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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Safe Routes Nebraska Announces Available Funding & Application Workshops

The Nebraska Department of Roads "Safe Routes Nebraska" Program is announcing the availability of funds for projects that encourage and better enable children in Nebraska to walk and bike safely to school. "Safe Routes Nebraska" is conducting workshops in July/August to assist communities with project ideas.

Schools, state, local, and non-profit organizations may apply through by completing an intent-to-apply form located at www.SafeRoutesNE.com. The deadline for intent to apply is September 7, 2007.

"Safe Routes Nebraska" representatives will be hosting an information booth at the Nebraska Council of School Administrator Days in Kearney on August 1. Workshops will be held July 31 in Gering; August 9 in Norfolk; and August 10 in Lincoln. The format will consist of a presentation with information about the program followed by a working session for communities to discuss project ideas. Participants are encouraged to bring materials, such as maps and photos to help explain their project ideas.

Safe Routes funding is 100 percent funded by the federal government and requires no matching funds by local entities. The funds, benefiting elementary and middle school students, 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).

The Safe Routes to School program is focused on promoting physical activity and improving health, making routes to school safe, and reducing traffic congestion around schools by encouraging children to walk and bike to school. Childhood obesity rates have more than tripled in the past 30 years while the number of children walking and biking to school has declined. 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 or from school, compared to 42 percent in 1969.

Through the 2005 passage of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), Congress designated a total of \$612 million toward developing the National Safe Routes to School Program. These funds will be distributed to the Nebraska Department of Roads and will fund education, planning and implementation of Safe Routes to School plans and programs.

For more information regarding the "Safe Routes Nebraska" Program, visit www.SafeRoutesNE.com.

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