



# Illinois Department of Transportation

2300 South Dirksen Parkway / Springfield, Illinois / 62764

**August 26, 2021**

## **CIRCULAR LETTER 2021-20**

### **SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOLS CALL FOR PROJECTS**

COUNTY ENGINEERS / SUPERINTENDENTS OF HIGHWAYS MUNICIPAL ENGINEERS / DIRECTORS OF PUBLIC WORKS / MAYORS METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS – DIRECTORS TOWNSHIP HIGHWAY COMMISSIONERS  
CONSULTING ENGINEERS

IDOT provided a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) which is available here: ([NOFO](#)) with ID 1002-1995. This program is listed in the Catalog of State Financial Assistance ([CSFA](#)) as 494-00-1002.

Currently, IDOT is accepting applications for the SRTS Funding Cycle 2021 through Thursday, September 30, 2021. Announcement of Selected Projects is planned for Spring of 2022.

This [IDOT SRTS](#) webpage has all details related to the program including the application forms.

The Illinois Safe Routes to School Program (SRTS) is a federal program administered by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). The SRTS supports projects and programs that enable and encourage walking and bicycling to and from school. The program applies to schools serving grades Kindergarten through 8th grade. Public grade schools, middle and junior high schools and grade centers that serve these ages are eligible. High schools and early childhood centers (that serve only pre- school children) are not eligible.

### **Program Overview**

The Safe Routes to School Program uses a multi-disciplinary approach to improve conditions for students who walk or bike to school. The program has three main goals:

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.

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 (within two miles) of both public and private primary and middle schools (grades K-8).

The program funds both infrastructure improvements to the physical environment, as well as non-infrastructure projects. Eligible project sponsors include schools and school districts, governmental entities and non-profit organizations. Projects may be organized on a variety of jurisdictional levels; however, infrastructure projects must have a local government sponsor.

Key features of the Illinois SRTS Funding Cycle 2021 include:

- Projects are federally funded at 80%, requiring 20% local match.
- Right-of-way (ROW) and easement costs are NOT reimbursable. Necessary ROW and easement should be secured before a project can be considered for award.
- Preliminary Engineering is not eligible for reimbursement and must be completed using local funds, prior to obligation of an award from this program.
- Funding is being offered for Infrastructure projects only during this funding cycle.

The Safe Routes to School program utilizes the five "E's" in seeking to improve the school walking and cycling environment: Engineering, Education, Enforcement, Encouragement and Evaluation. It funds the following types of activities:

1. Engineering: A broad term that describes physical changes to the walking and bicycling infrastructure within two miles of schools. Engineering solutions include planning, design, and construction of changes to the infrastructure.
2. Education: Education activities include teaching pedestrian, bicyclist and traffic safety and creating awareness of the benefits and goals of SRTS.
3. Encouragement: Encouragement strategies are about having fun. They generate excitement and interest in walking and bicycling. Special events, mileage clubs, contests and ongoing activities all provide ways for parents and children to discover, or rediscover, that walking, and bicycling are doable and a lot of fun.
4. Evaluation: Evaluation will help you measure the impact of your efforts. The two main categories for measurement are changes in travel mode (increases in walking/bicycling) and safety (decreased crashes, improved safety behaviors and knowledge). Evaluation also helps keep track of progress made toward goals and reports any changes or updates to the School Travel Plan.

5. **Enforcement:** Enforcement strategies to deter unsafe behaviors of drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists; to encourage all road users to obey traffic laws; and to share the road safely.

### **Funding Procedures**

Once a project is selected, IDOT will notify the applicant to schedule a kick-off meeting and begin the process of formalizing a funding agreement.

Infrastructure projects will be coordinated by the District Bureau of Local Roads and Streets. Typical infrastructure projects will involve sidewalks, bike paths, traffic signals, pavement marking, installation of bike racks, and permanent signs.

It is important to remember that all funds are provided on a reimbursement basis, so the sponsor must first complete the activity or project and then send an invoice to IDOT to receive reimbursement funds. **Local sponsors are responsible for paying all initial costs, then seeking reimbursement based on proof of payment.**

An exception to this will be construction of infrastructure projects that utilize the scheduled IDOT state lettings. Projects on the IDOT state letting will be administered through IDOT procedures where the state pays the contractor directly, receives federal reimbursement for SRTS approved funds, and then bills the SRTS sponsoring agency for their responsible portion. The local sponsor will be billed for their match. Cost overruns and unapproved items will be the responsibility of the sponsor.

Use of in-house engineering or day labor construction should be closely coordinated with the District Bureau of Local Roads and Streets to ensure reimbursement for work effort. In-house engineering and construction performed by qualified personnel for infrastructure projects selected through the SRTS program are eligible for reimbursement only for work performed after the formal notice to proceed has been given. There will be no retroactive funding for costs incurred prior to the notice to proceed. **A notice to proceed is a separate document from the project selection notification.**

Scoping the project to match the available funds is a critical step for the local sponsor, recognizing that federal procedures must be followed. Use of professional engineering services in determining cost estimates and project scopes is required.

### **Regulatory Requirements**

Safe Routes to School funds are federal funds originating from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The FHWA is required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) to consider environmental factors through a systematic, interdisciplinary approach before committing to a course of action. The Federal Highway Administration must also follow requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). NEPA Section 4f relates to public parks and recreational areas and must be considered for projects that extend outside of existing right of way limits. NEPA Section 106 relates to cultural and historic areas and must be considered for all construction projects. The Americans with

August 25, 2021

Disabilities Act design criteria must be followed on all infrastructure projects. Infrastructure improvements that are significant in scope or entail work outside of existing public right of way could require substantial cost to comply with these regulations. The department expects that most projects will not impact lands outside of existing right of way; and therefore, should qualify for categorical exclusions and have minimum environmental considerations.

**Who to Contact**

Questions related to this program may be directed to your District Local Roads and Streets Engineer, or the state Safe Routes to School Coordinator, John Paris, at (217) 524-6756 or john.paris@illinois.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "G. Tapas".

George A. Tapas, P.E., S.E  
Engineer of Local Roads and Streets

SSB/jp

cc: Brian Otten, Illinois Association of County Engineers  
Brad Cole, Illinois Municipal League  
Bryan Smith, Township Officials of Illinois  
Donald Goad, Township Highway Commissioners of Illinois