



## *Agency of Transportation*

# **Safe Routes to School Program**



## **2006 Guidance and Application**

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*Agency of Transportation*

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March 29, 2006

Dear Supporter of Safe and Healthy Children –

How many students in your community either walk or ride their bikes to school on a regular basis? Do you feel like more students should be walking or biking to school? Is your school pick up/drop off zone clogged with parents dropping kids off? Do kids in your community struggle to get enough physical activity? The new Vermont Safe Routes to School program can help address all of these issues.

This program is an exciting opportunity to have schools and communities work together to solve some of our pressing transportation, environmental and health challenges. We can provide you two years of funding and assistance with setting up chaperoned walking or bicycling groups, teaching kids safe bicycling and walking skills or sponsoring other events that would provide an incentive to those students who choose to walk or bike to school.

We hope that you will apply to be one of the schools participating in the Vermont Safe Routes to School (SR2S) program starting with the 06/07 school year.

Some of the benefits for your community include:

- *Safer environment for children and the broader school community*
- *Reduced traffic congestion at the school during drop off and pick up times*
- *More physically active students who arrive to school more attentive and ready to learn*
- *A school-wide activity that can be incorporated across the curriculum*
- *The identification of potential walking or bicycling paths, sidewalks or crosswalks that may be eligible for public funding*
- *Eligibility for 100% Vermont Safe Routes to School infrastructure funding*

The enclosed application packet describes the program in more detail and outlines what the Vermont SR2S program will provide and what we will ask you to do as part of the program. Please note that the deadline for applications is Friday, May 5, 2006.

If you have any questions about the Safe Routes to School program or the application process, please don't hesitate to contact me at 828-0059 or by e-mail at [jon.kaplan@state.vt.us](mailto:jon.kaplan@state.vt.us).

Sincerely,



Jon Kaplan  
Vermont Safe Routes to School Coordinator

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## **I. What is Safe Routes to School, and how can your school participate?**

### **A. About the new Vermont Safe Routes to School Program**

The Vermont Safe Routes to School program, as required by the federal transportation bill passed in 2005 is intended to benefit children in primary and middle schools (K-8). Safe Routes to School (SR2S) is about kids walking and biking to school: regularly, routinely, and safely. SR2S integrates elements of transportation, economics, health and physical activity, environmental awareness and safety into one program.

The Vermont SR2S program will provide support in the form of funding and services to participating schools around the state. Schools will actively promote walking and bicycling by students and will identify infrastructure projects to make walking and bicycling safer. The Vermont SR2S program can be closely integrated with other school-based health initiatives such as the formation of Coordinated School Health Teams and the development of school Wellness Policies.

The Vermont SR2S program is being guided by a Task Force representing broad interest in the program. The Task Force includes: the Vermont Departments of Health, Education, and Housing and Community Affairs, the Governor's Highway Safety Program, the American Heart Association, the Vermont Bicycle and Pedestrian Coalition, Vermont Forum on Sprawl, Regional Planning organizations, parents and schools. The Vermont Agency of Transportation is responsible for administering the program.

#### **Why is it Important?**

Nationwide, in one generation, the number of children walking or bicycling to school has dropped from over 70% to less than 15% and over 50% of school kids are routinely driven to school by their parents. The results have been costly both in dollars and our health.

- School traffic congestion has increased, leading to traffic snarls and decreased safety around schools for those who still chose to walk or ride bicycles. In some communities, school traffic has been found to account for about 25% of morning traffic congestion.
- School transportation operating costs in the U.S. exceed \$14 billion annually - the 2nd biggest element of the school budget, behind salaries.
- More than 1/3 of our school-aged kids are overweight or obese – the results of poor diet and a lack of physical activity.
- Obesity-related illnesses in Vermont alone result in estimated medical expenditures of \$141 million per year.

One of the best opportunities to address these issues is to increase regular, routine physical activity like walking or bicycling to school.

### **B. Goals of the Safe Routes to School Program**

1. Increase the number of children who walk or bicycle to school.
2. Identify, document, and seek to overcome the barriers, both physical and cultural, that are keeping more kids from walking and bicycling to school.
3. Raise public awareness of the conditions that school-age children face when they walk or bicycle to school.
4. Help communities identify and make improvements to community infrastructure, such as sidewalks, crosswalks, intersections, bike paths, and bike lanes, which will eliminate barriers to bicycling and walking.

### **C. What support will your school receive for participating in Safe Routes to School?**

Participating schools will be assigned a Regional SR2S Coordinator who will work with them directly to provide mentoring and assistance to the local initiative:

If your school is chosen to participate, you will be provided with the following SR2S support for 2 years:

- Eligibility to apply for funding for infrastructure improvements specifically to remove barriers to walking and bicycling to school. This construction money will be 100% federal, and will not require a community match.
- Funding of up to \$1,500 a year to purchase educational materials and encouragement incentives to for your school.
- Assistance with forming a local SR2S team consisting of school officials, municipal officials, parents, safety advocates and other interested parties to help spearhead local efforts, or assistance in working with an existing Coordinated School Health Team or Wellness Team.
- Assessments of current levels of bicycling and walking.
- Survey of parents and students attitudes towards bicycling and walking.
- Collection of drop off and pick up traffic data (peak school traffic hours).
- Mapping of sidewalks, crosswalks, shared use paths and bike lanes that provide access to the school.
- Bicycling and walking safety educational presentations/handouts.
- Resources to support events and activities that will encourage greater levels of bicycling and walking.
- Assistance with identification of needed improvements to sidewalks, crosswalks, paths, etc.
- Coordination with law enforcement officers with an aim of increased enforcement of traffic laws.
- Assessment of your school via surveys and traffic data after the program has been running for a while to see if attitudes and behaviors have changed.

### **D. What commitment is your school and community making?**

In return, the Vermont Safe Routes to School program expects your school and community to participate actively in the program. Your school and community is expected to provide:

1. Local SR2S team that includes parents, students, teachers, school administrators, local officials (Selectboard and/or public works), and local law enforcement – Ideally this team already exists, possibly as a Coordinated School Health Team or School Health Committee (check with your school nurse if you're not sure whether your school has one).
2. A two-year commitment by your local SR2S team to work on this program.
3. An individual who will serve as the town/school Community Contact.
4. A commitment on the part of the municipality to work with the school to make bicycling and walking safe for school children.
5. Coordinated school events and activities that support the goals of SR2S.
6. A demonstrated understanding and support of the goals of the SR2S program.
7. A plan to sustain the program after the initial 2 years of support.

### **E. Eligible Applicants**

The program is intended for students in grades K-8. Both public and private schools are eligible, and schools that include other grades (e.g. a 7-12 school) are eligible provided the focus is on the

students in the eligible grades. School districts or other groups of schools may apply as one entity, provided that the SR2S initiatives will be available in all schools within the group.

Based on the Federal guidelines for this program, state, local and regional levels of schools or local government and nonprofit organizations, are eligible recipients of SR2S funding. To encourage creative approaches to implementing this program, communities may choose to develop non-traditional partnerships among eligible applicants. Non-profit organizations that represent a school or group of schools are also eligible to apply.

Each selected school/district will identify a Safe Routes to School Community Contact. The Community Contact **does not have to be an employee** of the school or local government. They may be a parent, local public health official, police officer or anyone else who has the drive to be the local champion of this program.

#### **F. SR2S Time Line**

**March 27, 2006** - SR2S applications for school participation available

**May 5, 2006** - Applications due for school participation

**May 22, 2006** - Schools notified of acceptance into the program

**May/June and September/October 2006** - Baseline traffic surveys conducted by VTrans and Regional Planning Commissions

**August/September 2006** – Program kickoff in participating schools

**October 2006** – Walk/Bike to School Day/Week

**September - December 2006** - Mapping of commonly used routes to school; conducting behavior and attitude surveys; publicity of program throughout the community

**October 2006 through March 2007** – Safety presentations in schools; school projects related to bicycling and walking integrated into curriculum; incentive and encouragement programs to increase bicycling and walking

**January 2007** – Applications for funding of infrastructure improvements available

**February/March 2007** - Preliminary report on survey results/promotion efforts in school – I

**March 2007**- Initiate encouragement of biking or walking using events, contests and other public outreach

**April 2007** – Initiate walking and bicycling incentive/encouragement programs

**April – June 2007** – Identify infrastructure needs along route(s) commonly used by children walking or bicycling to school

## II. APPLICATION

### A. Cover Letter

Please include a cover letter that expresses your school and community's interest in participating in the Vermont SR2S program. The letter should describe your unique, creative approach to implementing SR2S in your community, including an identification of what elements of the SR2S support (see list under I. C. on page 2 of this application packet) will be most valuable to you. The letter should also discuss any previous or ongoing efforts to increase the levels of walking or bicycling, especially among school children.

### B. Applicant Information

The applicant is the school, school district, or non-profit organization that is submitting the application. Applicants may apply on behalf of multiple schools, but additional contact information will be needed for each school participating in the application, and each school should have a commitment to participate in the program.

#### APPLICANT CONTACT INFORMATION:

**School, District or Organization Name:**

Mailing Address:

Street Address (if different):

City, State, Zip:

Primary Contact Person for the application:

Daytime Phone Number:

Fax Number:

	Zip:

For each school participating, please indicate the school name, the town in which the school is located, and the towns which the school serves. **Single school applications are very much welcomed.**

<u>School Name</u>	<u>Location (Town)</u>	<u>Towns served by this school (list)</u>

## School / Community Contact Person:

**Important:** If multiple schools are part of the application, please copy this page and provide information for each school.

**Note:** The Community Contact **does not have to be an employee** of the school or local government. They may be a parent, local public health official, police officer or anyone else who has the drive to be the local champion of this program.

For each school participating in the program:

**School / Community Contact Person:**

Mailing Address:

City, State, Zip:

Email:

Daytime Phone Number:

Fax Number:

Zip:

**School Name:**

School Address (if different than above):

City, State, Zip:

School Telephone Number (office line):

Grade levels at school:

Total number of students enrolled:

Grade levels to participate in SR2S (if different):

Number of students in participating grades:

Zip:

**School Principal Name:**

School Principal Telephone Number:

School Principal Email:


I have read the enclosed information and understand what is expected of me and our school in the Vermont Safe Routes to School program.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Community Contact)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of School Principal)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### **C. Selection Criteria/Application Questions**

The following selection criteria and your answers to the related questions will be used to evaluate your application to the Vermont SR2S program. Answers must be provided to all of the questions for your application to be considered complete. Brief answers are appropriate, but feel free to attach supporting pages if needed. Please limit the answers to no more than three (3) pages. Your answers will help us to ensure that our program is a good match for your community. Schools will be selected based on your responses to these questions and how well the selection criteria are met.

- 1. Barriers to walking and bicycling (10 pts.)** – Identify any barriers to walking and bicycling that will be addressed by participating in the SR2S program.
  
- 2. Presence of ongoing initiatives (15 pts.)** – Describe efforts to get more kids bicycling and walking at your school.
  
- 3. Potential for success (40 pts.)**– Describe the community characteristics that will support a Safe Routes to School program at your school. Include:
  - a. A description of the existing network of sidewalks and/or paths leading to school and any obvious physical barriers (e.g. unsafe street crossings, missing segments of sidewalk, etc.) that should be addressed.
  
  - b. The existing participation of kids walking and bicycling to school and the potential to increase this participation if barriers (physical, cultural or otherwise) are removed?
  
  - c. Land use patterns that support walking or bicycling (e.g. population density, proximity of school to neighborhoods)?
  
  - d. The location of your school relative to population centers/neighborhoods in your community. Include a description of the roads that provide access to the school (Would students be getting to school on neighborhood streets, or along a busy highway, etc.).

- e. Attach a map showing your school and the surrounding area within an approximate 2 mile radius. One easy way to obtain a map is to type your school's address into Google Maps: <http://maps.google.com> – and print this map out. Other map sources (town maps, school bus route maps) are welcome as well. Please limit map size to no larger than 8 1/2" by 11".

**4. Community collaboration and support (25 pts.)** – Describe existing coalitions/committees (Coordinated School Health Team, Wellness Team, etc.) or other initiatives that focus on a related topic, such as childhood obesity and physical activity. If such a group does not exist, provide an example of another school-based collaborative effort in your community.

Please list members of any existing collaborations or teams that you anticipate will play a role in the implementation of the SR2S program. If you will be forming a new group/team, list potential members and what their interest/roles would be.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Role or organization</u>	<u>Currently involved? (Y/N)</u>
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		

Attach additional sheets if needed.

**5. Project in Designated downtown or village center (5 pts.)** – Note if the school is located in one of Vermont’s designated downtowns, village centers or regionally defined growth areas? A list of designated downtowns and village centers can be found at <http://www.historicvermont.org/programs/downtown.html>.

**6. Economically disadvantaged community (5 pts.)** – Describe elements that indicate economic needs in your community. For example, indicate what percentage of students in your school are eligible for free or reduced-cost school meals? \_\_\_\_\_%

## **D. Letters of Support**

### **a. Required Letters of Support:**

A letter of support is required from a local governmental body (e.g. Selectboard Chair or Town Manager/Administrator) and from the School (e.g. Principal or School Board Chair).

### **b. Additional Letters of Support:**

Additional letters of support from other community organizations or individuals may be provided to demonstrate broad local support for this initiative. Possible supporting groups are the Recreation Department/Committee, Planning Commission, Local Law Enforcement, Department of Public Works/Road Commissioner, PTO/PTA, etc. The additional letters of support will strengthen your application, but are not required.

## **E. Submission Requirements & Deadlines**

A complete application will include the items below, as detailed above. This checklist will help you to be sure you have a complete application:

- Cover letter
- Community contact information for each school with appropriate signatures
- Answers to application questions.
- School location map
- Required letters of support (Local Government and School)
- Additional letters of support (optional)

Completed application packages must be postmarked by May 5, 2006

No application received past this deadline will be considered.  
Please note that emailed or faxed applications will not be accepted.

### **Mail 6 copies of all application materials to:**

Jon Kaplan  
Safe Routes to School Coordinator  
Local Transportation Facilities Section  
VT Agency of Transportation  
1 National Life Drive  
Montpelier, VT 05633-5001  
Phone (802) 828-0059  
email [jon.kaplan@state.vt.us](mailto:jon.kaplan@state.vt.us)

If you have any questions about the Safe Routes to School program, the application or the selection process, please contact Jon using the information above.