

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL (SRTS) FAQs

1) What is the Safe Routes to School program?

The Safe Routes to School program is a community approach to encourage and enable more people to walk and bicycle to school safely. It's about getting kids out of cars and onto their feet and bikes and promoting active lifestyles. SRTS does this primarily by identifying the safest routes from children's homes to their schools and by pointing out safety concerns along routes for local agencies to investigate to determine potential improvement measures. The program involves two steps: (1) plan development and (2) project implementation.

2) How was the program established?

Delaware's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program was established September 10, 2002 when Governor Ruth Ann Minner signed Senate Bill 353 of the 141st General Assembly of Delaware (73 Del. Laws, c. 435). As directed, the Department of Transportation (DelDOT) began developing a program that would enable DelDOT to work with schools to encourage children to walk and bicycle to school safely. Three years later similar federal legislation was passed (Pub. L. No. 109-59). Delaware's legislation authorizes DelDOT to make SRTS grants available for bicycle and pedestrian safety and traffic calming measures in the vicinity of schools (17 *Del C.* §1022). The federal SRTS program was established August 10, 2005 under the *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users* (SAFETEA-LU). The federal program employs a multi-faceted approach that addresses infrastructure needs as well as implements non-infrastructure activities to achieve the program goals.

3) What is the purpose of the program?

SAFETEA-LU describes the purpose of the program as follows: (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 from an early age; and, (3) to 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 of schools (Pub. L. No. 109-59, §1404 (b)).

4) Why is the program important?

Recent trends, both nationally and in Delaware, have shown a decline in the numbers and percentage of children who walk or bicycle to school. This decline has been shown to have adverse effects on traffic congestion and air quality in the vicinity of schools. Studies have also shown that children who do not participate regularly in physical activity are at greater risk for a variety of health problems. Additionally, bicycle and pedestrian safety concerns are often identified as reasons for not bicycling or walking to school.

5) What are the benefits of the program?

There are numerous benefits of establishing a SRTS program at your school. They can help you meet goals such as: (1) educating children about pedestrian safety skills; (2) providing alternative transportation modes for getting to school; (3) decreasing traffic in the vicinity of elementary and middle schools; (4) improving signage for ease of travel; (5) enhancing the environment and design of neighborhoods; (6) increasing the safety of walking or bicycling to

school; (7) bringing the community together; and (8) providing incentives to students who walk or bicycle to school.

6) Who is eligible to participate in the program?

Any public school or public charter school recognized by the Department of Education may participate in the SRTS program, provided that the request is accompanied by a letter of support by the school principal or a district-level administrator; however, participation is restricted to projects and activities that benefit elementary and middle school children in grades kindergarten through eighth grade. The program seeks to encourage students who live within one mile of their school to walk and those who live within two miles to bicycle both to and from school. When applicable, students with ambulatory impairments are encouraged to travel to and from school using an assistive technology device, such as a wheelchair or scooter.

7) Who is eligible to receive program funding?

Funding is available to the organization or agency that is administering the SRTS program; this may be the participating school or an organization acting on behalf of the participating school. Eligible funding recipients include state, regional, or local agencies, including nonprofit organizations, and schools or school districts.

8) What is required prior to requesting funding?

Prior to requesting funding for planning assistance, a school needs to have an established SRTS committee that includes people committed to making the program a success on a continual basis. An estimate needs to be done to determine how much assistance is needed for the creation of the SRTS plan. Before requesting funding for SRTS projects and activities, the school needs to create a SRTS plan and get the plan approved by the Safe Routes to School coordinator.

9) Who should be involved in the SRTS committee?

A school must invite students, parents, teachers, school officials, local transportation agencies, and law enforcement agencies to participate in the SRTS committee. Partnering with a local health agency or recognized health organization, local civic associations, neighboring residents, and local governments is also encouraged.

10) What are the options for interested schools that are challenged with identifying the key persons to participate on the SRTS committees?

The SRTS coordinator is available to provide guidance on how to set up a SRTS committee. Contact information for possible committee members and supporting organizations can be found in the Delaware SRTS Resource List.

11) What should be included in the Safe Routes to School Plan?

A school's SRTS plan *must* identify safety hazards, current and potential walking and bicycling routes to school, and activities that incorporate each of the five Es (Evaluation, Encouragement, Education, Enforcement, and Engineering). The plan should include several components: (1) identification of planning process participants, including committee members; (2) vision statement; (3) broad goal statements; (4) summary of data, including baseline data and maps of observations; (5) measurable objectives; (6) prioritized projects and activities; (7) identification

of project partners who will assist in implementing projects and programs; and (8) evaluation criteria and next steps.

12) Is there help available to create the plan?

Yes, schools are not required to create the plan on their own. Technical assistance is available through consultants, non-profit organizations, and universities. Up to \$10,000 per school is available to be used for planning assistance. Additionally, it is expected that the school's SRTS committee will include people with planning expertise, including local government planners, and Metropolitan Planning Organization staff. The Safe Routes to School Coordinator is also available to provide information and direct the committee where to obtain additional information and resources.

13) I have heard references made to the 5 "Es." What are they?

The 5 Es are evaluation, education, encouragement, enforcement, and engineering. These are the five components of every successful SRTS program. A school's SRTS plan needs to address all five components by including both infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects and programs.

14) What is evaluation and why is it needed?

Evaluation is monitoring and documenting outcomes and trends through the collection of data, including the collection of data before and after the intervention(s). Collecting data at the beginning of a project, prior to any interventions, will be helpful in identifying and addressing areas of concern, and will provide you with information to measure against once your SRTS program is in place. After projects are completed, collecting data will assist you in monitoring your program's progress and determining its successes and any needs for modification. Appendix F in the Program Sourcebook provides surveys to use to collect baseline data and data after projects have been completed.

15) What types of evaluation data are required?

The Federal Highway Administration has requested that states provide them with specific evaluation data for SRTS programs. Evaluation of safety benefits provides information about how SRTS activities reduce fatalities and injuries, as well as reduce risk associated with walking and bicycling to school. Examples of evaluation data for safety benefits include accident data and data measuring changes in public perception of safety, the effect on safety behaviors among participants of SRTS programs, or increased awareness of safe walking and bicycling practices. Understanding the effect of the program on the number of students who walk and bicycle, versus arrive/depart from school via other modes of transportation provides information about how SRTS activities affect the behavior of students and motorists. It is important to compare data collected under similar conditions (i.e. weather, regular day or contest day, etc.). Additional types of evaluation data include the number of new partnerships created as a result of the program; the number of students and/or schools reached through the program; measurements of student health, air quality, congestion, and other metrics noted or implied by the legislative purposes of the program; and improvements to the built environment that benefit the ability to walk and bicycle to and from schools (i.e., the number of new facilities, miles of sidewalks, etc.). The additional types of evaluation data collected will vary among schools, depending on the types of issues and projects or programs identified in a particular school's SRTS plan.

16) How does DelDOT use the information collected for evaluation of each school's SRTS program?

Data collected for a school's evaluation of their SRTS program will be provided to the Federal Highway Administration, to ensure compliance with federal-aid requirements and also to ensure that the program is meeting the program goals. This reporting of evaluation data is critical for the study and development of a strategy for advancing SRTS programs nationwide, as called for in the federal legislation. FHWA is required to report to Congress on the progress of the SRTS Program. DelDOT will also retain copies of evaluation data in order to evaluate the program's effectiveness at the state level. See question 42 for more information about DelDOT's use of evaluation data to determine statewide program success.

17) What are examples of education activities?

Education programs teach children about the broad range of transportation choices, instruct them in important lifelong bicycling and walking safety skills, provide knowledge to students and parents on Delaware's pedestrian and bicycle law, and launch driver safety campaigns in the vicinity of schools. Classroom activities are a great way to raise awareness, encourage children to walk or bicycle to school, and teach safe walking and bicycling skills.

18) What are examples of encouragement activities?

Encouragement programs are events and activities used to promote walking and bicycling to school. Examples of encouragement activities include International Walk to School Day, frequent walker and biker cards, the walking or bicycling school bus, a walk or bike across America activity, and a walk or bicycle to school contest. Encouragement activities can be used to get students to apply what they have learned from the education program to their daily habits.

19) What are examples of enforcement activities?

Enforcement consists of partnering with local law enforcement to ensure traffic laws are obeyed within two-miles of schools (this includes enforcement of speeds, yielding to pedestrians in crossings, and proper walking and bicycling behaviors), and initiating community enforcement such as crossing guard programs.

20) What are examples of engineering projects?

Engineering projects are those that create operational and physical improvements to the infrastructure surrounding schools that reduce speeds and potential conflicts with motor vehicle traffic, and establish safer and fully accessible crossings, walkways, trails, and bikeways. Examples of types engineering projects include changing the roadway system around the school, changing traffic circulation patterns on school grounds, and improving safety conditions by reducing speeds. Specific projects include traffic calming, installing new sidewalks, adding bike lanes to streets surrounding the school, changing drop-off patterns on the school grounds, updating signage, and creating safer street crossings.

21) Are there any resources available for developing a program?

Yes, there are many resources available to assist you. The Delaware SRTS Program Sourcebook is a step-by-step guide on how to create and sustain a program at your school. The National Center for Safe Routes to School website, <http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/>, includes best practices from other states, surveys for collecting baseline data, ideas for education and

encouragement activities, and links to resources for enforcement and engineering improvements. You may also reference Delaware's SRTS Resource List for contact information of agencies and organizations that may provide additional resources.

22) How much funding is available?

DelDOT is expected to receive \$1 million dollars in federal monies each year for five federal fiscal years (FY 2005 – FY 2009) to administer the SRTS program. While the majority of these funds will be expended towards infrastructure (capital) projects, ten to thirty percent must be dedicated to non-infrastructure projects. Individual SRTS projects may be funded up to \$125,000. Up to \$10,000 per school is available for assistance in developing SRTS plans.

23) What happens to the funds remaining at the end of the funding period in 2009?

The Safe Routes to School program does not include a deadline for the states' use of the funding. The federal legislation specifies that SRTS funds are available until expended (they are not subject to the usual Federal-aid highway four-year rule of availability).

24) How many matching funds are required for projects for which we submit applications?

No matching funds are required. The federal share of the projects granted funding is 100 percent.

25) What types of projects and activities are eligible for funding?

Both infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects and activities are eligible for funding. Refer to questions 25 and 26 for more specific information on eligible projects and activities.

26) What types of infrastructure projects are eligible for funding?

Infrastructure projects should directly support increased safety and convenience for elementary and middle school children, in kindergarten through eighth grades, to bicycle and/or walk to and from school. Infrastructure funds are only available to schools that have students who reside within two-miles of the school, measured along existing transportation infrastructure. Project limits must be within two miles of the participating school. Planning, design, engineering expenses (including consultant services associated with developing the project), and construction costs are eligible infrastructure expenses. All infrastructure projects must be approved for use in the state of Delaware. Eligible projects include:

- sidewalk and walking path improvements;
- traffic calming and speed reduction improvements;
- installation of pedestrian signals and accessible pedestrian signals;
- accessible route improvements (including ramps and curb cuts);
- pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements;
- on-street bicycle facilities;
- off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities;
- secure bicycle parking facilities; and,
- traffic diversion improvements in the vicinity of schools.

27) What types of non-infrastructure projects are eligible for funding?

The federal legislation requires that all non-infrastructure activities that are eligible for funding must be “activities to encourage walking and biking to school.” Eligible activities include:

- costs for assistance in developing SRTS plans (funding for assistance shall not exceed \$10,000 per school);
- traffic education and enforcement within the school zone of a participating school;
- student sessions and materials on bicycle and pedestrian safety, health, and environment;
- modest incentives, promotional activities, and prizes for SRTS contests (the cost for a single prize shall not exceed \$50);
- parent education materials;
- materials to assist in enforcement of safety behaviors;
- costs for data gathering, analysis, and evaluation reporting;
- photocopying, printing, mailing, and survey costs;
- costs to employ a program manager to run a citywide, countywide, or district wide program that includes numerous schools; and,
- other costs as approved by DelDOT.

28) What types of projects are not eligible for funding?

Projects for recreation, beautification, bus safety, or similar safe routes programs to bus stops or transit are not eligible activities. Funding to provide for additional crossing guards, or to supplement the pay of existing crossing guards is not available. SRTS funds may not be used to build closed paths, for example a running or walking track solely on the school property for use during school activities. Infrastructure improvements on the school campus must connect the transportation system to the school entrance. Funding is not available for reoccurring costs as well, such as the maintenance of improvements. Infrastructure projects not within two miles of the participating school are not eligible for funding. Traffic education and enforcement not within the school zone of the participating school are ineligible costs.

29) We are planning and/or constructing a new school. Are construction elements, such as sidewalks, crosswalks, or bike paths, for the new school eligible for funding?

No, funding is not available for new school planning activities or construction projects. The school must be an existing public or charter school serving grades Kindergarten through 8 and must be recognized by the Department of Education. A SRTS committee needs to be established and a plan created before projects may be funded. Those involved in planning for and constructing the new school are urged to consider the implications of choices made in the planning, design, and construction of the new school on a future SRTS program at the school. For instance, considering possible locations of paths to connect the school property to surrounding neighborhoods during the new school planning process would be helpful in determining if and where to locate perimeter fencing. Installing sidewalks along main roads adjacent to the school property would encourage and enable students to walk or bicycle to school from the very beginning and would signal to students and the community that safe routes to school is important to the school. SRTS program funds might then be used to make improvements to the existing pedestrian and bicycling system and to provide for educational, encouragement, enforcement, or evaluation activities.

30) What if our project exceeds the \$125,000 limit?

If a project has been identified in the SRTS plan that exceeds this limit, the project shall not be administered or funded through the SRTS Program. Instead, DelDOT will seek to combine the project with other ongoing work in the area, or submit the project to compete for funding with other Delaware capital improvement projects.

31) Where can I obtain a funding application?

Funding applications for projects and activities in a school's SRTS plan may be downloaded from the Delaware Department of Transportation SRTS website at http://www.deldot.gov/static/Community_programs_services/srts/index.shtml. If a school desires funding assistance for developing its plan, a written request may be submitted to the Delaware SRTS coordinator. The request should reference support by the principal or school district administrator of the participating school. It should also include identification of the members of the SRTS committee and their titles, the amount requested, and justification for the amount requested.

32) What is the application deadline?

Currently there is no application deadline. Requests for planning assistance and applications for funding are accepted on a first come, first serve basis and evaluated for eligibility. If the sum of all requests received is less than the sum of funds available to be awarded, no prioritization will be made.

33) How will applications be evaluated?

Applications will be evaluated to ensure that projects and activities are eligible for funding. The following factors will be used to rate submitted proposals: (1) demonstrated needs of the applicant; (2) potential for reducing child injuries and fatalities; (3) potential of the proposal for encouraging increased walking and bicycling among students; and (4) completion of a SRTS plan that identifies safety hazards, and current and potential walking and bicycling routes to school, and involves students, parents, teachers, local transportation agencies, law enforcement agencies, and school officials in the plan development process. If the sum of all requests received is less than the sum of funds available to be awarded, no prioritization will be made.

34) Who determines which applicants will receive funding?

The SRTS coordinator will make the project selection. DelDOT reserves the right to judge the capability of the applicant. If the sum of all proposals received is less than the sum of funds to be awarded, no prioritization will be made.

35) Where do I submit a SRTS funding application?

Applications for SRTS project funding should be submitted to Sarah Coakley, Project Planner, Delaware Department of Transportation, P.O. Box 778, Dover, DE 19903.

36) For how many projects can I submit funding applications?

There is no limit on the number of applications a school or organization may submit. However, no project or activity will be eligible for funding unless it has been identified through a SRTS planning process and identified in the school's SRTS plan.

37) Is the funding a one time only funding opportunity?

No, there is no limit to the number of projects for which a school may submit a funding application or receive funding. It is also expected that the SRTS program will be ongoing. Delaware's SRTS legislation was passed before the federal legislation and federal funding was available, and the intent is for Delaware's program to be a lasting program.

38) How long do I have to complete the projects for which I receive funding?

Projects and activities should be completed as soon as possible after the project has been awarded. Infrastructure projects that are not completed within 18-months from the date on the executed agreement will be cancelled, and the sponsor will be required to return any funds expended on the project. A letter requesting an extension may be submitted prior to the end of the 18-month completion period. Each request will be reviewed and responded to accordingly.

39) What does DeIDOT offer in technical assistance for funded schools implementing Safe Routes to School programs?

The DeIDOT SRTS coordinator is available to provide resources and materials to school administration and staff, teachers, or parents (or to direct them where to obtain educational information and instructional materials). The coordinator will also coordinate contractual agreements and infrastructure projects with DeIDOT; disseminate information to the general public, schools, parents, government officials, and other stakeholders within communities about health and safety issues pertaining to SRTS; develop training courses, workshops and presentations; create and update a DeIDOT SRTS webpage; and facilitate the planning, development and implementation of SRTS projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools. The coordinator is available to provide information and resources to all public and charter schools serving students in grades kindergarten through eight, regardless of whether they have applied for or received SRTS program funding.

It is important to note that since the school and local community need to develop the plan, and the coordinator will be evaluating applications, the coordinator will not be a member of any school's SRTS committee. The coordinator also will not actively participate in the creation of the plan.

40) How long is technical assistance available from DeIDOT?

Assistance is available from the coordinator on an ongoing basis. It is expected that a school's SRTS committee will include members of local government planning staff and Metropolitan Planning Organization staff who will be able to provide more technical planning assistance on a continual basis. Funds are available to use the technical assistance of consultants, non-profits, and higher education units for the planning and implementation of projects.

41) How does DeIDOT envision sustainability for the Safe Routes to School programs implemented in Delaware?

DeIDOT would like to see each school's SRTS program be a regular program of the school sustained on a continual basis. The coordinator is available to provide assistance at all stages of the program. One of the purposes of requiring schools to complete SRTS plans is to encourage sustainability. Schools will need to demonstrate the ability to maintain improvements and activities in their plans and the ability to sustain the SRTS program through an established SRTS committee. Plans also should include provisions for ongoing evaluation and modifications to the plans as

needed. Providing no limit on the number of applications that may be submitted or the number of projects from a single school that may be funded is designed to encourage sustainability as well.

42) What are DelDOT's goals for the program?

In addition to sustainability of the program, DelDOT would like to see four other objectives achieved at the state level. DelDOT desires to enable participation on a variety of levels, including individual school, multiple school, school district, and statewide activities and projects. We also want a diverse group of participants in the program, including urban, suburban, and rural schools and schools or communities with varying income levels. The program is also designed to promote comprehensive SRTS programs and activities by funding programs and activities addressing all of the 5 Es. Additionally, DelDOT seeks to maximize the impact of the funds by pointing schools to established best practices and by providing easily adaptable materials and resources for schools and communities. The 18-month time limit on constructing infrastructure projects, and the \$125,000 per project limit were also designed to maximize the impact of the funds. Evaluation data from individual schools with SRTS programs will be vital to determining success of the program at the state level.

43) Whom should I contact with SRTS questions?

You should contact the Delaware Safe Routes to School Coordinator, Sarah Coakley, who may be reached at (302) 760-2236, or by email at sarah.coakley@state.de.us.