



To: Transport Planners
From: Adrian Davis
Date: 11/2018
Subject: School Travel Toolbox: No 17 California's Safe Routes to School Programme

Top line: California was the first state in the USA to legislate a Safe Routes to School program with the enactment of AB 1475 in 1999.

In 2007, the Safe Routes to School programme was extended indefinitely with funding provided from the State Highway Account. California has been a leader in the national SRTS movement for nearly a decade. Since its inception in 1999, Caltrans, the department in charge of awarding SRTS funding, made a \$189M investment in improving community infrastructure and promoting safe walking and bicycling to and from school.

Each year in California, requests for funding has been approximately five times greater than funds available. To help address this issue, Caltrans developed an innovative two-step review process to better target its limited resources toward funding the highest quality projects. This two-step process was followed in six cycles in the state legislated SRTS program, and in the first cycle of the federal SRTS program. In the first phase, Caltrans officials familiar with the local community assessed the feasibility of the infrastructure projects proposed by separate grant applications. Projects deemed "excellent" at the local level then progressed to the second phase, where they were reviewed at Caltrans headquarters by a panel that determined which projects will best achieve the federal program's goals. Lastly, the projects were scored and ranked, with the top projects receiving funding.

An evaluation commissioned by Caltrans supported the successes of California's SRTS programs concluded that the programme was achieving its goals of improving safety and increasing bicycling and walking, warranting a further continuation and expansion of the program. To assist in expanding the program, Caltrans markets SRTS to the community and affiliates through special web pages on Caltrans' Web site, publicizing in the newsletters of partner agencies and non-profit organizations, presenting at conferences and workshops and utilizing media outlets. Caltrans also provides technical assistance to encourage community support and the development of applications. Recognising that many organizations have little to no experience completing grants for federal funds, Caltrans developed a comprehensive training module to prepare potential applicants. This training has been offered to more than 400 individuals across eight regional Caltrans districts. A technical resource centre established also serves as a location for technical assistance and support for funded SRTS projects and for all schools in California.

One of the hallmarks of Caltrans' programme is its commitment to involving those with expertise in SRTS efforts. In 2005, Caltrans created a new SRTS Advisory Committee comprised of 20 members who are involved in health, education, local government, advocacy and traffic-related fields. One of the most influential champions of the SRTS program is Assembly Member Nell Soto, who had authored three previous SRTS bills then sponsored another bill which was approved in 2010.

Source: <http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/>