
Advocacy Column

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Rhode Island Awards Safe Routes to School Program Funding

Many of us remember walking or riding bikes to school, but most of our children and grandchildren either arrive at school in a bus or automobile. That is about to change in several fortunate Rhode Island communities. The Rhode Island Division of Planning and the Rhode Island Department of Transportation recently awarded \$1,900,000 in federal funds to support programs and activities in local elementary and middle schools intended to encourage children to walk and bicycle safely to school, rather than travel by car or school bus.

In the first project solicitation, the Safe Routes to School Program (SRTS) granted funds to thirteen programs in ten cities and towns for various infrastructure projects including planning, design and construction of such as crosswalks, traffic calming, and sidewalk construction or repairs to improve the ability of students to safely walk and bicycle to school. Funding for school activities include "walking school buses", "bike rodeos", safety training, and increased law enforcement.

According to the 2001 National Household Travel Survey, less than 16 percent of students between the ages of 5 and 15 walked or biked to school, compared to 42 percent in 1969. Approximately half are driven in a private vehicle even if they live close to the school. Childhood obesity rates have more than tripled in the past 30 years resulting in many children now at risk for a variety of health problems such as obesity, heart disease and diabetes, while the number of children walking and biking to school has declined.

The SRTS Program is a positive step toward improving the environment, reducing childhood obesity rates, and reducing traffic congestion around schools. It will also give many parents a gift of the time they currently spend driving their kids back and forth to school every day.

Projects awarded in this round include:

- Barrington: Hampden Meadows School -- \$226,100
- Central Falls: Ella Risk and Veterans Elementary Schools and Channel One -- Ralph J. Holden Community Center -- \$386,012
- Cranston: Park View Middle School, area elementary schools with Cranston Police Department-- \$213,334
- Hugh B. Bain Middle School, area elementary schools with Cranston Police Department -- \$78,033
- East Providence: Kent Heights Elementary School -- \$23,000
- Jamestown: Melrose Ave. Elementary School and Lawn Ave. Middle School with Rolling Agenda bike advocacy group and community coalition -- \$251,500
- Providence:
 - Anthony Carnevale Elementary School -- \$2,750
 - Laurel Hill Ave. Elementary School -- \$252,750
- Warwick: Holliman Elementary School -- \$8,400
- West Warwick: John Deering Middle School, Greenbush Elementary School, Maisie Quinn Elementary School, and Wakefield Hills Elementary School -- \$17,600
- Westerly: Tower Street Elementary School -- \$53,280
- Woonsocket:
 - Kevin Coleman and Fifth Ave. Elementary Schools and Connecting for Children and Families-- \$248,155
 - Woonsocket Middle School & Connecting for Children and Families -- \$168,155

The State of Rhode Island anticipates receiving \$5 million in SRTS funding through the current federal transportation act. Additional funding rounds will become available for new projects in future years.

Update on Arrowers



As we went to print, we were pleased to receive offers to arrow the last rides in 2007. We are grateful to all of you who arrowed this past year, and especially those who stepped forward at the last minute. At the Annual Banquet a list of our 2007 arrowers was prominently displayed, with a big "thank you".



We are now looking for arrowers for 2008 rides—please contact Jim Berry (email james.berry1@comcast.net, tel: 508-944-6969) or Gil Peel (touring@nbwclub.org). We provide paint, map and guidelines.