



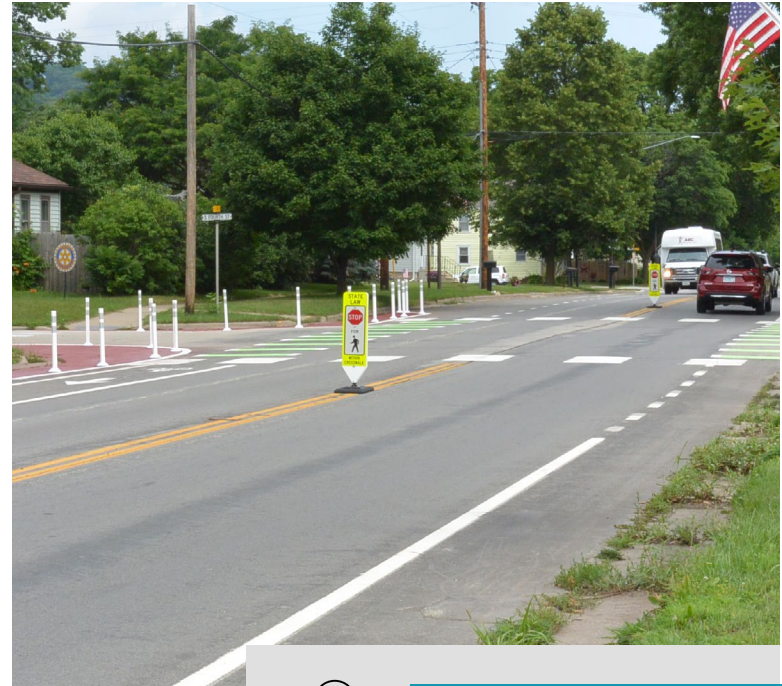
City of La Crescent

Elm St S

Safe Routes to School Demonstration Project: Summary and Evaluation



DECEMBER 2021



OVERVIEW

Demonstration projects are temporary, low-cost roadway projects used to test potential long-term solutions to improve walking, bicycling, and public spaces. Projects can include bike lanes, crosswalk markings, curb extensions, and median safety islands.

The demonstration project at two sites along Elm St S adjacent to La Crescent-Hokah Elementary originated with a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) plan completed in 2020. In collaboration with school staff, MnDOT, Houston County, and project consultants, the City of La Crescent installed the demonstration project in the summer of 2021.

The goal of the project was to make it easier to cross and bike along Elm St S, which had high traffic volumes, long crossing distances, and issues with drivers yielding to crossing pedestrians.

After multiple draft designs, the SRTS team decided on curb extensions at the intersections of Elm St S with 4th and 6th Sts, as well as painted bike lane crossings through these intersections. By narrowing perceived lane widths and the distance to cross at intersections, and by increasing pedestrian visibility, the design aims to slow drivers and allow pedestrians and bicyclists to cross and travel along Elm St S more safely.



PROJECT SUMMARY

INSTALLATION DATE: June 2021

DAYS TO INSTALL: 1

MATERIAL COST: ~\$12,000 (including materials that can be reused on future projects)

FEATURED ELEMENTS INSTALLED:

- Curb extensions (7)
- Painted bike conflict markings (4)
- Pedestrian signs (4)

LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS

The SRTS team fielded a survey to capture feedback from the community about the project sites. Pluralities of respondents reported that the demonstration projects improved safety for all road users and made respondents more aware of pedestrians and bicyclists. Respondents also expressed reservations about the appearance of the demonstration projects, how the projects impacted visibility, and how they would operate during the winter (projects are typically removed before the first snowfall).

DRIVER AWARENESS:

Survey respondents reported high awareness of the demonstration project intersections and crossings, though many commented that the design was distracting and might obscure

younger children waiting to cross. Many respondents reported their preference for a flashing light installation similar to the one currently located near the pool.

WINTER CONDITIONS:

Many survey respondents commented that the demonstration projects would be infeasible during the winter due to snow plowing considerations. Further communication about the temporary nature of these projects (they are typically removed before the first snowfall) might allay this confusion in the future.

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLIST SAFETY:

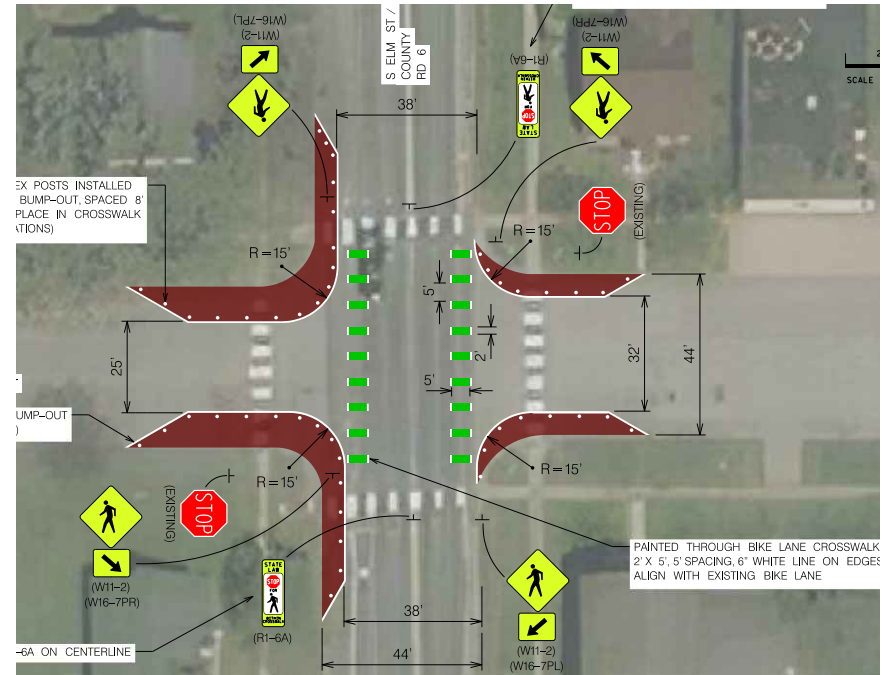
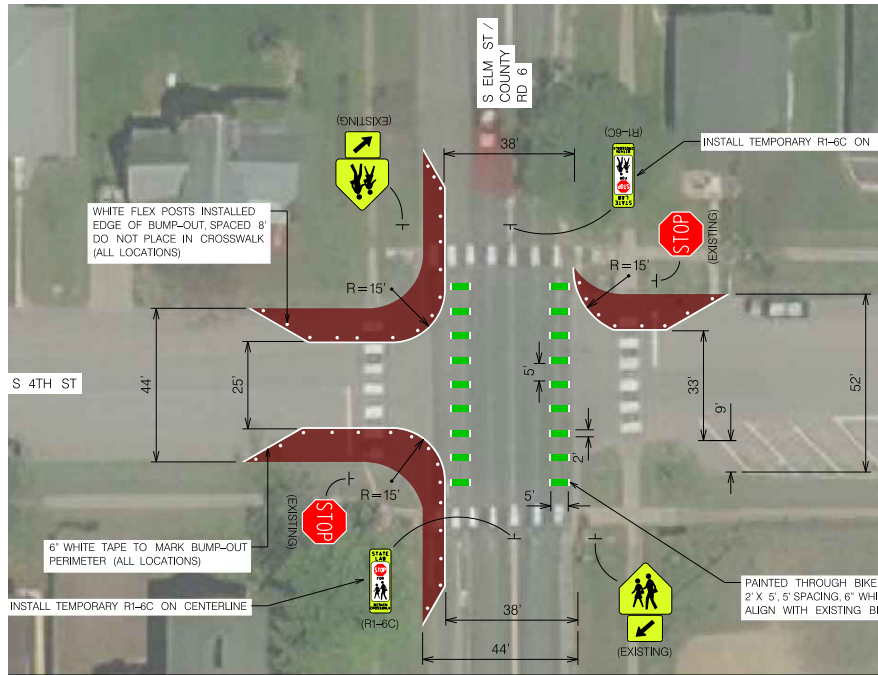
Less than half of respondents walked through the installation, and less than 15% biked

through. Bicyclists were very positive about most aspects of the project: more than half reported they wanted to see the installation become permanent.

PERMANENT IMPROVEMENTS:

As the City considers installing permanent improvements, it should continue to engage with community members, and in particular the school community, about their concerns (including appearance, winter maintenance, costs, and visibility). Proactive communication about the aesthetics of permanent design options, and what, if any, costs would be borne by the City (given that Elm St S is a County roadway) may be particularly beneficial.





DESIGN

The demonstration projects near the La Crescent-Hokah Elementary school campus consisted of three and four curb extensions at the intersections of S Elm St with S 4th St and S 6th St, respectively. Both intersections also featured high-visibility bike lane conflict markings and in-street pedestrian crossing signs.

The curb extensions are intended to alert drivers to the presence of crossing pedestrians, reduce lane widths and thereby encourage drivers to slow down, and to shorten pedestrian crossing distances so that people walking and rolling have to spend

less time in unprotected portions of the road. When successful, these temporary curb extensions can be made permanent with concrete curbs that connect with existing pedestrian facilities.

The high-visibility bike lane conflict markings help to alert drivers to the presence and continued right-of-way of bicyclists within the intersections. Likewise, the in-street pedestrian crossing signs increase drivers' awareness of pedestrians and reinforce in language that pedestrians have the right-of-way in any crosswalk, marked or not.

EVALUATION

Safe Routes to School staff worked with the community to collect feedback about the demonstration project. This feedback helps describe the effects of the project and to identify opportunities to modify and improve the design if and when the project is constructed with permanent materials.

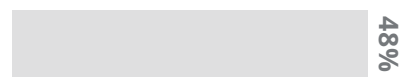
The project staff and community fielded an online survey to collect input about how pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers felt about the project and to solicit ideas for improving the project in the future. As stakeholders continue to evaluate opportunities to enhance pedestrian and bicyclist safety along this corridor, additional data collection (e.g., around driver speeds and yielding behaviors), as well as continued community engagement and education, can help to build support for effective infrastructure and policy enhancements.



RESULTS

SURVEY RESPONDENTS AGREE THAT THE PROJECT...

Makes them more aware of people crossing the street or using the bike lane.



Improves safety for everyone.



Makes them feel safer using the street.



Makes them more likely to walk or bike in the area.



Makes the street feel more pleasant.

