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The Case for Safe Routes to School Funding as a Smart Transportation Investment

March 10, 2026

Chair Walker and Members of the Committee,

When we talk about transportation investments, most of the focus understandably goes to the things we can see and build: roads, bridges, sidewalks, and crossings. Those investments are essential. But like any infrastructure system, building something is only part of the job. Ensuring that people know how to safely and effectively use that infrastructure determines whether the investment succeeds.

[Safe Routes to School](#), a national and federally-funded program, makes our transportation capital investments work better. Over the last 20 years, this funding has allowed Vermont to invest in sidewalks, crosswalks, traffic calming, and safer intersections near schools. But in creating this program, the federal government recognized that infrastructure alone does not change behavior or eliminate risk.

The program **teaches** students practical pedestrian and bicycle safety skills, so children learn how to cross the street safely. Funding can also help schools and communities find safe routes and identify where safety improvements are most needed before projects are built. In many small and rural towns, it has been the **only technical assistance available to help local leaders evaluate safety concerns around their schools and plan improvements**. But right now, Safe Routes to School programs are only being consistently funded and implemented in Chittenden County, leaving our rural communities without support.

The majority of Vermont's elementary schools are located in downtown and village centers, where there is a higher density of families in walking distance to school - but traffic safety remains a significant concern for parents, preventing their kids from walking or biking to school. This is a legitimate concern, as vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for children. Safe Routes to School programming helps families feel more comfortable, resulting in a 37% average increase in walking and biking to school in participating schools. That reduces congestion around schools—especially during morning arrival and afternoon dismissal—lowers transportation costs for families and school districts, and improves health and educational outcomes for kids. Most importantly, Safe Routes to School teaches responsibility and independence. Students learn how to move safely through their community, how to recognize risk, and how to make good decisions near traffic.

Local Motion is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Our Tax ID is 03-0361422.

Making it safe, accessible, and fun for everyone to bike, walk, and roll in Vermont.

Vermont has seen the benefits of Safe Routes to School programming before. From 2005 to 2012, the state supported a coordinator who helped communities advance both infrastructure improvements and safety education. More recently, from 2020 to 2024, VTrans subgranted Local Motion to run Safe Routes to School programming statewide. In that time, Local Motion partnered with 90 schools, hosted more than 250 events, distributed helmets and safety materials, and provided hands-on education through programs like Bike Smart. This assistance helped communities navigate funding processes, develop projects, and implement effective safety programs.

Today, Safe Routes to School has no dedicated or consistent funding. It must compete with other programs funded under the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) like trails, infrastructure, and environmental mitigation. Importantly, communities are left without the previously offered support of a state coordinator or technical assistance partner that helped identify which projects to prioritize and request funding for. This means most of this programming is just no longer happening - and in particular, non-infrastructure activities like education are rarely funded by TAP today.

Other states do things differently; as of 2024, 22 states designate a certain amount of funding from TAP for Safe Routes to School. Funding Safe Routes to School through TAP represents a **practical, responsible investment in safety, fiscal efficiency, and community capacity - especially in small towns.**

We respectfully ask the committee to **prioritize Safe Routes to School funding within TAP** so that children, families, and educators can travel to and from school safely. There are several ways to do this:

- Use TAP funds to hire a full-time statewide Safe Routes to School coordinator, either within VTrans or contracted with an outside organization.
- Set aside a percentage or dollar amount of the TAP funds specifically for Safe Routes to School.
- Prioritize Safe Routes to School projects and programs in TAP application scoring.
- Hold a separate competition for Safe Routes to Schools under TAP (see [Colorado](#)).

This is the upstream work that helps our infrastructure investments deliver real safety outcomes and long-term benefits for Vermont communities.

Thank you for your time and for your continued commitment to keeping Vermont's communities safe, healthy, and connected. We would welcome the opportunity to share more about how Safe Routes to School programming supports Vermont communities in future testimony.

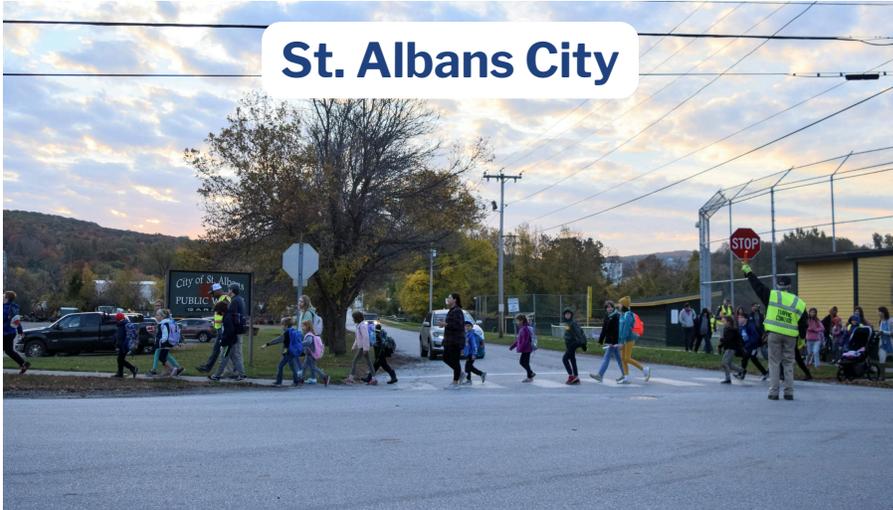
Warm regards,



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Safe Routes to School Events Coordinated by Local Motion

St. Albans City



Irasburg



Barton



Rutland



Northfield



Jericho



Poultney



Enosburg



Plainfield



Swanton



Sheffield



Isle La Motte

