Minnesota
State Safe Routes to School Program Infrastructure Solicitation Guide

2021-2022 Solicitation Guide

Contents

Minnesota Safe Routes to School State Infrastructure Program Overview

The Minnesota Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Infrastructure Program was established by the Minnesota Legislature in 2012 and is defined in Minnesota Statute 174.40. The legislature appropriated funding for SRTS infrastructure projects in 2020 Laws, 5th Special Session, Chapter 3, Article 1, Section 16, Subdivision 20 and 2021 Laws, 1st Special Session, Article 1, Section 2, Subd. 2(c). The intent of this solicitation is to award SRTS grants totaling up to $7.5 million.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) is responsible for the administration of the State SRTS program and makes the funds available to communities through a competitive process. SRTS funding does not require any local match. The funds are intended to fund standalone SRTS projects or provide the local match for SRTS infrastructure projects under federal bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure programs, such as the Transportation Alternatives (TA) Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG). SRTS infrastructure grants are paid on a reimbursable basis (the local agency finances 100% of the project cost up front and submits state aid pay requests for reimbursement).

This solicitation provides funds for the development and implementation of SRTS infrastructure projects, which will enable students to walk and bicycle to and from schools. Projects should be planning for construction to occur in 2022 or 2023. All SRTS infrastructure applications from townships, non-state aid cities ("small city"), and schools require a state aid city or county as the lead agency or sponsor. Applications from federally recognized tribes do not require a lead agency sponsor.

Applicants may apply for funding by completing an application and submitting it with the required attachments to MnDOT electronically.

Applicant Eligibility

To ensure that the SRTS program is available to a broad spectrum of groups that represent students, both public and non-profit entities may submit applications for infrastructure funding with a State Aid sponsor. See *Funding Eligibility* below for more information. Eligible groups include, but are not limited to:

- Schools, both public and private (note that private schools are only eligible to receive general fund grants)
- School districts
- Cities
- Counties
- Federally recognized tribes (note that tribes are only eligible to receive general fund grants)
- Townships

Pursuant to Minnesota Statute 174.40, home rule charter city, county, and town applicants are only eligible if the governing body has adopted subdivision regulations requiring new and proposed developments within its jurisdiction to have connected sidewalks and/or bicycle infrastructure. This requirement does not apply to tribal

applicants. This requirement also does not apply to school or school district applicants whose projects will be constructed entirely on school property. If any improvements take place on any county or city roadway or right-of-way, then the city or county must have adopted these subdivision regulations. Note that in these new and proposed developments, SRTS funding is eligible for the construction of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Additionally, all infrastructure proposed in any SRTS application must have a usable life of at least ten years.

Funding Eligibility

Both a minimum and maximum are in place for SRTS funding requests.

Minimum Request	Maximum Request
$50,000	$500,000

Items that are eligible for SRTS funds include reasonable elements associated with sidewalk and trail construction and ADA improvements, including basic landscaping and turf establishment. Landscaping planters, benches, bike racks, decorative fences, ornamental lighting, and other aesthetic treatments above the standard are generally not eligible. Other items that are not eligible include engineering, construction administration and inspection, right of way acquisition, and water main, sanitary sewer, or private utility work. Additionally, work on trunk highways or on trunk highway right of way is typically not eligible.

Lead Agency Sponsor

Schools, townships, and non-state aid cities will need a state aid city or county sponsor for their infrastructure projects. Tribal applicants do not need a lead agency sponsor. If a city in which the project is taking place is not listed as a state aid city, the city must work with the county as a sponsor. The sponsor's tasks could include, but are not limited to:

- Be the fiscal agent on behalf of the applicant and have funds flow from MnDOT to the state aid city or county to the contractor
- Request SAP/SP number for the project
- Ensure the project meets milestones and dates
- Assist local agency in execution of a grant agreement
- Develop, review and/or approve the plan
- Submit plan, engineers estimate, and proposal to the DSAE
- Advertise, let, and award the project
- Submit pay requests to State Aid
- Communicate progress and updates with the DSAEs and State Aid Programs Engineer
- Ensure that the project receives adequate supervision and inspection
- Assist with project close out

Project Options

Two project types are available for applicants to select from: (1) funding for construction of non-federally funded projects, and (2) local match for projects that have already been selected for federal awards. Applicants may submit multiple project applications but only one project type for each project location. Regardless of which project type is chosen, construction cannot begin until a grant is executed between MnDOT and the applicant agency.

Construction of Non-Federally Funded Project

This option is available for communities that have a project identified in their SRTS plan or other planning document and only need funds to implement the improvements. This option may be used to fund up to 100% of eligible SRTS construction costs. Projects should be planned for construction in 2022 or 2023. SRTS funds may be used for one or more of the following improvements:

- Pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements: pedestrian curb ramps, intersections or midblock crossings, median refuges, raised crossings, raised intersections, speed humps and curb extensions.
- Off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities: exclusive multi-use bicycle and pedestrian trails, sidewalks, and pathways that are separated from a roadway.
- On-road facilities: bicycle lanes, bicycle boulevards, and cycle tracks
- Traffic control devices: signs, bicycle and pedestrian activated signals, flexible bollards, and pavement markings   *Note: Electronic devices must be permanent - __not__ mobile.*

Local Match for Federally Funded Project

Funds may be used for the local share on SRTS federally funded projects already programmed in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). To be considered for a local match, the project must already be awarded federal funding, have a federal MnDOT project number, and be listed in an approved STIP for construction in the 2022 or 2023 fiscal years.

Federal Transportation Alternative STBG funding may also be eligible for use on these types of infrastructure projects. Applicants may want to consider which program best fits the needs of their project. The infrastructure applications for State SRTS funds may represent one school or multiple schools that are in close proximity to one another (schools on the same or adjacent campuses, neighborhood or block).

Selection Criteria

Projects from similar types of communities will be scored against each other. Applicant projects will be categorized into five selection pools. Projects will be scored, ranked, and selected from each of the pools below:

- MN Cities of the First Class (Minneapolis, Saint Paul, Rochester, & Duluth)
- Metro District Communities (excluding Minneapolis & Saint Paul)
- Greater MN State Aid Cities (excluding Duluth & Rochester)
- Greater MN non-State Aid Cities & Townships

- Federally Recognized Tribes (only applicable for SRTS grants funded with general funds)

Each project will be reviewed with the following criteria. The application criteria include (but are not limited to):

1. Eligibility: Applicant must follow all criteria identified in the *Application Eligibility* section of this document, including the criteria outlined the *Funding Eligibility* and *Lead Agency Sponsor* subsections.
2. Local SRTS Program: Show previous work done in the local SRTS program, including a SRTS Plan, implementation of the 6E Strategies[1], and selection of a broad project team consisting of staff from the schools, school districts, cities, or counties.
3. Full Project Description: All improvements are identified including the improvement location and any project maps or design exhibits.
4. Safety Concerns: Identified risks to safety for students walking or biking to school and percentage of students who may still continue to walk or bike to school even though these risks are present.
5. Project Improvements: Project improvements address the safety risks and hazards identified and mitigate safety concerns
6. STEPP Score: Student Transportation Equity for Priority Populations score, which was developed to support equitable scoring the SRTS grant application process. More information can be found HERE

Solicitation Timeline

A typical solicitation schedule for funding is provided below. This assumes funds are appropriated by the legislature in the May/June timeframe.

- **Monday, October 4th, 2021** – Safe Routes to School solicitation kick-off. Open letter of intent period
- **Friday, October 29th, 2021** – Deadline for applicants to submit letters of intent
- **Friday, November 12th, 2021** – Deadline for MnDOT to review of letters of intent. Recommendation to proceed forward with full application sent to applicants
- **Monday, November 15th, 2021** – Opening date for full application submittals
- **Friday, January 14th, 2022 (UPDATED)** – Deadline for applicants to submit full applications
- **Friday, March 4th, 2022** – Project selection finalized, and award letters distributed to selected projects

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[1] More information on the 6E Strategies can be found HERE

SRTS Infrastructure Application

The following sections provide guidance and assistance to potential applicants in filling out the application. Narratives in the application should be kept clear and concise. Note that the application is submitted as an online form. Applicants may use this downloadable application document to prepare and record responses, which may then be copied and pasted into the online form. Responses will be saved as drafts until the form is fully submitted.

Project Information

A. **Applicant Information**
   - Provide the contact information for the agency representative of this project application
   - Primary contact should be a part of the applicant agency – including a school, school district, small city, state aid city, county, tribe, or township – that is applying for this project
   - Use the address of the applicant agency

B. **Sponsoring Agency Information**
   - If the applicant is a school, school district, or a small city or township not listed as a state aid city, then the applicant must work with a state aid city or county as a sponsor
   - State aid cities, counties, and tribes that are directly applying do not need to fill out this section

C. **Project Funding**
   - Include the total amount requested in SRTS infrastructure funding
   - Include other federal funds or additional local and State Aid funds being used on this project

D. **Brief Project Description**
   - Enter a description that quickly describes the project. This would be similar to a construction plan title in which the type of project and general location(s) are identified. Example: "Shared use path along CSAH 12 and curb extensions at intersection of CSAH 12 and Main St." Maximum 300 characters.

E. **Type of Work**
   - Check either of the types of work and provide requested information on this project
   - Note that the second option for a local match has additional required fields to be filled out
   - To be considered for the local match option, the applicant must have been awarded federal funds in an earlier solicitation, have a MnDOT project number, and have the project included in a STIP
   - See the *Project Options* section above for more information on requirements for each project option

F. **School Information**
   - Name of School: Provide the name(s) of the school(s) where students attending will benefit from this project
   - Grades: Provide the grades at the school (PreK – 5, 6 – 8, etc.)

- Number of Students Enrolled: Provide the total number of students enrolled at the respective school

G. Eligibility Check
- Check if project qualifies for program funding by indicating if applicable policies have been enacted
- If the applicant responds "no" to any of the prompts, then the project is ineligible for funding through the SRTS program
- Applicants who respond "Not Applicable" will still be eligible for funding

H. Project Evaluation
- Indicate if the school district or school(s) are willing to complete after evaluations for this project
- Include the contact information for the person or role who may be contacted to complete the evaluations

Project Improvements & Safety

I. Full Project Description
- Check the boxes to indicate which SRTS infrastructure improvements are included in this project. Only select the improvements for which funding is requested. Other non-SRTS roadway improvements that still may be a part of the project should not be listed in this section
- Provide a full project description including the locations and uses of each improvement identified above. If multiple infrastructure improvements are proposed at or near the same location, describe the reasoning for doing so and identified potential benefits.
- Include any project maps or design exhibits. These exhibits may be uploaded with your application.

J. Safety Concerns
- No Walk/Bike Policy: Indicate if the school or school district has a no walking or bicycling policy.
- Hazard Busing: Indicate if any busing is mandated within the 1- or 2-mile radius of the school due to a hazardous condition.
- School Relocating: Indicate any plans or initiatives in the works to move any of the schools in the next 10 years.
- Encouraging School Policies: Indicate and list school policies that encourage walking and bicycling at the schools. Additional examples could include school policy to vary dismissal and arrival times to improve traffic flow and safety for walkers and bikers.
- Identified Risks: Indicate if safety risks or hazards been identified that prevent students from walking or biking to school
- Students Still Walk: While risks have been identified, indicate if students still walk or bike to school even though safety risks and hazards are present
- Percentage of Students of Walkers: Provide the percentage of students that live within a 1-mile radius of the respective school. Round to nearest tenth of a percent, Example: 4.1%
- Percentage of Students Bused. Provide the percentage of students at the respective school currently getting bused to and from school. Round to nearest tenth of a percent, Example: 4.1%

- List and describe the safety risks or hazards that have been identified, including the locations of these risks. Applicants may reference any student or parent survey data, crash data, SRTS plan, or other relevant sources. Upload any referenced sources when submitting this application.
- Identify which risks are present and how they affect priority populations. (Definition of priority populations)

K. Project Improvements
- Explain how the improvements that were identified in the *Full Project Description* would mitigate the risks and hazards identified in *Safety Concerns*. Ensure that each identified risk is addressed, or if an identified risk would not be addressed by this project, explain why.

Local Safe Routes to School Program

L. Safe Routes to School Plan
- Safe Routes to School plan: Indicate if the school, school district, city, county, tribe, or township has developed a Safe Routes to School plan. If yes, indicated the year in which the plan was adopted and a link to the plan. Also upload a copy of the plan with the project application along with any updates, addendums, surveys, public engagement sessions, or any other changes or community feedback that have occurred since the plan was adopted
- Identified improvements: Indicate if the improvements in this project are identified in the Safe Routes to School plan. If yes, provide the page number(s) on which the project is identified. If no, explain how improvements were identified, planned, and prioritized and indicate any other planning documents in which the project improvements have been identified

M. Implementing the 6E Strategies
- Identify or list 6E activities completed or implemented at the schools. Check all that apply. If you do not see your activity listed, use the available space next to "other" to provide your information on the alternative activity implemented at the schools.

N. Project Team Information
- Identify which roles and staff members are a part of this project team. If multiple people fit the same role, only check the corresponding box once. With your application, upload a list of project team members, their organizations (school, city, county, parent/caregiver, etc.) and their roles.

Equity Score

O. Student Transportation Equity for Priority Populations

- The Student Transportation Equity for Priority Populations (STEPP) Tool was developed to support equitable scoring during the Safe Route to School grant application process. Equity is a strong focus of the Safe Routes to School Program, and that focus is also carried into this grant program. A STEPP score is assessed for each public school in the State. Private and charter schools will be assessed with the district average score in which the school is located. The STEPP scores used in the project evaluation process for this solicitation can be found here:

  Equity Atlas - Safe Routes to School - MnDOT (state.mn.us)

Attachments

Ensure to upload and submit with your application:

a) Required attachments that do not affect the final application score:
   - School board resolution, certifying that:
     - the governing body of the school supports the project
     - funds, if any, required to be supplied by the school to complete the project are available and committed.
   - Submitting agency resolution of support, including certification, regulations, or ordinances that the community benefiting from this project has adopted subdivision regulations that require safe routes to school infrastructure in developments authorized on or after June 1, 2016. (This is not required of tribal applicants.)
   - A sponsor resolution (if applicable)
   - Engineering or planning based cost estimate with itemized breakdown
   - A timeline indicating major milestones of the project and their anticipated completion dates
   - Awarded SRTS application and federal award letter (if requesting local match for federal project)

b) Required attachments that may affect the final application score:
   - SRTS plan or link to SRTS plan online, or other planning document identifying the project
   - Any updates, addendums, surveys, etc. that show updates to SRTS plan within the last 5 years
   - At least one project location map with routes and schools labeled
   - List of project team members, including their organizations and roles

c) Additional project attachments (if applicable or available) that may affect the final application score
   - Other planning documents that identify the proposed project
   - Project design exhibits
   - Typical section of the proposed project
   - Student or parent survey data (related to safety concerns)

- o Crash data summary
- o Baseline Student Travel Tally
- o Project Schedule with milestone dates (plan submittal, construction start, and construction completion)
- o Letters of support

Application Submittal

This application is submitted as an online form, which can be accessed on the SRTS infrastructure grant webpage. The online form may not be available until the call for full applications on November 12, 2021. The downloadable application document may be used to prepare and record responses, which may then be copied into the online form. All prompts and questions on the online form will be the same as on the downloadable application document. A link may be generated to save responses until the whole form is submitted. The final date to submit the full application form is January 14, 2022. (DEADLINE UPDATED)