Safe Routes to School helps more kids walk and bicycle to school more often through infrastructure improvements, education and promotional activities. Walking and bicycling to school helps families stay active and healthy and kids arrive to school focused and ready to learn.

- In the first three years of SHIP, 215 schools serving 143,000 students created Safe Routes to School programs.

Walking School Bus a big plus to father and daughter

In 2011, the 320 students at Mankato’s newly-built Rosa Parks Elementary School were excited to see their new school and meet their teachers. But perhaps just as excited was one single father of a six-year-old daughter. He was thrilled to see the principal starting a new program called the Walking School Bus.

The city of Mankato, in conjunction with the school district, received support from SHIP to developing safe walking routes to Rosa Parks Elementary. Part of this was the development of the Walking School Bus program, a program made up of a group of children walking to and from school with one or more adults. The city installed Walking School Bus signs, crosswalks, stop signs and pedestrian crossing signals. The principal worked with the Parent Teacher Organization to select routes, organize volunteers, and improve a resource manual. The adults received training and got vests and handheld radios.

Currently, 29 percent of the students are using the Walking School Bus. The idea has spread to Roosevelt Elementary School, where they started their own program in the spring of 2011. Thanks to the Walking School Bus, 214 students are currently walking and biking to and from school at Rosa Parks and Roosevelt Elementary Schools, and more schools are paying attention.

All of which makes the father happy. For a father that goes to work in the early hours, it ensures that his six-year-old daughter will be able to get to and from school safely, all while being active.

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Updated 4/2013