Choosing State and Federal Funding Approaches

New State Revenue for Safe Routes to School

Pros
- Dedicated state funds significantly increase the chances that Safe Routes to School programs are sustainable long-term by diversifying funding and creating a level of commitment and permanency for the program.
- By supplementing limited federal funds for active transportation with state funds, the reach is increased. States generally have more potential Safe Routes to School projects than they can fund, so supplementing federal funds with state funds helps to meet that demand.
- State funds can be tailored to achieve state goals, and generally have fewer regulations than federal funds.
- States have no need to require a local match, and so may be more able to direct funds to communities with greatest need.

Cons
- This can be a heavy lift, depending on your state’s fiscal health. States rarely have extra money lying around, so you’ll need to identify a funding stream for this. This could mean raising taxes, cutting funding from something else, dedicating existing tax dollars, etc.
- Sometimes this takes multiple steps. For example, a campaign might first codify the program and create a line item in the budget, and then separately find a funding stream for the program.

Dedicated Federal Transportation Dollars to Safe Routes to School

Pros
- Even with dedicated Safe Routes to School funding, states can still choose to run one big TAP competition or can choose to separate out Safe Routes to School as a separate competition.
- This can be a good first step to building support for Safe Routes to School in your state. Your state does not need to utilize its own resources; it can use existing federal funds. As communities take advantage of this dedicated funding stream, you begin to build the case for why the state should appropriate additional funds to support Safe Routes to School.
- There is precedent for using federal transportation dollars for Safe Routes to School. Under SAFETEA-LU, Safe Routes to School had a dedicated funding stream and this is an initiative to return to similar funding levels.

Cons
- Projects require a state or local match of up to 20 percent of the project cost.
- The federal dollars to support Safe Routes to School initiatives amount to only a fraction of the need.
- Federal funding comes with stringent administrative and reporting requirements, and sometimes additional layers of environmental review, that can be especially burdensome for small cities and towns, school districts, and nonprofits.