

MINUTES of the Safe Routes to School Meeting,
Friday, December 10, 2010

Present:

SRAC Members

Lisa VanWinkle, Chair
Diane Bishop
Kim Curley, on the phone
Louise Dix
Joe Henner
Joe Marek
Susanna Pai

Absent:

Jonathan David
Gary Howland

Liaisons and Guests:

Mike Laverty, Oregon Transportation Safety Committee Liaison
Steven Huillet, Oregon Department of Education, Pupil Transportation
Gabe Graff, Portland Safe Routes to School Program
Nick Fortey, FHWA Oregon Division
Stephanie Noll, Bicycle Transportation Alliance
Dave Galati, SRTS Infrastructure Program Manager
Julie Yip, SRTS Non-Infrastructure Program Manager

Meeting called to order at 9:45 a.m. by Chair Lisa VanWinkle.

The reason for meeting in December, with no project selection agenda before the committee, is that last meeting's robust discussion concluded that it would be useful to reflect on the Oregon SRTS efforts and to offer suggestions or identify what's on track.

Old Business: approve minutes of August 6, 2010, meeting. With no corrections required, Susanna moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Diane. The minutes were unanimously approved.

New Business, updates: Kim C. brought up that a Walk and Bike Retreat was being planned for June, 2010, in Bend. All involved or interested in SRTS are invited.

Julie provided an overview of SRTS non-infrastructure and infrastructure projects.

1) Bear Creek Road project in City of Bend has been withdrawn by the city. The city looked at the budget and determined they could save some costs if they completed the sidewalk project themselves. They sent a letter in October 2010 to ODOT SRTS Program releasing the 2008 SRTS Award of \$233,724.

2) City of La Grande completed 6 blocks of sidewalk project before start of school, September 2010, using the 2008 \$250,000 award. Gary H. had provided information to Julie that the students were using the sidewalks on “K” St. to walk to and from Central Elementary.

3) City of Corvallis, being certified by ODOT to do local federally funded projects, had completed the Lincoln and Adams Elementary projects for covered bike shelters and rack installation at both schools, and pedestrian-activated signal on 35th St. by Adams Elementary. The ribbon-cutting ceremony had been in early December.

4) City of Corvallis was administering the Philomath School District project, through an IGA with Benton County, for covered two bike shelters and racks at the elementary and the middle schools, plus speed feedback signs on 16th St. in front of Clemens Primary.

5) Monroe Middle School’s covered bike shelter and racks in Eugene 4j School District was still being worked and was anticipated going to bid in early 2011, with construction in summer.

6) Thurston Elementary School in Springfield, whose covered bike shelter and rack project was first Oregon SRTS project completed, was visited by the SRAC in June 2010. The day of the visit, the SRAC saw very few bicycles and some scooters parked in the shelter.

7) Portland Bureau of Transportation, certified by ODOT to do local federally funded projects, was beginning to complete the SRTS pedestrian improvements at the project school sites, some being completed in December.

The January 2010 infrastructure awarded projects were in the process of having inter-governmental agreements signed between agencies and ODOT.

Joe M. suggested that the SRTS Program should evaluate infrastructure projects completed and track what project has done to influence and increase walking and biking. Julie said that she now had a non-infrastructure grant with Sustainable Oregon Schools Initiative, a non-profit with established networks for Oregon school districts and school policy makers. This grant has contracted a consultant, Lynne Mutrie of Mutrie Consulting, who could be tasked with visiting schools with completed infrastructure projects and working with them to evaluate impact of completed infrastructure and to encourage SRTS activities.

Joe M. brought up the potential for future school closures across the State and how this could impact SRTS projects

Julie said that the Education/Encouragement/Enforcement grants had been completed in some areas using FY2010 funding and the FY2011 grant year had just gotten going after October 1, 2010. The Portland Public Schools project had not yet been initiated since the project requested \$20,000 in late 2011 school year and \$80,000 for 2011-12 school year.

Julie asked for guidance on the Salem Hallman Elementary education/encouragement award of \$21,000, and the Monroe Elementary award for \$20,000, as these projects had not been started.

She wanted to know by what date of the federal grant year the committee suggested to send letters to the projects that the opportunity to use the awards had expired.

Discussion followed. There was a motion that the two schools have agreements approved by ODOT by end of 2nd quarter (March 30), otherwise the applicant will have to re-apply for 2011. It was moved by Susanna, and seconded by Diane and unanimously approved.

In a break in discussion, Steven H. of ODE was asked about what a Charter School is and is it private school? Steven explained that charter schools are public schools that have taken on a special focus, and have taken over a school district building. Charter schools are public schools.

The discussion next centered around SRTS and funding.

What is happening at the national level now that Congressman Earl Oberstar, the national SRTS Champion, has lost his seat? Nick F. of FHWA Oregon Division said that there has not been discussion on transportation funding with a great level of detail. The Obama Administration is pushing for performance-based programs, but there is no level of specificity. Joe pointed out that the performance piece speaks for Oregon's program looking to track performance of completed projects and programs.

Discussion followed on performance measures. Should the Oregon program put some funding for follow-up? Add in the agreement the addition of some evaluation component, and could be partially funded by SRTS and school. Lisa asks if this is enforceable. Perhaps holding some reimbursement back. SRTS program could investigate with Local Government Unit ways to do this. Would this cause school to overstate funding? Perhaps it might be as easy to follow up with surveys. What about a bonus amount to encourage follow-up. What's the best measure we can use? Surveys would be easy to get - apples to apples in measurement. What measurement do we want? What if surveys show no increase? What is best practice?

Diane reminded us that selection of project by Thurston (covered bike shelter) wasn't first priority of committee. A path from the neighborhoods would have been a higher priority.

Lisa summarized the discussion: it's critical to continuing to have performance measurements. Evaluation is an important component to strong SRTS effort. How to implement? Utilize what already exists, schools have already used surveys and are aware of process.

If committee agrees to this, ask staff to build it into requirement of Agreements to do this. 1) incentivize school to do work; 2) build in funding in project budget; 3) hire 3rd party to do survey work.

Diane moves that this is good direction, would like to see one of these methods. Have staff incorporate evaluation piece in future applications and past projects. She suggests that SRTS Staff review these three options and recommend to committee process to do this.

Kim wants Agreements to couple infrastructure with non-infrastructure, even though these are separate applications and activities and projects. Diane asked if the TSD process could be

different for SRTS than for other TSD programs? Joe asks if staff could come back to report on reporting requirements (federal requirements, TSD process).

Dave explained how the ODOT Local Government Unit is looking to streamline reporting for consistency. Discussion followed: is it possible to simplify the time involved in producing quarterly reports. Is it possible to tie Infrastructure and Non-infra activities together? Julie indicated that TSD grant process is rigid, will not accommodate simplification just for SRTS program.

What could committee suggest for future rounds of infrastructure applications? Dave asked committee for guidance when SRTS gets multiple applications from same community -- do we accept only one application per community? Or could the separate applications be bundled? Discussion followed.

The application allows school or school district, local agency to apply, which means multiple applicants are possible within a community. Dave asked if the committee might want to require future applications to come from school or school district, charter school – if this is possible, then what would happen for applications that have already submitted their notice of intent. Committee asked if this is even possible or fair at this stage of applications.

Could a school still submit an application because it's ahead of the district? It legitimizes application if school district applies rather than the school. Maybe put language in application that states that there is no advantage to multiple applications from communities.

Chair Lisa asks for a show of hands from SRAC:

- 1) leave application process as it is? 3
 - 2) change to application that encourages bundling? 3
- One Undecided.

Lisa suggests the SRAC hold off on making a decision as to whether or not to require non-infrastructure activities to be a part of an infrastructure grant. 233,724

What does committee want to suggest for \$233,724 in returned infrastructure funding? Intense discussion followed:

- Wait until staff gives information on evaluation.
- Put out a call for 2011 and do a set-aside of funding for evaluation. If there is \$300,000 for 2011 in non-infrastructure funding, then \$250,000 for non-infra and \$50,000 for evaluation component.
- Consider bike racks

Lisa suggests that if the committee likes the idea of an application for bike racks, that the \$233,724 from the Bear Creek project returned funding might go back to the remaining Reserve List. If that doesn't make meaningful project contribution, then committee comes back to what to do with funding.

Susanna brought up that City of Milwaukie did not reapply for Cycle 3 Infrastructure RFP because they thought they were on the last infrastructure cycle's waiting list. That was an oversight. Should committee move Milwaukie's project application in for consideration in place of Bear Creek? Bend project was for less than Milwaukie \$500,000 project proposal.

Julie provided letter from ODOT SRTS Program to City of Milwaukie. The letter states that the project was not selected for funding but was approved for the Reserve List. Reserve Projects remain eligible to advance for funding if openings arise before the next call for projects. The IGA amendment for Bear Creek was for \$233,734. This amount is now freed up to be put in bucket. Joe M. asked Dave what precedence is for ODOT when funding is returned. Dave said he understood that the Transportation Enhancement Program goes back to applicant for discussion.

Susanna suggested that the Bear Creek amount discussion is brought to Milwaukie regarding their 2009 application for \$500,000, and work with them if they want to accept the lesser funding. The committee agreed that this was the way to proceed. Dave will open discussion with Milwaukie.

Dave reviewed the current call for Infrastructure projects: 30 total Notices of Intent submitted, with 26 eligible. Those determined Not Eligible was because there were no action plans submitted. Typical proposed components for projects were sidewalks; striping bike lanes; school zone flashers; pedestrian activated signals; crosswalk improvements; traffic-calming (bulb outs, refuge islands); covered bike shelters & racks; speed reader boards; lighting to improve visibility.

Geographic distribution was good, and applicants included the coastal cities of Brookings, Gold Beach; Southeastern Oregon had no applicants, but Eastern Oregon applicants were Umatilla and Athena. North Plains and Athena had really low cost estimates, so Dave was going to suggest that they talk to their ODOT Local Agency Liaison for assistance.

Next steps: for those applicants who will proceed, the deadline for applications is January 14, 2011. He anticipated using February through March to do scoping and technical review, with an April meeting for project selection and award. He's planning on 2012 for construction, based on Preliminary Engineering and Design completion.

Lisa suggested that a tentative date to be set for the next meeting to review infrastructure applications: April 22, Friday from 9:30-2:30.

The meeting adjourned at 2:25 p.m.