

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL FUNDING



CORE IDEA

Safe Routes to School programs need funding in order to function. Securing ongoing funding for the program must be part of Safe Routes to School policy campaigns.

Why Does Safe Routes to School Need to Be Funded?

Funding for Safe Routes to School is essential to achieving the goal of getting more students safely walking and biking to school. Building sidewalks, painting crosswalks, and striping bike lanes costs money, as does educating students how to walk and bicycle safely and encouraging them to do so through events and activities. Without funding, communities have to cobble together and rely on donations and volunteers. Programs need secure, reliable funding to effectively make change and create sustainable programs.



What is Safe Routes to School Funding Used For?

Effectively supporting kids to safely walk and bike to school requires two main ingredients: infrastructure and non-infrastructure. Infrastructure refers to the way our streets, sidewalks, and neighborhoods are designed and whether they can safely accommodate walking and bicycling. Non-infrastructure refers to teaching kids how to walk and bike safely and encouraging them to do so. Infrastructure and non-infrastructure are mutually reinforcing, and effective Safe Routes to School programs include both components.

When there was dedicated federal funding for Safe Routes to School, states were to spend 70-90% of their funding on infrastructure and 10-30% on non-infrastructure.

INFRASTRUCTURE & NON-INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure

- Planning, design, and construction of projects that will substantially improve the ability of students to walk and bicycle to school
- Sidewalk improvements, traffic calming, street crossings, on-street bicycle facilities, off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities, secure bicycle parking, and more
- Speed and traffic reduction improvements in the vicinity of schools

Non-Infrastructure

- **Staffing:** Staffing is the foundation of Safe Routes to School programs. At the state level, staff administer the program and grant out funds to local programs. Locally, staff lead education and encouragement activities. To learn more about staffing, [click here](#).
- **Events and activities:** Funding for educational supplies, incentives, and marketing supports the awareness, reach, and participation of and in Safe Routes to School programs. A signature Safe Routes to School encouragement event is International Walk to School Day and its two-wheeled counterpart, International Bike to School Day. Events like these, as well as walk audits and bike rodeos, can be amplified with flyers and posters, which require printing and materials, and participation is encouraged with incentives like reflective items and prizes for schools with high participation rates.
- **Miscellaneous: Minigrants; Stipends; Consultants; Travel; Office Supplies**
 - **Minigrants & Stipends:** Some programs offer small minigrants to schools or others within their program area to support their program activities. Both programs themselves and schools using minigrant funds sometimes use funds to pay stipends to teachers or parents or other family members to encourage walking and biking
 - **Consultants** serve two purposes: they allow programs to temporarily expand staff capacity by bringing on short term labor; and they allow programs to access specialized skillsets that may not be otherwise available on staff. The use of consultants in Safe Routes to School programs varies greatly from hiring a one-time photographer for a Walk to School Day event to contracting with a design firm to develop a brand identity and marketing plan for a specific program. Engaging consultants to develop recommended route maps or conduct walk audits and develop infrastructure recommendations is relatively common.
- **Professional Development:** Larger programs often include funding for professional development, such as travel to conferences or other opportunities.
- **Office Supplies:** Photocopying, local travel, office supplies, etc.

How Much Funding Does a Safe Routes to School Program Need?

At the state level, advocates should aim to secure the same amount of funding their state received when Safe Routes to School was federally funded under SAFETEA-LU. There is historical precedent that all states ran programs with this amount of funding. To calculate this figure for your state, look up the historical amount apportioned to your state under SAFETEA-LU or take 18% of your state Transportation Alternatives Program (or subsequent federal transportation package) apportionment minus the Recreational Trails program funding. In keeping with historical precedent, between 70-90% of these funds should be available for infrastructure, and 10-30% for non-infrastructure.

These funds can be achieved either through state funding appropriated to Safe Routes to School or by dedicating federal transportation dollars to Safe Routes to School, just as funds were previously dedicated under federal law. Campaigns focused on federal funding look to pass state laws committing that TAP funds will be used for active transportation, not transferred to other highway uses. These laws ensure that state DOTs don't take from the limited federal active transportation funds to access more money for road building.

At the local level, it's a bit more complicated because there is great variability in sizes of cities and towns across the country. Based upon research into local Safe Routes to School budgets conducted in 2019, the following recommendations emerged on minimum amounts of funding for local Safe Routes to School programs.

- Non-infrastructure: Local SRTS programs must receive a minimum of \$100,000 per year to cover at least one full time staff person with benefits, provide funding for robust events and activities, and cover additional miscellaneous costs.
- Infrastructure: Funding must be allocated for Safe Routes to School infrastructure costs. In order to maintain at least 70 percent of funding for infrastructure, infrastructure funding must be a minimum of 2.3 times as much as program funding.
- Community size:
 - For communities under 300,000 in total population, a minimum funding level of \$333K will be required (including a minimum of \$100,000 for non-infrastructure).
 - For communities that have 300,000 to 500,000 population, a minimum funding level of \$667,000 will be required (including a minimum of \$200,000 for non-infrastructure).
 - For communities with 500,000 to 1 million in population, a minimum funding level of \$1 million will be required (including a minimum of \$300,000 for non-infrastructure).
 - For communities that are over a million in population, a minimum funding level of \$1.5 million will be required (including a minimum of \$450,000 for non-infrastructure).
- Crossing guards: If possible, achieving additional funding to support cost of providing crossing guards shall be included.



HOW DO I JUSTIFY THIS?

- Safe Routes to School is one of 14 interventions recognized by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that demonstrates a positive health impact and is cost-effective within five years. (CDC HI-5).¹
- Safe Routes to School interventions are cost-effective. A study in New York City found that the initial \$10 million Safe Routes to School investment to make improvements at 124 schools would yield \$230 million in cost savings from fewer injuries to adults and children over the course of fifty years. Thus, each dollar invested in improving safety for kids yields \$24 in reduced medical costs just from reduced traffic injuries.²
- All fifty states have experience running Safe Routes to School programs, as they did under the MAP-21 transportation bill.
- Preventing the death of just one child walking or biking is estimated to save approximately \$1.4 million in lifetime medical and work-loss costs.³
- One tremendous benefit of having dedicated local funding is that it can be used as the match for federal funding, ensuring that the community has the capacity to access and leverage that funding.
- State and local funds are cumulative to federal TAP funds, so they provide additional funding, which is imperative in light of low levels of funding relative to need.
- In addition, state and local funds are more flexible than federal funds and can be used to support Safe Routes to School for students in high school, who aren't eligible for federal funds, as well as other uses.

WHERE HAS SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL BEEN FUNDED?



Seattle, Washington: The City of Seattle hosts among the best-funded Safe Routes to School programs in the country. At baseline, it allocates \$2.5 million annually to Safe Routes to School, though the budget fluctuates because it is principally funded through fine revenue from speed cameras in school zones and the city's red light camera program. The city provides about \$350,000 for staffing and \$300,000 for education with Seattle Public Schools, including an adaptive program for students with disabilities. In the 2020-2025 Capital Improvement Plan, the City Council has increased the budget up to \$8 million annually for Safe Routes to School infrastructure. Also worth noting is the city's commitment to funding and conducting a racial equity analysis and citywide survey every few years.



La Crosse County, Wisconsin: In La Crosse County, the Safe Routes to School program is funded through the health department and funds only non-infrastructure. This funds 1.5 FTE Safe Routes to School coordinators, events, and activities. Infrastructure is funded through competitive applications for TAP funding through WisDOT and through local capital improvement budgets.



Hawaii: In 2012, the legislature passed HB 2626, which established a Safe Routes to School program and the authority that will govern and fund the program. It created a funding mechanism to pay for the program using \$10 of traffic violation funds to a Safe Routes to School program and a \$25 surcharge from speeding-in-a-school-zone violations to the Safe Routes to School program special fund.

WHERE HAS SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL BEEN FUNDED?



Minnesota: In 2012, the legislature passed a law creating a structure for a state Safe Routes to School program, but did not allocate any funding. In 2013, the legislature allocated \$500,000 for Safe Routes to School programming over two years. As part of a bonding bill, the legislature added \$1 million for Safe Routes to School infrastructure projects and an additional \$250,000 each year from the state general fund for programming. In 2019, approximately \$2 million was awarded for Safe Routes to School infrastructure and \$500,000 was awarded for Safe Routes to School non-infrastructure. Read more about the [campaign efforts](#) and see the [legislative text](#).



Oregon: In 2017, the legislature passed “Keep Oregon Moving”, a comprehensive transportation package that in addition to a massive investment in transit and trails of more than \$100 million each year, and a sensible focus on “fix-it-first” maintenance funding for our roadways and bridges, new funding from the bill will provide \$10 million annual investment for Safe Routes to School street safety improvements - bumping up to \$15 million annual investment in perpetuity starting in 2022. Title I schools have been prioritized for street safety investments with a lower matching funds requirement (20% vs 40%).

REFERENCES

1. “Health Impact in Five Years - Safe Routes to School .” HI-5 Creating a healthy path for our children. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, October 19, 2018. <https://www.cdc.gov/policy/hst/hi5/saferoutes/index.html>.
2. Muennig, Peter A, Michael Epstein, Guohua Li, and Charles DiMaggio. “The Cost-Effectiveness of New York City’s Safe Routes to School Program.” American journal of Public Health 104, no. 7 (July 2014): 1294–99. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2014.301868>.
3. WISQARS (Web-Based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System). 2010 Cost of Injury Reports. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Database queried for costs of injuries and fatalities to pedestrians and bicyclists, all ages and children ages 0 to 14. Accessed November 15, 2017. <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html>



MORE INFO

- Investing in Walking, Biking, and Safe Routes to School – A Win for the Bottom Line
https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/resource_files/121117-sr2s-investing-report-final.pdf