

ILLINOIS SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

Funding Application Guidance – Cycle 2025



PURPOSE

The purpose of this guidance is to explain the requirements, eligibility, and application process of the Illinois Safe Routes to School Program.

ABOUT SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) was established as a stand-alone Federal-Aid program in August 2005 through the passage of SAFETEA-LU, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users. Through 2009, Illinois received \$23.7M through SAFETEA-LU. In 2010, an additional \$7.5M was allotted as a result of the extension of SAFETEA-LU through December 2010.

These funds were provided to be administered through state DOTs at 100% federal participation with no state or local match required. These funds were made available until fully expended.

With the 2012 passage of MAP-21, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century, the SRTS program was changed from its status as a stand-alone program and became part of the new Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), along with the Transportation Enhancements Program and the National Recreational Trails Program. The most notable changes to the SRTS program were the elimination of the requirement for states to provide a full-time SRTS Coordinator position and the funding participations and limits.

Funding under MAP-21, and the FAST-Act, was provided as 80% federal/20% local match. Funding was also eligible for rescission after 4 years. The FAST ACT has expired; however, federal highway programs were being funded under a continuing resolution.

This year, for Cycle 2025, 80% will be funded by TA Set-Aside under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) of 2021, and 20% local match will be funded by HSIP.

Federal Participation for the SRTS Funding Cycle 2025 will be 100%.

SRTS uses a multidisciplinary approach to improve conditions for the 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; 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 (within 2 miles) of primary, middle, and high schools (grades K-12).***

Safe Routes to School utilizes the six basic program components, known as the “6 E’s”, that comprehensively address obstacles and create solutions:

Engineering – Creating 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.

Education – Teaching children about the broad range of transportation choices, instructing them in important lifelong bicycling and walking safety skills, and launching driver safety campaigns in the vicinity of schools.

Enforcement – Partnering with local law enforcement to ensure traffic laws are obeyed in the vicinity of schools (this includes enforcement of speeds, stopping for pedestrians in crossings, and proper walking and bicycling behaviors), and initiating community enforcement such as crossing guard programs.

Encouragement – Using events and activities to promote walking and bicycling.

Evaluation – Monitoring and documenting outcomes and trends through the collection of data, including the collection of data before and after the intervention(s).

Engagement & Equity – Working with existing community organizations. Listening to students, families, teachers, and school leaders. Building ongoing engagement opportunities that ensure initiatives are benefitting all demographic groups.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Grade Levels: Safe Routes to School projects must focus on students in grades Kindergarten through 12th grade. Public grade schools, middle, junior high schools, high schools, and grade centers that serve these ages are eligible. Early childhood centers (that serve only pre-school children) are not eligible.

Private Schools: Private and parochial schools may also apply for SRTS projects. Infrastructure projects that serve private school locations are allowed **if** they are located on the public right-of-way. This may include projects on private land that have public access easements. **ROW and Easement Costs are NOT reimbursable.** Non-infrastructure activities are also allowed at private and parochial schools.

Application Sponsors:

Infrastructure applications may be sponsored by Political subdivisions (municipalities, counties, townships) or other roadway jurisdictions. Schools and school districts may also apply for infrastructure projects provided they can demonstrate the ability to follow all Federal and State of Illinois policies, directives, and laws. However, IDOT can only contract with local agencies as Sponsors of the project. Schools and municipalities must work together to determine the most beneficial improvements to best enable safe walking and bicycling for students.

Non-infrastructure applications may be sponsored by School districts, Political subdivisions (municipalities, counties, townships), Metropolitan planning organizations / regional planning commissions, Councils of government, Local, regional, and state agencies (health departments, police departments), and Non-profit organizations (PTA/PTO, community organization, health association, etc.).

For the application, the group who will be administering the project(s) must apply as the Sponsoring Agency. A single Sponsoring Agency will be responsible for administering all project components of the application. The Sponsoring Agency will act as the fiscal agent for all projects and will put forth the initial funds for the project. Funds will be reimbursed through the Illinois Department of Transportation.

Every applicant must be registered through the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA) grantee portal, and all pre-award requirements must be fulfilled prior to submitting an SRTS application. The grantee portal link can be found [HERE](#). For general GATA information, please visit the [GATA website](#).

ILLINOIS SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

The Illinois Safe Routes to School Program is administered by the Bureau of Programming in the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and funds both **infrastructure** (engineering) and **non-infrastructure** (education, encouragement, enforcement, evaluation, engagement and equity) initiatives. A detailed list of eligible projects and activities in both the infrastructure and non-infrastructure categories appears later in this guide.

Key features of the Illinois SRTS Funding Cycle 2025 Program include:

- ✓ *SRTS projects are funded at 100% with no local match required.*
- ✓ *SRTS is a reimbursement program - Project sponsors are responsible for supplying the upfront cost of the project and will be reimbursed by IDOT.*
- ✓ *All infrastructure projects must be completed within a 2-mile radius of the school. Certain non-infrastructure projects must also comply with this rule.*
- ✓ *Each school district is limited to one infrastructure and one non-infrastructure application.*
- ✓ *Each project will require a separate application and will be reviewed and scored on its own merit, regardless of category or relationship to any other application submission.*

Student Tally and Parent Survey Results are required for every school affected by the project and are to be included with the project applications. Tally and Survey forms may be found on the SRTS website. Please use only a summary of the surveys – do not send the survey documents with your application.

- ✓ *INFRASTRUCTURE applications may include one infrastructure project only. Each project has a funding limit of \$250,000. The minimum for any single infrastructure project is \$25,000.*
 - ✓ *Infrastructure applications may be sponsored by Political subdivisions (municipalities, counties, townships) or other roadway jurisdictions. Schools and school districts may also apply for infrastructure projects provided they can demonstrate the ability to follow all Federal and State of Illinois policies, directives, and laws. However, IDOT can only contract with local agencies as Sponsors of the project. Schools and municipalities must work together to determine the most beneficial improvements to best enable safe walking and bicycling for students.*
 - ✓ *Preliminary Engineering (PE) and/or Right-of-Way (ROW) costs will **NOT** be reimbursable as part of the project.*
 - ✓ *All infrastructure projects must be obligated within 18 months of award announcement and construction completed and project closed by the end of three years from the date of award announcement.*
- No Federal Reimbursement will be Allowed for Work started and/or completed prior to Federal Authorization and/or a Notice to Proceed with a Contract Agreement.**
- ✓ *NON-INFRASTRUCTURE applications may include one non-infrastructure project only. Each project has a funding limit of \$100,000. The minimum for any single non-infrastructure project is \$2,500. New non-infrastructure mini grants have different funding levels, with some being dependent on the number of students participating. Any government entity, school district or nonprofit organization may sponsor a non-infrastructure application.*
 - ✓ *Non-Infrastructure mini grants may also require the number of students to be reached with the programming. Mini grants use this number to determine funding levels for each mini grant type. Documentation of the project's reach (number of students/participants) should be included with the final invoice.*
 - ✓ *All non-infrastructure projects must be completed, and invoices closed before the completion of two full school years. For example, if awards are announced in March 2026 the project must be complete and closed by May 2028 (end of two full school years).*

- ✓ *Permanently mounted solar powered speed feedback signs will be funded as infrastructure projects. Portable speed feedback trailers will NOT be funded during this cycle.*
- ✓ *All projects will be required to comply with applicable State and Federal requirements (including but not limited to) ADA, Title 23, NEPA, MUCTD, all procurement regulations, etc.*
- ✓ *Because of the limited amount of federal funds that are available, scope or funding change requests that increase the amount of funds awarded cannot be approved.*
- ✓ *Any unused SRTS funds remaining after the project is completed will be returned to the program. They may not be used for additional work or another project.*

**Electronic application packets must be received by this office by
4:30pm CST on the last day of application submittal.
Hard-copy application packets are not required for this funding cycle.**



EVIDENCE OF CONSULTATION

Resolutions of Financial Commitment and Administration and **Letters of Support** must be obtained for all Safe Routes to School applications in order to be eligible for SRTS funds.

For infrastructure applications, the following endorsements are required:

1. One **Resolution of Financial Commitment and Letter of Support** must come from the sponsoring municipal, county, regional or state roadway authority for any affected roadways. If more than one jurisdiction is involved (e.g. both county and local roads), resolutions from all jurisdictional authorities are required. The sponsoring governmental unit will be responsible for project administration, including timely bid letting and oversight of design and construction.
2. A second **Resolution or Letter of Support** must be obtained from the School District for all infrastructure projects.
3. If the project will be located along or on a state route, you must also submit a **Letter of Allowance** from your local IDOT District. This letter must state that the Department will allow this project to be constructed if it is chosen for Safe Routes to School funding.

Also required is a Detailed Cost Estimate, prepared by an engineer. A sample representation is included in the application.

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For non-infrastructure applications:

1. One **Resolution of Financial Commitment and Letter of Support** must be obtained from the sponsoring entity for all non-infrastructure projects.
2. A second **Resolution or Letter of Support** must be obtained from any agency/organization involved in implementation of non-infrastructure projects (e.g., police departments for enforcement programs, etc.)

The following GATA Documentation is required to be submitted as part of the application package.

1. GATA Uniform Grant Application
2. GATA Programmatic Risk Assessment
3. GATA Uniform Grant Budget Template
4. BoBS 2831: Uniform Grant Agreement Affidavit of Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest - Grantee

Optional for all applications: Additional letters of support from other project partners (PTAs/PTOs, Local School Councils, non-profit organizations, public health agencies) may accompany any application. Also, optional, but highly recommended, is the use of Parent Surveys and Student Tallies. If used, include in your application only a summary of the results of these surveys. Please do not submit the actual survey documents.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

Following is a list of fundable activities through the Illinois Safe Routes to School Program:

Eligible Infrastructure Projects:

1. **Sidewalk Improvements** – New Sidewalk, Sidewalk Repair, Sidewalk Gap Closure, Sidewalk Widening, Sidewalk Curb, Sidewalk Curb Ramp
2. **Traffic Calming/Speed Reduction** – Speed Bump/Hump/Table, Raised Crossing, Median Refuge/Center Crossing, Narrowed Traffic Lane
3. **Traffic Control Devices** –Upgraded Traffic Signal, New Pavement Markings, New Traffic Striping, In-Roadway Crossing Light, Flashing Beacons, Bike Sensitive Signal Actuation Devices, Pedestrian Activated Signal Upgrades, Pedestrian Countdown Signal, Permanently Mounted Solar Powered Speed Feedback Signs
4. **Pedestrian and Bicycle Crossing Improvements** – Crossing, Median Refuge, Raised Crossing, Sight Distance Improvements

5. **On-Street Bicycle Facilities** – New/Upgraded Bike Lane, Widened Outside Lanes/Shoulders, Geometric Improvements, Turning Lanes, Channelization, Roadway Realignment, Traffic Signs, Pavement Markings
6. **Off-Street Bicycle Facilities** – Exclusive Multi-Use Bicycle and Pedestrian Trail separated from the roadway
7. **Secure Bicycle Parking Facilities** – Bike Racks, Safety Lighting, Covered Bike Shelter

Within this set of fundable infrastructure projects, the following costs are reimbursable through the SRTS 2025 Cycle Program:

Construction Costs
Construction Engineering

Preliminary Engineering and ROW Acquisition costs will NOT be reimbursed.

Preliminary Engineering should be completed within 6 months of the awards announcement.

Obligation of construction funds must occur within 18 months of the awards announcement.

Construction should be completed within 3 years after the awards announcement.

Eligible Non-Infrastructure Projects:

1. **Enforcement** – Crossing Guard Training Program, Parent or Student Patrol Program, Equipment for Crossing Guard or Parent/Student Patrols
2. **Education** – Educational materials, sponsor a Bicycle Rodeo, teach Personal Safety Skills to students and parents, Educate Parents and Caregivers about Safe Driving Procedures at schools, Training Workshops targeting school and community audience
3. **Encouragement** – SRTS promotional campaigns and materials, modest rewards for SRTS contests and events, Walking School Bus programs, Bike Train programs, International Walk to School and International Bike to School events, Walking/Biking Mileage Clubs

4. **Evaluation** – Costs for data gathering, analysis, and reporting at the local level, Photocopying and Printing costs, Postage costs, Measuring Parent/Guardian/Student/Law Enforcement perceptions of safety

Many Education and Publicity Materials are available FREE-OF-CHARGE from Illinois Department of Transportation and other Safe Routes to School sources. These materials are available in PDF form. Printing of these materials is reimbursable as a project expense.

5. **Equity & Engagement** – Costs for gathering feedback from disadvantaged, historically underserved areas within the community regarding safety concerns and needs for students walking/biking/rolling to school; community-wide events that promote safe walking, bicycling, and rolling for school aged children. Costs for organizing a Safe Routes to School program and committee within a school, school district, community (except for salaries, stipends, or operational costs), or on a school campus. Safety Walk Audit for schools, Walkability or Bikeability event to determine gaps or hazards for students on their path to school.

Within this set of fundable non-infrastructure projects, the following costs are reimbursable through the SRTS 2025 Cycle Program:

- Equipment and Supplies
- Educational Materials
- Promotions, Incentives, or Publicity
- Planning and Evaluation
- Associated Education and Training
- Printing and Copying

Permanently Mounted Solar Powered Speed Feedback Signs will be funded as Infrastructure Projects.

Portable Speed Feedback Trailers will NOT be funded during this cycle.

New – Mini Grants for Non-Infrastructure

These grants contain pre-event, event, and post-event materials. Funds will be provided for each mini grant, including printing costs, needed supplies, encouragement items, and awards where applicable.

- **Walk to School Day or Bike to School Day Event**
Grant is for hosting a Walk to School Day event to coincide with the national event or hosting a community specific Walk to School Day event. Grantees may choose to select Bike to School Day instead. This grant is based on the number of students participating, with an additional lump sum for promotion and event costs. Resource materials are included in the grant packet.
- **Bicycle Rodeo or Bicycle Safety Clinic Event**
Grantee may select between a bicycle rodeo, bicycle safety clinic, or a combination of the two for this event. Funds will be included for supplies necessary for conducting bicycle inspections, helmet fittings, course set-up, and bicycle maintenance. Funds will be determined by the number of students/participants for the event, plus a lump sum of encouragement items, supplies, printing costs, and educational materials. Resource materials are included in the grant packet.
- **Pedestrian and Bicycle Personal Safety for Students**
The pedestrian and bicycle personal safety education program is intended for students as they commute to school, either as new drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, by mobility device, or those that use a combination of modes to reach and leave school. This educational material may be taught to a specific class, grade, school, or school campus and tailored to be age specific. Grantees may choose to use a third party for the presentation or integrate the materials into current curriculum. Resource links and materials are provided in the grant packet.
- **Pop-up Traffic Garden (temporary, semi-permanent, or permanent)**
The Pop-up Traffic Garden is a larger event requiring advanced planning. Grantees may choose to use temporary, semi-permanent, or permanent materials in a secured space. The traffic garden is intended to be a fun and educational experience, with students learning to ride on a “street” while obeying traffic signs, using hand signals, and being aware of other vehicles. The cost of the traffic garden will depend on the size of the traffic garden layout selected, the types of materials used, and the services hired rather than completed with volunteers. Maintenance costs of a semi-permanent or permanent traffic garden will be the responsibility of the grantee. Material lists and traffic garden plan resources are included in the grant packet.
- **Crossing Guard Training**
The Crossing Guard Training grant is intended to assist in the development of a crossing guard training program. Long-term costs for the continuation of the program will be the grantee’s responsibility. Funds will be included for supplies

and materials need to provide classroom and hands-on training. Training material resources are included in the grant packet.

- **Bike Bus or Walking School Bus**

The Bike Bus or Walking School Bus grant is intended to assist in the development of a school wide, grade wide, or class wide Bike Bus or Walking School Bus program. Initial Route Leader supplies, safety equipment, bike tools, printing, and encouragement items are supplied. This grant does use a price per student and lump amount to determine funding. Resources will be provided for the successful start to a Bike Bus or Walking School Bus program.

INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Recurring and operational costs, such as salaries and overhead, will not be funded.

Expenses for existing, expanding, or new program staff time are considered operational expenses and not eligible for SRTS funding.

Foods and Beverages cannot be funded.

The use of funds for projects that reorganize pick-up and drop-off primarily for the convenience of drivers rather than to improve child safety and/or walking and bicycling access is not permitted.

School bus safety programs and improvements to school bus stops are not eligible for this funding.

SUPPLEMENTAL SUPPORTING MATERIALS

You may wish to attach additional materials that support or provide extra information related to your proposed project. This may include photos or designs of the affected area(s), school wellness policies, survey results, walking audit findings, event photographs, speed studies, etc.

The last page of the application contains the feature for directly uploading these materials. While this is optional, inclusion of additional materials that help support your proposal may benefit the likelihood of your application being funded.

REVIEW/SCORING CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES

Upon receipt of the applications, a cursory review will be conducted by the SRTS Coordinator to determine eligibility and GATA compliance according to the criteria set. Applications deemed eligible will, after the application deadline, be reviewed and scored by the Review Committee. This committee will be made up of personnel from IDOT Central Office and each of the 9 IDOT District Offices. The members will score

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each application independently according to the following criteria – General Project Focus, Demonstration of Need, Project Detail and Cost Estimates, Hazards and Barriers. Other factors considered to calculate a final score will be Potential for Improving Walking and Bicycling, Consultation and Support, Enrollment Data from Illinois State Board of Education, Confirmation of PE and ROW status, and Previous SRTS Award Performance. Additionally, two more objectives will be reviewed: the number of low-income students impacted, and the number of disabled students impacted. These objectives are based on information provided in the Illinois School Report Cards (ISBE) and will be added to the total review score to calculate a final score. The final score will determine ranking of all projects. The highest scoring projects will then be reviewed in rating order from highest to lowest until a cutoff is agreed upon based on funding availability. Geographical balance and project schedule feasibility will also be considered.

Announcement of Awards

Upon final selection of projects and concurrence by FHWA, documents will be made available for announcement to the public.

After the public announcement of awards, a list of awarded projects will be made available on the website for public view and notice will be sent through the subscription service.

Letters of congratulations and implementation guidance will be sent to all awarded Sponsoring Agencies.

Project Implementation and Tracking

Successful grantees of infrastructure projects will be directed to contact the appropriate IDOT district to initiate implementation of the project. Scheduled kick-off meetings with all parties will be required to initiate the implementation of all infrastructure projects. The Bureau of Programming will continue to monitor and record progress of all infrastructure projects to ensure timely completion of the project.

All infrastructure projects must be obligated within 18 months of award announcement and construction completed and projects closed by the end of three years from the date of award announcement.

Successful grantees of non-infrastructure projects will be contacted by and directed to work with the SRTS Coordinator to guide them through all aspects of their projects, from beginning to end. All aspects of administration of these projects will be directed and completed by the SRTS Coordinator.

REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

All non-infrastructure projects must be completed, and invoices closed before the completion of two full school years. For example, if awards are announced in March 2026 the projects must be complete and closed by May 2028 (end of two full school years).

Selected projects are required to comply with a variety of federal and state requirements. Below is a listing of key requirements that will be the responsibility of the applicant.

State Procurement Procedures: Compliance with all State of Illinois procurement regulations.

ADA: Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) includes all infrastructure requirements and making program materials available in alternative formats.

TIP: Safe Routes to School funds must be programmed in a metropolitan or regional planning organization's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

MUTCD: Signage, striping and pavement marking projects must follow Illinois DOT design and signage standards as outlined in the Manual on Universal Traffic Control Devices.

NEPA: Except in unusual circumstances, most SRTS infrastructure projects will fall under categorical environmental exclusions that recognize construction of bicycle and pedestrian lanes, paths, and facilities as not involving significant environmental impacts. Where exclusions do not apply, projects are expected to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Please contact your IDOT District Local Roads office if you have questions about NEPA and your project.

Title 23: Safe Routes to School program must comply with Davis Bacon prevailing wage rates, competitive bidding, and other contracting requirements, even for projects not located within the right-of-way of a federal-aid highway.

For additional information regarding the Illinois SRTS program you may contact:

John Paris

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An e-mail subscription service is available to assist IDOT in communicating important information regarding the Illinois SRTS program. This is a one-way announcement service. Your email address will be kept private and not sold or otherwise distributed outside the department.

To subscribe or unsubscribe, click on the link below and send the blank email that pops up. (Do not add anything to the subject line or to the body of the email).

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