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MIAMI BEACH

COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM

TO: Finance and Citywide Projects Committee
FROM: Jimmy L. Morales City Manager
DATE: April 25, 2013
SUBJECT: **DISCUSSION REGARDING THE FLORIDA SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM.**

This item was referred to the Finance and Citywide Projects Committee for discussion by Commissioner Jorge Exposito.

BACKGROUND

The Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program is a federally funded discretionary grant program intended to help communities address their school transportation needs and encourage more students to walk or cycle to school. SRTS strives to enable and encourage children from kindergarten through high school, including those with disabilities, to walk and cycle to school; to make walking and biking to school safer and more appealing; and to facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools. The program also seeks to address the safety needs of children already walking or biking in less than ideal conditions.

The Florida SRTS (FLSRTS) Program is fully funded through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and managed through the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) on a cost-reimbursement basis. In order for a project to be eligible under the FLSRTS Program, the following criteria must be met:

- Proposed projects must be designed to meet an identified need that is preventing children from walking or biking safely to and from school.
- Proposed projects must be within a two-mile radius of the participating school, and within the school attendance area. Generally, the closer the project is to the school, the more likely it will be to increase the numbers of children walking or biking to and from school, or to increase the safety of children already walking or biking to school.
- Proposed projects must be located on public property or on permanent public easements. Right of way issues must be resolved before applying.
- Use of traffic control devices must be consistent with the current Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), unless the applicant receives experimental approval from FHWA.

Projects are classified as one of two types: infrastructure projects and non-infrastructure projects. Eligible infrastructure projects under the FLSRTS Program may include:

- **Pedestrian facilities:** includes new sidewalks and other pathways, sidewalk widening and sidewalk gap closures, on the public right of way. All of these facilities must include ADA ramps and meet other ADA requirements. Short pedestrian bridges and access improvements to bus stops may be able to be funded.
- **Bicycle facilities:** includes new or upgraded bike lanes, shared-use paths, geometric improvements and shoulder widening, on the public right of way.
- **Bicycle parking facilities:** includes bicycle parking facilities such as bike racks; shelters and bike lockers on school grounds.
- **Traffic control devices:** includes new or upgraded marked crosswalks, pavement markings, traffic signs and signals, flashing beacons, bicycle-sensitive signal actuation devices, pedestrian countdown signals, pedestrian activated signal upgrades, and all other pedestrian- and bicycle-related traffic control devices.
- **Traffic calming:** includes roundabouts, bulb-outs, speed humps, raised crosswalks, raised intersections, median refuges, narrowed traffic lanes, lane reductions, full- or half-street closures, and other speed reduction techniques. Generally these are not stand-alone projects, but some traffic calming devices may be included as part of an overall pedestrian or bicycle facility project.

Eligible non-infrastructure projects under the FLSRTS Program may include:

- Support for the creation of “Walking School Buses” or “Bike Trains” of school children
- Support for Walk and Roll to School Days.
- School encouragement and incentive programs.
- Support for bicycle rodeos.
- Pedestrian and bicycle safety education training for children or instructors, including, but not limited to, the Florida Traffic and Bicycle Safety Education Program.
- Support for these types of education programs, including paying for trainers, equipment, substitute teachers (if necessary and training is done during the school day) or training time for teachers (if necessary and training is done outside the school day).
- Other relevant training for children, such as transportation, environmental choices and personal safety, if done as part of a larger FLSRTS program.
- Relevant training for law enforcement personnel, school administrators, youth leaders, parents or the public, including paying trainers.

In 2011, the City applied for FLSRTS Program funding for various infrastructure improvements to improve the safety of students walking and bicycling to Biscayne Point Elementary. The scope of the grant application included design and construction of new sidewalks, crosswalks, and bicycle lanes to improve the safety of children walking and bicycling to school. The total cost of the infrastructure improvements identified was estimated at \$379,075.37. As a result of the City's grant application, the City was awarded \$150,000 under the FLSRTS Program for

Fiscal Year 2014/15.

ANALYSIS

FDOT District Six is currently soliciting applications for funding under the FLSRTS Program for infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects for Fiscal Years 2013/14, 2014/15, 2015/16, 2016/17, and 2017/18. The application process is open through June 14, 2013. FDOT has programmed approximately \$24 million over this five-year period. The program does not require a local match. FDOT has indicated that it intends to open the application process each fiscal year for Fiscal Year 2013/2014 through 2017/2018 contingent upon funding availability.

Below are three candidate FLSRTS projects identified by City staff for consideration. Detailed cost estimates for design and construction of the proposed improvements are being developed for each candidate project.

Feinberg-Fisher Elementary School, North Beach Elementary School, and Nautilus Middle School – Infrastructure Improvements

Pursuant to Letter to Commission # 077-2013 from the City's Quality for Education Committee, the committee requested the Mayor and City Commission consider supporting the inclusion of North Beach Elementary, Feinberg-Fisher K-8, and Nautilus Middle School in the City's SRTS application. Upon direction from the City Commission, the Administration will partner with each of these schools to identify infrastructure deficiencies currently preventing children from safely walking or bicycling to and from the schools. As part of the application process, City staff will conduct a series of inspections of the current infrastructure, including sidewalk condition, crosswalks, signalization, signage, pavement striping, traffic calming, lighting, and drainage. The City will conduct a review of all current and future projects in the school boundary area as well as interviews with the school principals, police liaison, and Parent-Teacher Association president. The Administration will coordinate with the City's Committee for Quality of Education to identify priorities and deficiencies for these two schools.

In addition, the following project has been recommended by City Commission for inclusion in the SRTS application to be submitted by the City:

Miami Beach Senior High School - Bicycle Boulevard along Royal Palm Avenue from 28th Street to 41st Street and Extension of the Par 3 Golf Course Off-Road Shared-Use Path.

A bicycle boulevard is a corridor that prioritizes bicycle traffic over vehicular traffic through the implementation of traffic calming features and signage along the boulevard. In order to further prioritize bicyclists over motorists, a successful bicycle boulevard must divert traffic and restrict certain turning movements. These restrictions are intended to reduce vehicular speed and volume along the roadway.

A proposed bicycle boulevard along Royal Palm Avenue would provide an alternative mode of transportation and a safe connection for children bicycling to Miami Beach Senior High. Currently, there are dedicated bicycle lanes along Royal Palm Avenue from 42nd Street to 47th Street where it connects to dedicated bicycle lanes on 47th Street from Alton Road to Pine Tree Drive. In addition, the City has an upcoming Capital Improvements Program (CIP) project that includes improvements to the Par 3 Golf Course located to the

north of Miami Beach Senior High School. As part of this CIP project, an off-road shared-use path will be constructed from the Scott Rakow Youth Center and run along the north and west edge of the Par 3 Golf Course; however, the path will not extend to Miami Beach Senior High School. In order to achieve a direct connection to the school, an extension to the proposed Par 3 off-road shared-use path is required. Therefore, in addition to the bicycle boulevard along Royal Palm Avenue, the SRTS grant application would also include an extension to the proposed Par 3 off-road shared-use path in order to provide a direct connection to the school.

The upcoming traffic safety study for Miami Beach High School will identify any additional safety enhancements that can be included in the City's SRTS grant application.

The implementation of a bicycle boulevard requires Miami Dade County Public Works and Waste Management (County) review and approval. As part of the County's review process, the City must obtain concurrence from the majority of affected residents along the corridor and present engineering plans for permit approval. This effort is anticipated to take six (6) to eight (8) months. As such, an application for design and construction of a bicycle boulevard along Royal Palm Avenue would be premature at this time. Since planning studies do not appear in the eligibility list, the City Administration recommends the deferral of this application until the next application cycle (Fiscal Year 2014/2015).

Florida Safe Routes To School Application Process

The FLSRTS application process involves an intensive review and planning effort with the intent of identifying all infrastructure deficiencies preventing safe and comfortable walking and bicycling conditions. As part of the application, the City is required to submit a technical report detailing the following elements:

- Introduction and Background Information (SRTS History by Maintaining Agency, School SRTS History, Eligibility Information, Past Engineering, Past Safety Planning, Past Evaluation, Past Safety Education Campaigns)
- Project School Data (Name, Enrollment, Student Travel Data, Student Economical Data, School Attendance Boundary)
- Existing Conditions Report (Crash History, Existing Deficiencies Report, Traffic Control Conditions, Traffic Volume)
- Proposed SRTS Improvements
- Maps (Bicycle and Pedestrian Crashes, Land Use, Existing Route Deficiencies)
- Cost Estimate

In order to compile the required information, City staff must coordinate with school officials and conduct various site inspections and evaluations. These inspections must be completed during morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up periods in order to observe peak hour conditions and trends.

CONCLUSION

Due to limited resources and time constraints, the Administration is seeking that the FCWPC prioritize the aforementioned candidate FLSRTS projects for Fiscal Years 2013/2014, 2014/2015, 2015/2016, 2016/2017, and 2017/2018. It should be noted that the City can apply for more than one eligible project in any given fiscal year; however, given the level of effort

FCWPC – Florida Safe Routes To School Program

April 25, 2013

Page 5 of 5

required to prepare the FLSRTS application, the Administration recommends prioritizing no more than two projects in one application cycle.

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