



Upper Valley Lake Sunapee  
Regional Planning Commission

June 12, 2008

Mr. John Corrigan  
New Hampshire Department of Transportation  
7 Hazen Drive  
P.O. Box 483  
Concord, New Hampshire 03302-0483

**SUBJECT: Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)  
Prioritization of PHASE II Safe Routes to School Grant Applications**

Dear Mr. Corrigan:

Please be advised that the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Transportation Advisory Committee met on June 10, 2008 to score and prioritize the three PHASE II Safe Routes to School (SRTS) applications received from member communities in the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee region. The applications evaluated were:

1. **Town of Charlestown** application for \$110,484 (\$99,995 for infrastructure, \$10,489 for non-infrastructure) to construct a sidewalk to connect Charlestown Primary School to the existing sidewalk network, and development of encouragement, enforcement, and educational programs to promote walking and bicycling to school. Proposed programs include a speed awareness campaign, radar speed feedback signs, school-site traffic calming, and feasibility studies for other potential improvements – sidewalks or trails to improve connectivity between neighborhoods and schools.
2. **Town of New London** application for \$98,550 (96,000 for infrastructure, \$2,550 for non-infrastructure) to complete two sidewalk projects connecting neighborhoods within New London to the Kearsarge Regional Elementary School, and develop encouragement, enforcement, and educational programs to promote walking and bicycling to school. Proposed programs include a “Walking School Bus” program and annual “Bike Rodeo.”
3. **City of Lebanon** application for \$30,900 (non-infrastructure) to develop a Comprehensive Travel Plan that would cover the 6 schools of the Lebanon School District. Additional funding (\$900) is sought to continue the NH BikeSmart program in Lebanon.

**I. PRIORITIZATION AND SCORING OF SRTS APPLICATIONS**

The committee scored and prioritized the projects as detailed below:

1. Town of Charlestown (86 points+10 Disadvantaged Communities points)
2. Town of New London (86 points + 0 Disadvantaged Communities points)
3. City of Lebanon (75 points + 0 Disadvantaged Communities points)

UVLSRPC TAC Scoring Summary:

| Scoring Criteria:                     | Points:           | Application         |                    |                 |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
|                                       |                   | Town of Charlestown | Town of New London | City of Lebanon |
| <b>"The 5 E's"</b>                    |                   |                     |                    |                 |
| Evaluation                            |                   |                     |                    |                 |
| • Comprehensive "Travel Plan"         | 10                | 9                   | 8                  | 10              |
| • Surveys and Site Visits             | 10                | 8                   | 9                  | 8               |
| Education                             | 10                | 9                   | 8                  | 8               |
| Encouragement                         | 10                | 9                   | 8                  | 8               |
| Enforcement                           | 10                | 9                   | 8                  | 7               |
| Engineering                           | 10                | 9                   | 9                  | 7               |
| <b>Community Support</b>              |                   |                     |                    |                 |
| Task Force with Broad Representation  | 10                | 8                   | 8                  | 7               |
| Municipal/School Support              | 10                | 8                   | 9                  | 8               |
| Parental Support                      | 10                | 7                   | 9                  | 5               |
| Educational Community (PTA/PTO)       | 5                 | 5                   | 5                  | 2               |
| Biking/Walking Advocacy Group Support | 5                 | 5                   | 5                  | 5               |
| <b>Disadvantaged Communities</b>      | <b>20 (bonus)</b> | 10                  | 0                  | 0               |
| <b>Total:</b>                         | <b>120</b>        | <b>96</b>           | <b>86</b>          | <b>75</b>       |

**II. TAC COMMENTS RELATED TO THE INDIVIDUAL APPLICATIONS**

The TAC offers the following comments related to the applications reviewed.

General Comments:

- The TAC felt strongly that all three applications received were worthy of receiving SRTS funding, and noted the improvement in the quality of applications received in Phase II as compared to Phase I.

Related to the Town of Charlestown Application:

- The TAC felt that Charlestown's application encompassed the spirit of the program in addressing each of the 5 E's. The infrastructure proposal will connect the Town's existing sidewalk system to the Primary School, which the TAC felt was an important consideration for promoting children walking and biking to school. The encouragement, education, and enforcement programs proposed (including a slow down campaign and a punch card system to reward children for walking and biking to school) were very innovative.
- The TAC recognized the Town's response to parents' concerns (detailed in the SRTS survey) about the safety of their children walking and biking to school. Because these children are primary school students, separation from traffic will be essential for parents in Charlestown to feel safe letting their children walk and bike to school. In response, the

Town has outlined plans for an 8' sidewalk. The TAC commended the Town for their responsiveness to parents' concerns.

- The TAC awarded Charlestown 10 of 20 points in the "Disadvantaged Communities" criterion. The TAC felt that the Town's median income (23% below the State average) and rates of children qualifying for free and reduced lunch (46% of students) were very compelling arguments for "Disadvantaged Communities" consideration. Essentially, the TAC considered "Disadvantaged Communities" points to be a "tiebreaker" between the Town of Charlestown's application and the Town New London's equally strong application.

Related to the Town of New London Application:

- The TAC felt that the Town of New London's application was very strong, and addressed each of the 5 E's in a comprehensive manner. The TAC was impressed with New London's infrastructure proposal to build a sidewalk along Pleasant Street, connecting a densely developed residential neighborhood to the Kearsarge Regional Elementary School.
- The TAC recognized that New London's infrastructure project may directly impact more students than Charlestown's infrastructure project. (The Kearsarge Regional Elementary School has approximately 400 students, whereas the Charlestown Primary School has approximately 200 students.) However, the TAC was unable to provide additional scoring consideration to New London based on the number of students affected because of the structure of the SRTS Phase II scoring system (see comments re: SRTS Scoring System below).
- The TAC was impressed with the breadth of community support for New London's SRTS proposal.

Related to the City of Lebanon Application:

- The TAC felt that the City of Lebanon's application to complete a Comprehensive SRTS Travel Plan for the 6 schools in the City of Lebanon was worthy of receiving SRTS funding, but did not score as highly as the two infrastructure proposals because of the structure of the scoring system (see comments re: SRTS Scoring System below).
- The TAC felt that the SRTS Statewide Advisory Committee should give additional consideration to cities with multiple schools who wish to undertake a comprehensive planning process to evaluate engineering, enforcement, encouragement, and education programs within their diverse jurisdictions.

### **III. TAC COMMENTS RELATED TO THE SRTS SCORING SYSTEM**

In addition to prioritizing the applications, the TAC provided comments related to the Safe Routes to School scoring criteria. TAC members offered the following comments:

General Comments:

- The TAC felt that the City of Lebanon's application to develop a Comprehensive SRTS Travel Plan for the 6 schools within the City could not be effectively scored under the existing 100-point system. As one TAC member said, "The scoring system just wasn't made

to evaluate this type of application.” The TAC recommends that all applications for SRTS funding for planning initiatives be scored under the abbreviated 50-point scoring system currently in place to evaluate startup funding applications.

Regarding the “Disadvantaged Communities” Criterion:

- The TAC felt that there would be little consistency between regional planning commissions as to how “Disadvantaged Communities” bonus points would be awarded because there has not been enough guidance from NHDOT on how to score this criterion.
- The TAC felt that 20 bonus points was a very large margin that could result in below-average applications from “Disadvantaged Communities” scoring higher than well-prepared and well-researched applications from “Non-disadvantaged Communities.”
- The TAC suggests that additional guidance be provided (e.g. an objective statewide measure) in subsequent Phases of the SRTS program for scoring the “Disadvantaged Communities” criterion. If additional guidance cannot be provided, the TAC suggests removing this criterion from the regional prioritization/scoring framework, and leaving the awarding of “Disadvantaged Communities” points to the SRTS Statewide Advisory Committee.

Regarding the former “Number of Students Affected” Criterion:

- The TAC understands the sentiment of many rural communities that the former “Number of Students Affected” criterion could reflect an inherent bias toward awarding funding to urban communities, but was surprised to see that the criterion was removed for the Phase II scoring system. The TAC feels that evaluating the number of students affected by SRTS applications is important, and recommends re-instituting the criterion for subsequent phases of the SRTS program as a 5-point criterion instead of a 10-point criterion.

The TAC thanks NHDOT for this opportunity to review and prioritize Safe Routes to School PHASE II project applications in the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee region. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have regarding this information.

Sincerely,



Nathan Miller  
Planner

CC: Dean Eastman, NHDOT  
Bill Watson, NHDOT  
Van Chesnut, Chair, UVLSRPC TAC