



## **AB 57 Fact Sheet**

### **California's Safe Routes to School construction program**

*Introduced by Assembly Member Soto*

*Sponsored by the Safe Routes to School National Partnership*

#### **Bill Summary:**

AB 57 seeks to eliminate the sunset date for the "Safe Routes to School" construction program in the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and makes statutory changes in the Streets and Highways code to conform to federal law. The bill calls for federal safety funds to continue to be allocated in equal amounts to: state highways, local roads, and the Safe Routes to School construction (SR2S) program. Funds for the Safe Routes to School program are distributed through a statewide competition and are used for the construction of bicycle and pedestrian safety and traffic calming projects such as sidewalks, trails, bike lanes, and intersection improvements. California has been operating under the "one-third" distribution formula for federal safety funds since the year 2000 after the first statewide Safe Routes to School bill was approved in 1999 (AB 1475). Subsequent SR2S bills in 2002 (SB 10) and in 2004 (SB 1087) extended the program until its current sunset date of January 1, 2008. AB 57 would extend California's Safe Routes to School program indefinitely, helping to make California's children healthier, safer and stronger.

#### **Program Need:**

1) **Safety:** According to the California Department of Health Services' analyses of SWITRS (California's Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System), hospital discharge data, and death certificate data among California residents ages 5 to 15 years old, in 2004 there were:

- 44 pedestrian deaths and 760 children hospitalized for pedestrian injuries
- 11 bicycle deaths and 1,157 children hospitalized for bicycle injuries
- Of the fatal collisions, eight out of ten involved a motor vehicle

2) **Health:** According to 2004 data from the National Center for Health Statistics, during the past three decades, the prevalence of overweight young people in the United States more than tripled among children 6 to 11 years old and more than doubled among adolescents 12 to 19 years old. In addition, according to the Federal Highway Administration, in 1969 approximately

50% of children walked or biked to school, but by 2001 this number had declined to only 15%. Scientists have shown a relationship between the built environment and public health.

3) **Traffic:** In some California cities, public works departments report that 20-30% of morning rush hour traffic is parents driving their children to schools. Safe Routes to School programs help to get more kids walking and bicycling to schools safely.

4) **Demand:** Since the year 2000, the State of California has offered a statewide competitive grant-making process for Safe Routes to School funds to improve the safety of the physical environment for children traveling to and from schools. On average, each year Caltrans received more than \$130 million in qualified grant requests for Safe Routes to School projects for only about \$22 million available. As a result, only one in every seven grant applications has been able to be funded. The overwhelming demand for the program from local agencies, combined with the aforementioned injury and fatality data points to the incredible need for California's Safe Routes to School program to continue.

**Federal Safe Routes to School Program:** Due in a large part to the success of California's Safe Routes to School program, in 2005, Congress approved \$612 million in Safe Routes to School funds for all 50 states through the federal transportation bill SAFETEA-LU. Through this new federal program, California is receiving \$68.2 million; however, the final call for projects will be released by Caltrans in the fall of 2007, therefore if AB57 is not approved, there are no identified funds to continue the popular and important Safe Routes to School program in 2008 and beyond. In addition, guidance from the Federal Highway Administration to State Departments of Transportation indicates, "Experience from States with existing Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs is that applications for SRTS funds greatly exceed available funding resources... many States and local communities have already established funding programs for SRTS that should remain available for projects and applications." As such, it is critically important for California's kids (and in terms of setting a national precedent) that AB 57 be approved, extending California's landmark Safe Routes to School program.

**Please Support AB 57:** The Safe Routes to School National Partnership encourages you to join us in supporting AB57 by writing a letter of support to the bill author Assembly member Nell Soto. Letters of support are needed ASAP from as many entities as possible including: cities, counties, MPOs, PTAs, organizations, etc. Please fax your letter of support for AB 57, the Safe Routes to School construction bill, to the attention of Missy Johnson, staff for Assembly member Soto at fax: (916) 319-2352.

**Contact:** For more information on how to support AB 57, please contact:

- Missy Johnson, Staff to Assembly member Nell Soto: (916) 319-3300
- Deb Hubsmith, Safe Routes to School National Partnership: (415) 454-7430 or [saferoutes@bikesbelong.org](mailto:saferoutes@bikesbelong.org)