

Ministers announce new initiative to support walking and cycling infrastructure for schools

Minister for Transport Eamon Ryan TD, Minister for Education Norma Foley TD and Minister of State Hildegard Naughton TD have today launched a new initiative called [Safe Routes to School](#) which will support active travel infrastructure for selected schools around the country. The programme, which is the next phase in the Government's investment in active travel, will see funding provided from the €1.8 billion committed under the Programme for Government, to support walking/scooting and cycling to primary and post-primary schools.

The *Safe Routes to School* programme aims to create safer walking and cycling routes within communities, alleviate congestion at the school gates and increase the number of students who walk or cycle to school by providing walking and cycling facilities. The improvements to the school commute could range from an upgraded footpath or new cycle lane to a complete reworking of a school's entrance.

Minister for Transport Eamon Ryan TD said: "Schoolchildren need more than hi- vis vests to get to schools safely. They need proper infrastructure to make walking cycling and scooting a practical choice for families. The first phase of Safe routes to school will help deliver these facilities by fast tracking segregated infrastructure and providing front of school treatments to improve access and prevent congestion. Helping children get to school safely under their own steam is better for their health and development and better for the environment.

Minister for Education Norma Foley TD said: "The Safe Routes to School gives school communities the opportunity to create solutions for healthier and

more sustainable travel to and from school. Being active is a key component of wellbeing, and this initiative will help our schools to promote active and safe travel for all students.”

Minister of State Hildegarde Naughton, who has delegated responsibility for the programme within the Department of Transport said: “The *Safe Routes to School* programme will reimagine the journey to school and reignite travel to school by active means. With this new initiative, we will work with school communities and together we will act to remove the barriers to walking/scooting and cycling to school which our children currently face. We will find ways to make the daily journey to school for every student fun, active and safe.”

“My hope is that in time, through continued investment and cooperation arising from the *Safe Routes to School* programme, every student in every village, town and city, can safely travel to and from school be it by foot/scooter or bike.”

Anne Graham, CEO of the National Transport Authority said: “The project being announced today is a significant step in encouraging young people to use more sustainable modes of transport, particularly when going to school. We want to see more young people cycling, walking/scooting to school, but we understand that safety is a concern.”

“In this first phase of ‘Safe Routes to School’, we will address this by providing better infrastructure for these young people. This year alone, work on projects will get under way in over 100 schools around the country.”

“NTA along with Green-Schools, looks forward to working with communities and with local authorities in making that journey safer than ever before, so that we can make a real difference to schools, families, and the environment.” All schools are eligible to apply to the programme and information will be circulated from the Departments of Education and Transport to schools

nationwide. The selected schools will be guided through the application process and will work with a designated infrastructure officer from Green-Schools who will liaise with the school and local authority as works are planned and carried out.

Schools will be selected for participation in the programme for 2021 based on a mix of criteria including school type, location and school's commitment to sustainable travel. The programme will select a number of schools for participation this year with further opportunities for schools that are not successful in their application to reapply at a later date.

The programme is funded by the [Department of Transport](#) through the [National Transport Authority \(NTA\)](#) and is supported by the [Department of Education](#). An Taisce's [Green-Schools](#) is co-ordinating the programme, while funding will be made available to local authorities which will play a key part in delivering the infrastructure along access routes and at the school gate.

For more information about the programme, visit www.greenschoolsireland.org/saferoutestoschool.

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