



## News Release

For immediate use

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### **Michigan Department of Transportation receives James L. Oberstar Safe Routes to School Award**

CHAPEL HILL – The National Center for Safe Routes to School awarded the 2007 James L. Oberstar Award to the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) for the exemplary establishment of the Michigan Safe Routes to School Program.

The award is named for Congressman James Oberstar (D-MN) to honor his dedication to America's school children as the pioneer for the National Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program. Oberstar, current chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, sponsored the federal Safe Routes to School legislation that strives to create safe settings where more parents and children can walk and bicycle to school.

"The National Center is very pleased to honor Michigan's Department of Transportation and the hard work of countless partners to get the Michigan SRTS Program quickly up and running, and with processes in place to maximize sustained successes," said Lauren Marchetti, director of the National Center for Safe Routes to School.

The Michigan SRTS Program demonstrated a number of key program elements that allowed them to lay the groundwork for effective program development. MDOT first established a SRTS Handbook providing tools and guidance to schools planning SRTS strategies. Along with partner organizations and various subcontractors, MDOT is also creating a number of specialized educational modules for specific program participants such as urban and disabled children, who may face special challenges surrounding walking and bicycling to school. Recognizing the need for program support, they also established training and technical assistance programs for schools completing the planning process.

Currently, 60 percent of Michigan's counties have a total of 256 registered schools that are in various stages of completing the planning process. Registered schools become the pool of applicants for State funds and their action plans are the basis for projects for which they request funding. MDOT maintains an open call for applications with no deadline for submittal, allowing each school to proceed at its own pace.

"I am very pleased to see this award go to Michigan, a state that neighbors my Congressional District. But, more importantly, I am heartened by the response of states nationwide to the Safe Routes to School concept," said Oberstar. "Michigan is setting the pace, and I look forward to seeing this program take root, grow and thrive throughout the country."

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In July 2005, Congress passed federal legislation that established a national Safe Routes to School program. The program dedicates a total of \$612 million towards Safe Routes to School from 2005 to 2009. These funds are made available to individual States to develop and administer Safe Routes to School Programs.

Established in May 2006 through funding from the Federal Highway Administration, the National Center for Safe Routes to School assists communities in enabling and encouraging children to safely walk and bicycle to school. The Center strives to equip Safe Routes to School programs with the knowledge and technical information to implement safe and successful strategies. The Center is maintained by the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center.

For more information on the James L. Oberstar Award, please visit [http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/news\\_room/oberstar\\_award/](http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/news_room/oberstar_award/).

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