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A Joint Release with Grant Partners
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Douglas County Receives a \$2 Million Safe Routes to School Grant for Canyonville

(Douglas County, Ore.) The Douglas County Board of Commissioners are pleased to announce that Douglas County has been awarded a \$2 million grant from the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC), as a part of the Oregon Department of Transportation's (ODOT) [Safe Routes to School](#) (SRTS) Competitive Construction Grant Program. The Commissioners along with the Douglas County Public Works Department submitted the grant application cooperatively with three key contributors – the South Umpqua School District (Canyonville School), Douglas County Educational Services District (ESD) and Thrive Umpqua (formerly Blue Zones Project). The grant funding will focus on improving the school zone near Canyonville School, located on North Main Street in the rural community of Canyonville. Much like Douglas County's other SRTS projects, the improvements will not only benefit students, staff, and parents during school hours, but also residents and visitors to Canyonville's Main Street every day.

“Douglas County was one of only two applicants in Oregon to be awarded the full \$2 million in funding for the 2021-2023 grant cycle! It is the highest amount awarded for Safe Routes to School projects by the Oregon Transportation Commission,” stated Tom Kress, Board Chair for the Douglas County Board of Commissioners. *“We are excited to announce this latest grant on the heels of completing our successful Carnes Road Improvement Project, adjacent to Green Elementary School. The school zone improvement project for Canyonville School is truly the culmination of many years of hard work and collaboration with the local Canyonville community, schools, and tribal members working hand-in-hand with our engineers in the Douglas County Public Works Department. We are very fortunate to have submitted another successful grant application.”*

This year Douglas County was one of 43 applicants to receive grant dollars from the Safe Routes to School Competitive Construction grant with ODOT. The agency received a total of 99 grant applications from applicants across the state with requests totaling \$73 million for safety improvements. The OTC ultimately approved grants that will fund the 43 approved projects with a total investment of \$28.3 million. ODOT's SRTS grant programs require matching funding from the local entity that was awarded the grant dollars. For the Canyonville project, Douglas County will contribute an estimated \$1,300,000, which will represent about 40% of the funding to cover the infrastructure improvements to North Main Street in Canyonville.

“The enhancement of North Main Street in Canyonville has been pursued for many years, dating back to the 1990s,” Kress said. *“As cited in our grant application, after many years of observing speeding vehicles, traffic violations and poor visibility due to gaps created by several driveway and street crossings, wide driveway entrances, on-street parking, and a lack of continuous designated bicycle and pedestrian lanes along North Main Street near the Canyonville School have made safe pedestrian travel very difficult and often times hazardous. We are confident that the improvements being made through the combination of grant and county funding for this project will address these concerns, and clearly define a safer school zone for students and provide a safer pedestrian path for everyone in the community.”*

The proposed improvements include the installation of continuous sidewalks with ADA ramps and buffered bicycle lanes on both sides of North Main Street between Gazley Bridge Road (located north of Seven Feathers Casino and Resort) and 1st Street in Canyonville. A rapid flashing pedestrian beacon, new school zone warning signs and new painted pavement and curb markings will be installed near the school. The improvements aim to increase the safety for pedestrians and bicyclists, maximizing healthy and efficient non-vehicular travel to and from Canyonville School.

“Thrive Umpqua is excited to partner with Douglas County on another project focused on safety, inclusion, and improving the health of our community. Safe street improvements like those proposed for Canyonville's Main Street pave the way to encourage community members of all ages to walk and bike more. We are thrilled to see schools around Douglas County participating in Safe Routes to School, and hope to encourage more to get involved in these programs that can really make a big difference in overall well-being for a lifetime, starting at a young age,” said Jessica Hand, Thrive Umpqua Executive Director.

According to their website, Safe Routes to School has a 16-year history of projects and programs in Oregon. Safe Routes to School is a national program introduced to increase physical activity, improve health and reduce traffic congestion around schools by making it safer and easier for students to walk and bicycle to school.

“Student safety is always a priority,” stated Kate McLaughlin, Superintendent for South Umpqua School District. ***“The grant provided through our partnership with the Douglas County Commissioners and the Public Works Department, and the work with Thrive Umpqua and the Safe Routes to School team will provide a tremendous opportunity to improve safety for pedestrians and bike riders to access Canyonville School. Canyonville Principal, Shilo White, and I are excited to see these necessary improvements for the entire Canyonville community!”***

The Canyonville SRTS project is currently seeking bids for the design work and is slated to begin construction sometime in 2023. We would also like to extend our appreciation to additional collaborators for this project including the City of Canyonville, the Canyonville Chamber of Commerce and the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians.

“Safe infrastructure is vital to our educational and encouragement programs,” said Janelle Newton, Facilitator for Safe Routes to School through the Douglas Education Service District. ***“As someone who works on the programming side of Safe Routes to School, we teach kids how to safely navigate streets as pedestrians and while riding bikes, but without proper infrastructure they cannot put those skills to use. In addition, our encouragement events like ‘Walk and Roll to School Day’ are not possible unless schools have safe infrastructure. Therefore, the project in Canyonville helps both aspects of Safe Routes to School, the infrastructure and non-infrastructure side, work together seamlessly.”***

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For More Information:

Douglas County Government: www.co.douglas.or.us

Safe Routes to Schools: www.oregonsaferoutes.org.

Project Information - Douglas County Public Works: <https://douglascounty-oregon.us/357/Public-Works>

Canyonville School (South Umpqua School District): <https://www.susd.k12.or.us/>.

Thrive Umpqua: <http://www.thriveumpqua.com/>

Douglas ESD: <https://douglasesd.k12.or.us/>