



# Learn it. Do it. Live it!

## MAKING SRTS HAPPEN AT THE SCHOOL DIVISION LEVEL

Policy changes and support for Safe Routes to School (SRTS) at the school division level can help communities make sustainable, long-term gains in the number of students safely walking and bicycling to school. School divisions can take a range of actions. Some may be relatively easy to implement, such as putting important SRTS events on the school division calendar. Others may require more time and effort but can yield significant benefits, such as creating a division-wide SRTS travel plan or hiring an SRTS Division Coordinator.

This **Learn it. Do it. Live it!** has recommendations to help get you started and strategies drawn from school divisions in Virginia.

### Getting Started

#### Practice your pitch.

You'll need to communicate succinctly and effectively what SRTS is, why it's needed and how the school division can support it. For help making the case for SRTS, see the SRTS Talking Points and the SRTS Customizable PowerPoint on the Virginia SRTS website.

#### Gather support.

It can be difficult for one person to create changes at the division level on their own. An excellent pitch will help bring supporters to your cause, but you'll also want to demonstrate that others share your views. This may include obtaining letters of support or petitions from key individuals and groups within the school division and community, such as:

- School PTA/PTOs or the school division PTA board
- School principals and school board members
- Local government officials and representatives, such as city council members or local law enforcement
- Neighbors, parents and other community members, to demonstrate that your perspective is widely held by others in the community



*Parents, teachers and students participate in Cardinal Forest Elementary School's Walk to School Day in West Springfield.*

#### Appeal to the right people.

Certain people within the school division are more likely have an interest in SRTS initiatives and/or the authority to implement changes. It is best to direct your appeals to these people. They include the:

- Transportation Director
- Health and Physical Education Supervisor
- SRTS Coordinator
- Wellness Coordinator
- Truancy/Discipline Officer
- Assessment Coordinator



**Give the school division “permission” by citing examples.**

School divisions tend to be risk-averse and may be reluctant to try something new if it hasn’t been proven elsewhere. Citing examples of school divisions in Virginia and across the country that have successfully taken the steps you advocate can help overcome this reticence. Use

this resource to get started, and share your success with us so we can add your division to the list.

**Be persistent.**

Significant change doesn’t usually happen overnight. Be patient, celebrate small success and incremental steps, and most importantly don’t give up!

**Actions Your School Division Can Take to Support SRTS**

**Encourage Walking and Biking**

Since walking and bicycling are no longer the most common travel modes to and from schools, many schools must actively encourage students to walk and bicycle. School divisions can reinforce this encouragement by adopting policies promoting active transportation and supporting schools that participate in Safe Routes activities.

Strategy	Who’s doing this in Virginia?
Adopt a school division policy that explicitly encourages students to walk and bicycle to school.	Prince William County, Stafford County
Amend the school division wellness policy to encourage walking and bicycling to school as a form of physical activity. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educate principals and school wellness committees regarding the policy change and implementation expectations.</li> <li>Provide resources and curriculum goals to help with implementation.</li> </ul>	Chesterfield County, Galax, Harrisonburg
Establish a division-wide mileage club to promote walking and biking. Set up a competition between schools as a motivator for participation.	Chesterfield County
Provide division-wide support for International Walk to School Day and National Bike to School Day.	Arlington County, Chesapeake, Chesterfield County, Galax, Harrisonburg, Henrico County, Lynchburg, Prince William County, Stafford County
Reach out to schools that currently prohibit or discourage walking and/or bicycling to understand local concerns and determine how they can be addressed.	Arlington County, Galax, Lynchburg, Prince William County, Stafford County



*Students take part in the Thomas Harrison Middle School Bicycle Clinic in Harrisonburg, where they learn bicycle safety tips such as how to check the tires, chains, and brakes of their bicycles.*

**Has your school division implemented any of these strategies? Let us know by filling out our [school division strategy survey](#)!**

**Emphasize Safety**

Safety is often a concern for parents and school staff in regards to students walking and bicycling to school. School divisions can prioritize policies and programs that further safety education for students and adults and for all modes of transportation to ensure that everyone knows how to safely walk, bike, drive and ride to and from school.

Strategy	Who’s doing this in Virginia?
Make student pedestrian and bicycle safety education a division-wide policy.	Loudoun County, Norfolk, Stafford County
Encourage parents and high school students to sign a safe driving pledge to abide by traffic laws, avoid distracted driving, drive at a safe speed, and respect pedestrians and bicyclists (e.g., by passing at a safe distance).	Loudoun County, Lynchburg, Stafford County
Require school bus drivers to complete a unit on sharing the road with pedestrians and bicyclists as part of their training and periodic refresher training.	Lynchburg, Stafford County
Establish a system for reporting and addressing pedestrian and bicycle safety concerns.	Chesterfield County, Galax, Stafford County

**Clarify Liability**

Many school principals are hesitant to allow their students to walk or bike to and from school because of unclear liability policies. School divisions should provide clear guidance to their principals regarding the school’s liability and address any concerns through the school division’s risk management department.

Strategy	Who’s doing this in Virginia?
Educate principals regarding school division liability policies pertaining to student walking and bicycling and SRTS activities such as Walk to School Day and Bike to School Day.	Chesterfield County, Prince William County, Stafford County
Meet with school division risk management personnel before reaching out to principals to understand and clarify liability policies.	Lynchburg, Prince William County, Stafford County, Norfolk
Establish policy clearly stating that the decision to allow or not allow students to walk and bicycle to school is a parental decision and not subject to review by the school principal.	Chesterfield County, Prince William County, Fairfax County

**Has your school division implemented any of these strategies? Let us know by filling out our [school division strategy survey](#)!**



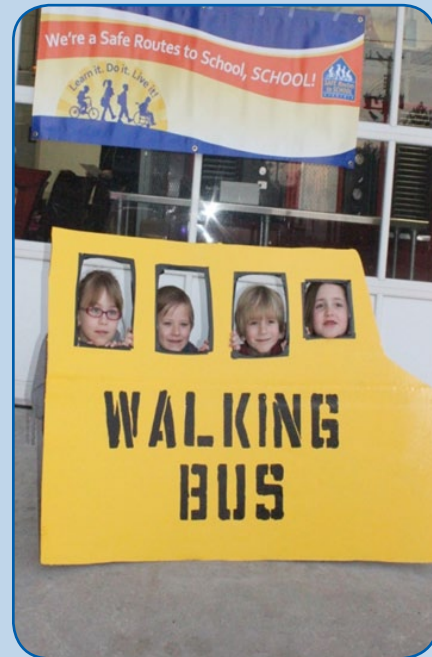


## Promote Arrival and Dismissal Best Practices through Outreach

Between parent drop-offs or pick-ups, walkers, bicyclists, bus riders, and parked vehicles, a school's entrance can be overwhelmed by students and adults during morning arrival and afternoon dismissal. School divisions can contribute to a safe arrival and dismissal by supporting schools in developing their own guidelines for arrival and dismissal that emphasize safe travel for all modes.

Strategy	Who's doing this in Virginia?
Develop and distribute arrival and dismissal best practices materials that address all modes of travel. Include strategies, such as staggering dismissal times by mode, to encourage walking and biking and to make walking and biking more comfortable, convenient and safe.	Chesterfield County, Prince William County, Stafford County
Provide direct assistance on arrival and dismissal procedures to schools that request it.	Arlington County, Chesapeake, Chesterfield County, Galax, Lynchburg, Prince William County, Stafford County

The City of Galax uses many of these strategies to ensure a SRTS program that is supported by the school division, parents of students, and the local community. The City has hired a SRTS coordinator, developed a local SRTS steering committee, encourages walking and bicycling through a division-wide wellness policy, sends regular newsletters to parents, shares its successes with the local newspaper, and has presented its accomplishments to the City Council.



Students and parents participate in the Galax Bike Challenge (left), the City and VDOT work to build new sidewalks near Galax Middle School (center), and students participate in a Walking School Bus (right).

Has your school division implemented any of these strategies? Let us know by filling out our [school division strategy survey](#)!

[www.VirginiaDOT.org/saferoutes](http://www.VirginiaDOT.org/saferoutes)



## Institutionalize It!

Safe Routes to School events are fun for students and parents, but they also represent an opportunity for schools to make walking and bicycling safer and increase active living within the community. School divisions can ensure lasting impact for a SRTS program by establishing participation at all levels of the division and developing policies that promote Safe Routes.

Strategy	Who's doing this in Virginia?
Invite school board members to participate in SRTS activities to help them become SRTS supporters.	Arlington County, Chesterfield County, Galax, Harrisonburg, Lynchburg, Prince William County
Establish a division-wide SRTS steering committee to advise school administration, staff and parents about issues and opportunities for safe walking and bicycling to and from school as well as promote participation in Safe Routes activities throughout the year.	Galax
Hire a SRTS Division Coordinator. The coordinator may be a school division employee or a local government employee and works with schools and SRTS school champions within the division to promote Safe Routes, facilitate trainings and lessons, and implement SRTS activities.	Alexandria, Arlington County, Chesapeake, Chesterfield County, Fairfax County, Galax, Harrisonburg, Henrico County, Loudoun County, Lynchburg, Newport News, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Prince William County, Stafford County, Williamsburg-James City County

## Communicate with Parents

As parents usually have the final say in how a student travels to and from school, their support is crucial to a successful Safe Routes to School program. By reaching out to parents through a variety of mediums, a school division can provide information, find support, promote engagement and address concerns about SRTS.

Strategy	Who's doing this in Virginia?
Send parents recorded voicemails from the school division or superintendent. Voicemails may address SRTS activities, pedestrian/bicycle safety, pedestrian/bicycle policies, and other SRTS-related issues.	Lynchburg
Provide parents with an informational flyer or email about the SRTS program and what they can do to support it.	Chesapeake, Chesterfield County, Galax, Harrisonburg, Lynchburg, Prince William County
Deliver presentations on SRTS to school PTA / PTO groups.	Chesapeake, Chesterfield County, Galax, Harrisonburg, Loudoun County, Lynchburg, Norfolk, Prince William County
Develop walking/biking maps for all schools in the division and provide them to parents.	Harrisonburg, Portsmouth

Has your school division implemented any of these strategies? Let us know by filling out our [school division strategy survey](#)!

[www.VirginiaDOT.org/saferoutes](http://www.VirginiaDOT.org/saferoutes)



## Get the Word Out

Many students, parents and school staff would be excited to participate in Safe Routes activities such as Walk and Bike to School Days or Crossing Guard Appreciation Day, but are unaware of these Safe Routes to School events. School divisions can play an active role reaching out to the community to make everyone aware of SRTS opportunities.

Strategy	Who's doing this in Virginia?
Include SRTS events on the school division calendar.	Arlington County, Chesterfield County, Galax, Loudoun County, Lynchburg, Prince William County, Stafford County
Create a SRTS web page on the school division website and keep it populated with timely and relevant SRTS content.	Arlington County, Chesapeake, Galax, Loudoun County, Lynchburg, Prince William County, Williamsburg-James City County
Establish social media accounts (e.g., Facebook or Twitter) for disseminating information on school division SRTS activities.	Arlington County, Chesterfield County, Harrisonburg, Prince William County, Stafford County
Distribute an e-newsletter on school division SRTS activities via a listserv or email marketing service (e.g., Constant Contact or MailChimp).	Chesapeake, Chesterfield County, Fairfax County, Lynchburg
Pursue local government resolutions to promote important SRTS initiatives, such as participating in International Walk to School Day and National Bike to School Day, a division-wide SRTS plan, or incorporating SRTS into local transportation plans.	Arlington County, Chesterfield County, Galax, Harrisonburg, Loudoun County
Deliver presentations on school division SRTS activities at meetings involving parents, staff, other community members and community leaders.	Arlington County, Chesapeake, Chesterfield County, Galax, Harrisonburg, Loudoun County, Lynchburg, Norfolk, Prince William County, Stafford County
Toot your own horn! Publicize successful SRTS activities. Collaborate with local media to get the word out.	Chesapeake, Chesterfield County, Galax, Harrisonburg, Loudoun County, Lynchburg, Prince William County, Williamsburg-James City County



*Students and their parents walk to school as part of the Healthy Living Festival at Shreveewood Elementary School in Falls Church.*



Has your school division implemented any of these strategies? Let us know by filling out our [school division strategy survey!](#)

[www.VirginiaDOT.org/saferoutes](http://www.VirginiaDOT.org/saferoutes)

## Evaluate

Understanding the transportation activity at a school is a key part of a Safe Routes to School program. School divisions that consistently monitor student transportation and establish transportation related performance goals are well-suited to increase the amount and improve the safety of walking and bicycling to and from school.

Strategy	Who's doing this in Virginia?
Conduct annual Student Travel Tallies and Parent Surveys division-wide. Student Travel Tallies should be conducted over a single week around the same time each year in September or October. For more information, visit the <a href="#">Virginia SRTS Program website</a> .	Arlington County, Chesapeake, Chesterfield County, Galax, Fairfax County, Harrisonburg, Henrico County, Lynchburg, Norfolk, Prince William County, Stafford County, Williamsburg-James City County
Regularly evaluate pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure on and near school campuses to ensure that it is well-maintained and any safety hazards are addressed.	Arlington County, Chesapeake, Chesterfield County, Galax, Harrisonburg, Lynchburg, Prince William County, Stafford County
Establish goals and performance targets, and then regularly assess progress toward meeting them.	Arlington County, Chesapeake, Galax, Harrisonburg, Lynchburg, Stafford County

## Collaborate

In many school divisions, schools and school buildings go beyond academics and represent a hub for the community. Safe Routes to School is an integral part of not only the school's transportation policy, but also the community's transportation plan. School divisions can connect with local government, law enforcement, health officials, and other local community groups to build a comprehensive and sustainable Safe Routes to School program.

Strategy	Who's doing this in Virginia?
Develop a list of potential partners within the community who could help implement elements of a division-wide SRTS program, and reach out to them.	Arlington County, Chesterfield County, Galax, Lynchburg, Norfolk, Stafford County
Include local government leaders and law enforcement officials on school division SRTS committees.	Arlington County, Galax, Harrisonburg, Norfolk
Work with your local government to ensure walking and bicycling routes to your school are included in its transportation plans, maintenance budgets, and capital projects.	Arlington County, Chesterfield County, Galax, Harrisonburg, Lynchburg
Work closely with the school division and local government on school expansion and renovation projects to ensure that pedestrian and bicycle access is provided.	Arlington County, Harrisonburg, Lynchburg, Stafford County

Has your school division implemented any of these strategies? Let us know by filling out our [school division strategy survey!](#)

Still have questions? Contact our Local Technical Assistance Coordinators at 1-855-601-7787 or email us at [info@VirginiaSRTS.org](mailto:info@VirginiaSRTS.org).

[www.VirginiaDOT.org/saferoutes](http://www.VirginiaDOT.org/saferoutes)