

Feet First Legislative Agenda 2012 Statewide Safe Routes to School Funding Steps to Contacting Your Legislator

Thank you for supporting the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program operated by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) (<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/LocalPrograms/SafeRoutes/>). By agreeing to ask your state legislator to support funding for this important program, you are championing engineering, education, encouragement, and enforcement efforts to increase the number of students walking and biking to school.

Feet First's primary goal this session is to ask the legislature to include funding for the Safe Routes to School program in the statewide transportation funding package they are considering for submission to the voters this year. To this end, we have targeted members of the House and Senate Transportation Committees. Please identify your representative on this committee and contact him or her about SRTS.

The most effective way of contacting your legislator is to **meet them in person**. If you have time to travel to Olympia to meet with them, make certain to call well in advance to set-up an appointment. State legislators tend to have very crowded schedules, but most will usually find time to meet with constituents if at all possible.

The second best way is to **write your legislator a letter** and send it through the mail. We have provided you with a sample letter, attached, which we recommend you personalize.

Here are a few suggestions to make your letter more persuasive and unique:

- Talk about your own experience with SRTS. If you are associated with a school that implemented a SRTS project, tell your legislator about what went well and why it matters to you.
- If you are a parent or caregiver, mention how SRTS positively impacts your children's health and safety.
- The enclosed roster of transportation committee members provides information on SRTS grant awards by legislative district. If your legislator has a project in his or her district, make sure to include this information.

You can also contact your legislator via email or telephone hotline, although these methods are not as effective with most lawmakers. Contact information can be found at the legislative website: <http://www.leg.wa.gov/pages/home.aspx>. You can also call the toll-free legislative hotline at 1-800-562-6000.

A final decision on a transportation funding package will likely be made before the close of the current session in early March. We encourage you to contact your legislator by the first half of February.

Sample Letter, Safe Routes to School Program

(Please feel free to personalize.)

Legislator's Name

Legislator's Address

Salutation

Please support additional funding for the statewide Safe Routes to School program in the transportation funding package you are considering submitting to the voters this year.

This program, administered by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), provides technical assistance and resources to cities, counties, schools, and state agencies to make it safer and easier for children to walk or bike to school.

Several trends highlight the need for Safe Routes to School:

- Forty years ago, 48 percent of America's children walked or biked to school; today only 13 percent of our children walk or bike to school.
- Lack of physical activity has had a terrible impact on children's health, including increased obesity.
- School district funding constraints have led to a reduction in yellow bus service for school districts across the state. Safe Routes to School can help districts increase safety while expanding their walk route boundaries.
- Between 10 percent and 14 percent of morning traffic is attributable to parents driving their children to school.

The Safe Routes to School program provides a wealth of benefits to municipalities and residents. The program funds infrastructure improvements such as sidewalks, traffic calming, and enhanced pedestrian crossings near schools. Additionally, the program funds police assistance for targeted enforcement in school zones and other safety enhancements such as crossing guards, neighborhood watch programs, and vehicle speed feedback signs.

Safe Routes to School is a popular program that fills a demonstrable need. Requests for funding from this program have more than doubled over the past six years. During the 2011-2013 biennium, WSDOT received 124 grant applications totaling 43 million dollars from various localities around the state. Unfortunately, there was only enough money available to fund 29 of these requests, totaling 11 million dollars.

Given the demand and need for the Safe Routes to School program, I urge you to include funding for the statewide Safe Routes to School program in any statewide transportation funding package submitted to the voters for their approval.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Your Contact Information