

NEWS RELEASE

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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WORKING FOR "SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOLS" IN NEW HAMPSHIRE
WHY AREN'T MORE KIDS WALKING OR RIDING BIKES?

Encouraging elementary school children to safely walk or ride bicycles to school is the goal of the new Safe Routes To School (SRTS) initiative by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation.

Kids driven even short distances to school reflect a national trend toward sedentary lifestyles, childhood obesity, and increased traffic congestion and air pollution. SRTS will address concerns about traffic safety, crime and bullying that may make private vehicles appear to be the safest way to get children to school.

The NHDOT is currently organizing partnerships with schools, cities and towns, Regional Planning Commissions, and advocacy groups. A preliminary survey will help communities identify the reasons so few kids walk or ride bikes to school. After analyzing the survey results, local "task forces" will be encouraged to develop creative solutions tailored to individual schools or groups of schools.

Safe Routes To Schools is designed for children in kindergarten through eighth grade, including those with disabilities, who live within approximately two miles of their school. Solutions under this flexible program can include safety education, escort programs such as the "walking school bus," increased law enforcement around schools, and sidewalk and bike path construction and improvements.

Federal funding is available to assist schools and communities implement the program. After the local planning task forces are formed, the NHDOT anticipates inviting local project applications in late May 2007.

For more information on the Safe Routes To Schools program, visit the NHDOT website at http://www.nh.gov/dot/bureaus/planning/SRTS_home.htm

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