



74 % of Americans support a national Safe Routes to School initiative.

-2003 poll

Safe Routes to School

Funded at \$612 million in final bill

The Outcome for the Safe Routes to School Program

Both the House and Senate transportation bills included a Safe Routes to School program. The Final bill devotes \$612 million in transportation funds over five years to make it safer for children to walk or bicycle to school. Funding for Safe Routes to School will be distributed to states in proportion to the number of primary and secondary school students in the state, with no state receiving less than \$1 million annually. The apportionment for each year are \$54 million in 2005, \$100 million-2006; \$125 million-2007; \$150 million-2008; \$183 million-2009. The State DOTs are to administer the program, and communities will be able to use the funds to fix hazards and slow traffic on roads, pathways or trails near schools while increasing safety through focused enforcement and education programs. Ten to 30 percent of the funds may be used for education. Each state is being directed to create a position of a Safe Routes to School coordinator, and the bill also provides funds for a national Safe Routes to School clearinghouse. The funding level is down from the level in the House package, \$875 million, but is much more than proposed by the **Senate**, which only allocated \$312 million.

Background on Safe Routes to School

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs will make it safer for children to walk and bicycle to school. They fix hazards and slow traffic near schools while increasing safety through focused enforcement and education programs. SRTS programs in several states have improved safety, encouraged thousands of children get healthy physical activity on the way to school, and reduced school-related traffic congestion.

The number of children walking or bicycling to school has declined dramatically in recent decades, increasing school busing costs as well as traffic congestion. Public health officials say children need to get more physical activity: since the 1970s, the percentage of obese children 6 to 11 years old has tripled.¹ At the same time, motor vehicles are the leading cause of death among children 4 to 14 years old.²

Safe Routes to School Programs Work!

- A Safe Routes to School program in Marin County, California, that included both safety improvements and encouragement, increased the number of children walking to school by 64 percent in two years.³
- A study of the effectiveness of the California Safe Routes to Schools program found that children who pass by these improvement projects on their route to school are three times as likely to walk or bike to school when the project is completed, compared to classmates who do not pass such projects.⁴
- More children walk to school where there are sidewalks.⁵

When America Bikes, America Benefits
prepared by America Bikes www.americabikes.org

June 2005

Safe Routes to School Programs Today

In the United States, Safe Routes programs are active in at least 18 states. From Marin County, California, to the Bronx, New York, parents and local advocates have established local programs that examine safety around schools and work to correct it, while encouraging children to walk to school. Comprehensive programs address *engineering* of the streets for safety, *education and encouragement* of children and parents, and increased *enforcement* of traffic laws. The national Safe Routes to School program will give parents the option of getting their kids out of the backseat and onto their feet.

Poll: Belden, Russonello & Stewart, "Americans' Attitudes Toward Walking and Creating Better Walking Communities," (2003) Surface Transportation Policy Project

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Guide for Community Preventive Services. (2005). *A review of the effectiveness of multi-component school interventions for improving nutrition related behavior and status of children and adolescents.* Manuscript in preparation.

² CDC fact sheet (2004) <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/childpas.htm>

³ Staunton, C.E., Hubsmith, D., & Kallins, W. (2003). Promoting safe walking and biking to School: The Marin County success story. *American Journal of Public Health*, 93, 1431-1434.

⁴ Boarnet, M.G., Anderson, C.L., Day, K., et al. (2005). Evaluation of the California Safe Routes to School legislation: Urban form changes and children's active transportation to school. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 28, 134-140.

⁵ Ewing, R. (in press). School location and student Travel: Analysis of factors affecting mode choice. *Transportation Research Record*.