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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Nebraska Department of Roads Awards Safe-Routes-to-School Federal Funding

The Nebraska Department of Roads has awarded approximately \$1 million in federal Safe Routes to School Program funds to communities for 14 statewide projects to encourage and better enable children to walk and bike safely to school.

The program is focused on promoting physical activity and improving health, making routes to school safer and reducing traffic congestion around schools by encouraging children to walk or ride bicycles.

The program is 100 percent funded by the federal government and requires no matching funds by local entities. The funds benefit elementary and middle school children and are divided into two categories: infrastructure (sidewalk and street-crossing improvements, traffic diversion and bicycle facilities) and non-infrastructure (promotional materials, student bicycle and pedestrian safety education sessions, and encouragement programs).

Funding was awarded to the following agencies:

Gering – Northfield Elementary School Walking or Wheeling Wednesday's	\$86,115 (awarded both categories of funding)
Westside Community Schools – Westbrook Elementary Safe Routes to School	\$159,178 (awarded both categories of funding)
City of Norfolk – School Route & Pedestrian Safety Assessment	\$30,000
Public Health Solutions – “No Child Left on Their Behind” (Bruning, Davenport, Dorchester, Fairbury, & Fairmont)	\$66,925
City of Sargent – Safe Routes to School	\$137,005 (awarded infrastructure funding)
Sargent Public Schools – Biking & Walking Safely Program	\$4,636 (awarded non-infrastructure funding)
City of Pierce – Safe Routes to School	\$170,797
Santee Sioux Nation – Safe Routes to School	\$126,160
Hartington – Holy Trinity Elementary School	\$3,000
Lincoln – Eastridge Elementary School	\$6,931
Village of Pilger – Safe Routes to School	\$69,266
City of Valley – Safe Routes to School	\$140,854

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## **Funding was awarded to the following Agencies:**

### **NON-INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS:**

#### **GERING NORTHFIELD'S WALKING OR WHEELING WEDNESDAYS**

Northfield Elementary School in partnership with the City of Gering was awarded \$5,712 to actively promote a "Walking or Wheeling Wednesday" (WOW). International Walk to School Day, the first Wednesday in October (October 7, 2009), will be the kickoff date for the WOW program. This day will consist of Northfield students, along with community leaders, school board members, law enforcement, and other school personnel, walking or wheeling to school and celebrating this important international event.

The WOW program will involve adult volunteers meeting at designated drop-areas on Wednesday's to walk groups of students to school. Program promotion and education will occur through all-school assemblies, school banners, brochures home to parents, and maps with designated routes.

Encouragement programs will be implemented that involve rewarding students for their participation in WOW. IWALK cards will be used to track participation. Reward items will include modest items such as, bike helmets, shoe laces, awards, t-shirts, shoe notepads, and water bottles.

#### **WESTBROOK ELEMENTARY SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM**

Westbrook Elementary of the Omaha Westside Community Schools (District 66) was awarded \$5,446 to implement and evaluate a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program. The program will include a SRTS kick-off at the beginning of the school year, participation in International Walk to School Day, the formation of walking school busses and an enhancement of Westbrook's walking club. Education and encouragement of pedestrian and bicycle safety and the importance of physical activity will be implemented with the walking club and in the school setting through partnerships with Activate Omaha and other community partners. Local law enforcement and school district School Resource Officers will assist with traffic enforcement. The University of Nebraska at Omaha Department of Health, Physical Education and Recreation will assist with the ongoing evaluation of the program.

## **NORFOLK SCHOOL ROUTE & PEDESTRIAN SAFETY ASSESSMENT**

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The City of Norfolk was awarded \$30,000 to conduct a citywide school route and pedestrian safety study. An assessment will be conducted of current pedestrian safety conflicts and route planning for school facilities including eight Elementary, one Middle, and one Junior High School that house grades K-8. The project will include a planning-level school site audit and bicycling/walkability assessment of attendance areas. In addition, public outreach and education activities will be conducted at the school facilities and at public forums within the community to help market the importance of providing safe routes to school and the benefits of daily non-motorized travel to and from school.

## **NO CHILD LEFT ON THEIR BEHIND – RURAL COMMUNITY PROJECT (BRUNING, DAVENPORT, DORCHESTER, FAIRBURY, AND FAIRMONT)**

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Public Health Solutions (PHS) was awarded \$66,925 in funding to continue implementing the No Child Left on Their Behind Rural Community program. This project will involve the following communities: Bruning, Davenport, Dorchester, Fairbury, and Fairmont. The overall goal of this project is to create a social norm that is more accepting and supportive of walking or biking to school and school activities, thereby increasing the number and safety of those walking and biking to school. This will be accomplished by educating parents, teachers and students on safe walking/biking practices, and on the health benefits of increased physical activity. Local collaborators in each community will include parents, local government, school administration, and law enforcement. Collaborators, with assistance from PHS will develop data collection efforts, a kick-off event, challenge activities, a promotional/educational campaign, a second event, and a program evaluation plan. Collaborators will also describe environmental barriers (engineering, enforcement) to safe walking/biking. Events will feature safe walking and biking, including traffic safety and enforcement issues. A walking map of each community, highlighting the safe routes to the school will be developed to enable the project to continue beyond the official end date. From this pocket-sized tool, a parent, child, or community member could plan a number of safe 10,000 step walking routes in their communities.

## **SARGENT SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY BIKING & WALKING SAFELY PROGRAM**

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Sargent Public Schools in partnership with the City of Sargent was awarded \$4,636 to implement programs that will increase the number of youth and adults who walk and bike safely. The School will conduct walking and biking safety meetings. During Parent-Teacher conferences, the Elementary Student Council will present walk/bike information to parents in interesting ways such as skits and games. There will be newspaper articles and advertisements that will help inform adults about current concerns and safety improvements. The School newsletter will also print articles regarding student walking and biking safety. Students will create safe walking and biking signs and posters for local businesses to post. The City and School will work with the Custer County Sheriff's Office and local law enforcement and school personnel to conduct two bicycle

rodeos per year, one in the fall, and one in the spring. This will include bike safety education through games and also, bicycle safety checks. Bicycle helmets will be provided to youth and awards for those students who wear their helmets. Additionally, the School, with assistance from the local law enforcement, will provide crosswalk guard training.

The School will purchase a pedometer for each of the youth in grades K-6, and encourage youth to walk, with prizes to be awarded on a weekly and monthly basis for the most steps walked. Teachers and youth will be responsible for recording steps on a daily basis. There will be a Golden Shoe Award that will be a “traveling” trophy. The trophy will “travel” from each classroom as grades compete against each other to walk the most miles per month. There will also be small individual prizes awarded to the top bikers and walkers in each grade.

For those students who bicycle to school, the School will track biking to/from school and provide weekly and monthly prizes, including bike helmets. This will be tracked by each student on a daily basis, similar to a current system for walking where students log their walking on note cards located on the Teacher’s desk. A set of bronze bike handlebars will be the “traveling” trophy for the class with the most miles biked per month.

#### **EASTRIDGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS WALK TO SCHOOL**

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Eastridge Elementary School Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) was awarded \$6,931 for an educational program to help students understand safety when walking and biking to school. The project will institute an ongoing education and informational program aimed at promoting safety and the benefits of walking and biking to school for all students of Eastridge Elementary School. The project would include the creation of safety programs and continuance and expansion of several ongoing safety programs. Weekly education and informational tools, presented in the form of a student newsletter, will be a part of every students take-home Friday Folder. Funds will be used to bring experts in the matters of health and safety into the school for discussions and workshops. International Walk to School Day and other such events will be promoted. Funds will also make available tools to help students make their walking and biking safer and more fun. Bicycle helmets will be made available for students in-need. Pedometers will be made available for students to track their walking. Students will also be offered incentives to engage in more physical activity.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS:**

### **GERING NORTHFIELD'S WALKING OR WHEELING WEDNESDAYS**

Northfield Elementary School in partnership with the City of Gering was awarded \$80,403 for design and construction of: 1,100 feet of pedestrian walkway, replacing a gravel pathway to separate pedestrian from bus traffic; a bus drop-off area to make front school steps ADA accessible; ADA curb ramps and crosswalk markings at the intersection of Davis Avenue and Chinoe Road; a drop-off area on the backside of the School to allow for ADA access to School modular classroom; ADA curb ramps and crosswalk lights at the intersection of Country Club Road and Chinoe Road; and construction of walkway on the west side of Five Rocks Road (NE Highway 71) from Bellevue Road to Country Club Road. These infrastructure improvements will allow all students participate in the Walking or Wheeling Wednesday program.

### **PIERCE COMMUNITY SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL**

The City of Pierce was awarded \$170,797 for design and construction of three interrelated components that will serve as a safe route to and from school. The City will install flashing beacons and an upgraded school crossing across State Highway 13 on the north side of the intersection of and Court Street just east of the Lied Pierce Public Library. Two and one-half blocks of new concrete walkway will be constructed on the north side of the Court Street starting on the west end of the Lied Pierce Public Library property heading west to the Elementary School. Three blocks of concrete walkway will be constructed on the south side of Court Street starting on the west side of Pleasant Street heading west to Sunset Street just east of the Pierce High School.

### **WESTBROOK SRTS INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT**

Westbrook Elementary School of the Omaha Westside Community Schools (District 66) was awarded \$153,732 for design and construction of the following: 1. Construct a speed table including a crosswalk at the intersection of Robertson Drive with Charles Street; 2. Convert Robertson Drive to one-way southbound during peak school traffic hours and designate an express pick-up/drop-off lane; 3. Construct curb extensions at the intersection of Robertson Drive with Hamilton Street and move crosswalk to north leg of intersection; 4. Construct a mini-circle at the intersection of Robertson Drive with Western Avenue as a traffic calming measure; 5. Restripe the south parking lot for one-way circulation to reduce vehicle-pedestrian conflict points; 6. Encourage use of Hillside Little League parking lot as remote drop-off/pick-up area; and 7. Promote usage of Keystone Trail underpass and discourage at grade crossing of Western Avenue.

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### **SANTEE COMMUNITY SAFE ROUTES PROJECT**

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The Santee Sioux Nation Indian Reservation was awarded \$126,160 for design and construction of a school route. The project involves constructing a concrete path to connect residential area to the school that is located on the east side of the Village. After crossing the highway, the path travels through a low-lying ditch through a small tree-filled area. To increase pedestrian visibility, trees and shrubs in this ditch area will be cleared to open the path, and culverts will be constructed to allow for proper drainage.

### **HARTINGTON – HOLY TRINITY ELEMENTARY SECURE BIKE PARKING PROJECT**

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Holy Trinity Elementary School located in Hartington was awarded \$3,000 in funds for installation of a secure bicycle parking facility for their students. School policy requires students who ride their bicycles to school to place them in the bicycle rack. The existing bike rack does not allow enough space for students store their bicycles.

The School will install two new bike racks next to the existing rack, allowing more students to ride their bicycles to school.

### **PILGER SAFE RAMPS & ROUTES**

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The Village of Pilger was awarded \$69,266 for design and construction funds to improve walking/biking school routes by installing new walkways where they are non-existent and repair or replace walks that are damaged. Routes include the north and south sides of five blocks located on Second Street directly in front of and running west from the Wisner-Pilger Middle School; the east and west side of the two blocks located on Main Street running south from the corner of Second Street; and the west side of the two blocks on South Monroe Street running south of Second Street. The project also includes placing new ADA compliant ramps or repairing and/or replacing ramps at 17 corners. Additionally, the Village will install five school warning signs on the routes most traveled by vehicles before and after school. The project also includes the purchase of two bike racks made of recycled plastic materials that will be capable of holding 10 bikes each.

### **VALLEY DC WEST SCHOOL ROUTE IMPROVEMENT**

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The City of Valley was awarded \$140,854 for design and construction of 1,224 linear feet of school route construction from Pine Street to West Street and 158 linear feet of school route construction along West Street. The project will connect students living in a 48-unit, low-income apartment complex and a newer, low-moderate income housing development to the school. Sidewalk would also be constructed for 504 linear feet from West Condron Street to Meigs Street. Three curb ramps with detectable warning panels will be constructed at the intersection of Hudspith and Pine Streets where a daycare center is located.

All sidewalks will be five-foot-wide, each intersection will have a curb ramp with detectable warning panels for a total of 11 curb ramps. Curb and gutter is needed along Meigs Street from West Street to Mayne Street to provide a barrier from traffic. There is existing curb and gutter along the remainder of the proposed alignment. MUTCD signage and pavement marking will be installed at the crossings.

The sidewalk on Meigs Street will connect with existing sidewalk on Pine Street. Currently, the intersection of Hudspeth and Pine Streets does not have a curb ramp on the northeast corner where a pre-school/daycare is located. The two curb ramps on the east side will be replaced to create better alignment and provide accessibility.

### **SARGENT SAFE ROUTES PROJECT**

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The City of Sargent in partnership with the Sargent Public Schools was awarded \$137,005 for design and construction of the following: 1. Repair/replace concrete walkways that are too hazardous to use; 2. Install handicap ramps; 3. Paint crosswalks and install Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) signage; 4. Install a raised crosswalk on Street to decrease the speed of vehicles around the school, as well as accompanying MUTCD signage; and 5. Install new stop signs at the parking lot entrances on and Semler and Street.

Through the 2005 passage of the “Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy of Users,” Congress designated \$612 million toward developing the National Safe Routes to School Program. Money is distributed to states to fund education, planning and implementation of Safe Routes to School plans and programs.

For more information about these projects and the Safe Routes Nebraska Program, visit [www.SafeRoutesNE.com](http://www.SafeRoutesNE.com).

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