

Safe Routes to School Infrastructure Program FAQ for Rulemaking Advisory Committee, 4.10.18

Q: What is the Oregon Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Infrastructure Program?

A: In the spring of 2017 House Bill 2017 passed in the Oregon State Legislature, dedicating \$10 million annually for Safe Routes to School infrastructure, increasing to \$15 million annually in 2023. **The purpose of the funding is to build projects within a one-mile radius of schools to make it safer and easier for students to walk and bicycle to school.**

Important facts:

- These new funds are available because of an increase in State Highway taxes and fees and are deposited into the Safe Routes to School Fund. State Highway tax dollars are constitutionally restricted to only be used for projects within the public road right of way. Infrastructure projects such as trails outside the road right of way and non-infrastructure projects such as education and encouragement programs are not eligible.
- There is a 40% cash match for the funds. The Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) may reduce the cash match to 20% when the project is within a city of 5,000 people or fewer, or is near a Title I school, or is within a “Priority Safety Corridor.” See definition below.
- The Safe Routes to School Fund is guided by regulations created in 2005 (OAR 737-025), when federal dedicated funding was once available. Because SRTS infrastructure funding now comes from the State, Rulemaking is needed to align it with eligible uses.

Q: Where are we now?

A: The Safe Routes to School Rulemaking Advisory Committee (RAC) formed in fall 2017. The RAC has met since November 2017 to develop the draft Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) and program policy and will meet again in May- June to work on program guidance.

RAC discussions/decisions to date:

- **Values:** RAC members identified values to guide program development, focus money, and get projects underway including: Social Equity; Geographic Equity; Health; Safety; Maximize Resources; and Communication/Coordination/Collaboration.
- **Recommended Rule:** In April, the RAC recommended amendments to OAR 737-025. The rule specifies:
 - **Eligibility:** cities, counties, ODOT, tribes, and transit agencies may apply for safety projects that are consistent with jurisdictional plans, supported by the school or school district, and that positively affects the ability of children to walk and bicycle to school.
 - **High level process:** A Safe Routes to School Advisory Committee will form to provide advice on program elements and recommend projects for any funding competitions.
 - **Some Program definitions:** Four important definitions were added to clarify the new law, including:
 - Title I: School where 40% or more students are from low-income households.
 - Plan: Any related and adopted infrastructure plan, SRTS Action Plan, or SRTS Infrastructure Plan that fulfills the requirements of ORS 195.115.

- Priority Safety Corridor: Any road with 40 mph or higher, or additional safety qualifiers.
 - Cash Match: Hard costs associated with project construction.
- **How the funds will be programmed:** Funds will be divided into the following three programs:
 - Rapid Response Program: No more than 10 percent of funds set aside from urgent needs or systemic safety issues.
 - Project Identification Program: No more than 2.5 percent of funds can be used by ODOT to help communities apply for projects.
 - Competitive Program: The remainder of funds will be set aside for a competitive program.
- **First funding allocation, application timeline, and focus areas:**
 - FY 2019-20: \$18.3 million to award
 - Anticipated focus areas: The SRTS Advisory Committee will prioritize awarded funds to projects on identified Priority Safety Corridors within a one-mile radius of a Title I school.
 - Anticipated application timeline for Competitive Program: *July 23, 2018* Competition opens; *October 15, 2018* Applications are due; *October-November 2018* Staff review and scoring; *December 2018 - January 2019* SRTS Advisory Committee review and recommend funding

Q: What happens next?

- Spring 2018: Draft SRTS Rule released for public comment May 1st-31st. A public hearing held on May 15, 2018 from 5pm-8pm at 626 High St NE, Salem. More information to come on RAC website (see below).
- Summer 2018: The OTC will consider adopting the SRTS Rule amendment and reviewing program policy.
- Summer/Fall/Winter: SRTS Program application outreach occurs across Oregon, including seven workshops.
- Summer/Fall/Winter 2018: Application process opens for competitive program.

Q: How can the public engage in the process?

A: All RAC meetings are open to the public with time allotted for public testimony. There will be a public comment period starting in April 2018 after the draft SRTS Rule is released that will run through the end of May 2018. There will be one public hearing on May 15, 2018 in Salem with the ability to join remotely. Information about these events will be posted on the RAC website (see below).

Q: Who is on the RAC?

A: Representatives from the Oregon Transportation Safety Committee (OTSC), Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (OBPAC), Public Transportation Advisory Committee (PTAC), Association of Oregon Counties (AOC), League of Oregon Cities (LOC), Oregon Safe Routes to School Network, local Safe Routes to School programs, Oregon Department of Education, pupil transportation, biking/walking advocacy groups, local law enforcement, representatives for topics of equity and public health.

Q: Where can I find more information?

A: RAC materials are located at <http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/Programs/Pages/SRTS-RAC.aspx>. Direct questions or comments to LeeAnne Ferguson, ODOT Safe Routes to School Program Manager, leeanne.fergason@odot.state.or.us, 503-986-5805.