



December 3, 2008

The Honorable [Governor Name]
[Address information]

Re: Safe Routes to School in [State]

Dear Governor [Name]:

On behalf of the thousands of Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs reaching millions of children around the country, the Safe Routes to School National Partnership commends you and your state for your work in implementing the federal Safe Routes to School program. SRTS, created by the 2005 federal transportation bill, is an important program that will improve children's health and safety. Therefore, we urge you to:

- Award the remainder of your available SRTS funding;
- Mitigate where possible the often long delays in implementation; and
- Share challenges with us so we can advocate together for improvements in the next authorization.

In three short years, every state has appointed a SRTS coordinator and has developed an application process for communities and schools to support projects such as building sidewalks and pathways, improving intersections, and initiating education, encouragement and law enforcement programs. Most states have reported significantly more demand for SRTS funding than what is available at current federal funding levels.

States all across the country are struggling with high rates of childhood obesity and physical inactivity, traffic congestion, poor air quality around schools that damage children's lungs, and high injury rates for child pedestrians and cyclists. On the financial front, many school districts are facing budget reductions and are cutting back bus routes to help make ends meet—leaving more children to either be driven by parents or to walk and bicycle on potentially unsafe roads.

Safe Routes to School can help address all of these issues. We're writing to ask for your help in ensuring that all of the federal Safe Routes to School money designated for [State] be utilized to make your communities and schools safe for children walking and bicycling.

First, we encourage you to *award the remainder of your state's available funding* as soon as possible. While some states have already awarded all of their anticipated available money through FY2009, other states still have a significant portion of their allocation remaining. Across all states, as of this fall, approximately 70% of the available funding through FY 2008 has already been awarded. Please see the enclosed chart for more information about the federal funds allocated to your state, and the rate at which the funding is being spent. After Congress appropriates the FY2009 funds, additional money will also be available for this important program in your state.

Second, we urge you to *mitigate the often long delays in implementation of SRTS projects*. As you know, once the award is made, the funding must also be obligated before communities can begin to benefit from new sidewalks, other infrastructure, and safety programs. We have heard from many SRTS coordinators and local communities that the process of issuing contracts, moving through the federal regulatory process, and drawing down funds can be time-consuming, mainly because small SRTS projects must follow the same rules and procedures for project authorization and obligation as large highway projects. According to the FHWA, across all states, nearly \$300 million remains to be obligated from the FY2005-2008 funds, plus an additional \$180 million in anticipated FY2009 funds once those are made available. We greatly appreciate your efforts to expedite the contracts and outlay of these funds and to keep locally funded projects moving through the implementation process.

Third, we invite you to *share with us best practices or challenges* you face in implementing the SRTS program. Our Partnership works with other advocacy groups to educate Congress about what's working well, and what barriers could be alleviated in the next authorization. Part of the difficulty in awarding and obligating funds is created by title 23 and related federal regulations imposed on the funding. We have also heard that states struggle with obligation limits on transportation funding and a slowdown in FY2009 funding due to the lack of a final federal transportation appropriations bill. Please share your stories and concerns with Margo Pedroso, Policy Manager for the Partnership at 301-292-1043 or margo@saferoutespartnership.org.

In closing, please accept our congratulations for your work thus far. Safe Routes to School programs all across the country are helping improve safety for children, getting more children active, reducing traffic congestion, and improving air quality around schools. Your leadership as Governor and the hard work of your state's SRTS coordinator is essential to the successful implementation of Safe Routes to School programs. Thank you again for your collective efforts in [State], and we look forward to continuing to work with you.

Sincerely,



Deb Hubsmith, Director
Safe Routes to School National Partnership

cc: [Name and Title of State Department of Transportation Director]
[Name of State SRTS Coordinator]

Enclosure: State of the States report
Safe Routes to School National Partnership brochure