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Governor Bredesen Announces Safe Routes to School Grant for Memphis

NASHVILLE – Governor Phil Bredesen today announced that the state of Tennessee will provide the city of Memphis with Safe Routes to School funds totaling \$160,771 for sidewalk and crosswalk improvements, traffic devices, and safety activities for elementary school children. The Safe Routes to School program is a statewide initiative designed to make bicycling and walking to school a safer, more appealing and healthier alternative for students in kindergarten through eighth grade.

“The Safe Routes to School program is a great opportunity for schools, communities and government officials to work together to promote a healthier lifestyle for Tennessee children,” said Bredesen. “The program helps create safer walking and biking environments for students and funds activities to encourage children and their parents to consider walking and biking to school for a more active lifestyle.”

The city of Memphis will utilize the Safe Routes to Schools funds to replace aging sidewalks and signage near the Rozelle Elementary School campus. The grant will also fund educational programs and promotional activities focused on bicycle and pedestrian safety and promotional activities to encourage walking and biking to school as a practical and healthy initiative.

The Shelby County legislative delegation worked to secure these funds for the city of Memphis.

The grant is made possible through a federally funded program administered by the Tennessee Department of Transportation. This year, TDOT provided more than \$1.7 million in Safe Routes to School funds to ten municipalities for projects across the state.

“The Safe Routes to School program is an innovative program that integrates health, safety, traffic relief, and environmental concerns under one umbrella,” said TDOT Commissioner Gerald Nicely. “Funds may be used for two different types of programs, infrastructure projects and non-infrastructure activities, that directly support increased safety and conveniences for kindergarten through middle school children to walk and bike to school.”

The SRTS program is funded by \$10.8 million in federal funds through 2009. The funds were provided specifically for this purpose through SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users), the federal surface transportation program. The Safe Routes to School program is 100% federally funded and does not require a local match.

The Safe Routes to School program is comprised of five elements referred to as the 5 E’s. The selection process was driven by the following:

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- Engineering—creating operational and physical improvements to the infrastructure surrounding schools that reduce speeds and potential conflicts with motor vehicle traffic, and establishing safer and fully accessible crossings, walkways, trails and bikeways.
- Education—teaching children about the broad range of transportation choices, instructing them in important lifelong bicycling and walking safety skills and launching driver safety campaigns in the vicinity of schools.
- Enforcement—partnering with local law enforcement agencies to ensure traffic laws are obeyed in the vicinity of schools (including enforcement of speeds, yielding to pedestrians in crossings, and proper walking and bicycling behaviors), and to initiate community enforcement such as crossing guard programs.
- Encouragement—events and activities to promote walking and bicycling (bike rodeos).
- Evaluation—monitoring and documenting outcomes and trends through the collection of data both before and after the intervention.

To learn more about the Safe Routes to School Program at the Tennessee Department of Transportation, please visit <http://www.tdot.state.tn.us/bikeped/saferoutes.htm> or contact Diana Benedict, Program Coordinator, at (615) 253-2421 or diana.benedict@state.tn.us.

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