



Illinois Safe Routes to School Program

Funding Application Guidance

(updated September 17, 2010)

PURPOSE

The purpose of this guidance is to explain the requirements, eligibility, and application process of the Illinois Safe Routes to School Program.

ABOUT SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) was established in August 2005 as a Federal-Aid program through the passage of SAFETEA-LU, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users. Through 2009, a total of \$612 million was allocated to provide funds to states to substantially improve the ability of primary and middle school students (grades Kindergarten through 8th) to walk and bicycle to school safely. Illinois received \$23.7 million through SAFETEA-LU. In 2010, an additional \$7.5 million was allotted as a result of the extension of SAFETEA-LU through December 2010.

SRTS funds projects and programs that enable, encourage and make safe walking and bicycling to school. Over the last 40 years, the level of walking and bicycling to school among school-aged children has dropped from approximately half of all students to fewer than fifteen percent. This decline in active transportation has negatively impacted schools and children. Schools currently experience massive traffic congestion, unsafe conditions and decreased air quality. Additionally, a growing trend of sedentary lifestyles in children has been linked to a variety of health issues including respiratory disease, diabetes and obesity.

SRTS uses a multidisciplinary approach to improve conditions for the walk or bike to school. The program has three main goals:

1. to enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school
2. to make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age; and

3. to facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity (within 2 miles) of primary and middle schools (grades K-8).

Safe Routes to School utilizes the five basic program components, known as the “5 E’s”, that comprehensively address obstacles and create solutions:

- **Engineering** – Creating operational and physical improvements to the infrastructure surrounding schools that reduce speeds and potential conflicts with motor vehicle traffic, and establish safer and fully accessible crossings, walkways, trails and bikeways.
- **Education** – Teaching children about the broad range of transportation choices, instructing them in important lifelong bicycling and walking safety skills, and launching driver safety campaigns in the vicinity of schools.
- **Enforcement** – Partnering with local law enforcement to ensure traffic laws are obeyed in the vicinity of schools (this includes enforcement of speeds, stopping for pedestrians in crossings, and proper walking and bicycling behaviors), and initiating community enforcement such as crossing guard programs.
- **Encouragement** – Using events and activities to promote walking and bicycling.
- **Evaluation** – Monitoring and documenting outcomes and trends through the collection of data, including the collection of data before and after the intervention(s).

ILLINOIS SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

The Illinois Safe Routes to School Program is administered by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and funds both **infrastructure** (engineering) and **non-infrastructure** (education, encouragement, enforcement and evaluation) initiatives. A detailed list of eligible projects and activities in both the infrastructure and non-infrastructure categories appears later in this guide.

Key features of the Illinois SRTS Program include:

- ***SRTS projects are funded at 100% with no local match required.***
- ***SRTS is a reimbursement program.*** Project sponsors are responsible for supplying the up-front cost of the project and will be reimbursed by IDOT.
- ***Between 70% and 90% of funds will support infrastructure projects. 10% to 30% of funds will support non-infrastructure programs.***
- ***Each school district is limited to one infrastructure and one non-infrastructure application.*** If a school district encompasses more than one municipality, the school district will have to select a single municipality to partner with on the infrastructure application, or develop an intergovernmental agreement that describes proposals covering multiple municipalities. Conversely, if a municipality is served by more than one single school district, the municipality may partner with each school district for one of each type of application.
- ***INFRASTRUCTURE applications may include up to 3 separate projects, with a funding limit of \$250,000 for the entire application (all projects combined). The minimum for any single***

infrastructure project is \$2,000. Infrastructure projects must be sponsored by a municipality, county, township, park district or similar entity. Infrastructure projects MAY NOT be sponsored by a school or school district.

- *NON-INFRASTRUCTURE applications may include up to 3 separate projects, with a funding limit of \$100,000 for the entire application (all projects combined). The minimum for any single non-infrastructure project is \$2,000. Any government entity, school district or non-profit organization may sponsor a non-infrastructure application.*
- *All applications require an approved Illinois School Travel Plan (see next section).*
- *Only those projects and programs included in the corresponding School Travel Plan and listed with the funding source SRTS Funding, Current Cycle are eligible for funding.*
- *Applications are accepted only through an online application process. The online application form is available at www.dot.il.gov/saferoutes.*

ILLINOIS SCHOOL TRAVEL PLAN

A completed *Illinois School Travel Plan* must be submitted to and approved by IDOT in advance of any funding application. The *Illinois School Travel Plan* is a separate process that outlines a school or community's intentions for making travel to and from school more sustainable and safe. It uses an online form, accessible only through the Illinois Safe Routes to School website. Schools and communities create their own unique *Illinois School Travel Plan* and submit it in advance of any funding request. *School Travel Plans must receive approval from the Illinois Department of Transportation before the online application process may be accessed.* Visit the web site for complete instructions on completing and submitting the *Illinois School Travel Plan*.

All projects and programs in the *Illinois School Travel Plan* will correspond directly to an application from the same school or community. Once a School Travel Plan has been completed for a particular applicant, the online system will automatically fill in certain fields of a corresponding application. This will eliminate the need to repeat some of the work accomplished in the *Plan*. Likewise, any projects and activities for which funding is being sought must be included in a pre-existing School Travel Plan. **You do not have to seek funding for all strategies outlined in the School Travel Plan** – only for those activities you wish to implement immediately.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Grade Levels: Safe Routes to School projects must focus on students in grades Kindergarten through 8th grade. Public grade schools, middle and jr. high schools and grade centers that serve these ages are eligible. High schools and early childhood centers (that serve only pre-school children) are not eligible.

Private Schools: Private and parochial schools may also apply for SRTS projects. Infrastructure projects

that serve private school locations are allowed as long as they are located on the public right-of-way. This may include projects on private land that have public access easements. Non-infrastructure activities are also allowed at private and parochial schools. See the Federal Highways Administration's SRTS guidance for more details (<http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/saferoutes/srtsguidance.htm>).

Application sponsors:

Infrastructure applications may be sponsored ONLY by the associated municipality or other roadway jurisdiction. School districts and municipalities must work together to determine the most beneficial improvements to best enable safe walking and bicycling for students.

Non-infrastructure applications may be sponsored by any of the following entities:

- School districts
- Political subdivisions (municipalities, counties, townships)
- Metropolitan planning organizations / regional planning commissions
- Councils of government
- Local, regional and state agencies (health departments, police departments)
- Non-profit organizations (PTA/PTO, community organization, health association, etc.)

For the purpose of the application, the group who will be administering the project(s) must apply as the Sponsoring Agency. A single Sponsoring Agency will be responsible for administering all project components of the application. The Sponsoring Agency will act as the fiscal agent for all projects and will put forth the initial funds for the project. Funds will be reimbursed through the Illinois Department of Transportation.

Project scale: Projects may serve schools at several different jurisdictional levels:

- Single school level
- Multiple schools in close proximity (2 miles)
- School district level
- City or municipal
- County
- Regional
- Statewide

EVIDENCE OF CONSULTATION

Resolutions of Support and Administration and **Letters of Support** must be obtained for all Safe Routes to School applications in order to be eligible for SRTS funds.

For infrastructure applications, the following endorsements are required:

1. One **Resolution or Letter of Support** must come from the sponsoring municipal, county, regional or state roadway authority for any affected roadways. If more than one jurisdiction is involved (e.g. both county and local roads), resolutions from all jurisdictional authorities are required. The sponsoring governmental unit will be responsible for project administration, including timely bid letting and oversight of design and construction.
2. A second **Resolution or Letter of Support** must be obtained from the School District for all infrastructure projects.
3. If the project will be located along or on a state route, you must also submit a **Letter of Allowance** from your local IDOT District. This letter must state that the Department will allow this project to be constructed if it is chosen for Safe Routes to School funding.

For non-infrastructure applications:

1. One **Resolution or Letter of Support** must be obtained from the School District for all non-infrastructure projects.
2. A second **Resolution or Letter of Support** must be obtained from any agency/organization involved in implementation of non-infrastructure projects (e.g. police departments for enforcement programs, etc.)

Optional for all applications: Additional letters of support from other project partners (PTAs/PTOs, Local School Councils, non-profit organizations, public health agencies) may accompany any application. Since the application process is online, **Resolutions** and **Letters of Support** must be in electronic form and uploaded as attachments to the online application. The upload feature may be found on the last page of the application. Resolutions or Letters that are submitted by mail, email, or any means other than through the online application system will not be considered.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

Only the projects and programs identified in the School Travel Plan will be eligible for funding. In other words, if an application seeks funding for something that was not included in the corresponding *School Travel Plan*, the application will not be considered. The online application process can accommodate requests for up to three separate projects or programs.

Following is a list of fundable activities through the Illinois Safe Routes to School Program:

Eligible Infrastructure Projects: (must be located within 2-miles of a school)

• **Sidewalk Improvements**

- New Sidewalk
- Sidewalk Repair
- Sidewalk Gap Closure
- Sidewalk Widening
- Sidewalk Curb
- Sidewalk Curb Ramp

• **Traffic Calming/Speed Reduction**

- Roundabout/Traffic Circle
- Bulb-out
- Speed Bump/Hump/Table
- Raised Crossing
- Median Refuge/Center Crossing
- Narrowed Traffic Lane
- Chicane
- Choker
- Lane Reductions
- Full/Half Street Closure
- Automated Speed Enforcement

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Traffic Control Devices

- New/Upgraded Traffic Signal
- New Pavement Markings
- New Traffic Striping
- In-Roadway Crossing Light
- Flashing Beacons
- Vehicle Speed Feedback Sign
- Bike Sensitive Signal Actuation Devices
- Pedestrian Activated Signal Upgrades
- Pedestrian Countdown Signals

• **Traffic Diversion**

- Separation of bicycles and pedestrians from traffic adjacent to school facilities
- New/Revised Pick-up/Drop-off Zone
- Traffic diversion away from school zone or designated route to school

• **Pedestrian and Bicycle Crossing Improvements**

- Crossing
- Median Refuge
- Raised Crossing
- Sight Distance Improvements
- Pedestrian Bridge
- Pedestrian Tunnel

• **On Street Bicycle Facilities**

- New/Upgraded Bike Lane
- Widened Outside Lanes/Shoulders
- Geometric Improvements
- Turning Lanes
- Channelization
- Roadway Realignment
- Traffic Signs
- Pavement Markings

• **Off Street Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities**

- Exclusive Multi-Use Bicycle and Pedestrian Trail that is separated from the roadway

• **Secure Bicycle Parking Facilities**

- Bike Racks
- Bike Lockers
- Designated Area with Safety Lighting
- Covered Bike Shelter

Within this set of fundable infrastructure projects, the following costs are reimbursable through the Safe Routes to School Program:

- **Preliminary Engineering 1/ Environmental Evaluation**
- **Preliminary Engineering 2**
- **Right of Way Acquisition**
- **Construction**
- **Construction Engineering**

Both in-house and consultant engineering and construction staff time is reimbursable in these categories. If you are unsure as to whether a certain project or activity is eligible, consult a traffic planning or engineering professional, or contact the Illinois Department of Transportation.

Eligible Non-Infrastructure Activities:

• Enforcement

- Costs for additional equipment needed for enforcement activities
- Crossing guard training programs
- Parent or student patrol programs
- Lower speed limits in school vicinity
- Speed feedback trailers or signs

• Education

- Creation of educational materials
- Bicycle and pedestrian and pedestrian safety curricula, materials and trainers.
- Teach pedestrian and bicycle safety skills to students and parents
- Organize a bicycle rodeo to teach on bike skills
- Teach personal safety skills to students and parents
- Teach the health, environmental and sustainable transportation benefits of walking and bicycling to students
- Educate parents and caregivers about safe driving procedures at the school
- Training, including SRTS training workshops that target school and community level audience

• Encouragement

- SRTS promotional campaigns and materials
- Modest rewards for SRTS contests and programs
- Incentive programs that encourage safe walking and bicycling over time
- Walking School Bus programs
- Bike Train programs
- International Walk to School Day or other special event
- Walking/biking mileage clubs
- Park-and-walk program
- Neighborhood Watch initiative
- Community safe driving awareness and education campaigns
- Safety and educational tokens that also advertise the program

- **Evaluation**

- Costs for data gathering, analysis and evaluation reporting at the local project level.
- Photocopying, duplication and printing costs
- Mailing costs
- Counting the number of students who walk and bicycle to and from school (*will be mandated for funded projects – federal reporting*)
- Tracking the number of crashes within 2 miles of school
- Measuring parent/guardian perceptions of safety (*will be mandated for funded projects – federal reporting*)

While we have attempted to include all possible Safe Routes to School projects within this list, please contact the SRTS coordinator for guidance if you would like to pursue a project that is not listed here.

Within this set of fundable non-infrastructure projects, the following costs are reimbursable through the Safe Routes to School Program:

- 1. Equipment and Supplies**
- 2. Educational Materials**
- 3. Promotions, Incentives or Publicity**
- 4. Planning and Evaluation**
- 5. Associated Education and Training**
- 6. Printing and Copying**
- 7. Consultant Services**

INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Recurring and operational costs, such as salaries and overhead, will not be funded. **Expenses for existing, expanding or new program staff time are considered operational expenses and not eligible for SRTS funding.** However, in-house engineering and construction personnel are eligible to be funded.

The use of funds for projects that reorganize pick-up and drop-off primarily for the convenience of drivers rather than to improve child safety and/or walking and bicycling access is not permitted. School bus safety programs and improvements to school bus stops are not eligible for this funding.

SUPPLEMENTAL SUPPORTING MATERIALS

You may wish to attach additional materials that support or provide extra information related to your proposed project. This may include photos or designs of the affected area(s), school

wellness policies, survey results, walking audit findings, event photographs, speed studies, etc. The last page of the application contains the feature for directly uploading these materials. While this is optional, inclusion of additional materials that help support your proposal may benefit the likelihood of your application being funded.

FUNDING LEVELS

Between 70% and 90% of total SRTS funds will support infrastructure projects. Between 10% and 30% of funds will support non-infrastructure programs. The actual division of funds will be determined according to the number and types of proposals that are submitted.

Funding levels are as follows:

- **Infrastructure applications may not exceed \$250,000, for all projects combined.**
- **The lower limit for individual infrastructure projects is \$2,000.**
- **Non-infrastructure applications may not exceed \$100,000, for all projects combined.**
- **The lower limit for individual non-infrastructure projects is \$2,000.**

REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

Selected projects are required to comply with a variety of Federal and State requirements in order to proceed. Below is a listing of key requirements that will be the responsibility of the applicant.

- **ADA:** Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) includes all infrastructure requirements and making program materials available in alternative formats.
- **TIP:** Safe Routes to Schools funds must be programmed in a metropolitan or regional planning organization's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).
- **MUTCD:** Signage, striping and pavement marking projects must follow Illinois DOT design and signage standards as outlined in the Manual on Universal Traffic Control Devices.
- **NEPA:** Except in unusual circumstances, most SRTS infrastructure projects will fall under categorical environmental exclusions that recognize construction of bicycle and pedestrian lanes, paths, and facilities as not involving significant environmental impacts. Where exclusions do not apply, projects are expected to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Please contact your IDOT District Local Roads office if you have questions about NEPA and your project.
- **Title 23:** Safe Routes to School program must comply with Davis Bacon prevailing wage rates, competitive bidding, and other contracting requirements, even for projects not located within the right-of-way of a federal-aid highway.

PROJECT SELECTION AND SCORING

The IDOT Safe Routes to School Implementation Committee will organize and distribute copies of the applications for review and evaluation. Each project in the application is scored individually. This may result in your receiving funding for one, two or three projects within the application. While entire applications may not be funded, individual projects will be fully funded at the level requested in the project description.

The review committee(s) will utilize the following selection criteria for project evaluation, which is based off of the criteria set forth in Illinois Public Act 94-493:

1. Contact Information Sheet = 2 points
2. General Project Focus = 3 points
3. Demonstration of Need = 6 points
4. Project Detail and Cost Estimate = 15 points
5. Hazards and Barriers = 8 points
6. Potential for Improving Walking and Bicycling = 15 points
7. Consultation and Support = 1 point

Official notification of awards (Notice of Award) will be made by IDOT via the regular mail. After this notification has been received, it is the responsibility of the project sponsor to contact the Department to initiate the agreement process. The applicable District Local Roads office, in conjunction with the IDOT central office Bureau of Local Roads and Streets, will administer infrastructure agreements. The IDOT Bureau of Design and Environment's central office in Springfield, IL, in conjunction with the IDOT Bureau of Business Services, will administer non-infrastructure agreements.

Sponsors have one year from the date of the Notice of Award to have an agreement in process or executed with IDOT. Funds awarded to sponsors who have not initiated the process within this timeframe will be subject to rescission. Rescinded funds will be re-allocated in the next funding cycle.