



Michigan Safe Routes to School in Action...

Maple Valley education meets engineering to create path



The Maple Valley school district serves students from two villages of Vermontville in Eaton County and Nashville in Barry County along with their outlying areas. The one combined junior/senior high school serves the entire district, but is located in a rural area between the two villages on a rural highway with a 55 mph speed limit. The only option for students to walk to school was along the unpaved shoulder: students had virtually no safe way to walk or bike to school. Two teachers sought to remedy that by teaching the industrial arts students about bridge construction and the class actually built a bridge to Federal standards on an existing county park trail connecting the two villages to the junior/senior high. This helped the students cross a wide river, but the unpaved trail was still inhospitable for daily use to and from school. The teachers then pursued Safe Routes to School funding to complete their vision. By bringing together the Village of Vermontville, Vermontville Township, Eaton County Parks, the

Maple Valley School District, the Thornapple Trail Association, several local private donors, and the Eaton County Road Commission, they developed a Safe Routes to School project that now provides a ten-foot wide non-motorized path on the Thornapple Trail from Linden Road in Vermontville to Mason Road, and continuing along the west side of Mason Road south to the school for a total distance of 1.6 miles (following the roadway was a 2.1 mile trek). The students have now built a second bridge in Nashville, and have plans to pursue funding to complete paving of the trail into Nashville for those students.

- Federal SAFETEA-LU SRTS investment: \$281,833
- Contribution from school includes a student-built bridge spanning the Thornapple River.
- This project was made possible through the collaborative efforts of several governmental units and private citizens, including the Village of Vermontville, Vermontville Township, Eaton County Parks, Eaton County Road Commission, Maple Valley Schools, the Thornapple Trail Association.

Project Impact:

- Over half of the school's students now have a reasonable and safe route to get to school by walking or biking.

