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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Nebraska Department of Roads Awards Federal Funding for Safe Routes to School

The Nebraska Department of Roads has awarded approximately \$450,000 in federal Safe Routes to School Program funds to communities for seven 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).

Funding was awarded to the following agencies:

- Public Health Solutions – “No Child Left on their Behind”, \$113,536 (awarded non-infrastructure funding on behalf of Beatrice Public Schools)
- Panhandle Public Health District – Hemingford “Just Move It”, \$6,854 (awarded on non-infrastructure funding on behalf of the community of Hemingford)
- Activate Omaha – Freiker Omaha, \$42,675 (awarded non-infrastructure funding for three Omaha-area schools)
- City of Clarkson – Clarkson Bicycle Safety Program, \$1,751 (awarded non-infrastructure funding)
- Village of Howells – Howells Safe Routes, \$2,711 (awarded non-infrastructure funding)
- Village of Diller – Diller/Odell Elementary School Safe Routes, \$36,773 (awarded infrastructure funding)
- City of Clarkson – Clarkson Safe Routes to School, \$248,249 (awarded infrastructure funding)

#MORE#

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](http://www.SafeRoutesNE.com).

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**Contact:**

Kelly Morgan; [kmorgan@sinclairhille.com](mailto:kmorgan@sinclairhille.com) (402) 476-7331; Jim Pearson (402) 479-4881.

Funding was awarded to the following agencies:

## **NON-INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS:**

### **NO CHILD LEFT ON THEIR BEHIND IN BEATRICE**

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Public Health Solutions (PHS), the local health department located in Crete, NE was awarded \$113,536 to continue implementing their No Child Left on their Behind program. In 2008, PHS began the program using Safe Routes Nebraska funding within the City of Crete. The 2010 funding award will focus on the City of Beatrice (pop. 12,496). Beatrice Public Schools (BPS) is the largest school district within PHS' Rural district. The proposed project will involve four elementary schools and a middle school located within two miles of the town center. The primary target audience is elementary/middle school students, with their parents and teachers as the secondary target audience.

The overall goal of this project is to create a social norm within each school that is more accepting and supportive of walking or biking to school and school-related activities, thereby increasing the number and safety of those walking and biking to school. This will be accomplished by educating parents, teachers and students on safe walking/biking practices and on the health benefits of increased physical activity. Local collaboration in Beatrice will involve parents, local government, school administration, Beatrice Community Hospital and Health Center and local law enforcement. Working together, the local collaborators and the health department will develop data collection efforts, kick-off events, challenge activities, a promotional/educational campaign, spring events, and a program evaluation plan. Collaborators will also identify environmental barriers to safe walking/biking.

PHS will install the Freiker system at the Middle School to encourage more walking and biking. Freiker, Inc (EIN 56-2539016) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, and the sole source provider for this product: an encouragement tool that also encompasses education and evaluation through the program. It encourages students to walk and bike to school. Although the name (short for FREquent biKER) implies that it is only for biking, it has been adapted to also be used for walking. Freiker is based in Boulder, Colorado, and several schools across the country, including schools in Colorado, California, Wisconsin, Minnesota, have implemented it through their state Safe Routes to School (SRTS) non-infrastructure funding. The heart of the program is the Freikometer – a weather proof, tamper proof, solar powered scanning device with wireless access that is placed near the school entrance. Students are given RFID (radio frequency identification) tags to put on their helmets or backpacks. As kids arrive at school, they walk or roll under the Freikometer, which beeps to signal that they have been counted for the day. The Freikometer wirelessly uploads the rider/walker data to a website daily, and the child or parent can log on to see real time data regarding the number of rides/walks accumulated. The Freiker system is comprehensive. It is pre-packaged with an encouragement program, complete with incentive items that are distributed to students incrementally as they reach their walking/biking goals. All brochures, posters and other educational items (templates) are also included in the package, along with technical support and software.

PHS will purchase bike racks to be secured on existing concrete pads. This will help reassure parents and students that their bikes will be safely stored during the school day.

Events will incorporate safe walking and biking, including traffic safety and enforcement issues. A walking map of each school will highlight the safest routes to school. Map development will enable the principles of the project to continue beyond the official program end date. From the pocket-sized tool, a parent, child, or community member could plan a number of safe 10,000 step walking routes within Beatrice.

### **HEMINGFORD BOBCAT TRAIL**

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The Panhandle Public Health District (PPHD) was awarded \$6,854 to expand upon a community program called, "Just Move it!" within the Village of Hemingford (pop. 993). PPHD also hopes to replicate the program in other communities across the Panhandle as part of a larger program to prevent obesity and reduce the risks of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and other chronic conditions.

Just Move It! is an existing community campaign to increase physical activity in the community. The safe routes to school program will be integrated into the Hemingford Public School's Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), and Family Consumer Sciences (FCS) programs, in addition to, community venues outside the school to get more students and their families involved with walking and biking.

Just Move It! will include a memorandum of understanding with the local school's chapter of FCCLA, their sponsor and FCS instructor. The Hemingford FCCLA chapter will implement a fitness component into their Big Brothers/Big Sisters program, a mentoring program partnering high school role models with elementary students on a regular basis. The student pairs will incorporate fitness challenges into their regular activities. The younger students will receive small charms/tokens for their backpacks as incentives for completing monthly physical activity challenges; while the older students will receive iTunes gift cards at the completion of the program each year to use with their iPods for walking and biking. The older students will also use the Just Move It! as a chapter and/or individual project to submit for FCCLA regional, state and national competitions for STAR (Students Taking Action with Recognition) on fitness and healthy lifestyles.

In addition to the mentoring pairs, the FCS Life Skills 8<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum will be expanded to include fitness activities and awards centering on walking and biking to school through the Fuel Up to Play 60 program. The Fuel up to Play 60 program is a NFL-sponsored program that encourages students to make a commitment to eating healthy foods and increasing their physical activity. Students track eating and physical activity, earn points, and rewards associated with the points.

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## **OMAHA FREIKER PROGRAM**

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Activate Omaha was awarded \$42,675 to implement the Freiker program at three Omaha, NE (pop. 379,115) elementary schools. Activate Omaha is a five-year initiative funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Active Living by Design program to promote "active living." Omaha was one of 25 communities to receive funding to encourage Omahans to become more active by utilizing features of the built environment that promote activity; such as bike trails, parks, walking paths, etc.

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Activate Omaha is proposing to implement Freiker in three Omaha schools. Safe Routes Nebraska (SRN) funding would assist in paying an Omaha-based SRTS Coordinator as Activate Omaha works with the schools to determine the best fit program, and then implement it. Funds would also be used for three complete Freiker packages, printing costs for brochures and other items, and tuition for two Activate Omaha representatives to attend League of American Bicyclists (LAB) training to become League Certified Instructors. LAB-Certified Instructor status will allow access to LAB curriculum, certification to teach the curriculum, and liability insurance.

## **CLARKSON BICYCLE SAFETY PROGRAM**

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The City of Clarkson (pop. 685) was awarded \$1,751 for safe routes to school programming that will complement existing health and safety community programs targeted at elementary/middle school students who ride their bike to and from school. Funds will be used to develop and disseminate promotional and educational materials for a Bike Safety Program. The Clarkson Fire Department will sponsor this program to help improve students' bicycle safety skills. Trained volunteers will inspect student's bicycles to ensure they are in proper working order, correctly fit students for bicycle helmets, and instruct students on proper street crossing and other "rules of the

road". A bicycle rodeo will be held where elementary and middle school students will perform various bicycle agility drills, time tested events, and safety exercises. Safe routes funding will assist with development of bicycle rodeo promotional and award materials. Promotion will include colorful posters displayed throughout the community. Small prizes (bicycle accessories, helmet stickers, etc.) will be awarded to those students that participate in the events.

Posters and flyers will be created and distributed to help raise safe routes to school program awareness, including the positive physical and mental health benefits associated with an active lifestyle. Posters will be prominently displayed at the two schools, the public library, and at local businesses. Educational flyers will be distributed to all students at both the public and parochial Clarkson schools.

### **HOWELLS SAFE ROUTES PROJECT**

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The Village of Howells (pop. 623) was awarded \$2,711 to establish a program that will enhance elementary and middle school students physical well being and increase safety on their routes to and from school. Specifically, funds will be used for promotional and educational materials for the Howells Public Library – Nutrition & Exercise Awareness Campaign. The Public Library will ask elementary and middle school students to design posters and flyers to assist in raising awareness about the positive health and mental benefits associated with a physically active lifestyle. These posters will be prominently displayed at the library, along with books and magazines relative to the subject. Additionally, middle school students will design and produce driver awareness flyers that will be mailed to every address within the school district, reminding automobile drivers to be alert of pedestrian and bicycle traffic within the vicinity of schools.

An annual Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) Bicycle Rodeo will be held in an effort to educate young bicyclists about the "rules of the road" and to ensure that helmets are worn and fitted properly, and that bicycles are in good working order. Posters and advertisement will be used to raise awareness of this public event.

The Howells Public School and Howells Community Catholic School will sponsor a Walk/Bike to school even on International Walk to School Day (October 8, 2010). Brochures will be printed and mailed to every household within the School District with elementary or middle school students, explaining the physical and mental benefits of walking and biking to school. Elementary and middle school students will be given incentives for participating in walk/bike events. These incentives will include: bicycle helmets, small prizes, pedometers, and bicycle odometers.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS:**

### **DILLER/ODELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SAFE ROUTES PROJECT**

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The Village of Diller (pop. 287) was awarded \$36,773 for design and construction of a school route located along the south side of Smith Street across from the Diller-Odell Elementary School, as well as from the Smith Street crosswalk to the school entrance. A designated route to school has been established, and all routes lead to this stretch of Smith Street that does not currently provide an off-street walking path.

### **CLARKSON SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL**

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The City of Clarkson (pop. 685) was awarded \$248,249 for design and construction of a 5-foot wide concrete school route on the north side of 6<sup>th</sup> Street from Maple Street to Bryan Street. The new walking path will also run a block north of 6th Street on the west side of Bryan Street. Clarkson Public School serves grades K through 12 and is located on 6th Street between Maple and Cherry Streets. St. John Neumann Elementary School serves 1st through 6th grade students and is located on Cherry Street adjacent to 5th Street. Each day students attending St. John's Elementary either walk or are bused to Clarkson Public School for lunch. There is an existing school route path that will connect to the proposed path. The proposed path will provide an off-street walking route where they do not exist.