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A NEWSLETTER FROM HENEGHAN & ASSOCIATES, P.C.

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## KEEPING OUR CHILDREN SAFE The Illinois Safe Routes Program



**SAFETY**—many different things come to mind when we think of the word safety. We think of our own safety and protection, or the safety of those around us. Some may think about the safety of their pets. For those with children in school, safety can take on a whole different

meaning. In addition to the child's safety while attending school, the safety of the child getting to school is equally important. That's why the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) provides The Illinois Safe Routes to School Program (SRTS).

The SRTS program was established in August 2005 as a Federal-Aid program that would last through 2009. A total of \$612 million was allocated to the program to be distributed to the states to be used for improving the ability and/or safety of kindergarten through 8th grade children to walk and ride bikes to school.

According to IDOT, the number of primary and middle school students walking or bicycling to school has dropped from about half of all students to fewer than 15% during the past 40 years. The fact that most children no longer walk or ride a bike to school has played a significant role in traffic congestion at and around the school which causes unsafe conditions and poor air quality for students and parents alike. In addition, the lack of safe routes to walk or bike to school compounds the already sedentary life-style that is prevalent in the United States today. And as we all know, the lack of exercise and sedentary life styles we lead are linked to health issues such as obesity, respiratory disease, and diabetes.

Listed below are the 3 main goals of the SRTS program:

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
3. To facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution.

To help address problems and create solutions, SRTS utilizes the 5 E's approach which includes:

1. Engineering—Creating infrastructure improvements near schools to reduce speed and conflicts with traffic, and to establish safer and fuller accessible crossings, walkways, trails, and bikeways.

2. Education—To teach children about transportation choices, educate them on bicycling and walking safety, and implementing safe driver campaigns around the schools.

3. Enforcement—Partnering with law enforcement to be sure traffic laws are obeyed including speed limits, yielding to pedestrians in crossings, and the proper or safe walking and bicycling behaviors. This also includes initiation of community enforcement such as crossing guards.

4. Encouragement—Implementing or using existing events and activities to encourage walking and bicycling.

5. Evaluation—Evaluating and documenting outcomes and trends through data collection before and after the implementation of the SRTS.

To meet the goals of the program and the desired results of the 5 E's, infrastructure (engineering) and non-infrastructure (education, encourage-



Photo—courtesy of IDOT's website

ment, enforcement) are funded with SRTS. Other important things to remember include:

1. SRTS projects are funded 100%.
2. Funding recipients must pay for the cost of the project and then request reimbursement.
3. 70-90% of the funding supports infrastructure projects

with the remaining funding supporting non-infrastructure projects.

4. There is a maximum of \$400,000 per project, and a minimum per application of \$10,000 for infrastructure projects.

5. There is a limit of \$50,000 per project and a minimum per application of \$2,000 for non-infrastructure projects.

6. All applications must include an approved Illinois School Travel Plan which is available through the SRTS website. This plan must be submitted in advance of any funding request and must be approved by IDOT prior to accessing the on-line application process.

7. Only the projects and programs identified on the School Travel Plan are eligible for funding.

8. Applications are only accepted through the online application process accessed at <http://www.dot.il.gov/saferoutes/index.html>.

IDOT does not know when applications will be due for this year as funding sources are uncertain. IDOT's Safe Routes to School Coordinator Megan Holt said she is encouraging those considering applying to Safe Routes to School to be proactive by starting completion of the School Travel Plan since the plan needs approval prior to actual application.

"We are hopeful that we will receive funding through the transportation bill, if that is approved, or through continuing resolutions," Holt said. "Starting on the school travel plan allows enough time for those interested to submit the plan and application, if and when funding becomes available."

## HA Elects First Vice-President

~ Cont. ~

If you have never applied to the SRTS program, you may be wondering what kinds of projects are fundable. Engineering projects can include and are not limited to sidewalk improvements, traffic calming/speed reductions, traffic control devices, pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements, on or off-street bicycle facilities, and pedestrian facilities.

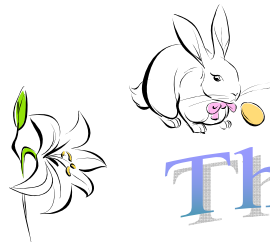
Educational projects include creation of educational materials for bicyclers and pedestrians. For example, a bicycle rodeo designed to teach safety skills would be a fundable activity.

Encouragement projects can include incentives for SRTS contests, initiation of a walking/biking mileage club, or the implementation of a neighborhood watch for speeders and others not exhibiting safety behaviors and skills.

This article is designed to give you a flavor of what can be accomplished through the SRTS program. Keep in mind public as well as private and collaborative efforts are eligible. Resolutions of support and administration and letters of support are required prior to being considered eligible.

To find out more about the SRTS program, call Heneghan and Associates. We'll be glad to assist you.

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