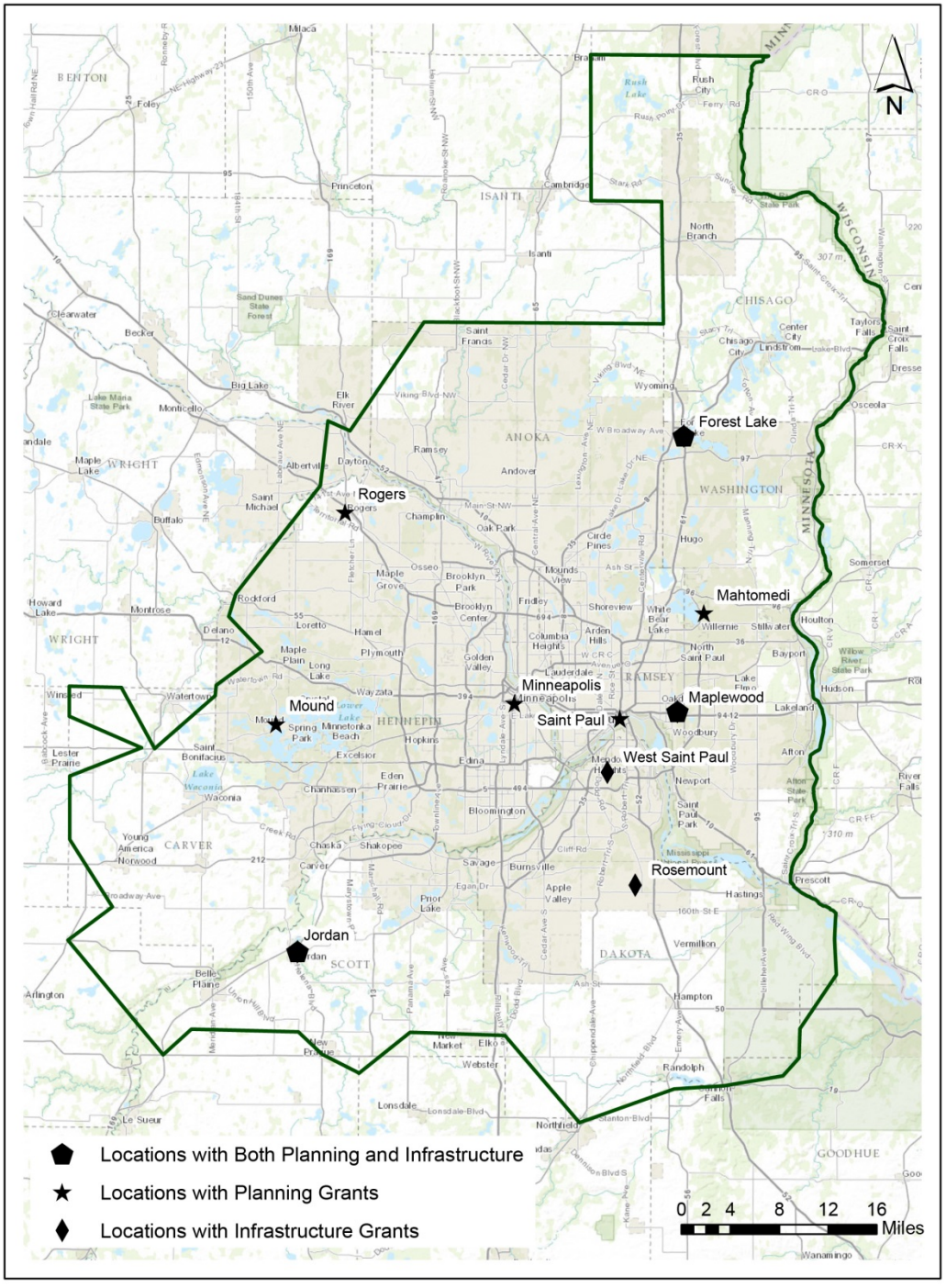


District 8 Safe Routes to School Locations 2014



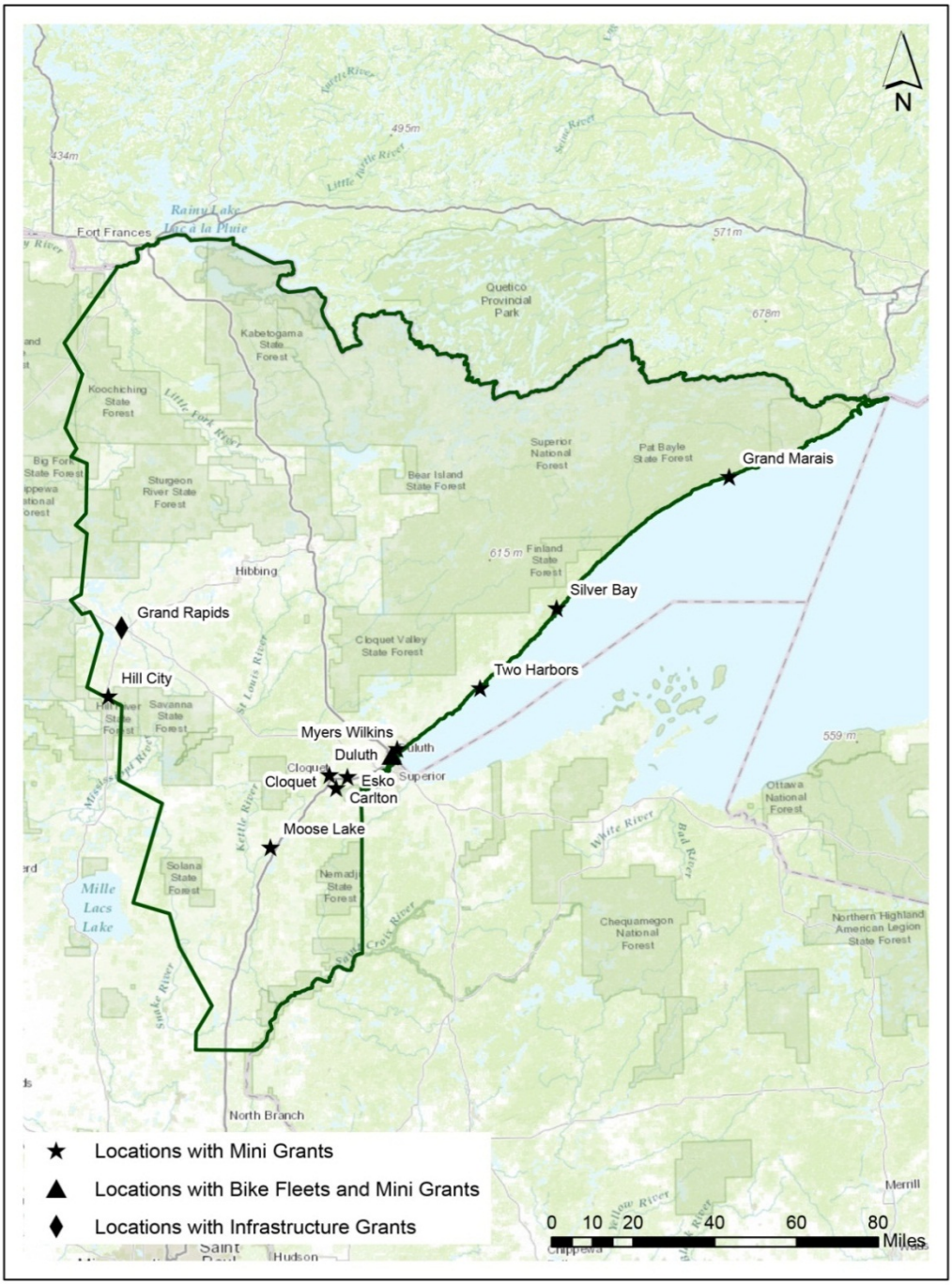
Metro District Safe Routes to School Locations 2014



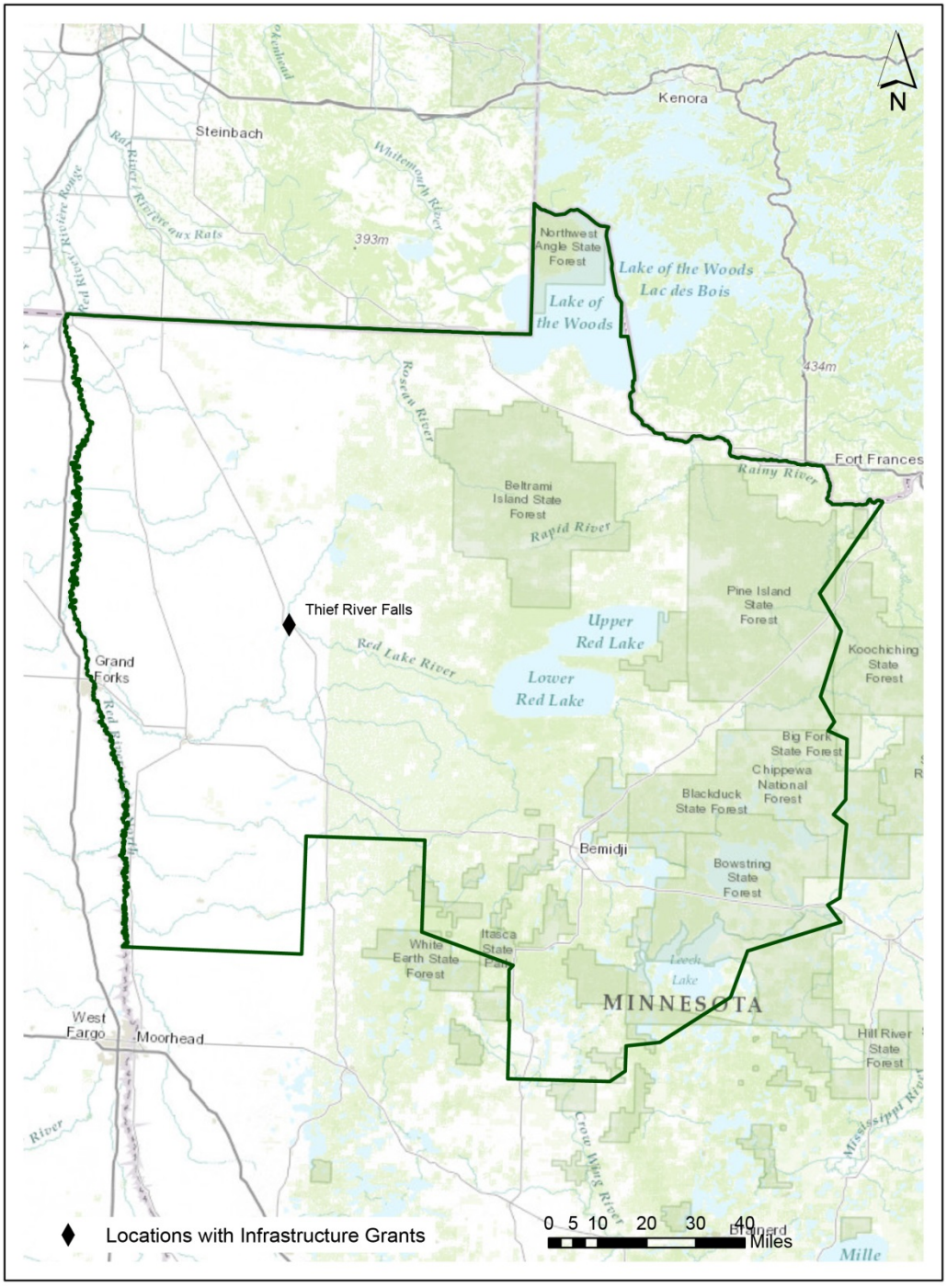
Appendix C: 2015 Maps

The following maps show SRTS projects by MnDOT district in 2015.

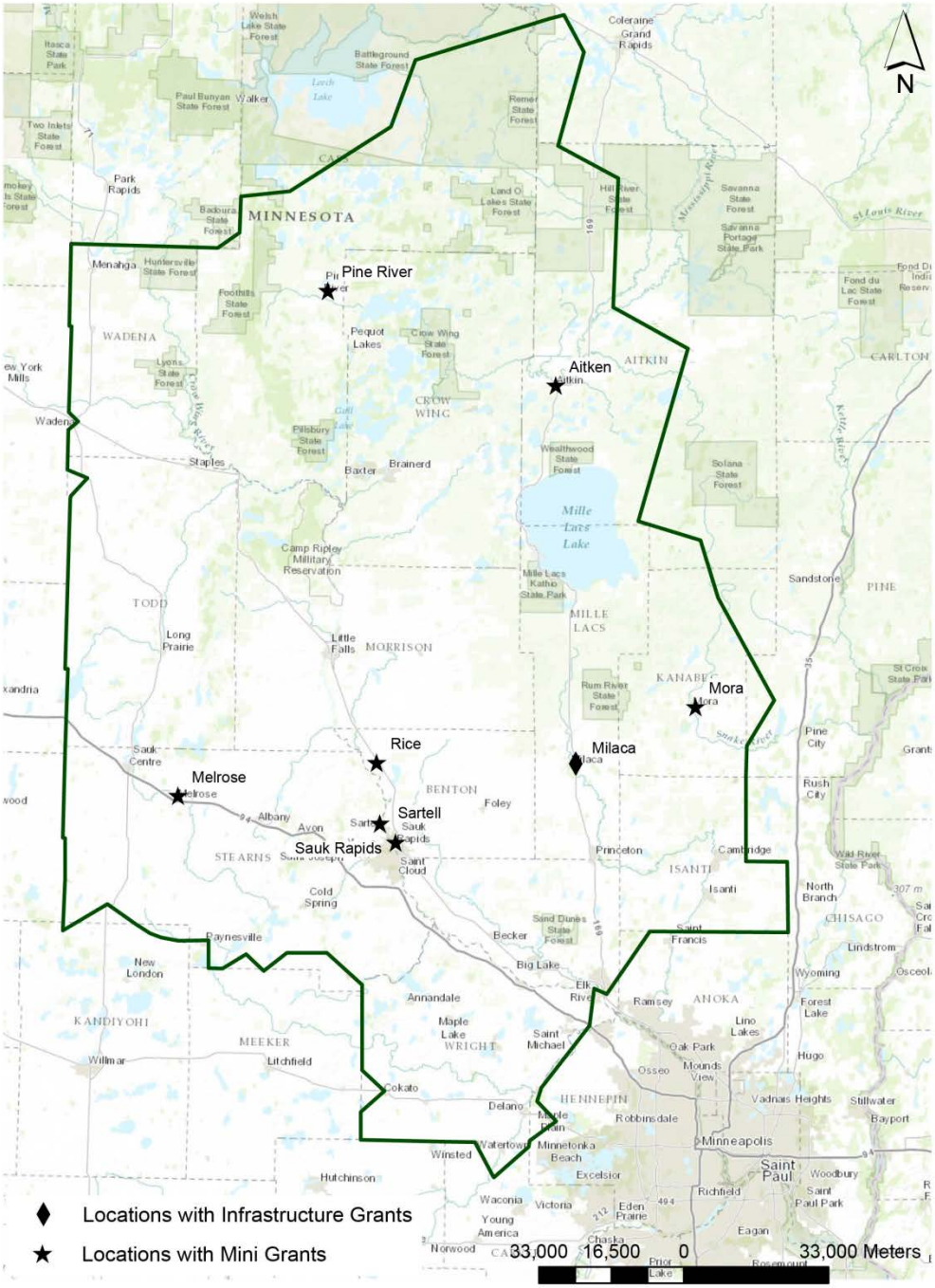
District 1 Safe Routes to School Locations 2015



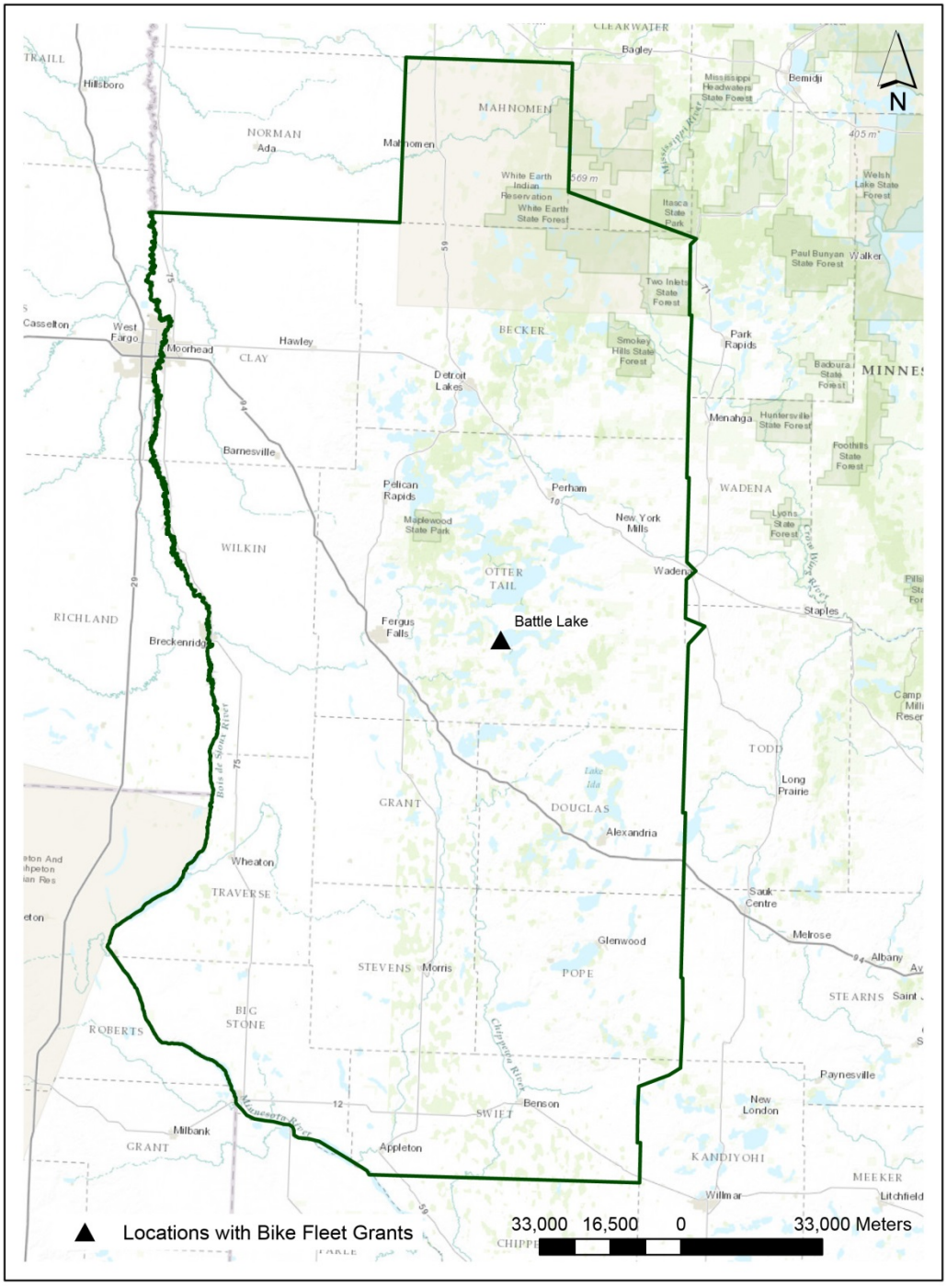
District 2 Safe Routes to School Locations 2015



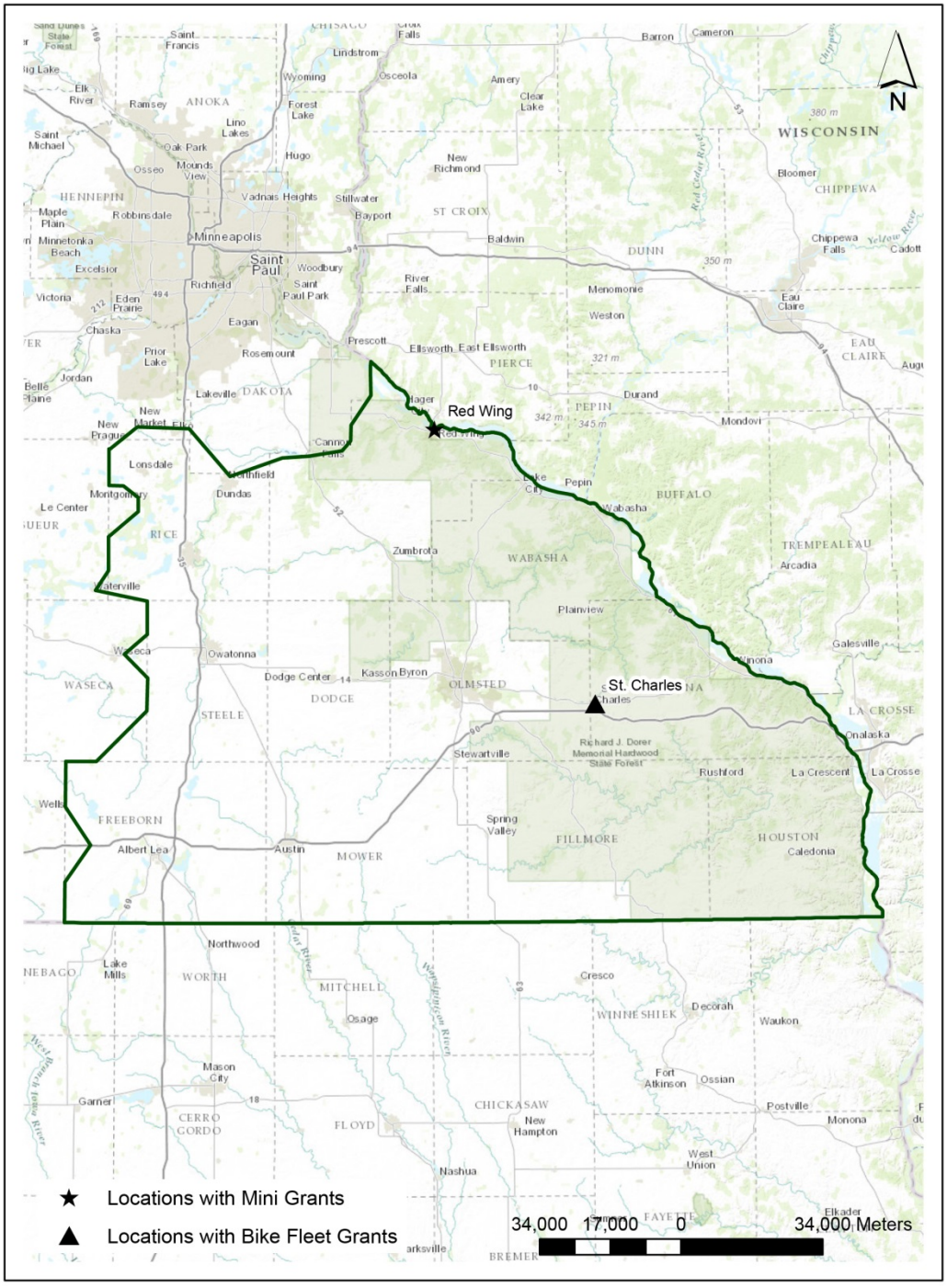
District 3 Safe Routes to School Locations 2015



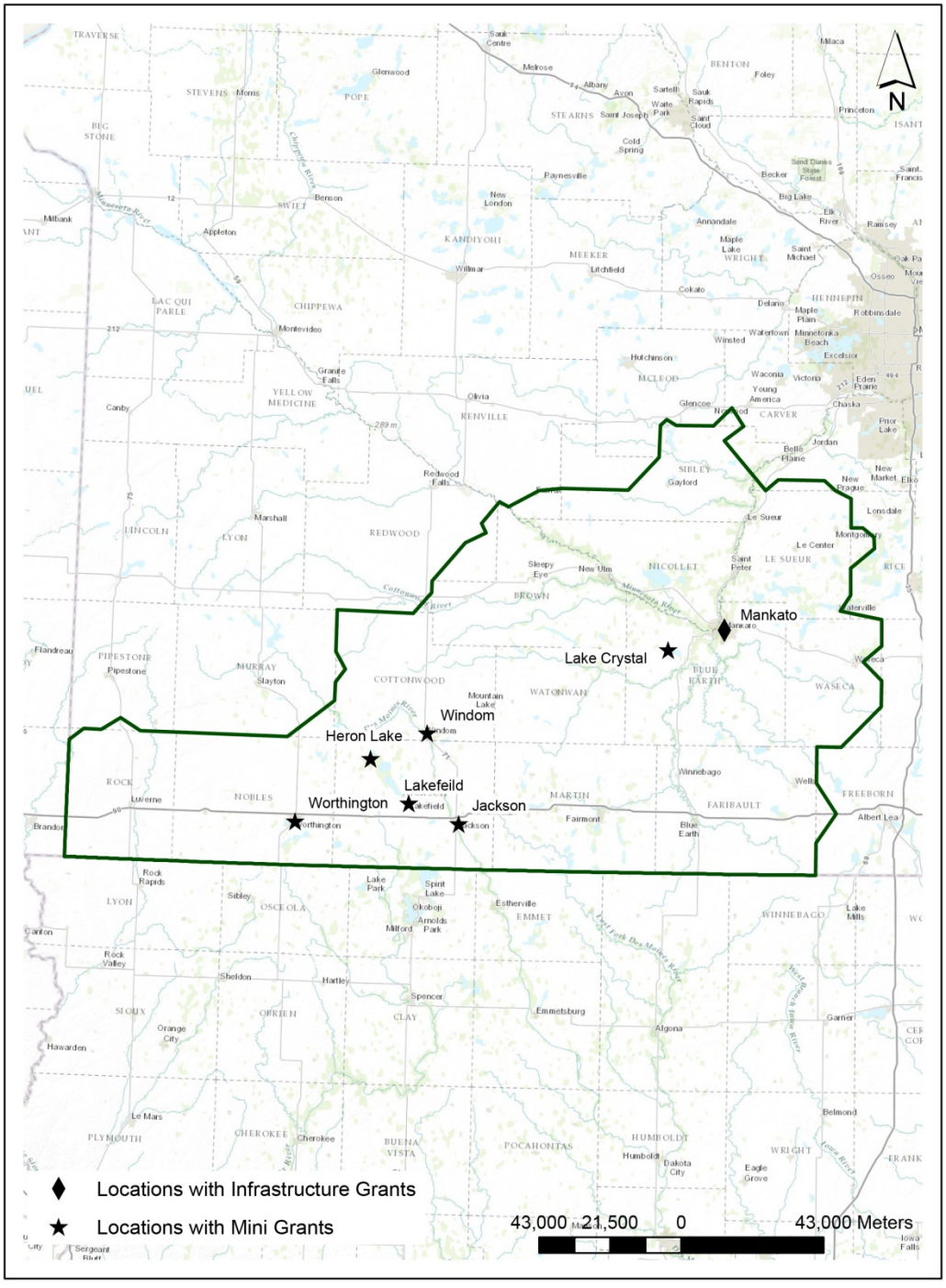
District 4 Safe Routes to School Locations 2015



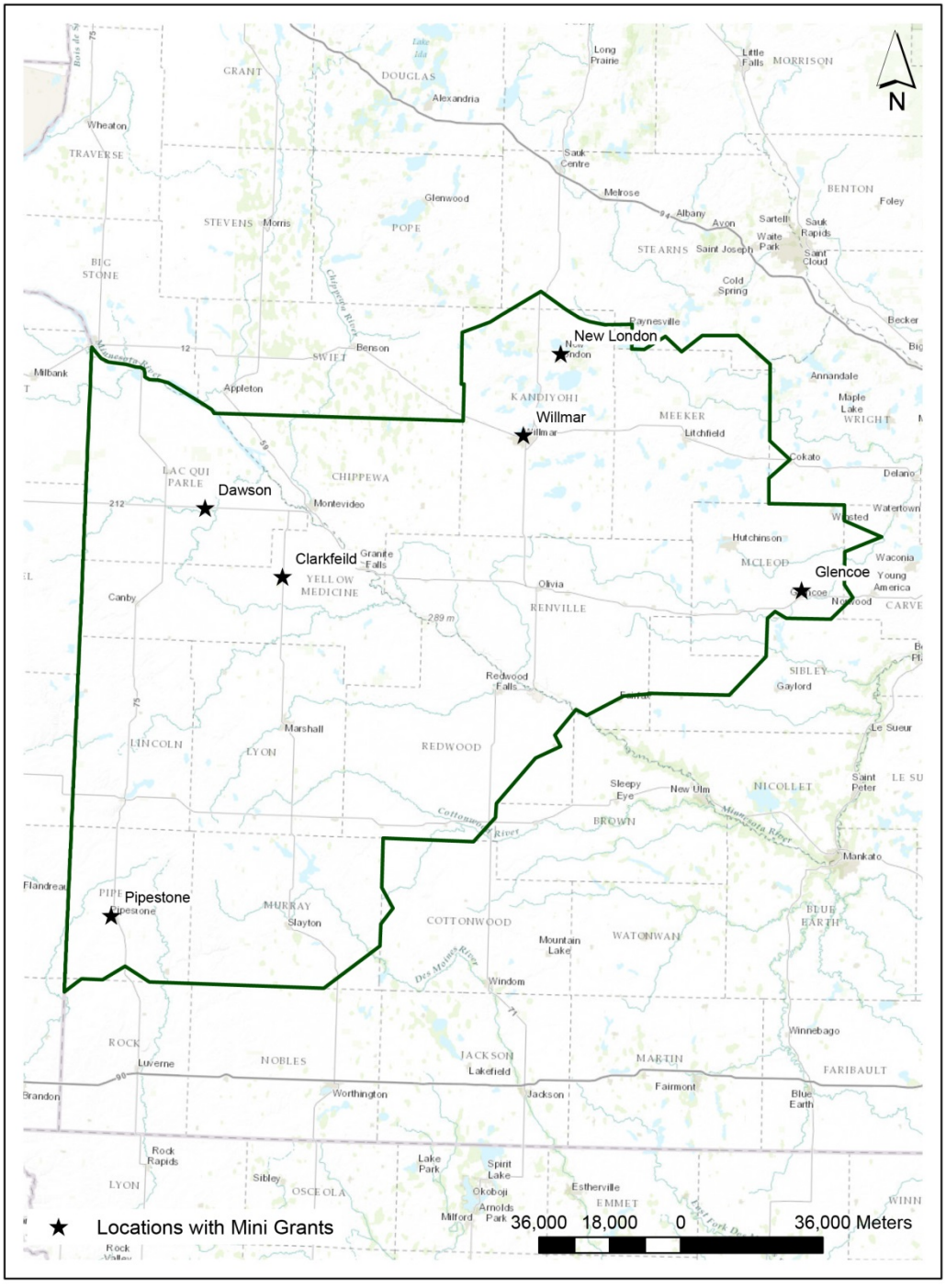
District 6 Safe Routes to School Locations 2015



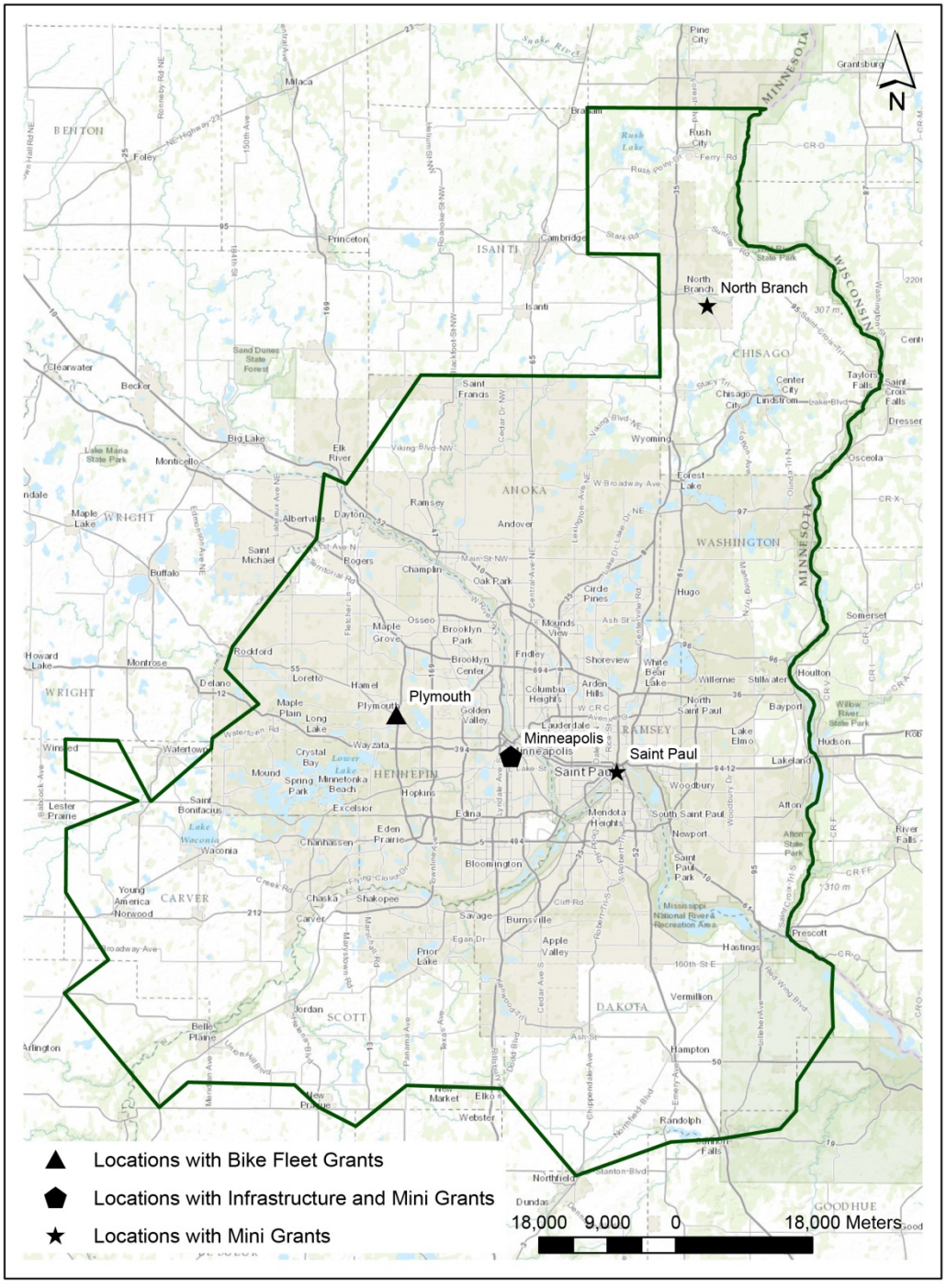
District 7 Safe Routes to School Locations 2015



District 8 Safe Routes to School Locations 2015



Metro District Safe Routes to School Locations 2015



Appendix D: SRTS Steering Committee

Figure 6: 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 Mankato	Minneapolis Public Schools
Department of Public Safety	Olmsted County Public Health
Federal Highway Administration	Pollution Control Agency
Fond du Lac Reservation	Public Health Law Center
Minnesota Dept. of Education	Red Pine Elementary School
Minnesota Dept. of Education / Health	St. Cloud MPO
Minnesota Dept. of Health	Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission
Minnesota Safety Council	