

# North Dakota Department of Transportation

## Safe Routes to School Program Guidelines

2010



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[www.dot.nd.gov](http://www.dot.nd.gov)



# Welcome to the North Dakota Safe Routes to School Program!

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a program that enables and encourages children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school. It will make walking and bicycling to school a safe and more appealing transportation option. The program facilitates the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools.

SRTS is an international movement designed to reach communities. The goal, simply stated, is to increase the number of children safely walking and biking to school. The movement began in Europe and has spread to the U.S. as a means to encourage and enable children to walk and bike to school safely.

Many of us remember a time when walking and bicycling to school was a part of everyday life. In 1969, about half of all students walked or bicycled to school. Today, however, the story is very different. Fewer than 15 percent of all school trips are made by walking or bicycling, one-quarter are made on a school bus, and over half of all children arrive at school in private automobiles.

This decline in walking and bicycling has had an adverse effect on traffic congestion and air quality around schools, as well as pedestrian and bicycle safety. In addition, a growing body of evidence has shown that children who lead sedentary lifestyles are at risk for a variety of health problems such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. Safety issues are a big concern for parents, who consistently cite traffic danger as a reason why their children are unable to bicycle or walk to school.

The purpose of the SRTS Program is to address these issues head on. At its heart, the SRTS Program empowers communities to make walking and bicycling to school a safe and routine activity once again. The Program makes funding available for a wide variety of programs and projects, from building safer street crossings to establishing programs that encourage children and their parents to walk and bicycle safely to school.

Community participation is vital to the success of the SRTS program. By using a multidisciplinary approach, the SRTS program works with the public, schools, parents, and others to identify and improve the ability of students to walk and bicycle to school safely.

The Safe Routes to School guidance on the program is available from the ND Department of Transportation website at [www.dot.nd.gov](http://www.dot.nd.gov) or for federal program information from the FHWA website at <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/saferoutes/>.

Thank you for your interest in the Safe Routes to School Program.

## **Background**

The Safe Routes to Schools Program (SRTS) was established in August 2005 as part of the Federal Highway Transportation Bill and is intended to benefit children in elementary and middle schools (K-8). The SRTS program at its heart is about kids walking and biking to school, and making it a safe and routine activity once again. The SRTS Program is funded at \$612 million over five federal fiscal years (FY 2005-2009) for both infrastructure and non-infrastructure reimbursement grants.

The North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT), through the Local Government Division, is administering the program and is expected to receive approximately \$1 million in federal monies each year for five fiscal years for infrastructure and noninfrastructure projects.

The SRTS Program provides funds to substantially improve the ability of elementary and middle school students to walk and bicycle to school safely.

## **Program Purpose**

- To enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school
- 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
- 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 (approximately 2 miles) of elementary and middle schools (Grades K-8)

These stated purposes describe the overall intent of the SRTS Program. There are many possible outcomes of this far reaching program that addresses both infrastructure and noninfrastructure needs to achieve program goals.

## **Desired Outcomes**

- Increased bicycle, pedestrian, and traffic safety
- More children walking and bicycling to and from schools
- Decreased traffic congestion
- Improved childhood health
- Reduced childhood obesity
- Encouragement of healthy and active lifestyles
- Improved air quality
- Improved community safety
- Reduced fuel consumption
- Increased community security
- Enhanced community accessibility
- Increased community involvement
- Improvements to the physical environment that increase the ability to walk and bicycle to and from schools

- Improved partnerships among schools, local municipalities, parents, and other community groups, including non-profit organizations
- Increased interest in bicycle and pedestrian accommodations throughout a community

## Program Components

Research has shown the most successful way to increase bicycling and walking is through a comprehensive approach that includes the “5 E’s” directly or indirectly. The “5 E’s” are:

- **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, yielding to 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). Selected applicants will be required to submit data before, and two years after the completion of selected projects

## Program Eligible Recipients

State, local, and regional agencies that demonstrate an ability to meet the requirements are eligible SRTS program recipients. To ensure the program is available to a broad spectrum of groups both public and nonprofit entities are eligible SRTS grant recipients.

In order to be eligible to receive SRTS funding, projects must be submitted through a Board of County Commissioners, Cities over 5000 population, and Bureau of Indian Affairs. Projects by Cities under 5000, School Districts, and non-profit organizations must be in partnership with a local government agency.

## Program Funding

North Dakota will receive approximately \$1 million per year in federal monies for five federal fiscal years (2005-2009) for SRTS projects. Federal guidelines state that not less than 10 percent and not more than 30 percent of the total money will be allocated for non-infrastructure activities with the remaining funds going towards infrastructure projects.

SRTS program funds will be awarded through a statewide competitive process that is reviewed by the SRTS advisory committee. All SRTS projects are 100% federally funded for eligible items, to the limit of the project award with no matching funds required. Minimum funding is set at \$10,000 with maximum project funding set at \$150,000. It is important to note that SRTS program recipients will be required to complete the project and then request reimbursement from NDDOT upon completion. This program is not a “cash-up front” program, it is a reimbursement program for cost incurred. Costs incurred prior to FHWA project approval are not eligible for reimbursement.

**Infrastructure costs eligible** for reimbursement include construction and construction engineering. **Ineligible costs** include: All planning, preliminary engineering, environmental impact mitigation, right-of-way acquisition, and other costs incurred before the project has been approved by FHWA for funding. All infrastructure SRTS projects must be located within approximately two miles of a school with students in grades K-8.

Please ensure that you develop an accurate cost estimate. If your project receives funding, the amount awarded will be based on your cost estimate.

SRTS funding is to supplement, not replace existing funding sources. Due to limited funding you are encouraged to be as cost effective as possible in order to stretch funds as far as possible.

## **Eligible Projects**

For the purpose of project selection, SRTS projects are divided into two main categories; infrastructure and non-infrastructure. The following is a list of potential projects. This list is not intended to be comprehensive; other types of projects or activities that are not on this list may also be eligible if they meet the objectives of reducing speeds and improving pedestrian and bicycle safety and access.

### **Infrastructure –**

- Sidewalk improvements
- Traffic calming and speed reduction improvements
- Pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements
- On-street bicycle facilities
- Off-street bicycle facilities
- Secure bicycle parking facilities
- Traffic diversion improvements in the vicinity of schools

### **Non-infrastructure –**

- Public awareness campaigns and outreach to press and community leaders
- Traffic education and enforcement in the vicinity of schools
- Student sessions on bicycle and pedestrian safety, health, and environment
- Funding for training of volunteers, and managers of local SRTS programs

## Project Selection Criteria

The selection process will be focused on a project's ability to meet SRTS program goals and the potential to develop long term walking and bicycling behaviors.

- Demonstrated need for project
- Identification of safety hazards
- Potential of proposal to reduce child injuries and fatalities – addresses safety concerns
- Potential of proposal to create a safer walking and bicycling environment within approximately two miles of a school
- Potential of proposal to encourage walking and bicycling among students – promotes healthy lifestyles
- Reduces traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools
- Identification of current and potential safe walking and bicycling routes to schools
- Number of child pedestrian or bicyclists currently using routes and anticipated to use routes
- Community support for application

## Special Provisions

**ADA:** Facilities must be designed to reasonably meet the needs of persons with disabilities. In so doing, the participant must comply with all applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Additional Information is available at [www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada](http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada).

**Title 23:** All SRTS infrastructure projects and non-infrastructure activities need to comply with applicable provisions in Title 23, such as project agreements, authorization to proceed prior to incurring costs, etc. In addition, infrastructure projects under the SRTS 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.

As part of the Title 23 requirements, all projects funded by SRTS monies must also comply with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations. Most SRTS infrastructure projects will likely fall under the categorical exclusions provisions of [Title 23 Code of Federal Regulations Section 771.117](#) that recognize construction of bicycle and pedestrian lanes, paths, and facilities as not involving significant environmental impacts.

**TIP / STIP:** All projects within a metropolitan planning organization (MPO) funded by the SRTS program must be programmed in a metropolitan planning organization's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

Applicants are responsible for any and all local permits relevant to their project. Please work with your appropriate partners to determine necessary permits.