

Dover will Promote Health and Safety with “Safe Routes to School” Program

In collaboration with City of Dover officials and the Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association (OMEGA), Dover City Schools has completed the planning to apply for a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) grant. SRTS is a federally funded program that works with local communities to develop strategies to encourage and enable students in grades K-8 to walk or ride their bicycle to school safely.

Led by Kevin Buettner from the Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association, a committee of community members, Ohio Department of Transportation representatives, school administrators, and city officials have worked together for more than a year to identify areas around our elementaries and middle school that need improvements. This group developed a School Travel Plan that summarizes current demographics and prioritizes changes that need to be made for students who walk or bike to school.

SRTS funds infrastructure projects such as improved street crossings, sidewalks, and signage, as well as non-infrastructure strategies such as educational programming, encouragement events and traffic safety enforcement near schools. In conjunction with the SRTS committee, each fall our schools have sponsored a “Walk to School Day.”

The Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association will now work with the City of Dover officials to write a grant to fund the identified projects up to \$400,000. If received, the grant money will pay for the installation of sidewalks and sidewalk improvements around our schools, as well as educational materials for our students.

Walking and biking to school can promote a healthy and active lifestyle. Studies show students who arrive at school refreshed and ready to learn are more focused during the school day, which can improve academic performance. The district wants to encourage this while providing for the safety of our students.

We are excited about having the Safe Routes to School program in Dover. Since the program began in 2008, walking and bicycling to school has increased in Ohio communities with SRTS programs, and we are hopeful Dover will achieve similar results. Thank you to our community members and key stakeholders that participated in the planning process. Together, we are all working to make Dover a safer and healthier place for our kids.