

Item Title: North Carolina Department of Transportation Safe Routes to School Program Grant

Specific Action Requested:

That the Board of Commissioners accepts and appropriates \$207,164 into the Grants and Donations fund from the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT).

Item Summary:

Purpose: The Board of Commissioners must approve all grants, revenue, and expenditures. In accordance with the Wake County Personnel Ordinance, the Board of Commissioners must also approve any changes to the full-time equivalent position amounts.

Background: The North Carolina Department of Transportation Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program was established in 2005 to provide an opportunity for communities to improve conditions for bicycling and walking to school. The purpose of SRTS is to: enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school; make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age; and facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools.

Wake County was awarded the SRTS grant in 2023 to cover services from July 2024 through June 2026. In May 2025, the NCDOT Integrated Mobility Division (IMD) awarded Wake County additional funding through December 2026. It will require a 20% local match.

Strategic Plan: This action supports Inclusive Prosperity Goal 3 by 2029; Nine out of ten residents asked will share that they can find and enjoy enriching experiences that support our community's high quality of life.

Fiscal Impact: This agreement provides additional funding of \$207,164 to allow for a third year of services into the Health and Human Services Grant Fund for the (SRTS) Program. The additional funding will amend the period of performance to December 31, 2026. The Federal funding will fully support two (2) FTEs and programmatic costs. A 20% match is required from the County. The total amount requested by Wake County for a third year of SRTS funding was \$258,956. Following the 80/20 match, NCDOT IMD will provide \$207,164, and Wake County will provide \$51,792 for the local match funding, which are already

allocated within the Health Promotion Section budget and General Aid to County funds. If future funding is not identified, the positions will be abolished.

Additional Information:

Wake County Public Health (WCPH) seeks to improve the physical health of the community and decrease unintentional injuries by preventing motor vehicle crashes with child pedestrians and bicyclists through the continuation of a comprehensive Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program. SRTS is an evidenced-based program that can increase physical activity levels and set children up for a lifetime of being active. Research has shown that physical activity is essential to overall health. Currently, WCPH has two (2) FTE Public Health Educators servicing the county.

The 2020 WCHHS Chronic Disease Report notes that eight (8) of the top ten (10) leading causes of death in Wake County are chronic diseases, some of which are linked to lifestyle factors such as physical activity. Additionally, a report funded by the John Rex Endowment in 2014 identified motor vehicle-pedestrian crashes as the third leading cause of injury for children in Wake County. While this specific data is not available for more recent years, the Wake County Health and Human Services (WCHHS) 2022 Injury Report indicates that motor vehicle traffic crashes are among the three leading causes of overall injury and injury death in the county. Wake County is now the most populous county in the state with nearly 1.23 million residents and continues to grow more than twice as fast as the rest of the state. As a result, traffic pressure on our roadways is growing, and some of our communities are experiencing rapid development and even displacement. At the same time, WCPH recognizes that the physical infrastructure necessary to safely walk and bike is not distributed equitably across communities in Wake County. National research shows that people in low-income communities are more likely to walk and bike to work and school, but their neighborhoods are less likely to have sidewalks, and they have a higher risk of being injured or killed while walking or biking.

The Wake County Public Health Safe Routes to School goals for the grant are to:

1. Increase the number of K-12 students who walk and bike to school by implementing evidence-based Safe Routes to School strategies.
2. Increase knowledge of the rules of the road and safe walking, biking, and driving behaviors and increase positive attitudes towards walking and biking to school.
3. Increase access to safe infrastructure by facilitating the prioritization process and school-focused road safety assessments.

WCPH SRTS will infuse the project priority areas of education, encouragement, and evaluation while accomplishing the goals listed above.

The SRTS grant funds will be used as follows:

Budget Categories	Cost
Personnel Costs	\$185,000
Contracted Services	\$49,377
Equipment and Supplies	\$11,750
Printing	\$3,969
Training and Development	\$8,860
Total Costs	\$258,956
Amount Paid by NCDOT IMD	\$207,164
20% Match Paid by Wake County	\$51,792

Attachments:

1. NCDOT Award Letter
2. Budget Memo – FY2026 Grants and Donations Fund