

Colorado Safe Routes to School Strategic Plan Appendix

Five-Year Strategic Plan Update
March 2024

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Evaluating Performance (2017 -2022)

CDOT has made considerable progress with the latest strategic plan's goals and objectives, but there is still room to grow and improve, as is summarized in the strategic plan. Below is a comprehensive evaluation of each of the goals from the last plan.

Goal 1 - Demonstrate that more children are walking or bicycling to and from school as a result of Colorado Safe Routes to School.

Indicator 1(a): Walk to School Day Events

The continuance of and growth in the number of Walk to School Day (WTSD) Events is another indicator. By 2019, 178 schools throughout Colorado registered for WTSD events. Participation notably declined during the pandemic due to remote learning and social distancing, however it started to rebound in 2022 when 109 schools registered. That level held steady in 2023 with 109 schools registered.

Indicator 1(b): Bike to School Day Events

In 2013 Colorado also began promoting Bike to School Day. Eighty-one (81) Colorado schools registered for the inaugural event that year. Participation grew and peaked in 2018 with 173 schools registered for the event. Like WTSD events, the pandemic also triggered a decline in Bike to School Day events. In 2022 and 2023 there were 95 and 81 registered events, respectively. Although a decrease from preceding years, 81 events in 2023 Colorado placed 4th in the nation among participating states.

Taken together, these translate to thousands of Colorado's students, families, teachers, and administrators taking part in events that encourage safe walking and biking to school.

Goal 2 - Establish a user-friendly grantmaking process that makes it easier for more agencies to apply and compete for funding.

Indicator 2(a): Digital Access to Application

The application guidance and submittal documents have been converted to an online, digital platform. The application is placed on a stand-alone webpage for easy and clear access. The page provides specific action steps for each phase of the grant application.

Indicator 2(b): Communication and Outreach

To maximize statewide awareness of the grant program, notices of funding opportunities, and timelines, CDOT makes special announcements and updates through its e-newsletters and social media.

Indicator 2(c): Support Staff and Materials

The online application form is complemented by a downloadable Grant Application Guide that walks prospective applicants through every item in the application, highlighting areas that may require extra time so that applicants can plan accordingly.

Indicator 2(d): Funding Requests

While the level of funding requested between 2018 -2023 does not quantitatively show that more children are, in fact, walking / biking to and from school, it does underscore that the program is heavily

subscribed to, indicating a strong interest among schools and communities to make it safer for kids to bike to and from school.

In addition, CDOT offers I-I grant application assistance through phone consultations to provide more individualized support. This is coupled with a group webinar that provides information on the program and affords interested parties with an opportunity to ask questions. Language interpretation services for non-English speakers are available for these sessions upon request.

Lastly, program staff is also available to provide feedback upon request for applicants who are not awarded funding but may wish to reapply through a future grant cycle.

Goal 3 – Raise awareness of the effectiveness of the program in getting children walking and bicycling to and from school.

Indicator 3(a): Webinar Series

The development and roll out of the free, annual webinar series has been a meaningful accomplishment. Round (year) 3 of the series started in February 2023. The webinar content is developed based on topics of interest among stakeholders, including grantees. Sessions often feature case studies of grantee projects underway or recently completed. The webinar series is a no-cost, remote option for communities new to the safe routes program or for those that are already underway and seeking to take their programs to the next level. Webinar recordings are available on CDOT’s SRTS page and can be accessed for free at any time.

Indicator 3(b): E-newsletters

Success stories and resources are also shared through CDOT’s “Futures in Motion” e-newsletter that is distributed to a list of approximately 400 recipients. A cornerstone of the e-newsletters is to highlight local initiatives, and spotlight progress and results from CSRTS grantees. As of 2022, these newsletters were distributed in English and Spanish.

Indicator 3(c): Toolkits

Development and distribution of *Working Together to Make Meaningful Change: A Toolkit for Engaging Communities Across Colorado* (See Figure 1). Created by the Safe Routes Partnership with support from CDPHE and CDOT in 2021, this resource offers tips and strategies for authentic and equitable community engagement. By using this resource to assess how programs can meaningfully and equitably engage a community, prospective grantees can significantly strengthen their applications.

Figure 1. CDPHE's Toolkit for Engaging Communities Across



Development of a suite of School Crossing Guard Training materials that are now free and accessible in English and Spanish are on the CSRTS web page. These include a PowerPoint School Crossing Guard

Training Presentation; a School Crossing Guard Training Manual (see Figure 2) including testing, practical training guidance, and field assessment guidance; and a Handbook for School Crossing Guard Sponsors, to provide consistent guidance in hiring and training new and existing school crossing guards.

Indicator 3(d): Curriculum Development

Additional curriculum developed includes a Bicycle Rodeo Train the Trainer; Core Subject Bicycle and Pedestrian Lesson Plans K-8; Pedestrian Safety Lesson Plans K-2; Bicycle Safety Lesson Plans 3-6. These detail the variety of ways the lessons can be used inside and out of the classroom, and how easily they can be integrated into the core curriculum for grades K-8.

Indicator 3(e): Parent Surveys

The dissemination of parent surveys has been another important factor in raising awareness. Since the beginning of 2017 through 2022, 12,811 surveys have been completed by Colorado parents of K-8 students. Participation in the survey increases parents' awareness about the program and its benefits while yielding valuable data about student travel behavior that can be used to inform projects and programs.

Goal 4 - Influence policy decisions that promote and support more children walking and bicycling to and from school.

An example from the last five years is the creation and dissemination of "Supporting Safe Routes to School Through Smart School Siting" (See Figure 3). Prepared by the National Safe Routes Partnership for CDOT, the report identified specific actions that school districts, local governments, and state government officials can take to support the siting (locating) of schools in areas that support students and families who walk, bike, roll, or skate to and from school. Following its completion in 2020, the Partnership delivered a webinar in 2020 to introduce the report and summarize its key guidance.

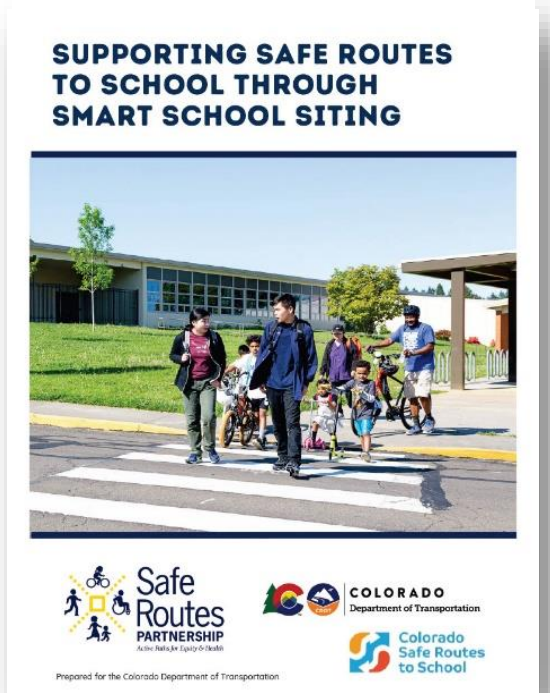
Goal 5 - Develop capacities of communities to launch, maintain, and sustain Safe Routes to School initiatives.

Additional accomplishments in support of Goal 5 made in the last five years include the following:

Figure 2. SRTS Crossing Guard Training Manual in Spanish



Figure 3. CDOT's Supporting Safe Routes to School Through Smart School Siting



Indicator 5(a): Responding to the pandemic

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, standard means of encouraging kids to walk and bike to school were not available options. A COVID-19 Resources page was added to the CSRTS website, which was continuously updated while relevant. This page was specifically devoted to offering creative tools and guidance on how to develop, maintain, and build upon Safe Routes to School programming within the unprecedented circumstances.

Funding allocations were also adjusted. Shortly after releasing the call for FY 21 SRTS Projects, the decision was made to earmark approximately \$2M of \$7M available for grants to support communities experiencing hardships due to COVID. Because of the limitations on in-person activities, CDOT promoted healthy activity through a Walktober poster contest in October 2020, in celebration of Colorado Pedestrian Month and what would have been Walk to School Day. Winning entries were featured on the CSRTS website.

Indicator 5(a): More equitable funding

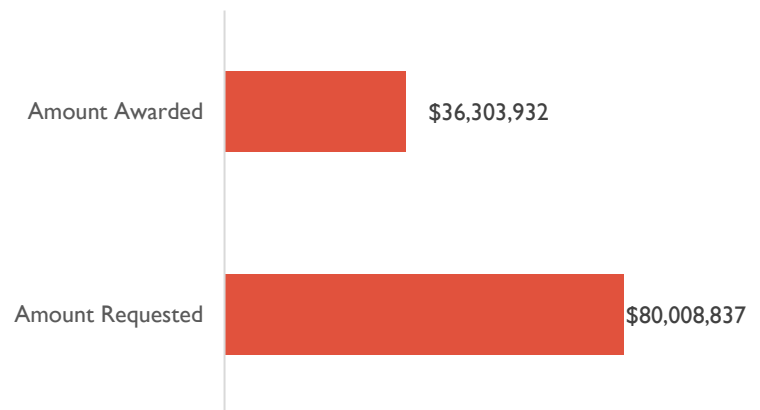
CDOT adjusted its funding approach to make the Safe Routes program more accessible to lower income communities. For many schools or districts, funding is very limited and securing a local match can present a barrier that keeps them from pursuing an application. To make safe routes programs available more to schools and districts, CDOT provides 100 percent funding (no local match required) for qualifying schools.

Current Conditions

Considerable Demand & Local Investment

As discussed in the strategic plan, there is a considerable funding gap between grant application requests versus those that are awarded. Figure 4 illustrates the depth of this gap in applications that were requested versus awarded over the last 17 years. Despite this gap, it's important to note that these awards have been supplemented by local match dollars, indicating that program funding serves as an important vehicle for leveraging local dollars from towns, cities, and counties throughout Colorado.

Figure 4. SRTS Awarded / Requested 2005-2023



2022 Report Card

In the 2022 Report Card, **Colorado achieved a score of 130 / 200**. This puts Colorado in the top third of states and at the higher end of the *Making Strides* category. Figure 5 illustrates the scoring criteria used by the Safe Routes to School National Partnership and showcases how Colorado measured within each of these scoring criteria. The four categories and how all states scored in 2022 was as follows:

- **Building Speed** – 4 States - 151-200 Points

- **Making Strides** – 11 States - 101 -150 (*Colorado scored 130*)
- **Warming Up** - 23 States - 51-100 Points
- **Lacing Up** - 12 States - 0 -50 Points

As noted in the strategic plan, this score demonstrates that Colorado has taken meaningful steps to support walking and bicycling through its Safe Routes program, **but still needs to take significant steps to demonstrate a stronger and more effective commitment to enabling Coloradans to be safe and physically active.** A point of note is that while Colorado's score didn't decline from 2020 (the preceding reporting period), it also didn't improve. It had the same score in 2020. Looking ahead, in gaining another 21 points, at least, Colorado will graduate to the top category (Building Speed).

CDOT and the SRTS program does not have influence over all the scoring criteria in the report card. However, opportunities for improvement under this plan to increase its score on a future report card include:

- Adopt a statewide goal to increase walk and bike mode share (potential to gain five points)
- Providing support to TAP applicants; (potential to gain five points)
- Increase amount of state funding for active transportation; (potential to gain five points)
- Provides Safe Routes to School planning grants or minigrants; (potential to gain three points)

These opportunities have been accounted for in the Annual Action Planning Considerations developed for this plan. CDOT staff and the SRTS advisory committee will use this list of considerations in the next five years to develop annual work plans to achieve the plan's visions, goal, and objectives.

A point of note is that CDOT's score will increase in the 2024 report card by at least five points in that it now waives the local match requirement for qualified, high-need communities.

Figure 5. SRTS 2022 Report Card for Colorado¹



¹ Safe Routes Partnership. (2022). *Making Strides 2022*. <https://saferoutespartnership.org/resources/report/making-strides-2022-state-report-cards>

2020 Statewide Program Assessment Report

To help assess Colorado's progress in supporting Safe Routes to School, the national Safe Routes Partnership conducted a review of Colorado's relevant programs, policies, funding, and practices. The 2020 Statewide Program Assessment Report provides an overview of SRTS programming in Colorado and provides a high-level assessment of challenges, innovations, and opportunities. This report draws from data collected during an initial survey period in 2019 as well as additional responses and information gathered specific to Colorado in 2020. **Fifteen schools in Colorado responded to the survey.** This level of response may have been a result of COVID and the many challenges that schools were navigating including closures and transitions to remote learning.

As stated in the report, many local SRTS initiatives were developed and grown in Colorado between 2005 - 2020. This is partly demonstrated by the number of programs that are flourishing in major population centers along the Front Range, especially in Denver and Boulder. However, as the report states, **there is room for considerable growth in Safe Routes to School in Colorado with the help of state level leadership and resources.** There are significant population centers in the state that have little to no Safe Routes to School activity. In addition, existing programs have the potential for much higher levels of impact. An on-line, interactive map showing the location of past and current SRTS-funded projects can be accessed at

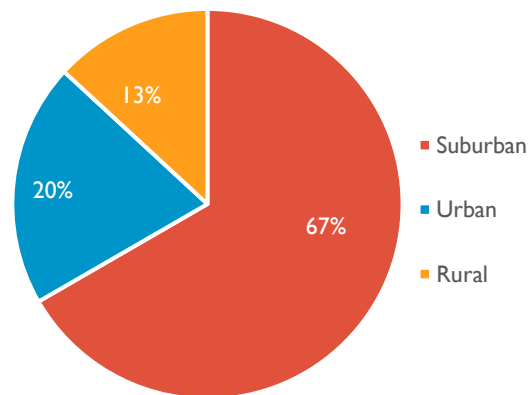
<https://cdot.maps.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=8ee452943fcb40eb9fc9b55d6a8d3f45>

Other key takeaways from the report considered in the development of goals and actions for this plan (see Section 4) are provided below.

Limited participation: As of 2017 (most current data available), 579 schools (approximately 43 percent of all elementary and middle schools) across the state in 30 percent of Colorado's School Districts had implemented Safe Routes to School programs. While this is a notable rate of participation, over half of Colorado's elementary and middle schools were yet to participate (as of six years ago).

Urban / Suburban Focus: Two-thirds of Colorado respondents to the 2019 survey indicated that their Safe Routes to School program was in a suburban community, 20 percent in an urban area, and 13 percent in a rural area. This is generally aligned with the urban-rural split in Colorado with approximately 13 percent of Colorado's population residing in rural areas. Reasons identified for comparatively limited participation among rural communities included lack of adequate staff or other capacity to complete a grant application, absence of a local funding match and lack of adequate staff resources to lead, administer, and support a SRTS program.

Figure 6. Community Types Implementing a Safe Routes to School Program



Staffing Limitations: Of the Colorado survey respondents, only 27 percent of respondents reported that their program had a full-time, paid coordinator; almost half of respondents indicated that their program had a part time coordinator; 7 percent indicated that their coordinator worked on a volunteer basis; **and 20 percent of programs had no coordinator, lead, or staff at all.**

Funding Limitations: The size and source of Safe Routes to School program budgets in Colorado vary widely, from no budget at all, to over one million dollars for capital improvements and programmatic work. Sixty percent of respondents indicated that their programs received transportation funding through the state's Safe Routes to School grants program or other federal grants. Colorado programs also depended on local funding, foundations, school funds, and donations from community members and local businesses. The funding pattern is similar to national results where programs rely heavily on state and federal transportation grants followed by local funds, education funding, and donations. **This degree of dependency reinforces the importance of adequate federal / state funding levels for the program.**

Although the state program can provide low levels of funding for many local Safe Routes to School programs, for real sustainability and comprehensive impact, programs need to be able to hire staff. **State funding for Safe Routes to School could be expanded to provide more significant support.** Many communities around the country are ensuring the longevity and efficacy of their Safe Routes to School programs by providing guaranteed sources of local funding, such as hospitals, local businesses, and foundations. More Colorado communities would do well to explore this approach.

Approachable, Short-Term Programs: According to the National Center for Safe Routes to School, 178 Colorado schools participated in Walk to School Day and 157 schools participated in Bike to School Day in the 2018-2019 school year. Participation levels for both events steadily increased between 2017- 2020. For many schools, these programs may offer the lowest barrier to entry because they don't require a local match, a grant application, or staff / volunteer to manage grant administration.

Health and Safety Factors

Several points of data help capture the state of student health and safety and highlight the importance of providing students with safe routes for walking and biking to school. When strategizing for the next five years and considering the program in the longer-term, it's important to document these factors so that investments in infrastructure and program interventions are considered holistically.

Safety / Crash Data:

Student safety is at the center of the program's past and future. Understanding and documenting trends is critical to looking at the next five years and how to improve the safety of students walking and biking to and from school throughout Colorado.

Crash data was pulled from January 2017 – November 2022. As shown in Table 1, every year in Colorado approximately 2,500 crashes involving bicycles or pedestrians occur, resulting in approximately 1,200 injuries and 95 fatalities. Moreover, about half were suspected to involve an injury and a notable percentage of those resulted in a fatality. This data includes all reported crashes on public roadways in Colorado. It's worth noting that some crashes involving bicyclists and pedestrians may go unreported so the numbers shown may not capture the actual number of crashes. **The data underscores the ongoing need for infrastructure and education focused on improving**

safety for all those who walk or bike in Colorado, including K-12 students traveling to and from school. (Note: CDOT receives data from the DRIVES system for all crashes, excluding private property and counter reports. Counter reports are self-reported by drivers and are not investigated by a law enforcement officer).

Table 1. Crash Data 2017-2022²

Mode of Travel	Total Crashes	Total Suspected Injury Crashes *	Total Fatal Crashes
Bicycle	6,766	3,157	86
Pedestrian	8,745	4,274	485

*Includes possible injury, suspected minor injury, and suspected serious injury.

Obesity Rates:

Childhood obesity can greatly impact children’s physical health and emotional well-being. Data obtained from the State of Childhood Obesity website reveals that Colorado has relatively low rates of obesity compared to other states. With 14.7 percent of youth ages 10 to 17 having obesity, Colorado ranks 16 out of the 50 states and the District of Colombia. Table 2 below summarizes rates of obesity among youth through 2020. While these rates are lower in comparison to 35 other states with higher rates, **the key point is that thousands of Colorado’s youth are obese. Lack of sufficient physical exercise is a common contributing factor.**

Table 2. Colorado’s Obesity Among Youth³

Age	Rate of Obesity (%)
2-4 years (participating in Women, Infants, and Children or WIC program)	8.6
10-17 years	14.7
High School Students	10.3

School Smart Choice Data:

The Healthy Kids Colorado Survey (HKCS) is administered every other year to Colorado's public middle and high school students. It’s a voluntary opportunity for young people to report their health status in the areas of mental health, nutrition, physical activity, sexual health, suicide, experiences of violence and racism, school and community engagement, access to trusted adults, attitudes, and perceptions and more.

² CDOT. *Colorado Crash Data Dashboard*.

https://tableau.state.co.us/t/CDOT/views/CDOTCrashSummaryAVtestver2_0/NonMotorists?%3Aorigin=card_share_link&%3Aembed=y&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y

³ State of Childhood Obesity. *Explore State Data: Colorado*. <https://stateofchildhoodobesity.org/state-data/?state=co>

The HKCS is a comprehensive data source for understanding how young people are doing, with over 100,000 participants each administration year. The most recent data available is from the survey administered in the fall of 2021.

As shown in Table 3, almost 55 percent of respondents could get to school by an active mode, however only 21.7 percent (age 15 years and younger) indicated they do walk or ride one or more days in an average week.

The results suggest that nearly 80 percent of respondents take a bus, drive, or get a ride to school. This aligns with nearly half (49 percent) of respondents who indicated they were not physically active for an hour each day on five or more of the most recent 7 days. The recommended amount of physical activity that children and adolescents (ages 6 through 17 years) should be getting is 60 minutes (1 hour) or more of moderate-to-vigorous activity⁴. In summary, many students who could travel to / from school by active mode are not, and many students are not getting the recommended, minimum amount of physical exercise each day or per week.

Table 3. Student Activity Level

	Students 15 years or younger (%)
Percentage of students (15 years or younger) who attended physical education (PE) classes on one or more days in an average week	47.5
Percentage of students (15 years or younger) who could walk or ride a bike, scooter, or skateboard to school if they wanted to	54.8
Percentage of students (15 years or younger) who spent 3+ hours in front of a TV, computer, smart phone, or other electronic device for something other than schoolwork	73.3
Percentage of students (15 years or younger) who walk or ride a bike to school one or more days in an average week	21.7
Percentage of students (15 years or younger) who were physically active for a total of at least 60 minutes per day on five or more of the past 7 days	51.1

Parent Survey Data:

Tables 4 – 8 summarize survey results collected between 2017-2022 by the National Center for Safe Routes to School Partnership. It shows several of the survey questions asked followed by a summary of responses from parents of children in grades K-8 in Colorado schools. **In all, 12,811 parents responded.** While this information is not fully representative of student travel behaviors in Colorado, it does provide an informative snapshot.

Q: On most days, how does your child arrive and leave for school?

The results show that 16 -19 percent of students walk, nine bike, and two percent responded other (skateboard, scooter, inline skates, etc.). This equates to 27- 30 percent of students arriving or traveling home from school via an active mode, thus 70-73 percent of students are traveling in a motorized vehicle.

⁴ (2018) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, 2nd Edition. https://health.gov/sites/default/files/2019-09/Physical_Activity_Guidelines_2nd_edition.pdf

Table 4. Student Mode of Travel

Mode of Travel	ARRIVE to school (%)	LEAVE from school (%)
Bike	9	9
Carpool (children from other families)	4	4
Family Vehicle (only children in your family)	51	45
Other (skateboard, scooter, inline skates, etc.)	1	2
School Bus	19	22
Transit (city bus, subway, etc.)	0.5	0.5
Walk	16	19

Q: At what grade would you allow your child to walk or bike to/from school without an adult?

Twenty-seven (27) percent of respondents indicated that they would not feel comfortable, regardless of the grade, allowing their child to walk or bike to school without an adult. Of the respondents that provided a grade, 82 percent said they would be comfortable with their child walking or biking to/from school without an adult by the eighth grade.

Table 5. Parents Feeling Comfortable with Child Commuting to School Alone

	Individual %	Cumulative %
Not comfortable at any grade	27	27
Comfortable	73	100
If comfortable, what grade?		
1	0.4	0.4
2	1	1.4
3	4	5.4
4	10	15.4
5	13	28.4
6	13	41.4
7	13	54.4
8	6	60.4
9	4	64.4
10	4	68.4

11	1	69.4
12	0.3	69.7
College	4	73.7

Q: In your opinion, how much does your child’s school encourage or discourage walking and biking to/from school?

Fifty (50) percent of parents polled indicated that their child’s school neither encourages nor discourages walking or biking to/from school. Nearly equal, 47 percent indicated that their child’s school encourages or strongly encourages students to walk or bike to/from school. Only 3 percent of respondents remarked that their child’s school discourages commuting via bike or foot.

Table 6. School Encouraging or Discouraging Walking or Biking

	%
Strongly Encourages	16
Encourages	31
Neither	50
Discourages	2
Strongly Discourages	1

Q: How much fun is walking or biking to/from school for your child?

Notably, 60 percent of respondents indicated that, for their child / children, walking or biking to and from school was fun or very fun, although less than half of that amount (26-28 percent) do walk or bike. Only four percent indicated it would be boring and a third were neutral.

Table 7. How Fun Walking or Biking is for Child

	%
Very Fun	26
Fun	34
Neutral	36
Boring	2
Very Boring	2

Q: How healthy is walking or biking to/from school for your child?

The responses on health were nearly universal. Eighty-nine (89) percent of respondents indicated that walking or biking to/ from school is healthy or very healthy.

Table 8. How Healthy is Walking or Biking

	%
Very Healthy	57
Healthy	32
Neutral	10
Unhealthy	0.5
Very Unhealthy	1

In summary, the majority of parents recognize that an active mode to and from school is a healthy choice and fun, but less than 30 percent of students typically travel to / from school by an active mode.

Moreover, half of schools don't encourage walking or biking as a regular mode of transportation. However, the majority of respondents indicated that they would be comfortable with their child walking / biking to – from school without an adult by the 7th grade.

Program Investment

Since program inception in 2005, the demand for SRTS program funds in Colorado has been consistently robust. Grant recipients are using program funds to improve infrastructure and lead education and encouragement programs that better enable students to safely walk and bike to school. However, as reflected in Table 9 below, the program is regularly oversubscribed. It is not uncommon to see a near 50 percent discrepancy between funds requested and funds awarded. Specifically looking at the last five years, since completion of the last strategic plan, the requested amount of funds has been 64% higher than the available amount.

Table 9. SRTS Funds Awarded 2017-2023⁵

Year	Funds Awarded	Funds Requested
2017	\$2,500,000	\$4,783,365
2018	\$2,488,676	\$2,332,351
2019	\$4,968,753	\$7,260,040
2021	\$6,010,924	\$10,725,739
2023	\$3,310,395	\$6,481,291
All (2017 – 2023)	\$19,278,748	\$31,582,786

⁵ CDOT. (2023). *Colorado Safe Routes to School Projects Master List*. <https://www.codot.gov/programs/bikeped/saferoutes/assets/master-list-of-all-csrts-projects.pdf>

Stakeholder Engagement

Online Survey. An online project survey was broadly distributed in the spring of 2023. An invite to complete the survey was sent to 418 individuals throughout Colorado from the Safe Routes subscribers list. Respondents were asked for input on several topics such as whether they had used technical assistance resources (i.e. webinars), prioritization of the seven E's, obstacles to success, adequacy of funding, ways to extend the program to make it even more equitable, and big ideas for the future, and work occurring in relation to Safe Routes to Parks.

More than 160 people responded representing diverse community types and agencies from throughout Colorado. Respondents were also invited to share contact information if they were interested in participating in a focus group later in the planning process.

Focus Groups. Two virtual focus groups sessions were conducted to examine more closely several of the recurring themes and issues that emerged in the survey responses. While several of the same questions were asked of both groups, some questions were tailored based on the participants' survey responses. The first focus group was held on July 25 and focused more on the Engineering E and infrastructure (non-programmatic) side of the program. Five participants from jurisdictions and agencies participated in the 90-minute virtual session. The second 90-minute session was held on July 26, 2023, with six participants. This session focused on other aspects of the program including education, equity, engagement, and evaluation.

The agencies and organizations that participated in the focus groups included:

July 25

- City of Greeley, CO
- Jefferson County, CO
- North Front Range MPO
- Adams 12 School District
- City of Broomfield, CO
- Fort Collins, CO

July 26

- Mesa County, Colorado
- Steamboat Springs, CO
- Denver, CO
- San Luis Valley Great Outdoors

Stakeholder Interviews: Eleven (11) virtual interviews were conducted in September and October of 2023. Interviewees were identified based on their past involvement in and knowledge of the Colorado Safe Routes program as well as their capacity, through partnership, to help CDOT advance the program over the next five years. Among the 11 interviews conducted, 16 people participated. Questions focused on issues such as local capacity, program communications, grant application requirements, funding adequacy, equity, enforcement, evaluation, and the continuance / refinement of program goals. The agencies and organizations that participated in the interviews include:

- Bicycle Colorado
- Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG)
- Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment (CDPHE)
- Town of Westcliff, Colorado
- Town of Salida, Colorado
- Boulder County Public Health
- Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT)
- National Center for the Safe Routes to School
- Mesa County, Colorado
- Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA)

Summary of Input

Through the stakeholder engagement, several specific recommendations were made related to various aspects of the SRTS program. Through the survey, focus groups, and interviews input was received on what the program is doing well and should continue doing and ways that it could be improved. This informed the plan's goals, objectives, strategies, annual action planning considerations, as well as ongoing (current) program activities that will be continued into the next five years.

Some of the recurring themes heard through engagement included the following:

- Provide promotional and educational materials and resources in more than just English. Ensure information is available in the format/language that is most accessible to that community/school and utilize local leaders that match the identity of the community.
- Identify and target schools with highest need (due to lack of infrastructure, socially vulnerable demographics, etc. or those that are Title I schools) and prioritize outreach and investment to these schools or underserved communities.
- Provide more technical assistance to communities that don't have access to technical expertise. This could include staffing and/or training support.
- Build more protected bike lanes and other traffic calming/safe speed infrastructure updates to encourage safe biking/walking to schools.
- Increased education about safe walking and biking (especially this) needs to be implemented for students. Weaving this into institutionalized education is encouraged. Also need to educate parents/caregivers about safe vehicular driving, as well as the benefits of active transportation for the students.
- Peer learning, success stories, and a formula for how to start the programmatic aspects of a SRTS program are all important.
- Promote and educate communities about the SRTS program well before the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) goes out. Two months is not enough time to learn about the program and gather all required materials before applying.
- Physical improvements to improve safety and traffic calming is essential. Infrastructure, lighting, and signage will have the greatest impact and fully separated bike infrastructure, such as a share use path, is best.
- Local jurisdictions often don't have the staff capacity, time, or resources to go after grants, and the SRTS can often be too burdensome, so be sure to offer support in this aspect for

communities that can't do it on their own. Often times they also don't have capital to fund projects so more funding could help for more implementation of projects.

- Hard to encourage biking when kids don't have access to bikes – incentivize active transportation by providing this access to bike materials. Examples include developing a bike library, seeking grant funding to provide bikes to students, developing an e-bike rebate program for students/families.
- Utilize community connectors/liaisons to get the message out. Often there is mistrust with state government, so build connections with local leaders to communicate the SRTS program and its benefits. Be sure to identify liaisons that match the culture/character of the community.
- Need to have more support for schools/communities that don't have the staffing to apply and administer grants. Also provide more technical support for issuing bids and contracts to build physical improvements.
- Provide more incentives to students for participation in SRTS. Offer awards, prizes, etc.
- Offer funding for communities/schools to purchase biking materials to provide to students (helmets, bike lights, etc.)
- School choice has a big impact on students being able to walk/bike to school. Those that choose to schools don't have the option to bike/walk because they live too far away.

Integration Across Plans

Integration of CDOT's Safe Routes program into other plans, where appropriate, can help deepen awareness of the program across the state and aid in the implementation of goals and actions over the next five years. Looking ahead, updates to or development of these plans present important opportunities for integration of the Safe Routes program and implementation of the strategic plan.

CDOT 10 – Year Plan. When future updates to this Plan are made, Safe Routes to School Investments should be considered. The 10-year project list is founded on four key tenets including Safety, Resilience, Fix It First and Multimodal. For safety, the Plan says, **Colorado's transportation vision is for a future with zero deaths and serious injuries so all people using any transportation mode arrive at their destination safely.** To that end, future amendments to the project lists or the Plan should include projects that will improve safety for the thousands of Colorado students who walk or bike to and from school every day and those that wish to but don't because of existing facility conditions. The Transportation Commission, in finalizing and adopting future updates to the project list, should consider how implementation of projects will advance the goals and actions of CDOT's Safe Routes to School Program.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Update. In 2024, CDOT will begin development of a statewide Active Transportation Plan, which will be an update to its 2012 Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (amended in 2015). Relevant information from the current conditions section of the strategic plan should be integrated so the status of the Safe Routes Program is documented as part of CDOT's larger active transportation framework. In addition, when revisions are considered for investment decision criteria in Table 1 of the 2012 Plan, inclusion of Safe Routes should be maintained. Lastly, as policies are developed to further advance active transportation programs and facilities as part of CDOT's overall network, those policies should align with and ideally advance the goals and actions of this strategic plan.

State Transportation Safety Plan. The Strategic Transportation Safety Plan has been updated for 2020 to 2023. It is a statewide plan, intended for all Colorado stakeholders involved with transportation safety; it replaces the Strategic Highway Safety Plan (2014 -2019). The plan guides all Colorado agencies and other stakeholders in taking action on improving transportation safety – specifically in areas of leadership, safety culture, driver behavior, and infrastructure. The plan incorporates a "Zero Deaths" philosophy and has identified 15 key strategies to target Colorado's high and critical priority safety issues. The plan's stated goal is to reduce fatalities and serious injuries in Colorado by 15 percent by 2023.

The next update to the Safety Plan presents an important opportunity to potentially expand upon the unique and important roles that Safe Routes program plays in the delivery of a safer, multimodal system and a sustained reduction in crashes involving fatalities and significant injuries. While the Safety Plan does reference the Safe Routes Program, the next update provides an important opportunity for deeper integration of this strategic plan's goals and actions into the Tier I strategies of the Safety Plan. In addition, the next update to the Safety Plan should more fully summarize the results of annual evaluation and reporting (on the Safe Routes Strategic Plan) so the value of the program is more fully understood in the realization of a safety-first culture in Colorado.

Colorado Safe Routes to Parks. Colorado is one of three Accelerator States under this new program. Through October 2023, a multi-agency team from Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and CDOT collaborated to improve safe, convenient, and equitable walking and biking routes to parks and open spaces. While the focus was on parks, CDOT's representation is important in part, because enhancing active transportation options to parks and open spaces has a lot of synergy with providing safe routes to and from schools. Many schools are located immediately next to or near parks so co-benefits between the two programs could be achieved.

CDOT is currently collaborating with the Safe Routes Partnership on their Colorado Safe Routes to Parks Activating Communities Grant and Technical Assistance program which awarded \$10,000 and 9 months of technical assistance to four Colorado communities to implement safe routes to parks initiatives. That program period and associated grant activities will be from January 8, 2024 to September 30, 2024.

Following completion of Colorado's program in November 2024, CDOT and its two state agency partners should host a webinar session on key lessons learned and data compiled that could be leveraged by future Safe Routes grant applicants and to help grow statewide participation in programs such as Walk and Bike to School Days.

State Health Improvement Plan for 2024. Released by CDPHE in 2022, this plan identifies safe routes to schools and youth serving destinations (parks, libraries, recreation centers), as a strategy for reducing transportation-related emissions and increasing transportation choice. To further the partnership between CDOT and CDPHE and given the close nexus between active transportation and physical and mental health, future updates to this plan should maintain safe conditions for walking and biking to schools as an important intervention for reducing rates of obesity among K-12 students as well as improving their mental health.

Chronic Disease State Plan (2022-2030). The 2022-2030 Chronic Disease Plan builds on the state's existing plans and on input from people across the state to outline specific and realistic objectives that can be achieved by 2030. Each objective was selected for its promise and capacity to address the health needs of Coloradans and to position the state to achieve better long-term outcomes in chronic disease. One of the Plan's primary goals relates to Everyday Access for Coloradans and a supporting strategy is to increase interventions for active travel to school and youth-serving destinations **such as safe routes to school programs**. While positive, CDOT will coordinate with CDPHE as part of the next plan update on how a more robust discussion of the Safe Routes program and the goal / action framework in this plan can play a meaningful role in the reduction of chronic disease rates in Colorado.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). requires States and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), such as the Denver Regional Council of Governments, to use 2.5 percent or more of State Planning and Research and Metropolitan Planning funds on activities to increase safe and accessible options for multiple travel modes for people of all ages and abilities. The types of eligible activities include, but aren't limited to, the following:

- (1) adoption of Complete Streets standards or policies;
- (2) development of a Complete Streets prioritization plan that identifies a specific list of Complete Streets projects to improve the safety, mobility, or accessibility of a street;
- (3) development of transportation plans—
 - (A) to create a network of active transportation facilities, including sidewalks, bikeways, or pedestrian and bicycle trails, to connect neighborhoods with destinations such as workplaces, schools, residences, businesses, recreation areas, healthcare and child care services, or other community activity centers;
 - (B) to integrate active transportation facilities with public transportation service or improve access to public transportation;
 - (C) to create multiuse active transportation infrastructure facilities, including bikeways or pedestrian and bicycle trails, that make connections within or between communities;
 - (D) to increase public transportation ridership; and
 - (E) to improve the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians

As CDOT and the state's five MPOs carry out projects under the IIJA, much of this work will present important opportunities to construct projects and deliver plans that will improve opportunities to K-12 students in Colorado to walk and bike to school.