

National Safe Routes to School Clearinghouse Established

The University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center and its partners are pleased to announce the establishment of a new National Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Clearinghouse. Created through funding from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Clearinghouse will serve as a center of excellence for SRTS programs across the country in their effort to enable and encourage children to safely walk and bike to school.

The Clearinghouse will work to promote positive recognition for safe walking and bicycling to school at the local and national level as well as serve as the central hub of information on successful SRTS strategies and programs.

“We are excited to be leading this effort and to build upon our work in the area of Safe Routes to School,” said Lauren Marchetti, program manager for the Clearinghouse. “We look forward to assisting Safe Routes to School programs across the country and helping them thrive based on knowledge, research and quality communication and promotion.”

Initial operations began within two days of the FHWA award, and the Clearinghouse is expected to be fully operational by the end of July 2006. The Clearinghouse is housed within the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center (www.hsrc.unc.edu), in partnership with:

- American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (www.transportation.org)
- America Walks (www.americawalks.org)
- Governor's Highway Safety Association (www.ghsa.org)
- Institute of Transportation Engineers (www.ite.org)
- Toole Design Group (www.tooledesign.com)

Resources available from the Clearinghouse will include:

- SRTS-related education and promotional materials, including a program brochure, talking points, fact sheets and media kits
- A stand-alone Web site, housed at www.saferoutesinfo.org, containing SRTS materials, such as case studies, useful links and best practices among community programs
- Technical assistance resources to field SRTS inquiries
- Customizable materials, including media materials and public service announcements
- Training options ranging from a multi-day course to providing a speaker for a conference
- An online database with information about State SRTS programs, as well as local projects and activities that receive federal funding

The Clearinghouse will also serve as the coordinating agency for Walk to School activities in the U.S., a task formerly conducted by the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center. Activities in this area include expanding the U.S. Walk to School Web site (www.walktoschool.org), offering additional tools for Walk to School coordinators and furthering the promotion of Walk to School both at the national and local level.

In addition to supporting Walk to School in the U.S., the Clearinghouse also has plans to expand its involvement in International Walk to School activities such as expanding the IWALK Web site (www.iwalktoschool.org) and growing the International Walk to School Award.

The Clearinghouse will also provide a liaison to each State SRTS Coordinator to assist with general inquiries and program needs. Liaisons will work with State SRTS Coordinators to identify each state's specific needs, obstacles and successes. Upon gauging the state's level of readiness, the liaison will then be able to tailor their assistance to fit the individual state's circumstances.

The Clearinghouse team has been active in promoting safe walking and bicycling to school for more than a decade, including the promotion of International Walk to School Day, the development of a National SRTS Course, the training of over 50 national SRTS Course instructors and a soon-to-be-released online, comprehensive SRTS Guide.

Congress required a Clearinghouse as part of the Federal Safe Routes to School program established by SAFETEA-LU, and the National Clearinghouse will support implementation of the Federal program.

For more information, please visit www.saferoutesinfo.org.