

SafeRoutes

Colorado Safe Routes to School



TO: Transportation Commission

FROM: Debra Perkins-Smith

DATE: March 7, 2012

RE: Colorado Safe Routes to School Overview and Request for Approval of Selected 2012 Projects

Colorado is a national leader for Safe Routes to School (SRTS). The Colorado SRTS program administered by CDOT has now allocated over \$13 million in federal SRTS funding to projects statewide. These projects have directly impacted over 500 Colorado schools since the program's inception in 2005. You will find attached for your approval a list of 2012 SRTS projects recommended for funding.

National Recognition

The strength of the Colorado SRTS program was most recently witnessed by winning the 2012 James L. Oberstar SRTS national award for Heatherwood Elementary in Boulder CO. This award is the highest national honor a SRTS project can receive. Thanks to CDOT SRTS funding, Heatherwood was able to add infrastructure, most notably a crosswalk across a segment of rural highway near the school entrance, which allowed many students a safe route to walk and bike to school. Paired with education and encouragement efforts, Heatherwood went from 12% of kids regularly walking and biking to school to now over 43%. Heatherwood's program is also the first SRTS program in the State of Colorado for children with special needs. Since 2007, the Oberstar award has been given annually for outstanding achievements in implementing Safe Routes to School programs in the US. Colorado is the only state to have received this award twice; Bear Creek Elementary was the national recipient in 2008.

Governor John Hickenlooper agreed to be video interviewed about what Safe Routes to School means to Colorado in recognition of this award. The full interview can be found at:

<http://303cycling.com/John-hickenlooper-interview-safe-routes-to-schools>

Program Purpose

The primary goal of SRTS is to get more children in grades K-8 to walk and bike to school. 40 years ago, nearly 50% of kids walked or biked to school. Today, the average is less than 15%. 20-25% of all traffic congestion in the morning is due to driving kids to school, contributing to poor air quality around schools and increased rates of childhood obesity. SRTS aims to change these behaviors and foster more effective, healthier, safe and active ways for kids to get to school.

SRTS State Statue and SAFETEA-LU

On June 5th, 2004, the Colorado State Legislature passed into law a Colorado SRTS program. It directed the Transportation Commission and CDOT to establish the program using federal funds. This happened during the tail end of TEA-21, meaning there was no immediate funding

to apply to the program. With an eye to the future, a committee of dedicated people came together to promulgate CDOT rules for administering the program in anticipation of new federal legislation. Colorado was the first state to call for projects when SAFETEA-LU was passed due to this forward thinking.

SAFETEA-LU provided 100% federal funding for the program and required no local match for projects. Colorado has awarded over \$13.5 million to projects statewide to date. Per state and federal statute, these funds are awarded through a process as follows:

Eligibility

- Eligible applicants include any political subdivision of the state (school district, city, county, state entity, tribal entity).
- Nonprofits may also apply by partnering with a state subdivision.

Selection Process

- Applications are reviewed by a nine member volunteer advisory committee appointed by the CDOT Executive Director. The committee represents bicyclists, pedestrians, parents, teachers, law enforcement, and rural TPRs and MPOs per state statute. Members serve a 2-year rotating term.
- CDOT Regions provide the advisory committee with an initial screening and budget review for the infrastructure applications.
- Scoring Criteria established in application

Funding

- \$2.5 million recommended to be allocated to 2012 SRTS Grants.
- 44 applications were received this year, representing requests from every CDOT Region. Requests total approximately \$6 million.
- This program is 100% federally funded.
- Minimum funding is set at \$50,000 with maximum project funding set at \$250,000 for infrastructure projects. Minimum funding is \$3,500 for non-infrastructure (education and encouragement) projects.
- 10% - 30% of total funds must be allocated to non-infrastructure projects.
- Colorado legislation requires allocation in proportion to K-8 student population around the state. (75% to areas within MPO boundaries, 25% to rural TPRs)

Program Evaluation

The Colorado SRTS program is strong on evaluation and performance measures. Each project awarded SRTS funds must complete:

- A pre and post project school student travel tally that documents how students are arriving to school
- A school parent survey that gauges parent perceptions of their child walking/biking to school
- A final accomplishment report that is posted on the CDOT website

Sustainability

The Colorado SRTS program is more than just a grant program. Our goal is to provide education and information so people can implement SRTS programs with or without federal funding. Many statewide initiatives were developed as part of the Colorado SRTS program based on trends seen across grant applications and data collected from the SRTS Parent Surveys. For example, CDOT created Colorado Crossing Guard Guidelines and held a series of Crossing Guard Train-the-Trainers because a large number of communities identified the lack of adequate crossing guard training resources as an important need for children to get to school safely. Instead of providing individual grants to fund this need on a community by community basis, the Colorado SRTS Advisory Committee directed CDOT to develop a comprehensive crossing guard program that could serve the needs of the entire state.

Other examples of statewide initiatives include:

Colorado K-8 Bicycle and Pedestrian Curriculum

Colorado will be the first state in the nation to develop a complete set of bicycle and pedestrian lesson plans for K-8 core subject areas, such as math, science, language arts and history classes. These lesson plans align specifically with the state's K-8 standards for education and were developed in partnership with the Colorado Dept. of Education. The goal is to have children be able to learn about the positive societal benefits of walking and biking throughout their entire learning. Lesson plan examples include the history of bicycling in Colorado and how to calculate the calories burned from active transportation.

Walk to School Day

CDOT supports Walk to School events as part of Colorado Pedestrian month in October of each year. Schools are encouraged to use Walk to School events as a starting point for SRTS. We had 238 schools officially register for Walk to School Events on the www.walktoschool.org website for October 2011, an increase of 10% from the year before.

Application Sessions

Each year, CDOT holds statewide trainings to educate communities about applying for a SRTS grant. These sessions help communities understand the federal and state grant requirements as well as develop ideas for strong SRTS programs.

2012 Prioritized Projects

In your packet, you will find a complete list of 2012 SRTS applications as prioritized by the SRTS Advisory Committee. This attachment also includes a listing of the 2012 members serving on the Advisory Committee. 44 applications were received in 2012. The projects recommended for funding, which are shaded, amount to \$2.5 million. The amount of funding requested was approximately \$6 million, meaning that the requests far exceeded the amount available.

The projects were prioritized in a way that aligns with the geographic population of K-8 students around the state, per state statute requirements. Each CDOT Region has at least one

project demonstrating the wide reach of the program. This project list is recommended for Commission approval.

Estimated Timeline for 2012 SRTS Grants

August 2011	Call for 2012 projects announced
December 2, 2011	Applications due to CDOT office by 4:00 p.m.
Dec. 2011	SRTS Program Manager reviews applications for minimum qualifications and distributes to Advisory Committee for review and scoring of projects.
Mid February 2012	Advisory Committee selects projects.
Mid March 2012	Project recommendation to Transportation Commission for approval
Early April 2012	Applicants notified.
Summer 2012	Contracting Process with Respective CDOT Region for Infrastructure Projects
November 1, 2012	Contract NEPA requirements completed.
July 31, 2014 (Est.)	Estimated project completion.