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## Rethinking a safe route to school

By Paige Rudick • Daily News paiger@wahpetondailynews.com  
Jul 9, 2020



Breckenridge's Active Living Committee received a \$225,000 grant from the Minnesota Department of Transportation to implement a Safe Route to School.

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The Breckenridge Active Living Committee is working on a new Safe Routes to School plan after input from the community and city employees.

The Minnesota city was awarded a grant of \$225,000 from the Minnesota Department of Transportation to implement a Safe Route to School in 2019.

The plan consisted of a complete safety route system around the Breckenridge public schools. New sidewalks, walk and bike lanes, crosswalk lights, as well as Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant crossings and necessary ramps, were all included.

“There’s been a change of heart with what we wanted to do there,” Director of Public Services Neil Crocker said.

Where sidewalks were planned to be developed created concern from citizens about trees that would have to be removed. Moreover, the idea of maintenance and care of the sidewalks to-be implemented has created heartburn for citizens and city personnel. The sidewalks that were planned to be implemented would have been on residential, city and school property.

The discomfort with their plan has led to the group determining to rethink that plan.

“As a result of that, we talked about potentially doing some one-ways and dedicating walkways in the street and not doing sidewalks,” Crocker said. “If we go away from sidewalks, in some areas that will be incredibly high maintenance or put a burden on citizens where we have to remove far too many trees that creates heartburn, then we need to look at potentially rerouting traffic and putting in one-ways.”

He recommended that the group use advice from Police Chief Kris Karlgaard and Breckenridge Elementary School Principal Corinna Erickson for how to best reroute traffic that would allow for a good traffic flow, bus routes and safely unloaded students for events.

An additional concern the group has was that if they diverge too far from the original plan, that they will become ineligible and lose the grant money from the Minnesota DOT. Crocker reached out to the department to determine how much deviation was allowed.

“I reached out to (the DOT) to ask how much deviation from the original plan and still be eligible for this grant not be in default of the plan because the scope for the projected has changed,” he said. “(DOT) said as long as the original intent is still there, that can be interpreted in a lot of different ways, the intent is still a safe route to school.”

The group determined that they will be working with Karlgaard and Erickson to develop an alternative plan and pitch that idea to the DOT to determine if the new plan would still be eligible for the grant.

“There has been a lot of work and time that has gone into this,” ALC President Shawn Krause-Roberts said. “We are putting in safety things that can help them (schools) for right now. I think we are okay at looking at this again.”

