

May 22, 2007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nebraska Department of Roads awards \$2M in Safe Routes to School federal funding

The Nebraska Department of Roads has awarded more than \$2 million in federal Safe Routes to School program funds to communities for 23 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).

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.

--More--

Funding was awarded to the following agencies:

Non-infrastructure projects:

LEXINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS STREET & BIKE SAFETY PROGRAM

The City of Lexington Community Fitness Initiative (CFI) was awarded \$23,554 for a program that includes public awareness campaigns, education on the health benefits of walking and biking, and expanding the school crossing guard program. CFI's goal is to raise awareness about childhood obesity in the community while subsequently reducing the incidence of the problem. CFI's program will contain four components: 1) public awareness campaigns and outreach to press and community leaders; 2) traffic education and enforcement in the vicinity of schools by improving and expanding the crossing guard program; 3) student and parent education sessions on bicycle and pedestrian safety, health, and environment; and 4) funding for training volunteers and managers of Safe Routes to School programs.

HOLDREGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS WALK & BIKE TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

Holdrege Public Schools was awarded \$19,603 to educate parents and students about the benefits of walking and biking to school. The school system in partnership with the City of Holdrege, Safe Community Coalition of Holdrege, Two Rivers Public Health Department, Phelps Memorial Health Center and the Holdrege City Police will disseminate information through public service announcements, local media and brochures. The Safe Community Coalition of Holdrege will assist the school in researching the possibility of implementing a Walking School Bus program. The Walking School Bus would involve adult volunteers who meet with a group of students, and walk them to and from school. All Holdrege Public School kindergarten through eighth-grade students will be educated through special assemblies featuring wellness speakers and advisor and advisee groups. Special sessions and classes will be led by physical education teachers and the school nurse to promote wellness and a healthy lifestyle. A student incentive drawing for a bicycle will be held each month. All students will receive pedometers to track walking and biking distance.

GRAND ISLAND WALNUT MIDDLE SCHOOL SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

The City of Grand Island was awarded \$20,640 to implement a Safe Routes to School program at Walnut Middle School. The project team will consist of a bilingual project coordinator (Central District Health Department), school resource officer (Grand Island Police Department), Tri-City Safe Kids staff member, and representatives of school staff, parents and students. A social marketing campaign will focus on modifying identified attitudes and behaviors related to walking and biking patterns. Educational and public awareness materials including posters and videos will be obtained through the Safe Routes Nebraska Department of Roads Web site.

The community-tailored campaign will target three groups: students, parents and drivers. The student campaign will focus on adolescent behaviors of behavioral anatomy (independent decision-making) and value autonomy (developing a set of principles), with the power of peer-group influence. A student-generated campaign will change the current culture to one where walking and biking is “cool” and “healthy.”

HASTINGS SAFE ROUTES PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

The City of Hastings was awarded \$28,370 for a public awareness campaign that consists of four components:

1. Public awareness and outreach – the development and implementation of a six-month television campaign on KHAS-TV. It will promote increased bicycle, pedestrian, and traffic safety as well as encourage more children to walk and bike to and from school (beginning in the 2007-2008 school year). In addition, a community Safe Routes to School training workshop will be held in fall 2007.
2. Traffic education and enforcement (within a two-mile vicinity of schools) – the organization and training of student safety patrols and/or adult crossing guards. This will be a collaborative effort by the Hastings City Police Department, Hastings city engineering staff, Tri-Cities Safe Kids, and the local schools. Training will be conducted at the beginning of the 2007-2008 school year and, if necessary, again at the beginning of the second semester. An educational video will be produced by an audio-visual class at Hastings College or Hastings public schools. State-produced Safe Routes to School materials will be used in addition to locally developed materials. These educational materials will contain safety information specific to the Hastings community.
3. Student education on bicycle and pedestrian safety, health, and environment – the student education component will include the development and implementation of Walk to School Day/Week activities at each targeted school in October 2007. Education on bicycle and pedestrian safety, health and environment will be integrated into the fifth- and sixth-grade curriculum. Physical education teachers will receive training on this in addition to the curriculum. Resources will be available in Spanish.
4. Data collection/assessment – conducting student and parent surveys, and walk-ability/bike-ability assessments. Geographic information services software will be used to map routes; walk maps will then be distributed to the schools for parents and students.

MAYWOOD TIGER PAW TRAIL – NONINFRASTRUCTURE

Maywood Public School was awarded \$5,196 for student pedestrian and bicycle safety sessions, public awareness campaigns, encouragement programs, and painting supplies for the tiger paws that will be painted on the school route path. Funds will be used for six hours (beyond regular work hours) of the physical education teacher’s time to instruct students about the importance of bicycling and walking to school, along with safety skills.

Public awareness campaigns will be conducted through the use of bicycle safety brochures and newspaper advertisements that promote walking and driver awareness. The school's staff will encourage students to walk and bike to school through the use of frequent walker and biker cards, as well as awards for completed cards. Students will participate in mapping the route and painting the tiger paws on the path.

McCook Public Schools Walk to School Program

McCook Public Schools was awarded \$8,761 to encourage McCook elementary students to walk and bicycle to school. The project includes traffic education and enforcement around three public schools, serving children in grades kindergarten through eighth grade; student and family education on bicycle and pedestrian safety and physical health and activity; a public awareness campaign to include public service announcements, and other communication with elementary school families and the community.

Papillion-Rumsey Station Elementary Safe Routes to School Program

The Sarpy/Cass Counties Department of Health was awarded \$13,668 for the Papillion-Rumsey Station Safe Routes Program. The department is working in partnership with Papillion-Rumsey Station Elementary School, Safe Kids Sarpy/Cass County chapter, and Activate Omaha to implement a Safe Routes to School program. Projects will include a SRTS kick-off and challenge at the beginning of the school year, participation in international Walk to School Day, formation of Walking School Bus pick-up sites and routes, and ongoing walking clubs. Educational curriculum for students on pedestrian and bicycle safety will be implemented in the classroom with the assistance of community partners and volunteers. Classrooms will also have the opportunity to engage in friendly competition through the use of a "traveling sneaker trophy" and incentives for participation. Program updates and news will be broadcast over Rumsey Station Television. Local law enforcement will provide additional traffic enforcement and pedestrian and bicycling skills will be taught by Safe Kids Sarpy/Cass County chapter members. Parents will be targeted with safety messages through local media, school newsletters, and invitations to attend events with their children.

Lincoln – Elliott School Walking & Biking Project

Elliott Elementary School located in Lincoln was awarded \$7,575 to encourage more students to walk and bike to and from school. Funds will be used to provide students with pedometers and to implement a Walking School Bus program, where adult volunteers meet with a group of students, and walk them to and from school. Safe walking and biking practices will be highlighted at special events throughout the year. The school's staff will encourage students to use the Antelope Valley bike paths once they are complete, and its Community Learning Center staff will teach bicycle safety. In addition, the school will provide students with helmets and a safe place to park bicycles during the school day.

SPRINGVIEW STUDENT SAFETY AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

The Village of Springview was awarded \$639 for a public outreach campaign. A four-week newspaper advertisement campaign will educate local drivers on how to keep pedestrians and bicyclists safe. In addition, a brochure will be created for students and parents that will include a map of designated safe routes to school. The brochure will also list the benefits of walking and biking to and from school, such as improved health, reducing air pollution, and traffic issues. Safety tips to educate students on how to walk and bike safely will also be included in the brochures. Brochures will be mailed to each student at the beginning of the school year to encourage walking and biking to and from school.

FRIEND WALK TO SCHOOL BROCHURES & EDUCATION

The City of Friend was awarded \$1,550 to promote walking and biking to and from school. The city will create brochures that promote Walk to School Night, a Walking School Bus Program and a walking contest. A parent and student survey will be conducted to evaluate the Safe Routes to School Program. Funds will be used to create a newsletter devoted to walking and biking, and a map of the Safe Routes to School pre-determined by the city and school. Pedometers will be provided to students to record mileage for a walking competition, and safety vests and signs will be purchased for school crossing guards.

Infrastructure projects:

KEARNEY KIDS SAFE TREK TO SCHOOL

The City of Kearney was awarded \$250,000 for a project that targets Kenwood Elementary School located at 1511 5th Avenue. Located in the oldest part of town, Kenwood students encounter heavy truck, commuter and college student traffic. Also, sidewalk gaps exist because sidewalk installation was not regulated at the time the neighborhood was developed many years ago. The city will construct approximately 50 blocks of new sidewalks where gaps exist in this eight- by nine-city-block grid. This will complete the majority of sidewalk gaps within the entire Kenwood enrollment area. The city will also place digital speed readers at 5th Avenue and 11th Street to modify driver behavior.

HOLDREGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS WALK & BIKE TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

Holdrege Public Schools was awarded \$167,883 for infrastructure improvements that will enable students to walk and bike to and from school. One segment of sidewalk will be installed to connect the city park to the middle school. Parents and students would be educated to use the city park as a pick-up and drop-off point for those parents who prefer not to allow their children to walk and bike the entire route from their homes to school. A second segment of sidewalk is proposed to be located east of the high school building and along 12th Street, which will connect to existing sidewalk.

A pedestrian-activated crossing light will be installed on 14th Street directly south of the middle school main entrance. Two new school zone flashing lights will be installed on 11th Avenue between Arthur and Logan and 11th and Sherman Streets. One movable quick read with radar speed indicator device will be rotated at the five intersections of 10th and Lincoln, 11th and Sherman, 11th and Arthur, 14th and Blaine, and 14th and West Avenue. The school will install two bike racks – 60 bikes each – and concrete pads at the middle school.

WALLACE SCHOOL SCHOOL ROUTE SIDEWALK PROJECT

The Wallace School District 65R was awarded \$113,508 to install 5-foot-wide sidewalks on one side of Rodney and Alice Streets. The two streets are east-west routes to reach the school, which is located on the west side of town. Each sidewalk segment will be 1,275 linear feet in length, and crosswalks will be painted at each street intersection. Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices signage with flashing beacons will be installed at the two street crossings located in front of the school.

YUTAN TRAIL SYSTEM – PHASE 1

The City of Yutan was awarded \$243,600 for a trail project that will connect Yutan's schools to the east half of the community, which is divided by Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad tracks and upper Clear Creek. The project includes an underpass beneath the railroad and a pedestrian bridge over the creek. The project will connect a new 70-home subdivision and existing 175-home subdivision to the elementary school.

PAPILLION-RUMSEY STATION ELEMENTARY SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

Sarpy County was awarded \$113,442 for safety crossing improvements at three specific locations adjacent to the Papillion-Rumsey Station Elementary School. School-area signing and crosswalk striping will be updated for compliance with the federal 2003 MUTCD. The proposed project includes the following: 1) school zone flashing beacons and curb extensions will be installed at the intersection of 66th and Savannah Drive; 2) curb extensions will be installed at the intersection of Savannah Drive and Eagle Ridge Drive; 3) a new bike parking area will be constructed in front of the school; and 4) a new crosswalk will be installed at the school drive onto Savannah Drive.

MAYWOOD TIGER PAW TRAIL

Maywood Public School was awarded \$135,004 for construction of the "Tiger Paw Trail," which will help ensure a common path for all students to travel. The path will run from the school property and travel northwest across town. Orange-colored tiger paws will be painted on the path every 10 feet for students to recognize that they are on the right path to school. Crosswalks will also be installed at busy intersections.

AUBURN MIDDLE SCHOOL PEDESTRIAN CROSSING IMPROVEMENT

Auburn Public Schools was awarded \$77,772 for improvement of a pedestrian crossing. Auburn Middle School is located adjacent to U.S. Highway 75. The existing student crossing is located in the middle of the block and near a crest of a hill in the highway. The project work includes the following infrastructure solutions to address community safety concerns: 1) widen and relocate the crosswalk farther from the hill; 2) install a pedestrian light and a speed warning device; 3) install one new flashing light and move the present flashing light to a more prominent location; and 4) trim and/or remove tree branches to enhance visibility of school zone signs.

O'NEILL – HYNES AVENUE SCHOOL ROUTE SIDEWALK

The City of O'Neill was awarded \$93,538 for installation of approximately 3,000 feet of sidewalk on the north side of Hynes Avenue, from 10th Street to Highway 281. This segment of sidewalk will provide students attending the junior high school and elementary school a safe place to walk and bike.

ORLEANS SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

The Village of Orleans was awarded \$85,830 to construct sidewalks from the school to residential areas, a park, pool, and the library. Ramps that conform to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 will be installed with truncated domes for improved accessibility and easier walking and bicycling. MUTCD-compliant pedestrian street crossing signs and crosswalk tape markings will be installed to make drivers aware of designated crosswalks and school routes.

BELLEVUE – CHANDLER VIEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SCHOOL ROUTE SIDEWALK

The City of Bellevue was awarded \$143,489 to install a sidewalk on the west side of 25th Street spanning from Cornelia Street to Childs Road, near Chandler View Elementary School. The project will include storm sewer work to enclose an open ditch, which will allow students to have a safe place to walk and bike to and from school.

OSMOND COMMUNITY SCHOOL SCHOOL ROUTE SIDEWALK

The City of Osmond was awarded \$117,266 to complete a walking and biking route to school by installing concrete sidewalk and enclosing a ditch near Osmond Community School. The sidewalk will be located on the north side of Prairie Street.

SPRINGVIEW DESIGNATED ROUTES TO SCHOOL

The Village of Springview was awarded \$118,671 to construct sidewalks from each area of town, which will provide students a safer route to and from school. ADA-compliant accessible curb ramps will be included to provide access for bicycles and those with disabilities. Taped crosswalks will be installed at high-traffic intersections.

GRAND ISLAND WALNUT MIDDLE SCHOOL SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROJECT

The City of Grand Island was awarded \$249,004 for pedestrian and bike crossing improvements and traffic calming at Walnut Middle School. This will be achieved by shifting the main driveway to the school off of Custer Avenue to align with 15th Street, and by installing a traffic signal.

#NDOR#

Contact:

Kelly Morgan, Safe Routes Nebraska Program Coordinator, (402) 476-7331,
kmorgan@sinclairhille.com

Jim Pearson, Nebraska Department of Roads, (402) 479-4881,
jpearson@dor.state.ne.us