

Upper Valley Lake Sunapee
Regional Planning Commission

RECEIVED
DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION

OCT 19 2007

BUREAU OF
Planning and Community Assistance

October 15, 2007

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 Safe Routes to School Grant Applications**

Dear Mr. Corrigan:

Please be advised that the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Transportation Advisory Committee met on October 9, 2007 to prioritize the three Safe Routes to School (SRTS) applications received from member communities and advocacy organizations in the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee region. The applications evaluated were:

- City of Lebanon application for \$13,261 to purchase a speed trailer that would be used in the vicinity of city schools to act as a traffic calming device.
- New Hampshire BikeSmart application for \$22,500 to provide bicycle safety training at 40-50 schools statewide.
- Upper Valley Trails Alliance application for \$25,631 to assist schools in the towns of Charlestown, Grantham, Hanover, and Plainfield in developing School Travel Plans that incorporate the "5E's": evaluation, education, encouragement, enforcement, and engineering.

The committee reviewed the Safe Routes to School project scoring criteria, and prioritized the projects as detailed below:

1. City of Lebanon (UVLSRPC Rank #1)
2. UV Trails Alliance (UVLSRPC Rank #2)
3. NH Bike Smart Program (UVLSRPC Rank #3)

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

- SRTS scoring criteria are dependent on population density around schools. Some TAC members felt that this may reflect an inherent bias toward awarding funding to urban areas of the state.
- Many sparsely-populated rural communities in the UVLSRPC region have village schools located on numbered state highways. This reality has presented conflicts between traffic and children who walk or bike to school. Because of the scoring emphasis on population density around

schools, some TAC members felt that the criteria were not reflective of the issues that rural communities need to address.

- New schools tend to be built along higher-speed roads in out-of-town areas. This reality presents additional traffic issues, which can be more difficult and costly to mitigate given that the infrastructure that supports walking and biking (e.g. sidewalks) is often not available in out-of-town areas. These issues should be considered when evaluating potential Safe Routes to School projects.
- The TAC felt that under a strict interpretation of the scoring criteria, none of the applications received would score well. The TAC suggests that NHDOT conduct a review of the SRTS scoring criteria prior to subsequent cycles of grant solicitation/funding.

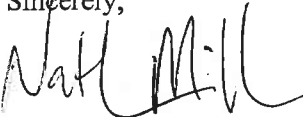
TAC members were also asked how the three applications received might have been improved, and offered the following comments:

- The NH BikeSmart Program application seemed to be missing important elements, including the SRTS Action Plan and development of a SRTS Task Force for local implementation.
- The City of Lebanon's application was clearly the most effective in addressing the 5E's, but could have focused more on how the data collected from the mobile speed trailer would assist in enforcement efforts.
- The NH BikeSmart Program and UV Trails Alliance applications could have provided more detail as to how their programs would affect specific communities.
- The TAC would prefer to see one proposal for each school in the UV Trails Alliance application, instead of the schools being "lumped together" in one application.

In general, the UVLSRPC TAC expressed excitement about the Safe Routes to School program and its prospects for helping children safely walk or bike to school. Around the region, interest in the program is growing, and SRTS Task Forces are currently forming in Charlestown, Grantham, Hanover, and Plainfield. As such, it is anticipated that there will be significant growth in community-driven applications emanating from the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee region in subsequent cycles of funding.

The TAC thanks NHDOT for this opportunity to review and prioritize Safe Routes to School 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: Dennis Fowler, NHDOT
William Watson, NHDOT
Van Chesnut, Chair, UVLSRPC TAC