



August - September 2015

Coordinator's Corner

I hope this newsletter finds everyone well rested after a fun and safe summer. Back to school is an exciting and busy time for everyone, but it's also one of the best times to establish SRTS programs and activities that will carry on throughout the year. This edition of the Virginia SRTS Newsletter is full of information to help get you started.



In the Friends & Faces column, veteran local SRTS coordinators share some of the most valuable lessons learned from the past year. Use their knowledge as you start planning for the two fall statewide SRTS events - Student Travel Tally Week and International Walk to School Day. More information on both events is in this newsletter and on our website. In addition, we have two new Learn it. Do it. Live it! Resources to help grow your program. These resources cover information about Working with Law Enforcement and Making SRTS Happen at the School Division Level.

Looking for funding to help support your events? Check out the new "Funding Focus" feature for information about a wide variety of funding sources. We also have information on the importance of including students of all abilities in SRTS activities with examples from around the state, and exciting information about the 10th anniversary of SRTS.

Looking at the calendar, you can see that October in particular is a very busy month for SRTS so if there is anything we can do to help support your events, or if you are interested in more information on any of the topics included here, please call the Virginia SRTS Hotline at 1-855-601-7787 or email us at Info@VirginiaSRTS.org.

Regards,

Rob Williams
Virginia SRTS State Coordinator

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CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER

- 8-11: First week for Student Travel Tallies
- 10: QuickStart Mini-grant application due

OCTOBER

- 1-31: National Partnership for SRTS/ Kaiser Permanente [Fire Up Your Feet Fall Activity Challenge](#)
- 7: [International Walk to School Day \(iWalk\)](#)
- 8: QuickStart Mini-grant application due
- 8: Walkabout Mini-grant application due
- 21: [Saris 5th Grade Poster Contest entries due](#)
- 26-30: Last week for Student Travel Tallies
- 30: Last day to input Student Travel Tallies to be eligible for banners and decals

NOVEMBER

- 1: [Transportation Alternatives Program \(TAP\)](#) grant applications due

Let us know about SRTS events in your community!

Click [here](#) to send your information so we can include it in our calendar.

Friends & Faces: Lessons Learned from Virginia's Local SRTS Program Coordinators

The 2015-2016 school year marks the third year of the VDOT-funded Safe Routes to School Coordinator program. Over the past two years, over a dozen schools divisions received grants to help fund SRTS Coordinator staff positions. As a result of the coordinators working at the division level, these school divisions have higher than average participation rates in national and statewide SRTS events and ongoing pedestrian and bicycle safety education programs.

While many of the coordinators had experience in education prior to their SRTS positions, they and the VDOT Program Staff have learned a lot about implementing SRTS at the division-level, building relationships with teachers and administrators and the essential elements of a sustainable SRTS program. For this Back-to-School Edition of our newsletter, we're sharing some of the coordinators' most valuable "lessons learned" from the past year to give everyone a leg up at the beginning of the school year and inspire you to make this your best SRTS year yet!

Outreach: How & When

Newsletters...

"I [recently] learned about the beauty of third party resources to help with outreach. For example, Chesterfield County Public Schools SRTS just switched our newsletter to paperless. We started using the program Mail Chimp, and not only has my contact list grown, my open percentage has increased as well."
-Brooke Mahan, Chesterfield County Public Schools SRTS Coordinator

"My [last] newsletter was emailed out to all middle school and elementary school physical education teachers which had not been done before, and [I received several] inquiries from that email."
- Sally Smallwood, Fairfax County Public Schools SRTS Coordinator

In-person outreach...

"We plan to visit more teachers instead of [emailing them]. We need to see them face to face to let them know we are here to help."
- Janice Jennings and Val Mulhern, Loudoun County Public Schools SRTS Coordinators



Janice Jennings interacts with students on Bike to School Day

"Meeting with PE staff in person is the best way to make contact, get information, and offer assistance."
- Tom Norton, Arlington Public Schools SRTS Coordinator

"Through the Open House [I hosted at the public library], I learned there are people from various walks of life who have some strong ideas about making Williamsburg safer for walking and bicycling."
- Darlene Dockery, Williamsburg James City County Public Schools SRTS Coordinator

Getting the date right...

"[During my first Bike to School Day as a coordinator], I learned the importance of proper date scheduling. Speak with the principals in your districts to see not only when SOL tests will occur but also when teachers will start SOL review lessons [and scheduling make-up tests]."
- Katie Osbourne, City of Galax Public Schools SRTS Coordinator

Recognition & Relationship Building

Saying thank you...

"I've decided to recognize my student safety patrolmembers and try to make it a yearly event in the schools, like Crossing Guard Appreciation Day." - *Becky Short, Prince William County Public School SRTS Coordinator*



Becky Short on Crossing Guard Appreciation Day

"In our [monthly] PE Teacher Meetings, I am starting to [introduce] more activities and samples of games the teachers can incorporate into the classes. Our meetings are [now] more hands-on as opposed to standard information dissemination." - *Patti Raduenz, Norfolk Public Schools SRTS Coordinator*

"We learned that bringing a "gift" (equipment, a flash drive with resources etc.) goes a long way with getting our foot in the door and getting teachers to listen. Once we were able to make face to face meetings with a teacher and she saw our passion and desire to help students' overall health and wellness, she was able to see the benefit of the SRTS events." - *Janice Jennings and Val Mulhern, Loudoun County*

Motivation & Messaging

"We've learned that a great tool to motivate teachers and schools to do events is by showing them what other schools are doing! When schools share their successes and positive experiences it is more influential than anything else." - *Janice Jennings and Val Mulhern, Loudoun County*

"At the Weight of the State Conference [in Richmond on April 20-21, 2015] a representative from the National Partnership for Safe Routes to School discussed how [schools and coordinators] can support the funding opportunities for the SRTS program on a macro level. I took this message back to my participating SRTS schools and told them that without participation and support there is a chance that we can lose SRTS funding." - *Brooke Mahan, Chesterfield County SRTS Coordinator*

Bicycle Education

Planning is key...

"[The location, security and convenience of bike storage] are critical to the successful use of the bikes [at schools]. I plan to make adjustments to [my program] budget to help schools with bike storage buildings." - *Nathan Barge, Harrisonburg Public Schools SRTS Coordinator*



Nathan Barge assists with a bicycle safety lesson.

"I have observed that when there is only one PE teacher for a class of 20+ students [there are] more problems, crashes and damage to the bike fleet. Two teachers are better to help students have a successful safety and skills class. I have [also educated] the P.E. teachers on what needs to be watched, prevented and repaired to protect the bikes from damages and students from injuries."- *Nathan Barge, Harrisonburg SRTS Coordinator*

Passing the training baton...

"Bike Safety Lessons have been highly successful in the elementary schools. The PE Teachers are offered an in-service training before they get the bikes. The first few days, I take the lead, model the lessons, and show them the skill progression for the different bike riding and safety skills. By the third day, teachers feel comfortable enough to take the lead in teaching the lesson and I become their assistant. By the last day, the teachers are signing up for next school year and asking to have the bikes for two weeks (instead of one). They are also very impressed with the students' improved skills and excitement about the program." - *VJ Meleski, Interim Fairfax County Public Schools SRTS Coordinator*

Inclusive SRTS programs are a natural

The purpose of the Safe Routes to School program is "to enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school." With a little advance planning, students with disabilities can participate in most, if not all SRTS activities.



Adapted bicycles being used during PE classes at the Stratford Program in Arlington.

Why is including students with disabilities such an important part of SRTS? Consider these statistics from the National Center for Safe Routes to School's [Including Students with Disabilities](#) resource:

- Children with disabilities are a part of all public schools in the U.S. On average, one out of every seven students has a disability.
- Children with disabilities are at a higher risk for sedentary behavior than their nondisabled peers.
- Children with disabilities are more likely to rely on walking and bicycling in order to live independently later in life.

The resource also contains seven strategies to create an inclusive SRTS program. They include:

1. Involving special education professionals and parents of children with disabilities on the SRTS team.
2. Consulting special education professionals and parents of children with disabilities when planning SRTS education activities during the school day.
3. Seeking input and involvement when planning SRTS encouragement activities.
4. Involving children with disabilities in walking and bicycling audits.
5. Letting the Principal know that including students with disabilities is a priority for you.
6. Ensuring SRTS messages and images are inclusive, and
7. Establishing special programs when necessary.

Several Virginia SRTS programs received grants to purchase equipment for inclusive SRTS activities.

In Harrisonburg, SRTS Coordinator Nathan Barge received a \$5,000 grant from [Strider Sports International](#) to purchase of 20 pedal-less balance bikes and copies of the Strider curriculum. The bicycles were distributed among five elementary schools; students are learning how to ride with these bikes, including those who may not be able master riding a standard bicycle.



Harrisonburg's balance bike fleet

In Arlington, SRTS Coordinator Tom Norton, with help from Leah Jaremenko, the adaptive physical education specialist for the Stratford Program, applied for a [VDOT QuickStart Mini-grant](#). The Stratford Program is a secondary school for Arlington Public School students who have special needs. Tom and Leah used the Mini-grant to purchase balance bikes, bike locks and air pumps to enable more students to participate in the bicycling unit during their PE classes. In class, they learned how to ride, safe bicycling habits and basic maintenance skills.

Tom also provided helmets purchased with a portion of Arlington's Non-Infrastructure grant funding, and the Stratford Program pooled their own resources to purchase an additional adaptive tricycle to add to the one they already owned.



Stratford Program, Arlington

Arlington County hosted its 6th annual [iCan Bike Camp](#) at Kenmore Middle School the last week in July. The iCan Bike Camp uses modified bicycles and one-on-one instruction to teach campers with disabilities how to ride two-wheeled bicycles.



*iCan Bike Camp at Kenmore Middle School.
Photo credit: Rob Faris*

This year, 40 participants, ages 8-29 attended the camp. By the end of the week, 72 percent of campers could ride their own two-wheel bicycle independently, and the others had made significant progress towards independent riding.



*iCan Bike Camp at Kenmore Middle School.
Photo credit: Rob Faris*

The camp is a transformative experience for campers, parents and volunteers. One parent described their child as "positively levitating when I asked him about how things went today. For a kid who, before camp, was terrified of falling and thought he would never ride a bike, the

results were outstanding.” Another was “thrilled with how successful this was....For years [my son] has had a phobia about learning to ride a bike. iCan Bike was amazing. He enjoyed the whole process, and is now a proud and totally independent biker!”

The iCan Bike Camps are run by iCan Shine, Inc. a non-profit organization that provides recreational opportunities for individuals with disabilities. To learn more about their programs or to host a camp in your area, please visit their website at www.icanshine.org.

Saris 5th Grade Poster Contest

The Saris 5th Grade Poster Contest is back for fall 2015! The theme for this year’s poster is **#longfortheride**. Posters should convey the student’s love for bicycling, must be original artwork and include the hashtag **#longfortheride** somewhere in the design.

Each school may submit one poster to the state poster contest coordinator. Entries should be postmarked by **October 21** and mailed to:

Rob Williams
VDOT SRTS Coordinator
1401 East Broad Street, 1st Floor
Richmond, VA 23219

The state coordinator will determine the prize winners for Virginia and send the top entry on to the national competition.

The winning entries from each state will be posted for online voting November 17 through 19. The national winner will be announced on November 23. The grand prize winner will receive a new bicycle, bicycle accessories and a trip to the National Bike Summit in Washington D.C.

Please visit the [Saris website](#) for the complete rules and prize information. Good luck!

New Program Resources

VA SRTS Program staff have been busy over the summer updating the program website and creating new resources to grow your SRTS program.

Program Website

Improved Navigation Bar

The links at the top of each page have been grouped in to columns to make it easier to find what you’re looking for.

Redesigned Statewide Event Pages

We’re also working to update each of the Statewide Event pages to have similar formats. Each event page will have a description of the event, previews of the resources available to download, and a summary of the past year’s event in Virginia. You can currently see these changes on the [Student Travel Tally Week](#) and [International Walk to School Day](#) pages.

NEW! Virginia SRTS Partner Organizations Page

We are pleased to showcase several organizations from different parts of the Commonwealth willing to share their expertise and resources with others working to increase the number of students safely walking and biking to school. The [Partners page](#) includes a short profile of each organization, contact information and links to their websites and social media platforms.

We would love to hear from you! Send your thoughts on the new website organization via email to Info@VirginiaSRTS.org

Learn it. Do it. Live it! Resources

The Virginia SRTS Program has **Learn it. Do it. Live it!** tip sheets available on a variety of topics on our [Resource Library](#) webpage. We have recently added new two new tip sheets to our **Learn it. Do it. Live it!** collection. Learn more and download copies for use in your work at the links below.

SRTS 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.



Working with Law Enforcement

Community law enforcement agencies such as the local police department or sheriff's office are natural partners to Safe Routes to School efforts and can augment a school's safe routes activities. Law enforcement agencies and SRTS programs all work to encourage safe pedestrian and bicycling behavior, and to find ways for motorists to be part of the safety picture around schools. Many students respond positively when police officers and firefighters take part in school events. At several bicycle rodeos this spring, the officer-led stations proved the most popular, with students spending the most time at them and even repeating stations!



Fall Statewide SRTS Events

Student Travel Tally Week

Schools across Virginia are encouraged learn how their students are traveling to and from school by hosting their own Student Travel Tally Week in either **September** or **October**. Travel tallies provide baseline data to help evaluate the influence of SRTS programs on student travel modes. Student travel tallies require about five minutes at the beginning of a lesson for the teacher to lead the quick show-of-hands survey on two days during the week. It will also take a couple of hours for someone to organize and submit the tally results.



Virginia schools use the National Center for Safe Routes to School's enhanced data system, to record their tallies. The [National Center's data system](#) provides many advantages to schools that conduct travel tallies, including the ability to create division- and state-wide reports. The National Center's data system also stores travel tally data from previous years so schools can see how students' travel behavior changes over time.

There are two options are available for submitting data:

1. Upload tallies online, which allows schools to immediately create a Student Travel Tally Report; or
2. Mail the completed paper tally forms to the National Center to process, which can take up to six weeks to see the results.

If this is your school's first time conducting travel tallies, be sure to check out the [Student Travel Tally](#) page on the Virginia SRTS website. You'll find resources including getting started guides, flyers to promote the event at school, and ideas to help incorporate tallies into the classroom. Schools that participate for the first time and survey at least 80% of their classrooms will receive a SRTS banner to hang in their school. Second and third time participants will receive decals to decorate their existing banners.

Don't forget that if your school is planning to apply for a Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Grant to fund a SRTS infrastructure project, you will need to provide travel tallies as part of the application. The TAP grant application is due **November 1**, so plan to conduct your school's travel tallies in September. For more information about student travel tallies please check out the [Student Travel Tally](#) webpage or contact your [LTAC](#).

Walk to School Day

International Walk to School Day (iWalk) is a global event that involves communities from more than 40 countries walking and biking to school on the same day. It began in 1997 as a one-day event. Over time, this event has become part of a movement for year-round safe routes to school and a celebration with record breaking participation each October. This year, International Walk to School Day will be held on Wednesday, **October 7**.



In 2014, 220 Virginia schools participated. Let's see if we can hit **250 in 2015!** Visit our [Walk to School Day webpage](#) for more information and downloadable materials you can use to promote your event and celebrate those who walk or bike to school. Please be sure to register your event on www.walkbiketoschool.org to be a part of the international celebration. Remember - October is Walk to School Month, so schools can host an event any day in the month.

Did You Know? Celebrating 10 Years of SRTS

In July 2005, Congress passed federal legislation that established a National Safe Routes to School program to improve safety on walking and bicycling routes to school and to encourage children and families to travel between home and school using these modes. The program, which was signed into law in August 2005, dedicated a total of \$612 million towards SRTS from 2005 to 2009. SRTS funds

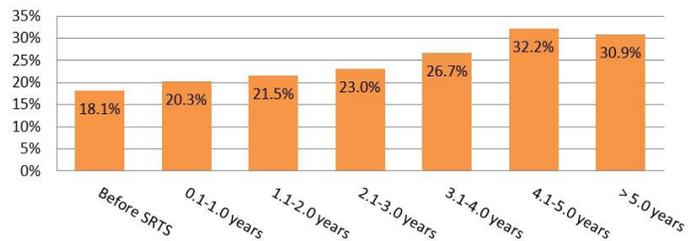
could be used for both infrastructure projects and non-infrastructure (programmatic) activities. The legislation also required each state to have a Safe Routes to School Coordinator to serve as a central point of contact for the state.

Safe Routes to School programs operate in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. With legislative extensions, the Federal Safe Routes to School Program has apportioned nearly \$1.15 billion to states as of September 30, 2012. These funds have benefited or will benefit close to 15,000 schools" - saferoutesinfo.org

What has been the impact of the federal SRTS program? Read on and use the statistics below to illustrate the positive outcomes for the whole community as a result of SRTS.

1. A study of Safe Routes to School programs in five states found that active travel to school increased by 37% after implementation of the programs.

Average Rates of Walking and Bicycling to School By Length of Participation in SRTS Program



2. Today, 13 percent of children walk or bike to school, which is a sharp decline from 1969, when 48 percent did so.
3. Between 2005 and 2012, Congress appropriated \$1.2 billion for SRTS....By the end of 2012, nearly 14,000 elementary and middle schools had received SRTS funding.

4. Engineering improvements, i.e., sidewalk, crosswalks, traffic lights, were associated with walking or biking rates going up by 3.3 percentage points per year, amounting to a relative change of 18 percent over five years. Education and encouragement programs were also associated with walking and biking going up by 1 percentage point per year, a relative increase of 25 percent over five years.
5. A New York City study analyzed child pedestrian injuries during school travel hours from 2001 to 2010 and found a 44 percent reduction in injury rates in areas with SRTS infrastructure projects, compared with no change in similar areas without SRTS infrastructure improvements.

Sources:

1. Moudon, A. V.; Stewart, O. 2012 - Moving Forward: Safe Routes to School Progress in Five States, July 2012
- 2-5. McDonald, N. "Impact of Safe Routes to School Programs on Walking and Biking." San Diego, CA: Active Living Research; 2015. Available at www.activelivingresearch.org

Funding Focus

Just as SRTS programs exist at several different levels - federal, state, local, and school-based - there are many types of funding available for SRTS programs. This newsletter feature will help you get started, but is not meant to be an exhaustive list.

Know of additional funding sources you would like to share with other SRTS practitioners? Please send an email to Info@VirginiaSRTS.org so we can feature it in a future newsletter.

VDOT Funding

The Virginia Department of Transportation is committed to SRTS and looks for SRTS infrastructure projects to fund using federal Transportation Alternative Program Grants.

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

The VDOT Local Assistance Division (LAD) administers grants for infrastructure projects under the federally funded [Transportation Alternatives Program \(TAP\)](#). Safe Routes to School project applications receive additional credit during the project review and selection phase. As a result, a high number of TAP applications for SRTS infrastructure projects submitted in past years were recommended for funding. For example, approximately 12 percent of total allocations for FY 2016 are designated for SRTS projects in eight different municipalities.

- The FY 2017 round of grant applications are due **November 1, 2015**.
- Be sure to review the [LAD website](#) for additional TAP information.

Non-governmental Funding

There are many non-profits, advocacy groups and companies whose missions align well with SRTS, and may have funding available. Many of these opportunities, as well as others, are listed on [Grant Watch Virginia](#), an online clearinghouse of grant opportunities.

Click to [download a table](#) with information about grants from:

- The Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth
- The National Dairy Council and National Football League
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and American Heart Association
- The Coca-Cola Foundation
- MetLife Foundation, and
- PeopleForBikes

VA SRTS Funding Opportunities

The Virginia Department of Transportation offers two ongoing mini-grant opportunities - QuickStart Mini-grants and Walkabout Mini-grants. See below for more information and be sure to visit the [School Travel Plans and Grants webpage](#) to apply for these mini-grants online.

QuickStart Mini-grants

QuickStart Mini-grants are \$1,000 grants for schools that are interested in funding a small (or large) Safe Routes to School activity. These grants are unique to the Virginia Safe Routes to School program and are a great way to start up a Safe Routes program. To apply, fill out a short application [online](#).

- The remaining due dates for fall 2015 are **September 10** and **October 8**.
- There will be three more rounds of grants in spring 2016. The due dates in the spring are **February 4**, **March 3** and **April 7**.
- Be sure to check out the [QuickStart Mini-grant webpage](#) for more information, or contact Jim Elliott at Jim@VirginiaSRTS.org.



Walk to School Day - Ginter Park Elementary, Richmond



QuickStart Mini-grant funded skateboard and scooter rack at Simonsdale Elementary, Portsmouth

Walkabout Mini-grants

There is a limited number of Walkabout Mini-grants available for schools this fall. The school awarded a Walkabout Mini-grant will receive a walkabout led by a Local Technical Assistance Coordinator (LTAC) that provides an opportunity for schools, parents, local officials, and interested stakeholders to experience the walking and bicycling conditions around a school, share perspectives, and come to a consensus regarding potential solutions to improve safety for students walking and biking to school. The LTAC will also provide the school with a Walkabout Report, summarizing the walkabout experience through maps, photos and a list of recommendations for improving walking and biking conditions. Schools are encouraged to use this report to support an infrastructure grant application. You can apply for a Walkabout Mini-grant [online](#).

- Applications are due Thursday, **October 8**.
- Selected schools will be notified by Thursday, **October 22**.
- The Walkabout should be completed during the fall semester, preferably before November 30 for the report to be complete before winter break.



Walkabout participants at Galax Elementary, Galax

