

Thoreau Elementary Safe Routes to School Plan (June 2026)

About the School	
Number of Students ^a	Approximately 400
% Economically Disadvantaged	44%
% Non-white	50%
Arrival / Dismissal Times	8:25 AM / 2:00 PM (Mon) 8:25 AM / 3:20 PM (Tue-Fri)

^aStudent data source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Major Streets and Highways	Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) ^a
Nakoma Road	12,900
Yuma Drive	3,250
Odana Road	5,500
Seminole Highway	9,300

^aSource: City of Madison Street Centerlines

Safety Concerns at Thoreau

What we heard from the Principal (or Designee)

- Construction on Nakoma Road, which added sidewalks and parking bays on the non-school side of the street, finished in Fall 2025. Prior to construction, caregivers would often stop on the far side of Nakoma Road and then cross with their students midblock, walking in between buses. This behavior appears to have been greatly reduced.
- School leadership wants to keep all arrival/dismissal traffic on the Nakoma Road side of the school. Teachers of elementary students are taught that they must make eye contact with whoever they release the child to, requiring staff to be present at any pick-up location. Using both sides of the school would require two staff for each classroom, which was described as not feasible.
- The principal would prefer to have more parking spaces available for elementary school staff.

What we learned from the crossing guard

With John Nolen Drive operating at reduced capacity due to construction through 2027, there anecdotally appears to be higher westbound traffic volumes on Nakoma Road during arrival. The 10-

minute parking spaces added during recent construction are well used. Caregivers park on Nakoma and use the new sidewalk to walk to the crossing guard rather than crossing unassisted midblock. At the intersection of Nakoma Road with Seminole Highway and Yuma Drive, drivers often disregard signs and turn right on red.

Hazardous Transportation Busing

The school district provides unusually hazardous transportation busing for students who live in the Marlborough-Crawford Heights neighborhood south of the Beltline.

What we learned from surveys and other caregiver feedback

- Out of the 11 respondents for this school, 8 believed that the most common way students get to school is being driven by parents, 2 answered by taking the bus, and 1 answered that they don't know.
- When biking on Chippewa Drive, speeding vehicles makes it difficult to cross Cherokee Drive.
- Crossing S Midvale Boulevard at Yuma Drive is difficult because some drivers do not yield.

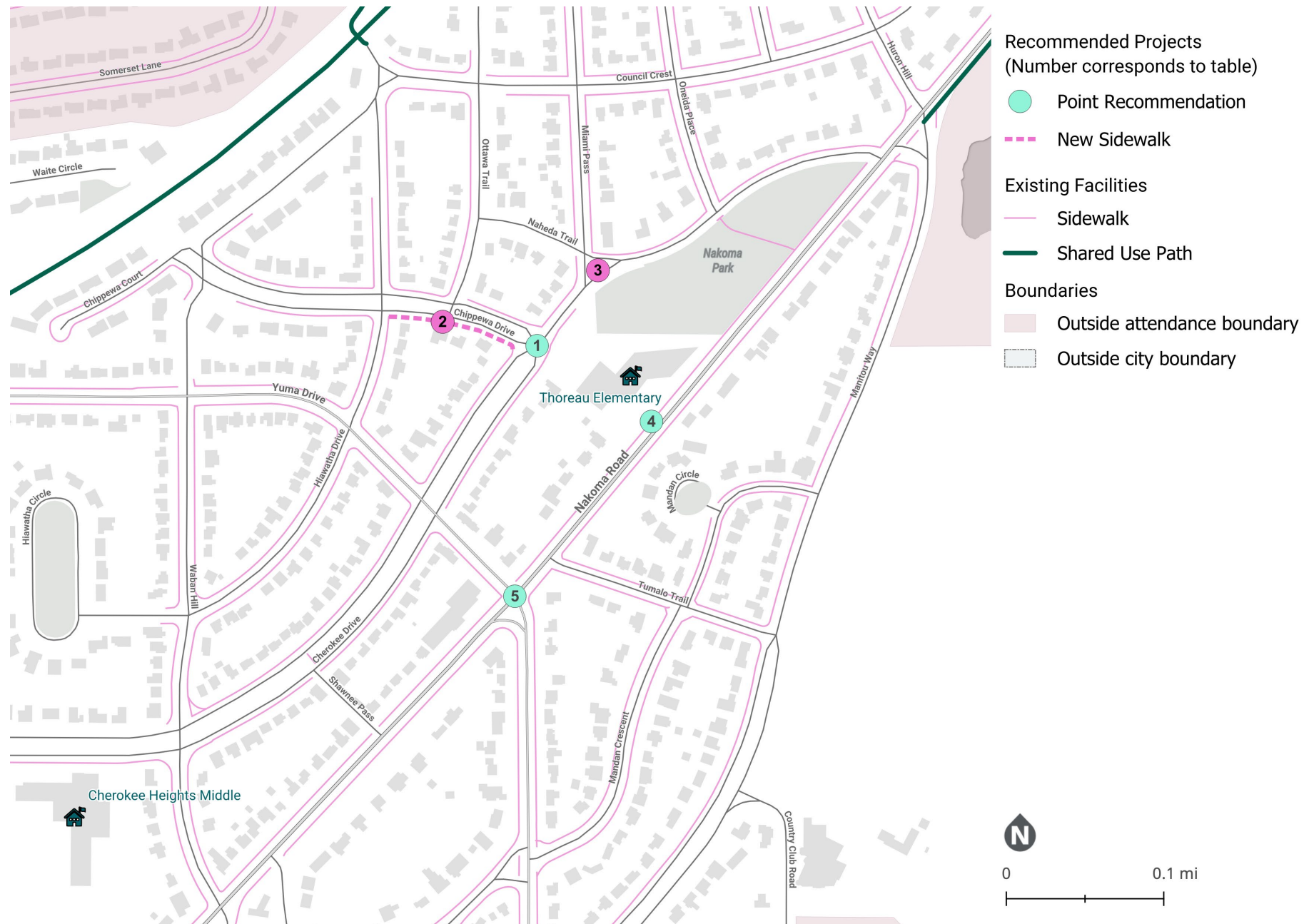
Existing Conditions (and Previously-Planned Bikeways and Paths)



Arrival and Dismissal Observations

Observation Details	
Observation Date	The consultant team observed arrival on Monday, November 17.
School Buses	School buses lined up in front of the school on the north side of Nakoma Road.
Specialized Transportation	Before/Aftercare and specialized transportation vehicles dropped off students behind the yellow buses on the north side of Nakoma Road. Staff placed sandwich boards to reserve these spaces.
Caregiver Vehicles	- During arrival, caregivers driving parked along Nakoma Road and walked their students to the front entrance. - Recent work included constructing sidewalks on the south side of Nakoma Road. Many caregivers parked in designated 10-minute parking spaces and walked their students to the midblock crosswalk before crossing with the crossing guard. No caregivers were observed crossing midblock without the crossing guard. - Several caregivers were observed dropping off students at the rear of the school along Cherokee Drive. Caregivers who stopped or parked their vehicles intermittently stopped in the intersection or blocked the driveway to the rear parking lot. - Some caregivers continued east on Cherokee Drive, obeying directions given by Student Safety Patrol stationed at the east leg of the intersection. One was observed making a U-turn to turn west on Cherokee Drive, potentially causing conflict with staff who were walking to the school on the unmarked west leg of the intersection.
School Staff Roles	- School staff are stationed at the front entrance to greet students, including those arriving by bus and specialized transportation. - Staff placed small sandwich board signs along Nakoma Road to reserve curb space in front of the school for specialized transportation.
Adult Crossing Guards	- Adult crossing guards are posted at: - Nakoma Road midblock in front of the main entrance. - The intersection of Nakoma Road, Seminole Highway, and Yuma Drive. - The intersection of Nakoma Road, Odana Road, and Monroe Street.
Student Safety Patrol	- Student safety patrol members are posted at: - The west leg of the intersection of Cherokee Drive and Chippewa Drive. - The front entrance of the school.
Bike Rack Locations and Use	- There are two areas with bike racks around the school – one rack just inside the gate at the front entrance, and two racks at the rear of the school next to the driveway onto Cherokee Drive. - All three racks were full. Several bicycles were secured to the front gate next to the racks.
Students Walking and Biking	- Some students were observed walking to school. They mostly came from the east, walking on the sidewalk on the north side of Nakoma Road. - Many students were observed biking to school. - About 4 caregivers dropped off students on cargo bikes. All pulled onto the sidewalk by the front entrance.

Priority Recommendations at Thoreau Elementary



The numbered issues and recommendations in the table correspond to the points in the Recommendations Map (shown on previous page).

Recommendations for School Leadership or MMSD Building Services

#	Location	Issue	Recommendations
1	Cherokee Drive and Chippewa Drive	- This crossing is located at the rear of the school. Several caregivers were observed dropping off students at the rear of the school along Cherokee Drive. Caregivers intermittently stopped in the intersection or blocked the driveway to the rear parking lot. - Some caregivers continued east on Cherokee Drive, obeying directions given by Student Safety Patrol stationed at the east leg of the intersection. One was observed making a U-turn to turn west on Cherokee Drive, potentially causing conflict with staff who were walking to the school on the unmarked west leg of the intersection. - Several students and their caregivers were observed bicycling to this location, where students secured their bicycles to racks placed on grass. - Though there are medians on the northern and western legs, they do not extend through crosswalks and cannot be used as median crossing islands for pedestrians.	<i>Immediate Priority:</i> - Communicate expectations by sharing the school's Transportation Safety Brochure. Encourage more walking and biking to school to reduce the number of caregiver vehicles. Encourage caregivers who drive to use the short-term parking on both sides of Nakoma Road. - Build a concrete pad and anchor bicycle racks to the base. - Continue the use of a student safety patrol to guide students across the eastern leg of the crossing.
4	School main entrance	- All students or caregivers were observed crossing Nakoma Road with the crossing guard. - A sidewalk has recently been constructed on the south side of Nakoma Road. This sidewalk appears to be wider than others in the area. However, signposts are placed several feet off the curb, and a temporary snow fence caught blowing leaves, resulting in a narrow pedestrian access route. - Existing bicycle racks in front of the school are not securely anchored and were at capacity, and a few bicycles were observed secured to the fence.	<i>Immediate Priority:</i> Anchor bicycle racks to concrete and expand capacity by anchoring additional bicycle racks to the base. Like the current racks, any additional racks should support the bike frame in at least two places and enable secure locking.

Recommendations for City of Madison

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2	Chippewa Drive between Hiawatha Drive and Cherokee Drive	While sidewalks exist in much of the school walking zone, there are frequent small gaps in the network, presenting a barrier to walking and bicycling to school. Gaps in this location include the south side of Chippewa Drive between Hiawatha Drive and Cherokee Drive.	<i>Medium Term (2-6 years)</i> Construct new sidewalks where there are gaps.
3	Cherokee Drive between Chippewa Drive and Nakoma Road	While sidewalks exist in much of the school walking zone, there are frequent small gaps in the network, presenting a barrier to walking and bicycling to school. Gaps in this location include a short segment on the south side on the intersection island.	<i>Medium Term (2-6 years)</i> Construct new sidewalks where there are gaps.

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4	School main entrance	- All students or caregivers were observed crossing Nakoma Road with the crossing guard. - A sidewalk has recently been constructed on the south side of Nakoma Road. This sidewalk appears to be wider than others in the area. However, signposts are placed several feet off the curb, and a temporary snow fence caught blowing leaves, resulting in a narrow pedestrian access route. - Existing bicycle racks in front of the school are not securely anchored and were at capacity, and a few bicycles were observed secured to the fence.	<i>Immediate Priority:</i> Discuss sidewalk maintenance coordination and concerns for the new sidewalk with City streets department.
5	Nakoma Road at Seminole Highway and Yuma Drive	- Drivers were observed turning right from Seminole Highway onto Nakoma Road despite signage prohibiting right turns when a crossing guard is present. - Many caregivers still cross Nakoma Road at this location, even though a sidewalk has recently been constructed on the south side of Nakoma Road and a crossing guard is now posted just south of the main entrance. The crossing guard is stationed at the northeast corner to serve Thoreau Elementary students crossing Yuma Drive but also assists students from the Waldorf School located in Westminster Presbyterian Church.	<i>Immediate Priority:</i> - Consider the use of a No Right Turn (R3-1) LED blank-out sign that illuminates when called for by a pedestrian. <i>Long Term (6+ years)</i> - When intersection is reconstructed, narrow curb radii to slow speeds of turning vehicles.

Information contained in this document is for planning purposes and should not be used for final design of any project. All results, recommendations, concept drawings, and commentary contained herein are based on limited data and information and on existing conditions that are subject to change. Further analysis and engineering design are necessary prior to implementing any of the recommendations contained herein.