

Minnesota State Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program: Infrastructure Solicitation Letter of Intent

2023 Letter of Intent (LOI) Guide





Overview

The Minnesota Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Infrastructure Program was established by the Minnesota Legislature in 2012 and is defined in [Minnesota Statute 174.40](#). MnDOT Office of State Aid for Local Transportation (SALT) and the Office of Transit and Active Transportation (OTAT) share responsibilities for the administration and oversight of the SRTS program. SALT administers the SRTS infrastructure funds on local roads (city, county, township, and Tribal owned roadways), and OTAT administers the non-infrastructure SRTS funds. For this 2023 SRTS infrastructure solicitation, the intent is to award grants totaling up to \$10.9 million.

Program Goal

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) State Aid for Local Transportation (SALT) Office administers the state SRTS infrastructure program with guidance from the 2023 AT & Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Infrastructure Advisory Committee. The process, criteria, and prioritization for the solicitation are required by statute to establish a geographic equity-based project evaluation and selection process that is competitive, criteria-based, and objective. Projects are selected and approved by the 2023 AT & SRTS Infrastructure Advisory Committee to provide financial assistance to eligible recipients to construct school-adjacent pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure improvements.

Letter of Intent Purpose

The purpose of the letter of intent process allows program reviewers at MnDOT to gauge the development of proposed projects. This also creates an opportunity for smaller and first-time applicants to understand if they meet the eligibility requirements and if their projects will be able to enter construction within the required timelines. Letter of Intent reviewers at MnDOT will provide a recommendation on whether applicants should proceed with submitting a full application or develop their project further. If an applicant receives a recommendation to further develop a project instead of submitting a full application, they may still submit a full application if they choose to do so.



Applicant Eligibility

The 2023 SRTS Infrastructure Solicitation is available to a broad spectrum of entities that represent students. Townships, schools, school districts, and non-state aid cities may submit applications for infrastructure funding with a lead agency sponsor. Note that a resolution of support is required from the applicant agency's governing council and from the lead agency sponsor's governing council or board. Additionally, resolutions of support must be submitted from all public agencies that will have property or right-of-way impacted by this project. Eligible entities include:

- Schools, both public and private
- School districts
- Non-State Aid Cities
- State Aid Cities
- Counties
- Federally Recognized Indian Tribes
- Townships

Pursuant to [Minnesota Statute 174.40](#), a statutory or home rule charter city, county, town, or federally recognized Indian Tribe is eligible to receive funding if the governing body has adopted subdivision regulations that require safe routes to school infrastructure in developments authorized on or after June 1, 2016. This requirement does not apply to school or school district applicants whose projects will be constructed entirely on school property. Note that in these new and proposed developments, SRTS infrastructure funding is eligible for the construction of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Additionally, all infrastructure proposed in any SRTS infrastructure application must have a usable service life of at least ten years.

Funding Eligibility

Safe Routes to School infrastructure funding does not require any local or tribal match, and grants are paid on a reimbursable basis (the local or Tribal Agency finances 100% of the project cost up front and submits state aid pay requests for reimbursement). Grant requests must be between \$50,000 and \$1,000,000.

Eligible Improvements

SRTS infrastructure funds may be used for projects which will enable students to walk, bike and roll to and from schools. Eligible items include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following improvements:

- Pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements: pedestrian curb ramps, intersections or midblock crossings, median refuges, raised crossings, raised intersections, speed humps and curb extensions
- Off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities: exclusive multi-use bicycle and pedestrian trails, sidewalks, pedestrian bridges, pathways that are separated from a roadway
- On-road facilities: bicycle lanes, bicycle boulevards, and cycle tracks
- Traffic control and safety devices: signs, bicycle and pedestrian activated signals, flexible bollards, and pavement markings, pedestrian-scaled lighting *Note: Electronic devices must be permanent - **not** mobile.*
- Basic curb, roadway, or turf replacement due to removals required to install the improvements listed above



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Ineligible Improvements

SRTS infrastructure funds may **not** be used for projects that serve purely a recreational or leisure purpose. Additionally, items that are **ineligible** for SRTS infrastructure funds include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Landscaping planters, benches, and decorative fences
- Ornamental lighting beyond the standard
- Benches, bike racks or bike parking, fix-it stations, water fountains
- Aesthetic treatments above the standard
- Costs associated with engineering, construction administration and inspection, right of way acquisition, and water main, sanitary sewer, or private utility work
- **Work on trunk highways or on trunk highway right-of-way without a letter of support from the MnDOT district engineer. Work on trunk highways is only allowed if this letter is included with the application.**

Funding Types

State SRTS funds can be used to (1) fund up to 100% of the construction costs of non-federally funded projects, and to (2) provide the required local or tribal match for projects that have already been selected for federal awards. Construction cannot begin until a grant agreement is executed between MnDOT and the applicant agency.

Construction Project (No federal funding)

This option is available for communities that have a project identified in their SRTS plan or other planning document and need funds to implement the improvements. This option may be used to fund up to 100% of eligible SRTS construction costs. Projects should be planned for construction in 2024 or 2025.

Local or Tribal Match for Federally Funded Project

Funds may be used for the local or Tribal share on SRTS federally funded projects already programmed in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). To be considered for a local or Tribal match, the project must already be awarded federal funding, have a federal MnDOT project number, and be listed in an approved STIP for construction in 2024 or 2025.

Federal Transportation Alternative (TA) or Safe Streets for All (SS4A) funding may also be eligible for use on these types of infrastructure projects. Applicants may want to consider which program best fits the needs of their project.



Lead Agency Sponsor

Schools, school districts, townships, and non-state aid cities will need a state aid city or county to serve as their lead agency sponsor for their infrastructure project. If a city in which the project is taking place is not located within the state aid city, the city must work with the county as a sponsor. The sponsor's tasks could include, but are not limited to:

- Be the fiscal agent on behalf of the applicant and have funds flow from MnDOT to the state aid city or county to the contractor
- Request SAP/SP number for the project
- Ensure the project meets milestones and dates
- Assist local agency in execution of a grant agreement
- Develop, review and/or approve the plan
- Submit plan, engineers estimate, and proposal to the District State Aid Engineer (DSAE)
- Advertise, let, and award the project
- Submit pay requests to State Aid
- Communicate progress and updates with the DSAEs and State Aid Programs Engineer
- Ensure that the project receives adequate supervision and inspection
- Assist with project close out

Letter of Intent (LOI) Instructions

This LOI is submitted as an online form, which can be accessed on the [SRTS infrastructure grant webpage](#). The online form may not be available until the opening for letters of intent on October 9, 2023. A link may be generated to save responses until the whole form is submitted. The final date to submit the letter of intent form is November 9, 2023.

If an entity errantly submits a letter of intent or would like to make changes before the November 9th deadline, they shall send an email to steven.prusak@state.mn.us prior to resubmittal. Be sure that the message includes the first and last name of the entity representative, along with the entity name. Also, include the reason why you may need to resubmit a letter of intent. Unless notice is otherwise given, the latest LOI submittal per project by date will govern.

Related Documents

- [SRTS Infrastructure Program Guide/Training Presentation \(PowerPoint\)](#) – includes general SRTS infrastructure program information, eligibility, funding, and project selection process
- [2023 SRTS Infrastructure Solicitation FAQs](#) – includes responses to frequently asked questions regarding the grant program, the application, project selections, design and construction



Solicitation Timeline

- **Monday, October 9th, 2023** – Safe Routes to School Infrastructure solicitation kick-off. Letter of intent period opens
- **Thursday, November 9th, 2023** – Deadline for applicants to submit letters of intent
- **Wednesday, November 22nd, 2023** – Deadline for MnDOT to review of letters of intent. Recommendation to proceed forward with full application sent to applicants
- **Monday, November 27th, 2023** – Opening date for full application submittals
- **Friday, February 2nd, 2024** – Deadline for applicants to submit full applications
- **April or May, 2024** – Project selection finalized, and award letters distributed to selected projects pending volume of applications received

Letter of Intent Review Process

Interested grant applicants are strongly recommended to complete a letter of intent for their project prior to submitting a full application. Upon completion, the letter of intent will be reviewed by MnDOT SRTS Infrastructure program personnel. The reviewing party will either recommend or not recommend that the entity proceed to the full application. The goal of this initial review is to ensure project eligibility and determine project readiness prior to submittal of the full application. A recommendation to proceed will be sent to the email address listed in the submitted letter of intent form on or before the review deadline of November 22, 2023.

Questions

Applicants who have any questions regarding the letter of intent may submit questions by e-mail to: Steven Prusak at steven.prusak@state.mn.us.

Questions must be submitted prior to 4:30 pm on November 7, 2023 in order to provide adequate response time.

Letter of Intent Contents

Applicant Information

1. **Name (First & Last):** Provide the name of the contact person at the local or Tribal agency applying for the funds. This person should be the person to contact with questions about the application and whom represents the agency submitting the project.
2. **Agency Name:** The name of the agency submitting the application.
3. **Job Title/Position:** The job title or position held by the applicant
4. **Phone:** The work phone number of the person at the agency applying for the funds.
5. **Email:** The work email address of the person at the agency applying for the funds.
6. **Agency Type:** Select the appropriate agency type radio button for the submitting agency: Township, Non-State Aid City (Population < 5,000), State Aid City, County, Federally Recognized Indian Tribe, School or School District.



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7. Address: The number and street name of agency.
8. City: The city where the agency is located.
9. State: This will always be Minnesota.
10. Zip Code: The zip code where the agency is located.
11. County: For non-tribal applicants, select the county where the agency is located from the pull-down list.
12. MnDOT District: Select the appropriate MnDOT district in which the proposed project would be constructed.
13. School and/or School District(s): Please list the school(s) and/or school district(s) in which the proposed project would be constructed. The infrastructure applications for State SRTS funds may represent one school or multiple schools that are in close proximity to one another (schools on the same or adjacent campuses, neighborhood, or block). (150 character maximum)

Project Information

1. Describe the work you want to do for which you are seeking support. Include a description of the project development activities for this project completed to date. Please be detailed and specific with improvements proposed. Provide locations and complete extents. Define project development in terms of plan development – Is it a concept? Has it been studied? Are preliminary plans prepared? Is final design underway? (800 character maximum)
2. Enter the estimated amount of Safe Routes to School Infrastructure Program funding requested. This value must be between \$50,000 and \$1,000,000.
3. Total project budget: What is the total estimated cost of this project? Include all capital construction costs only. Do not include engineering, construction administration and inspection, not right of way acquisition.

Project Location

1. Confirmation of jurisdiction: Answer “yes” if the proposed infrastructure improvements will be constructed on the right-of-way or property of another agency other than the applicant and/or sponsoring agency. Answer “no” if this does not apply.
 - i) List all public agencies that are a part of this project. A public agency should be listed if it is partnering on this project or if this project will be constructed at any point within its city/township/county limits.
2. Provide a latitude for the project location. This may be approximated as the beginning point of the project. Please provide latitude in decimal format. See [FAQs](#) for instructions on how to identify your project latitude and longitude.
3. Provide a longitude for the project location. This may be approximated as the beginning point of the project. Please provide longitude in decimal format. See [FAQs](#) for instructions on how to identify your project latitude and longitude.



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Funding Sources

SRTS Infrastructure grant funds can be used to pay for the local or Tribal match of previously awarded federally funded construction projects. Answer “no” if the proposed project has not been selected for federal funding. Answer “yes” if the project has and identify the following information:

- a) Indicate which federal funding program this project has been selected for
- b) Indicate which STIP version (2023-2026, for example) the project is included in
- c) Indicate the Sequence Number(s) from the STIP
- d) Indicate how much federal funding is programmed

Applicants must ensure they have local or Tribal funds available for the local or Tribal share of this project.

Eligibility Check

Proposed projects must verify their project qualifies for the listed requirements below by indicating “yes”. Responding “no” to any of the following questions means the project is ineligible for funding through this program.

1. For non-tribal applicants, the applicant must have a **full resolution** (not just a letter of support) from their council or governing board supporting the project and application for SRTS infrastructure grant funds. The applicant understands this eligibility requirement and can execute and attach this document by the application submittal deadline of February 2, 2024.
2. Schools, school districts, townships and non-state aid cities will need a state aid city or county to serve as their lead agency sponsor. If a lead agency sponsor is required, the applicant must have a **full resolution** (not just a letter of support) from the sponsoring agency’s council supporting the project and agreeing to act as the project sponsor. The applicant understands this eligibility requirement and will obtain and attach this document to the application by the submittal deadline of February 2, 2024.
3. The applicant must have a **full resolution** (not just a letter of support) from all entities other than the applicant or lead agency sponsor whose property or right-of-way will be impacted by the proposed project. The applicant understands this eligibility requirement and will obtain and attach this document to the application by the submittal deadline of February 2, 2024.
4. Projects constructed with this grant funding must have an expected service life of 10 years minimum. The applicant affirms to the best of their current knowledge and belief that this requirement will be met.
5. Projects are required to be ready for construction in 2024 or 2025. The applicant understands this eligibility requirement and will complete design, bidding and construction by December 31, 2025.
6. Safe Routes to School infrastructure grant funds cannot be used on impacts to trunk highways or trunk highway right-of-way without an explicit letter of support from the MnDOT district engineer. The applicant understands this eligibility requirement and will obtain and attach this document to the application by the submittal deadline of February 2, 2024.



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7. All eligible applicants for Safe Routes to School infrastructure funds must have adopted subdivision regulations that require Safe Routes to School infrastructure in developments authorized on or after June 1, 2016. The applicant understands this eligibility requirement and can attach proof of compliance via ordinance or other language that demonstrates how it is applied.
8. Only construction costs are eligible for the program. Development of engineering and construction plans are not eligible nor are right of way acquisition costs. All awarded projects must follow the State Aid process, which includes developing a construction plan set signed by a licensed engineer. The applicant must have the ability to develop this plan set or the funds to pay a consultant to develop this plan set. Exhibits from engineering studies do not qualify as a construction plan set. The applicant understands this requirement and has the ability or funds to develop the plan set.
9. Safe Routes to School funds cannot be used to pay local agency or federally recognized Indian Tribe staff time to construct or install any improvements. Local agency or federally recognized Indian Tribe staff time is not an eligible cost for the program. All awarded projects must be put out to bid and awarded to a contractor. The applicant understands this program requirement and plans to bid the project out to a contractor.

Project Improvements

1. Describe how your project would improve safety concerns and provide public health benefits for your community. Please be detailed and specific with existing safety hazards. Provide locations and supporting explanations. Define public health improvements from the lens of improving connectivity of destinations and/or how this project will increase safety and comfort for active transportation modes. (800 character maximum)

Planning, Experience, & Public Engagement

1. Has the proposed project been developed from an existing transportation planning document(s)? If "yes" please provide the title of these documents and include a year of publication for each.
2. Describe your organization and/or the sponsoring agency's history with delivering infrastructure projects. If not applicable, identify the key steps and strategies that will be used to deliver the project via the State Aid process. Will the project be designed in-house or employ consultant support? How does the entity advertise and bid construction projects? Who will administer construction and inspect the project? (800 character maximum)
3. What has resulted from conversations with stakeholders, elected officials, school district representatives or from the general public? Is there written support for the project? If a project sponsor is needed, are they receptive to supporting this process? Please provide specific instances of public engagement or political discussion to demonstrate interest and support in the project. For entities requiring sponsors, describe your history and comfort working cooperatively with your County. Has verbal or written acceptance of their role been secured? (1600 character maximum)