Georgia Department of Transportation

Safe Routes to School Program

Program Guidance

GDOT
Keeping Georgia on the Move

Updated November 2007

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Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program

INTRODUCTION

In 2007 the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) launched a new program entitled Safe Routes to School (SRTS). The initiative is aimed at making bicycling and walking to school safe and routine through providing funds and services for infrastructure improvements, and education, encouragement and enforcement activities. Federal funds are made available to help create an environment where school children in K-8th grades can travel to school safely while walking and biking. Americans are realizing that traffic congestion, fuel consumption and air pollution near our schools, coupled with growing health and obesity concerns, make walking and biking to school a low-cost, attractive alternative.

Safe Routes to School programs present a unique opportunity for a variety of individuals to partner and work towards a common goal. Through the SRTS program, parents, school principals, school district officials, private school officials, local transportation officials and nonprofit organizations are encouraged to work together to create safe ways for children to walk and bike to school.

Georgia DOT Safe Routes to School Program Goals:

- Enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school safely.
- Make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age.
- 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 primary and middle schools (Grades K-8).
- Develop comprehensive SRTS programs that incorporate all 5 "E"'s: Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Engineering and Evaluation.

Georgia's Safe Routes to School Program is divided into two components: Non-Infrastructure and Infrastructure. Non-Infrastructure activities will be carried out through the GDOT Safe Routes to School Resource Center (as described below), and Infrastructure projects will be selected through a competitive application process. Below is an outline for a developing a Safe Routes to School Program:

1. Decide to start a Safe Routes to School program

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2. Contact the Georgia SRTS Resource Center (TBD) Coming Spring 2008

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3. Create a SRTS program that addresses the 5 E's

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4. Apply for Infrastructure funding , if applicable

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5. Competitive programs will continue to implement the 5 E's in their SRTS programs

NON-INFRASTRUCTURE

Georgia Safe Routes to School Resource Center Coming Soon (Spring 2008)!

Non-infrastructure activities include programs that encourage biking and walking to/from school (such as Walk to School Day events), educate the school community on safety (such as bicycling safety classes) and enforce traffic laws and school rules (such as speeding or not parking in the crosswalk). These types of activities, and many more, are described in the Georgia Safe Routes to School Guidebook (see www.dot.state.ga.us/srts).

To provide these services to schools, GDOT is establishing a Georgia Safe Routes to School Resource Center. The Resource Center will assist K- 8 schools with services that may include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Developing a customized SRTS plan
- Conducting walkability/bikability assessments
- Developing bike/ped safety trainings
- Hosting a Walk to School Day event
- Coordinating with local planners, engineers, and law enforcement regarding school safety issues

All schools (grades K-8) will have an opportunity to enroll in the Resource Center's program. The Resource Center will also conduct outreach and marketing to encourage participation among all schools, and will evaluate all programs (see Evaluation/Performance Measures

section). Schools enrolled in the resource center's program are given priority when applying for SRTS infrastructure projects (e.g. sidewalks, traffic calming, bike lanes, etc).

INFRASTRUCTURE

General:

Infrastructure projects will be selected based on a competitive application process, with priority given to schools that are enrolled in the Resource Center, have a SRTS Plan or are working on Education, Encouragement and Enforcement programs. All infrastructure projects must be within a 2-mile radius of a school with grades K-8th. All accepted applications must comply with federal and state funding requirements. Applicants are encouraged to apply for projects which will benefit a broader are than a single school.

Infrastructure: Eligibility

Eligible Applicants:

State, regional, local, county and city government, and school districts.

Eligibility Criteria:

- Projects must serve schools with students in kindergarten through eighth grade.
- Both public and private schools are eligible.
- Projects must be located within a two mile radius of the school.
- A school must be actively engaged in non-infrastructure activities (e.g. SRTS Plan, Education, Encouragement and/or Enforcement activities) and enrolled in the Georgia SRTS Resource Center.
- Projects must be within the public right of way. This may include projects on private land that have permanent public access easements. Public property includes lands that are owned by a public entity, including those lands owned by public school districts.

Eligible Projects:

Below is a list of eligible infrastructure projects. Other types of projects 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. Certain facilities or treatments may not be appropriate for every location or roadway type. All infrastructure projects must meet GDOT and AASHTO design guidelines or approved variance. See the GDOT Pedestrian Guide for further information. For more information on any of these bicycle and pedestrian facilities and traffic calming devices, go to www.bikepedinfo.org.

- **Sidewalk improvements**: new sidewalks, sidewalk gap closures, curbs, gutters, and curb ramps, upgrades to meet ADA compliance.
- **Traffic calming and speed reduction improvements**: roundabouts, curb extensions, chicanes, speed humps, raised crossings, raised intersections, medians, median refuge island, narrowed traffic lanes, lane reductions, automated speed enforcement, vehicle speed feedback signs, and variable speed limits.
- **Pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements**: cross walks, raised median and median refuge islands, raised crosswalks, raised intersections, curb extensions, traffic control devices (including new or upgraded traffic signals, pavement markings, in-roadway cross walk lights, flashing beacons, bicycle-sensitive signal actuation devices, pedestrian countdown signals, accessible pedestrian signals, pedestrian activated signal upgrades and leading pedestrian indicators), and sight distance improvements.
- **On-street bicycle facilities**: new or upgraded: bicycle lanes, paved roadway shoulders, bicycle related traffic signs and pavement markings.
- **Off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities**: multi use trails, side paths, and trail links i.e. connecting cul-de-sacs to a school or to a school route.
- **Secure bicycle parking facilities**: bicycle parking racks, bicycle lockers, designated areas with safety lighting, and covered bicycle shelters.
- **Traffic diversion improvements**: separation of pedestrians and bicycles from vehicular traffic adjacent to school facilities, and the diversion of traffic away from school zones or designated routes to a school if only, it can be demonstrated that it increases the number of children biking or walking to/from school or improves the safety of children biking or walking to/from school.

Ineligible Projects:

- Acquisition of right-of-way
- Construction and improvements of pick-up/drop-off areas, unless it can be demonstrated that it increases the number of children biking or walking to/from school or improves the safety of children biking/walking to/from school;
- Compensation for crossing guards;
- Repair of traffic lane pavement (unless it's a new or upgraded bike facility);
- Purely cosmetic upgrades or routine maintenance of existing bicycle or pedestrian facilities (e.g. sidewalks, multi-use trails, bike lanes). Note: ADA upgrades are eligible.
- School bus or bus stop related improvements.

Infrastructure: Application and Project Selection Process

Application Requirements and Call for Applications Coming in Spring/Summer 2008

General:

Georgia Department of Transportation will have a call for applications biannually. The application period will be advertised on GDOT's SRTS website (www.dot.state.ga.us/srts/), as

well as through the Resource Center, mailings and mass emails. Selected projects will also be posted on the website.

SRTS Project Review Panel:

Applications will be reviewed by the GDOT Safe Routes to School Coordinator for eligibility and completeness. The coordinator will forward the applications to the SRTS Project Review panel for evaluation.

The SRTS Project Review panel will recommend funding, request more information, and propose negotiations to amend the proposed project or recommend deferral or rejection of the applications. Project recommendations are then forwarded to GDOT's Chief Engineer and Commissioner for final approval.

The Project Review Panel shall be comprised of the following participants:

1. GDOT State Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator
2. GDOT Traffic Safety and Design Engineer
3. GDOT District Office Traffic Operations Representative
4. Department of Education or School Administrator
5. Georgia Department of Public Health Representative
6. Governor's Office of Highway Safety Representative
7. Local SRTS practitioner (Parent Champion)
8. Law Enforcement Representative
9. PTA Representative

Project Funding Limits:

- Applications are limited to $500,000 per application, per funding cycle. Applications received from a project sponsor may include multiple elements (such as, sidewalks, bike lanes, and speed humps), but cannot exceed $500,000.
- No matching funds are required – all projects are paid for with 100% federal funds.

Infrastructure: Project Management

All projects will be designed, constructed and managed by the Georgia Department of Transportation through a planning & engineering consultant(s) and construction contractor(s). **GDOT will coordinate with the local jurisdictions to ensure the project is designed and built according to the initial approved applications and concept.** GDOT will conduct all preliminary engineering, including right of way certification and environmental clearances, up to letting the project to construction. All projects will be GDOT let (i.e. local governments do not need to put project out to bid for construction).

Local Government/Sponsor Responsibilities:

- Coordinate with GDOT and its consultants throughout the design process to ensure the project is designed and built according to the initial approved applications and concept.
- Sign Memoranda of Understanding with state and/or local governments (depending on the project location) agreeing to maintain the project.
- Participate in required evaluation and performance measures

EVALUATION/PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Annual evaluation for all infrastructure projects and non-infrastructure programs (through the Resource Center) is required.

National Evaluation Requirements:
Evaluation tools created by the National Center for Safe Routes to School - the Student Tally Form and the Parent Survey Form - will be required as part of all SRTS programs and projects in Georgia. The evaluation includes the number and percentage of students that walk and bike to/from school before, during and after the improvements are completed.

Georgia Evaluation Requirements:
Provide follow-up information on performance measures identified in the local SRTS Plan, such as, percent change in motor vehicle trips to school, speeding, speeding tickets issued, or compliance with crosswalk laws.

The focus of evaluations will be to review the effectiveness of the use of funding including the capture of safety benefits, behavioral changes and other potential benefits of SRTS programs such as the creation of new community partnerships, measurements of student health, air quality congestion around schools or improvements to the built environment that benefits the ability to walk and bicycle to and from schools. Ongoing review and evaluation activities are vital for the continual improvement of the SRTS program. The SRTS coordinator will provide the sponsor with evaluation tools in order to collect streamlined data throughout the state.