



NEWS

AS RECOMMENDED BY SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER PERLA TABARES HANTMAN, SCHOOL BOARD ENDORSES TEN ADDITIONAL SCHOOLS FOR SUBMITTAL UNDER THE SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT PROGRAM

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News Release from Perla Tabares Hantman

At its February 11, 2009 meeting, the Miami-Dade School Board endorsed ten schools for submittal under the Safe Routes to School Infrastructure Grant Program, including Ernest R. Graham Elementary, Brentwood Elementary, Maya Angelou Elementary, Meadowlane Elementary, Winston Park K-8 Center, Coral Way K-8 Center, Ben Sheppard Elementary, Devon Aire K-8 Center, Spanish Lake Elementary, and Gertrude K. Edelman/Sabal Palm Elementary.

“This is a wonderful step in the right direction to helping us ensure the safety and security of our students as they travel to and from school,” said Ms. Hantman, who sponsored the Board item for the endorsement.

The Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Infrastructure Grant Program enables and encourages children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school, by making pedestrian routes safer and more appealing, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age. The U.S. Department of Transportation implemented federal-aid highway funds legislation providing federal grant dollars for infrastructure improvements to establish SRTS programs at public elementary schools nationwide for five fiscal years. The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is processing all SRTS grant applications at the local level.

Since 2007, the School Board has endorsed 47 schools for inclusion in the SRTS Program. These schools were chosen in collaboration with the Miami-Dade County

Public Schools Community Traffic Safety Team (Public Schools CTST), whose members include representatives from the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the Miami-Dade County Public Works Department (Public Works). The schools all have large student populations that walk to school, and are located in areas where there have been high instances of pedestrian traffic accidents involving children between the ages of five and thirteen. The required engineering studies were funded through MPO grants and FDOT consultants.

Thus far, of the 47 schools submitted by the School District, FDOT has selected a total of 41 schools for funding under the SRTS Program. These schools will receive over \$6,200,000 for necessary infrastructure improvements. The six schools that did not receive funding--Melrose Elementary, Dr. Robert B. Ingram Elementary, Avocado Elementary, Leisure City K-8 Center, Coconut Palm K-8 Academy, Redondo Elementary--will be re-submitted by the District for further consideration by FDOT at its next round of application submittals due April 30, 2009.

Recognizing the safety and health benefits of the SRST program, the Public Schools CTST has established a goal of providing a SRTS for all elementary and middle schools in the District. Due to limited funding sources for the required engineering studies, and pursuing the goal of completing studies for qualifying schools, the Public Schools CTST has partnered with the Florida International University (FIU) Engineering Division, and the Florida Engineering Society (FES) Miami Chapter, to perform the engineering studies for newly identified schools. The FIU students will perform the work under the direction and supervision of licensed engineers. To assist in the prioritization and selection process for the next round of schools, the FIU/FES team has developed a priority school matrix. The top ten ranked schools, named above, will be submitted under the next round of SRTS grant applications for fiscal year 2011, along with the six schools that were not previously funded.

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