



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

ROY COOPER  
GOVERNOR

JAMES H. TROGDON, III  
SECRETARY

DATE: August 27, 2018

TO: Safe Routes to School Stakeholders and Supporters

FROM: Hanna Cockburn, AICP  
Director

SUBJECT: Safe Routes to School Program Status

The purpose of this memo is to correct the inaccurate information contained in a recent blog post about North Carolina's Safe Routes to School program.

NCDOT established the Active Routes to School program in cooperation with the Department of Health and Human Services' Division of Public Health in 2013 to more effectively implement the Safe Routes to School education and encouragement programs while leveraging public health efforts to improve health outcomes for children.

The success of this program can't be understated. We are so proud of the important work being done by the regional coordinators in schools across North Carolina. Schools in 96 of our 100 counties have participated in a walk or bike to school day event since the program's inception. Active Routes to School has positively impacted the lives of thousands of students in North Carolina and created advocates for improving the conditions for biking and walking across the state.

At the time this partnership was established, the total amount of available funding was fixed based on allocations to the state from the federal government specifically for the Safe Routes to School program. The federal funding set-aside for this program ended in 2012 when a new federal transportation authorization bill was approved. NCDOT has extended the program through May 2019 by shifting as much funding as allowed under federal rules toward non-infrastructure SRTS programs.

Unfortunately, Congress decided to end the set-aside and all 100 percent federal funding for the Safe Routes to School program. While Safe Routes to School programs and activities are eligible for Transportation Alternative funding made available under the federal FAST Act, the allocation of these funds is subject to the requirements of North Carolina's Strategic Transportation Investment law.

NCDOT is disappointed in Congress' actions, but we are committed to exploring all avenues to continue the efforts of the Active Routes to School program. While these funding issues are not new, the urgency to resolve the need is pressing. Working with our partners in the Division of Public Health, we remain hopeful that a solution exists to establish long-term, sustainable funding for this important program.

### **Funding Background**

As part of the **Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users** (SAFETEA-LU) Federal Transportation Authorization in 2005, the Safe Routes to School program was launched, providing 100 percent Federal participation in eligible projects. Between 2005 and 2012, North Carolina was apportioned \$20.2 million in SRTS funds. The authorization required the use of up to 30 percent of the state apportionment to be used on non-infrastructure related activities. Funds for SRTS were made available to states until expended, and funds were not transferable to other programs.

The **Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century** Act (MAP-21) became effective in 2012. MAP-21 made several significant changes to the Safe Routes to School program: it streamlined many transportation programs into the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) – including Safe Routes to School. It also established a funding limit of 80 percent federal participation for TAP funds and introduced the requirement that project funds be awarded through a competitive process to eligible project sponsors.

In 2015, **Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act** (FAST Act) was signed into law. The FAST Act eliminated the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) and replaced it with a set-aside of Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) funds for Transportation Alternatives (TA), which included all projects and activities that were previously eligible under TAP and reaffirmed the funding limit of 80 percent federal participation and the competitive award process.

In 2013, North Carolina passed the **Strategic Transportation Investment** law. The law established a framework to guide transportation infrastructure investments through a data-driven process. The law's Strategic Mobility Formula established a revenue distribution model that addresses statewide mobility, regional impact projects and division needs. TAP/TA funds are distributed according to mode-specific quantitative criteria and projects must compete for funding across all non-highway modes. Funds are awarded through a competitive call for infrastructure projects on a two-year cycle. There are no provisions in the law for ongoing programmatic funding.