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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Federal Funding

Nebraska Department of Roads Awards Safe Routes to School

The Nebraska Department of Roads has awarded approximately \$450,000 in federal Safe Routes to School Program funds to communities for five statewide projects to encourage and better enable children to walk and bike safely to school.

The program is focused on promoting physical activity and improving health, making routes to school safer and reducing traffic congestion around schools by encouraging children to walk or ride bicycles.

The program is 100 percent funded by the federal government and requires no matching funds by local entities. The funds benefit elementary and middle school children and are divided into two categories: infrastructure (sidewalk and street-crossing improvements, traffic diversion and bicycle facilities) and non-infrastructure (promotional materials, student bicycle and pedestrian safety education sessions, and encouragement programs).

Funding was awarded to the following agencies:

- Public Health Solutions – “No Child Left Inside”, \$44,775 (awarded non-infrastructure funding on behalf of Crete Elementary Schools)
- Public Health Solutions – “No Child Left on Their Behind”, \$48,822 (awarded non-infrastructure funding on behalf of Thayer Central Community Schools, Hebron, NE)
- Superior Public Schools – Superior Schools Safe Routes Project, \$66,891 (awarded infrastructure funding)
- City of South Sioux City – South Sioux City Connecting Schools Trail, \$196,540 (awarded infrastructure funding)
- Prescott Elementary School in Lincoln – Let’s All Pedal to Prescott, \$99,338 (awarded infrastructure funding)

Through the 2005 passage of the “Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy of Users,” Congress designated \$612 million toward developing the National Safe Routes to School Program. Money is distributed to states to fund education, planning and implementation of Safe Routes to School plans and programs.

For more information about the projects listed here or the Safe Routes Nebraska Program, visit www.SafeRoutesNE.com.

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CRETE ELEMENTARY BOLTAGE PROGRAM

Public Health Solutions District Health Department (PHSDHD) was awarded \$44,775 to continue building on the foundation of the "No Child Left Inside" community awareness project involving a grassroots obesity prevention partnership with the installation of a BOLTAGE unit at Crete Elementary School.

Formerly known as the Freiker system, the purpose of the BOLTAGE Unit is to encourage more walking and biking through a combination of incentives and technology. BOLTAGE features the installation of a solar-powered unit that records the number of students who walk or bike to school. Participating students are assigned a radio frequency ID (RFID) tag. Each tag has a unique code assigned to the owner. The BOLTAGE Unit reads the code number when a student rides or walks under the unit. The unit beeps to let the participant know they were counted. The unit wirelessly uploads the rider/walker data to a website daily, and the child or parent can log on to see real time data regarding the number of rides/walks accumulated. The BOLTAGE Unit includes an encouragement program, complete with incentive items that are distributed to students incrementally as they reach their walking/biking goals.

The Crete Elementary BOLTAGE program will be modeled after the Beatrice Middle School Program (funded February 2010) and the Boulder, Colorado Program. In addition to the solar-powered counting unit, funds will be used for PHSDHD personnel to implement the program; promotional and advertising items such as backpack mail and walking maps; and related equipment and supplies such as bike racks, pedometers and bike helmets.

NO CHILD LEFT ON THEIR BEHIND AT THAYER CENTRAL

Public Health Solutions District Health Department's (PHSDHD) was awarded \$48,822 for implementation of the "No Child Left On Their Behind" (NCLOB) at Thayer Central consolidated schools, located in Hebron, Nebraska (population: 1,302). The overall goal of implementation at Thayer Central is the development of a model framework for consolidated schools incorporating PHSDHD's most successful education and encouragement strategies used over the past two years. The project involves students in three different school buildings located in Hebron. Students come from the communities of Byron, Chester, Gilead, Hubbell and Hebron in Thayer County. The program would impact 410, K-8th grade students, and their parents. Because data collected over the past two years continues to highlight reckless driving incidences in and around consolidated schools, PHSDHD will initiate driver awareness and pedestrian safety education with the assistance of local law enforcement. Not only is safety a key objective to the program but also to create a social norm that is more accepting and supportive of walking/biking to school, during school and after school. This will be accomplished through the development of a best practices kit for consolidated schools. The kit will include successful education and encouragement strategies, materials, incentives and evaluation tools utilized in educating parents, teachers, and students on safe walking/biking practices and the health benefits of increased physical activity.

Local collaborators within the community will include parents, local government, school administration staff and law enforcement. Collaborators, with assistance from the Department, will conduct walkability assessments, community kick-off event, fall/spring walking challenges, bi-monthly challenge events, i.e., National Walk to School Day, alternative drop-off days (where students who ride the bus are encouraged to walk from a designated, safe location), and a bike rodeo promoted through backpack mail. Caches of helmets and locks will be available for students biking to school. Collaborators will identify environmental barriers (engineering, enforcement) to safe walking/biking. Funding will be utilized to address identified barriers. A walking map highlighting safest routes to school will be developed based on local input.

SUPERIOR SCHOOLS SAFE ROUTES PROJECT

Superior Public Schools (SPS), located in the City of Superior, Nebraska (population: 1,738) was awarded \$66,891 in Safe Routes funds to address walking and biking safety around the new elementary school (K-6) being built adjacent to the existing middle/high school. SPS is requesting Safe Routes funds for three related components.

Part 1 of the project is to design and develop a bike/walk path from the west end of 6th Street, joining the footbridge spanning Lost Creek, across Lincoln Park and ending at the south end of the new elementary building being constructed. The new walk/bike path through Lincoln Park would allow students access to the school away from 8th Street. The only route now is on 8th Street, which is only one of two streets that allow access to the west of Lost Creek for vehicles and the main artery that people drive. The speed limit on 8th Street actually increases at the present school. Superior Public Schools is working in conjunction with the City and the Police Department to lower the speed limit starting in January. The Police Department performed a speed zone study and found thirty percent of drivers are exceeding the posted school zone limits. The department plans to intensify their patrols in the area once the new school is opened.

Part 2 of the project is to replace school zone flashing lights with a more modern radar-enhanced school zone speed sign. In addition a modern radar-enhanced school zone sign will be placed west of the newly established K-12 school zone, and in conjunction with the city, the intersection of 6th and Park Street will be converted to a 3-way stop.

Part 3 of the project is to enhance the lighting along the walk path. This will be accomplished by replacing four existing lights with more modern, efficient lights. Superior Public Schools would also like to add two more poles and lights along the path to make sure it is well lit for students.

SOUTH SIOUX CITY CONNECTING SCHOOLS TRAIL

The City of South Sioux City (population: 12,000) was awarded \$196,540 to construct a trail to connect two elementary schools to an existing trail system, as well as provide access to the trail system for middle and high school students from the central parts of the City.

The project consists of preliminary engineering and construction of a 10'-wide trail which begins across the street from Covington Elementary School at the southwest corner of 22nd and B Streets. From there the trail will continue east to E.N. Swett Elementary School. The trail then proceeds south on the west side of C Street, crossing the railroad tracks through a newly developed pedestrian crossing until it reaches 26th Street. At 26th & C Streets, a new crosswalk will be constructed allowing students to cross C Street and continue east on 26th for approximately one block on an existing sidewalk until it links to the existing trail system.

LET'S ALL PEDAL TO PRESCOTT

Prescott Elementary School located at 1930 S. 20th Street, in Lincoln, Nebraska (population: 254,001) was awarded \$99,338 to create a safe, secure, and attractive bicycle court at the main entrance to the Prescott Elementary School playground. The project is designed as the new entry into the new playground that is currently undergoing renovations to add a walking path, new grass playing fields, community gathering spaces, and an outdoor classroom. This renovation plans to enhance student health and learning emerged from the Prescott School Neighborhood Advisory Committee (SNAC), to improve student learning and development, strengthen families, and build safe and healthy neighborhoods. A new bicycle court at the main entry is considered an essential element in the new plan.

The project will involve prepping the site, laying a base, and pouring a permeable concrete pad or pavers. New bicycle racks/loops will be installed along with new lighting. Fixtures will be pole types with acorn style lamps intended to match or compliment the lighting at the main school entrance. Pillars will be installed at the corners of the bicycle court and will include mounting points for signs and potentially for a fabric cover over the bicycle court. The perimeter will be secured with hedge plantings. The bicycle court entry and exit points are incorporated into a brick wall entryway with benches and additional lighting.