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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Nebraska Safe Routes to School Announces Available Funding

To encourage and better enable Nebraska children to walk and bike safely to school, the Nebraska Department of Roads recently launched the Safe Routes to School program. As a part of the state's program, Safe Routes to School allows funding opportunities for communities, schools and local agencies.

Safe Routes funding is 100 percent funded by the federal government and requires no matching funds by local entities. The grants, 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 deadline for indicating intent to apply for Safe Routes to School funds is December 1, 2006.

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 state departments of roads and will fund education, planning and implementation of Safe Routes to School plans and programs.

For more information regarding the Nebraska Safe Routes to School grants, visit [www.SafeRoutesNE.com](http://www.SafeRoutesNE.com).

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