



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on June 11, 2014

DOT Spends \$1 Billion to Get Kids to Walk to School

Remember when you walked to school uphill both ways? Bet you didn't know that if you did that today the federal government would pay you for it.

Under provisions of the federal Safe Routes to School Program (SRTS), the U.S. Department of Transportation "provides Federal-aid highway funds to State Departments of Transportation" to make sure kids get to school safely.



An Associated Press (AP) article describes the program's application:

For a growing number of children in Rhode Island, Iowa and other states, the school day starts and ends in the same way — they walk with their classmates and an adult volunteer to and from school. Walking school buses are catching on in school districts nationwide because they are seen as a way to fight childhood obesity, improve attendance rates and ensure that kids get to school safely.

And:

Many programs across the country are funded by the federal Safe Routes to School program, which pays for infrastructure improvements and initiatives to enable children to walk and bike to school.

As if cribbed from some darkly humorous novel about the silliness abounding in a dystopian socialist America, the goals of the SRTS published by the Department of Transportation are galling. The DOT explains:

The Program provides funds to the States to substantially improve the ability of primary and middle school students to walk and bicycle to school safely. The purposes of the program are:

1. to enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school
2. to make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age; and
3. to facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity (approximately 2 miles) of primary and middle schools (Grades K-8).

How much does the Obama administration dole out to states who hire these fat-busting "drivers" of these 21st century "walking school buses?"

According to data published in 2012 by the U.S. Department of Transportation, over \$1 billion in money plundered from taxpayers is devoted to this unconstitutional aspect of the nanny state.

As with all of the federal government's "grants" to states, administrators insist that the money accomplishes some noble humanitarian goal. The AP reports:

Robert Johnson, of the Missouri-based PedNet Coalition, a nonprofit that advocates for transit alternatives, said the success of the programs reflects a growing interest in getting kids more



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active.

“Every parent is looking for ways to make their child a little healthier, and walking to school is one,” he said.

Every parent? While it is true that the funds for this federal program comes from the “legal plunder” of millions of Americans who would never willingly support such nonsense, the methods used to derive the alleged benefits of the Safe Routes to School scheme are not within the enumerated powers assigned to Congress in the Constitution.

One would imagine that states would rise up and demand that the federal beast remain within its constitutional cage. Not so much.

Department of Transportation figures reveal that all 50 states (and the District of Columbia) line up annually for the SRTS handout.

In 2012, the size of the grants ranged from \$21,080,209 to California to the \$933,567 checks sent to the governments of Alaska, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Maine, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

In what has become the typical trope of states that have allowed themselves to be reduced to nothing more than administrative subunits of the all-powerful central government, supporters point to all the good being accomplished by the surrender of sovereignty masquerading as a social aid program. The AP reports:

On the milelong route in Providence, the program’s manager, Allyson Trenteseaux, and another volunteer recently led Jaiden, Rosanyily and six other children through busy intersections and around broken glass littering the sidewalks.

On the walks, Trenteseaux said, she mends relationships among the kids, builds relationships and intervenes when there are problems. During the winter, a walk leader noticed some of the children were wearing slippers and bought them all boots.

Last year, 11 of the 14 students who participated and completed a survey attended school more often. The program now has a waiting list, and Family Service plans to expand into more schools next year.

Lets any would-be state education official wonder whether he’s up to the challenge of carrying out the federal kiddie kumbaya, the U.S. Department of Transportation “offers a central online library of informational videos and resources, designed specifically for local public agencies. Each video addresses a single topic — condensing the complex regulations and requirements of the Federal-aid Highway Program into easy-to-understand concepts and illustrated examples.”

It must be very difficult for the petty edu-crats to picture just how the “walking school bus” would work, so the billion dollars allocated to this program are well spent.

Sarcasm aside, it’s one thing for the federal government to go on constitutional walkabout, usurping authority that should be rightfully retained by the states, but it is quite another level of lamentable lunacy for the several states to willingly subordinate themselves to the plutocrats on the Potomac.

Why have the states so completely and meekly abdicated their rightful position of power?

Why have they deserted their posts as sentinels set to watch for the approaching advance of federal absolutism?



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Why do Americans look to Washington for cures to diseases bred by the swarms of would-be dictators that infest that former swamp?

Why do we sit idly by as congressmen, courts, and the president conspire to reduce our state governments to mere colonies of the federal empire?

Are state lawmakers and governors now so accustomed to their servitude that a benign stupor is their only reaction to the placement by the federal government of tighter and tighter chains around their necks?

Liberty will be preserved and legal plunder will be punished when citizens of the states realize that the billions spent on “walking school buses” and other such federal follies are little more than a mess of federal pottage with which our birthright of republican government is being purchased.

A bill currently pending in the Senate would authorize an additional \$500 million appropriation for the Safe Route to School program.

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