

## **SRTS News, August 2007: Encouraging Safe Bicycling and Walking to School**

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### First Round Funding Deadline for NHSRTS is Sept. 17, 2007

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Summertime reading of a different kind is engaging educators and community leaders across New Hampshire in August.

As they strive to meet a Sept. 17 application deadline, members of N.H. Safe Routes to School (NHSRTS) task forces are taking a close look at the **funding criteria** and **application guidelines**. Both documents, along with the **application form**, can be found on the [NHSRTS Web site](#) (address below).

Applications will be reviewed first by [Regional Planning Commissions](#) (RPCs) and then by a **statewide advisory committee**. In early December, the Commissioner of the N.H. Department of Transportation (NHDOT) will announce the first round of reimbursements under this federally funded program.

Communities will likely accept federal funds for projects ranging from preliminary planning and walk-

to-school days to sidewalk construction and repairs.

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### Planning Task Force

The funding criteria were designed to encourage the formation of SRTS task forces at the individual school or community level. School and municipal officials and staff members, parents, students and community organizations use a planning approach known as the "5Es:"

- Evaluation
- Education
- Encouragement
- Enforcement
- Engineering

The purpose of the initiative is to **promote safe walking and bicycle riding to school** by students in **kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade**, including youngsters with disabilities. The program focuses on children who live within approximately two miles of school.

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### Surveys

Many localities begin their projects by conducting surveys to determine how many children are already walking or riding bicycles, while identifying the reasons parents and children have for using private vehicles for the school commute.

New Hampshire is participating in a national effort to collect such data so that the effectiveness of SRTS can be measured. **The funding criteria require the use of standardized forms available for easy download** (along with detailed instructions) from the [“Getting Started”](#) page on the NHSRTS Web site.

Walking and cycling audits are also being used to identify physical issues, including deteriorated or nonexistent sidewalks and cycling routes, faded crosswalks and other pavement markings, and overgrown bushes that obstruct walking routes.

Other communities are organizing walking school buses or rolling bike trains as they prepare for **International Walk to School Day on Oct. 3, 2007.**

It is recommended that communities work with the RPC for their area to develop the strongest possible application.

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## Reimbursement Program

Local organizers and officials are cautioned that SRTS is a reimbursement program. Projects do not become eligible for reimbursement until applications are approved and spending authority confirmed by both NHDOT and the

Federal Highway Administration. **The program cannot pay for expenses incurred before that approval is granted.** Unfortunately, the timing of the first round of funding precludes reimbursement for activities conducted during the coming fall semester.

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## Outreach Continues

John Corrigan, the state SRTS coordinator, continues to work closely with communities that are in various stages of organizing SRTS task forces. These include **Andover, Charlestown, Concord, Farmington, Gilford, Gorham, Hopkinton, Keene, Lebanon, Nashua, Portsmouth, Rye, Troy, Tuftonboro, Warren and Weare.**

Communities served by the [Nashua Regional Planning Commission](#) are invited to attend a SRTS workshop at the commission offices, 115 Main Street, Nashua, on Wednesday, Aug. 22, at 2 p.m. RSVP to Matthew Waitkins, 603-883-0366 ext. 18 or [mattw@nashuarpc.org](mailto:mattw@nashuarpc.org)

Schools and communities that are not yet participating in the program are invited to get involved. Filling out and returning the [“preliminary school survey”](#) form found on the Web site is a good way to start. When a community indicates an interest in SRTS, the coordinator will meet with local leaders at their convenience to explain the program, answer any questions, and offer advice on creating a local plan.

It is anticipated that the program will be modified, and a second round announced, based on knowledge and experience gained during this first round of reimbursements.

Visit the NHSRTS Web sites for an overview of the program, details about the 5Es, application documents, and extensive links to local and national SRTS resources.

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