



MDOT PRESS RELEASE

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MDOT awards "Safe Routes to School" grants for programs for students with disabilities

August 5, 2010 -- Three Michigan schools serving students with disabilities will receive more than \$45,500 in federal Safe Routes to School (SRTS) funding for education programs, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) announced today. Schools in Allegan, Genesee and Washtenaw counties are receiving grants to address the challenges that children with disabilities may face while participating in SRTS programs. The Michigan Fitness Foundation is MDOT's partner in the initiative.

"MDOT and the Michigan Fitness Foundation have high expectations that these Safe Routes to School grants will help children with disabilities in Michigan," said State Transportation Director Kirk T. Steudle. "Resolving issues that prevent children with disabilities from participating in programs designed to increase their mobility not only will benefit students, but their parents, teachers, schools and communities as well."

"This funding is intended to help elementary and middle schools develop model SRTS programs for students with disabilities while utilizing lessons learned in a white paper released last January on this topic," said Marilyn Lieber, president and CEO of the Michigan Fitness Foundation. "It is our expectation that the work to be done here in Michigan can be replicated throughout the state and nation, thereby broadening the reach of the health benefits of physical activity."

The schools receiving SRTS funding are:

Hillside Learning and Behavioral Center, Allegan, Allegan County
Durant-Tuuri-Mott Elementary School, Flint, Genesee County
Woodland Meadows Elementary School, Saline, Washtenaw County

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The following schools are listed by county:

Allegan County

Hillside Learning and Behavioral Center

The Hillside Learning and Behavioral Center in Allegan will receive a \$22,500 grant to install mobility learning and mock intersection paths on the school grounds that will replicate city streets and sidewalks. The paths will provide a safe environment for students with disabilities to practice crossing streets and learn how to use traffic signals, pavement markings and handicap-accessible sidewalk ramps and other enhancements required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The focus is on helping students develop the confidence to become more mobile, and encourage them to travel safely to and from school and throughout the community. The Hillside Learning and Behavioral Center serves 93 students with disabilities from seven local school districts.

Genesee County

Durant-Tuuri-Mott Elementary School

The Durant-Tuuri-Mott Elementary School in Flint, in collaboration with the Crim Fitness Foundation, is receiving a \$15,000 grant to help the school follow the SRTS planning process and develop an action plan that is necessary in order for any school to apply for federal funding. The award is intended to provide schools insight into the tools, resources or programs that need to be developed or adapted to implement a plan that incorporates required elements for K-6 students with disabilities. Durant-Tuuri-Mott is a neighborhood school that serves 500 students, including 137 students with disabilities. The Crim Fitness Foundation has a history of working with people with disabilities.

Washtenaw County

Woodland Meadows Elementary School

The Woodland Meadows Elementary School in Saline is receiving a grant of \$8,050 to help the school conduct a mobility audit, identify barriers to student participation in bike/walk/roll-to-school days, and provide training for teachers, volunteers and students with or without disabilities. The school, in collaboration with Programs to Educate All Cyclists (PEAC), also will focus on teaching K-3 students with disabilities to become self-advocates and create a walking program for students with disabilities that will pair them with high school students. Staff and volunteers will be educated on best practices for working with children with disabilities. Finally, general education students will learn how to be walking buddies for their peers with

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disabilities. Woodland Meadows is a fully inclusive neighborhood school; out of a population of 480 students, 35 are students with disabilities.

MDOT's role is to administer the federally legislated SRTS program that creates opportunities for collaboration with agencies and partners not traditionally involved with transportation funding. The SRTS program provides educational programs, infrastructure improvements and encouragement activities to help children to safely walk and bike to school and increase their physical activity. Funding was established by Congress under the Safe, Accountable, Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users of 2005 (SAFETEA-LU). SRTS funding is 100 percent federal, with no local match required.

Students with disabilities that range widely in type and severity represent 15 percent of the student population in Michigan. In January, MDOT and the Michigan Fitness Foundation released a white paper, *Effectively Planning and Implementing Safe Routes to School for Students with Disabilities*, to begin discussion on the topic and to identify some of the challenges and solutions to help students with disabilities participate in SRTS programs. The paper is available online at: www.saferoutesmichigan.org, along with general information about the SRTS program in Michigan.

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MDOT says: Construction work zones need your undivided attention.