

# Developing an Effective Safe Routes to School Funding Program for Hawai'i

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[The Safe Routes to School Program](#)<sup>1</sup> is a Federal-Aid program of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The Program provides funds to the States to substantially improve the ability of primary and middle school students to walk and bicycle to school safely. The purposes of the program are:

1. to enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school
2. to make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age; and
3. to facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity (approximately 2 miles) of primary and middle schools (Grades K-8).

Each State administers its own program and develops its own procedures to solicit and select projects for funding. The program establishes two distinct types of funding opportunities: infrastructure projects (engineering improvements) and non-infrastructure related activities (such as education, enforcement and encouragement programs). The Hawaii department of transportation HDOT currently has a fund announcement, due June 21: <http://spo3.hawaii.gov/notices/notices/none-100/getfile?filename=3-18-13-safe-routes-to-school-3rd-round.pdf>.

The Safe Routes to School Program in Hawaii has had little success distributing funds to realize its goals and objectives. According to the federal highway administration website, **Hawaii was allocated \$7,188,946** for the Safe Routes to School program. According to the Department of Transportation's Safe Routes to School website, it appears that \$175,942 has been spent to date. Under the state legislature, HB 2626 was enacted in 2012. It creates additional state funds for a Safe Routes to School program, requires the counties to develop Safe Routes to School programs, and have the state and counties work together to administer the program (see details on page 2). The federal program provides funds for infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects that encourage students to safely walk and bike to school. Federal requirements mandate that these funds be spent on the Safe Routes to School program (2005-2011). It appears that there have not been any infrastructure funds that have been spent for this program. The program started in 2005. Due to the amount of funds available for the program, there seems to be a real need to get the counties and the state to work together to develop a system to allow for the planning, design, and implementation of projects to meet the goals and objectives of the program and adhere to federal transportation requirements. The department of transportation currently has a call for applications that is due June 21<sup>st</sup>. This is the third call for applications. The following has been allocated for the program, according to the department of transportation's [website](#):

Infrastructure Awards
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<sup>1</sup> The Program was created by [Section 1404](#) of the *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users Act* (SAFETEA-LU). The SRTS Program is funded at \$612 million over five Federal fiscal years (FY 2005-2009) and is to be administered by State Departments of Transportation (DOTs).

Date	Project	Recipient	Amount	Actual Cost
2/22/2012	Princess Nahienaena Elementary School Safe Routes to School Project	County of Maui	\$155,000	N/A*
2/22/2012	Kamalii Elementary School Safe Routes to School Project	County of Maui/Keonekai Neighborhood Association	\$459,000	N/A*
Non-Infrastructure Awards				
Date	Project	Recipient	Amount	Actual Cost
5/30/2008	Non-Infrastructure Public Service Announcements	State of Hawaii DOT	\$455,000	\$175,942
5/30/2008	Safe Routes to School Awareness Project	State of Hawaii Department of Education	\$ 13,300	N/A*
6/9/2008	West Hawaii Safe Routes to School Program	Peoples Advocacy for Trails Hawaii (PATH)	\$ 34,246	N/A*
6/9/2008	Ride to Live, Live to Ride	Honolulu Police Department	\$117,117	N/A*
6/10/2008	SRTS for Dole Middle School	Kokua Kalihi Valley	\$ 13,500	N/A*

\*Project has not yet been completed and closed.

## House of Representatives, 26<sup>th</sup> Legislature, 2012 H.B. No 2626

[HB 2626](#) from the 2012 Legislative Session<sup>2</sup> has created a new surcharge for civil penalties within a school zone that provides funds to the safe routes to school program special fund. It officially establishes a revenue stream and a program within the county to administer the program. It calls out the responsibilities of the department of transportation and the counties. HB 2626 specifies:

Section 2, Chapter 291C, Hawaii Revised Statutes is amended to establish, within the department of transportation, a safe routes to school program to enhance traffic safety around Hawaii's schools, enable and encourage children to walk and bicycle to school, and make bicycling and walking to school safer and a more appealing transportation alternative through the federal safe routes to school program.

[§291C-104 Speeding in a school zone or construction area.](#)

[\[§291C-4\] Safe routes to school program special fund; establishment.](#)

[\[§291C-5\] Safe routes to school program surcharge.](#)

[\[§291C-3\] State and county safe routes to school programs; coordinators; grants; reports.](#)

[\[§291-16\] Safe routes to school program surcharge.](#)

<sup>2</sup> Signed into law, effective September 1, 2012

The department of transportation has a number of responsibilities, including working with the counties to develop a mechanism to provide funds to county safe routes to school programs. Specifically:

The director of transportation, through the safe routes to school program coordinator, and in consultation with county safe routes to school program coordinators, shall develop a mechanism to provide funds to county safe routes to school programs from the special fund. Implementation of this program “shall take into consideration the need to:

- (1) Fill a permanent, full-time position of safe routes to school coordinator within the county designated office;
- (2) Maximize the participation of stakeholder groups in the community and school officials;
- (3) Work in conjunction with county-designated safe routes to school stakeholders and train volunteer facilitators for school-based workshops and community-based projects, including flexible training schedules;
- (4) Train potential grant requestors and stakeholder groups in federal and state requirements necessary in procurement, contracts, design, and construction; and
- (5) Allocate not less than ten per cent and not more than thirty per cent of the apportionment of safe routes to school funds for non-infrastructure-related activities or activities to encourage walking and bicycling to school, public awareness campaigns, student sessions on bicycle and pedestrian safety, or other non-infrastructure activities as prescribed under section 1404 of the 2005 Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users, Public Law No. 109-59.

HB 2626 further concludes that the position at the department of transportation shall act as a central point of contact for the federal safe routes to school program. The law establishes a county-designated office with safe routes to school program coordinators, who will:

... in consultation with the department of education, department of health, and Hawaii Association of Independent Schools, shall provide safe routes to school funds for school-based and community-based workshops and infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects that will reduce vehicular traffic and congestion, encourage walking and bicycling, and promote health and safety around Hawaii's schools.

HDOT currently has a fund announcement: <http://spo3.hawaii.gov/notices/notices/none-100/getfile?filename=3-18-13-safe-routes-to-school-3rd-round.pdf> that requires a government entity to administer the planning and compliance for use of infrastructure funds. There are significant funds within the department of transportation’s safe routes to school fund account. Due to the strict requirements and the department of transportation’s lack of advertising funds, it is recommended that the counties work with the department of transportation to establish a mechanism to work together to meet the requirements of the federal SRTS program as well as meet the requirements for HB 2626. The information below is taken from the HDOT fund announcement and details the requirements for the infrastructure grants.

The SRTS federal program requires extensive knowledge of federal regulations and processes. Therefore; non-profit organizations shall be required to partner with a government agency for infrastructure projects only. If an infrastructure grant is awarded to a non-profit organization, a Memorandum of Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding between the non-profit organization and government agency will be required before HDOT can issue written authorization to proceed. In addition, project managers of infrastructure projects must be experienced in managing federal-aid projects similar in nature and shall be a professional engineer licensed in the State of Hawaii.

The missing piece of HDOT's program is the requirements, stated under HB2626, which includes consultation with organizations that have received SRTS funds, to develop a streamlined process for the program. The information below details the requirements under HB2626:

(g) The director of transportation, in consultation with organizations that have received non-infrastructure and pending infrastructure grants, shall develop a streamlined process for the federal safe routes to school grant program that meets federal and state requirements, simplifies the application process, and expedites release of funding after completion of school-based and community-based projects for infrastructure and non-infrastructure.

In addition, the county requirements for the program require a more inclusive approach that addresses the real needs of students, parents and schools to develop a safer infrastructure and transportation behaviors to better encourage students to walk or bike to school. The following outlines the grant proposal requirements for the county safe routes to school program:

- (1) Identify the modes of travel used by students to get to school;
- (2) Determine the number of students using each mode of travel;
- (3) Survey the parents of each student to gather information regarding the factors involved in the choice of transportation mode for the student and, where the student travels by automobile or bus, conditions that would need to change for the parent to permit the student to walk or ride a bicycle to school, and obstacles to walking and biking; and
- (4) Identify traffic infrastructure elements in the immediate vicinity of each school, including multi-lane roadways, speed limits, and traffic calming features that, either by their presence or absence, contribute to the use of automobiles as a student's mode of travel to school.

We recommend that the counties work with the department of transportation to develop a grant program that allows for best use of the funds to meet the goals and objectives of the program, to work at the local level to identify needs and develop real solutions, to assist with engineering, federal, and state compliance requirements, and to streamline the process so that funds can be released. To date, no funds have been released for infrastructure projects by the department of transportation. Nonprofit organizations, advocacy groups, the department of health, and many parents and teachers have been trying to work with the department of transportation to develop a system that would work. This coalition of support will continue to work to help make this program successful but needs the assistance of local and state government to make the program successful.

**Resources for more information:**

Federal Safe Routes to School Program: <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/saferoutes/>

Resources: <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/saferoutes/resources/>

State of Hawaii Department of Transportation Safe Routes to School Program:  
<http://hidot.hawaii.gov/highways/safe-routes-to-school-program/>

Safe Routes to School National Partnership: <http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/>

Compiled by the National Parks Service