



December 2012

Coordinator's Corner

There is much happening with safe routes to school in Virginia, as we end 2012 and welcome 2013. Two grant applications deadlines remain in December, with one more in January:

December 20: Last opportunity in 2012 to apply for a QuickStart Mini-grant!

December 21: Non-infrastructure grant applications due

January 25, 2013: Infrastructure grant applications due

We are planning a series of 1/2 day workshops early next year to support local SRTS programs. We anticipate hosting two workshops in each LTAC region. One workshop will be geared towards communities that want more information about SRTS. The other workshop will provide details on how some best practices SRTS programs and activities. This workshop is in anticipation of another round of non-infrastructure grants in the fall of 2013. We need your help to plan for these workshops by answering three short questions:

1. Would you attend one of these workshops?
2. If so, what is your zip code? (This will help us plan workshop locations.)
3. Would you be interested in hosting a workshop?

Take this short poll at <http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/1110997/VDOT-SRTS-Workshops-Spring-2013>

The Friends and Faces column of this issue of our Virginia SRTS newsletter profiles Doug Miller, an engineer in VDOT's Northern Virginia District office. Doug talks about how VDOT Districts work with local governments on locally administered infrastructure projects. This issue also includes some great information on staying active during winter break and cold weather, including how Prince William County Public Schools plans to use their recently-awarded QuickStart Mini-grant to keep bicycle education 'rolling'.

Read on!

-Rob Williams
VDOT Safe Routes to School Coordinator



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CALENDAR

December 2012

- 7: Last day to submit SRTS Activities and Programs Plan for VDOT review and approval
- 14: Last day to submit Comprehensive School Travel Plan for VDOT review and approval
- 20: QuickStart Mini-grant applications due (fifth round)
- 21: Non-infrastructure grant applications due

January 2013

- 25: Infrastructure grant applications due

May 2013

- 8: Bike to School Day

Friends and Faces

Doug Miller is an engineer with VDOT's Northern Virginia District office, Preliminary Engineering section. He has worked on several locally administered SRTS infrastructure projects, including a recently-completed project at Charles Barrett Elementary School in Alexandria.



What is your role with the Northern Virginia VDOT District?

Is there anyone else from VDOT you work with at the District Level that helps promoting the SRTS Projects?

I oversee the implementation of infrastructure-related projects, including overseeing project design and coordinating construction activities. And, if everything goes accord to plan, I process the invoices and vouchers so the locality can be reimbursed for their efforts. Because I've been involved in programs of this type for a while, I'm also able offer support and technical assistance to two of my colleagues in the Preliminary Engineering section, Bethany Mathis and Anna Fortune.

Are you involved with non-infrastructure projects, too?

While I have not worked on non-infrastructure projects, Fatimah Allahdoust and Cindy Engelhart the NOVA District Planning section have. They are more directly involved in the non-infrastructure related processes, including the review of school travel plans.

How did you get involved in transportation? When did you first become involved with SRTS?

I started at VDOT in the environmental section, mostly working on implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act. About 10 years ago I transferred to Preliminary Engineering, and about that time the day-to-day implementation of the Transportation Enhancement (TE) program became a responsibility for VDOT's nine District offices. I gained "cradle to grave" knowledge and oversight of TE projects, which are small, locally administered and federally-funded. Although the application and eligibility processes are different, when it comes to designing and constructing a pedestrian improvement there's very little

difference between projects paid for with TE dollars and those funded through the SRTS program.

How do you see the SRTS projects fitting into a community's larger transportation system?

I see the SRTS program as filling a need in the community that's difficult to fill with other, more conventional, forms of federal funding. From a process standpoint, it's "easiest" to fund these projects with local funds, but that's not always an option. While larger transportation projects are good candidates for other federal funding sources (RSTP, CMAQ, etc.) the SRTS program is targeted at smaller projects that might otherwise not be built in a timely fashion.

What are some of the communities you've worked with on SRTS projects? Is there a particular project you enjoyed working on? What did it consist of?

I most recently worked with the City of Alexandria on a project at Charles Barrett Elementary School. The project make it easier and safer for students to get to the school on foot and bike with a new configuration of streets at the school's entrance, including crosswalk, sidewalk, and ramp improvements. Since the improvements were right at the school entrance, a maximum number of students were able to benefit from the project. It's great example of how we can work closely with a local government to deliver a very worthwhile project within a narrow window of time. By working together, the City of Alexandria was able to build this project during the summer 2012 - just in time for school to start in the fall 2012. I understand that the project is a great success.

The Charles Barrett Elementary School project was the first, and for a long time it was the only, SRTS project in the NOVA District. I'm pleased to say that we now have nine more SRTS projects lined up, and all of them should be completed within the next three years.

QuickStart Mini-grants are in Demand: 32 and Counting!

In early December, we awarded four more \$1,000 QuickStart Mini-Grants, bringing to 32 the total number of schools benefiting from this program! More grants are available, so consider applying for one. The last application deadline for 2012 is December 20.

QuickStart Mini-grants

Kent Gardens Elementary School, McLean - *Bike it!*

Prince William County Public Schools (benefits Dale City Elementary School, Parkside Middle School, and Beville Middle School) - *Bike Safety and Education Program*

Russell Middle School, Lawrenceville - *Bicycle Rodeo*

Rockingham Memorial Hospital, Harrisonburg (benefits Skyline Middle School, Smithland Elementary School, and Spotswood Elementary School) - *'Risk Watch' Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Education*

More information on this program is on the website under Travel plans and grants. Click on QuickStart Mini-grants for full details and a link to the online application.

SRTS Grant Reminder

Deadlines for the upcoming grant applications are approaching. If you are planning to apply for either an infrastructure or non-infrastructure grant, review the schedule below. You'll need a VDOT-approved SRTS Plan for the application. Use the Comprehensive School Travel Plan for infrastructure grant applications and the SRTS Activities and Programs Plan for non-infrastructure grant applications.

December 21, Non-infrastructure Grant applications due. Includes a VDOT-approved SRTS Activities and Programs Plan

January 25, Infrastructure Grant applications due. Includes a VDOT-approved Comprehensive School Travel Plan

Grant applications will be submitted using an online system, Foundant. You will be sent logon information once your SRTS plan has been approved.

Keep Your SRTS Program Going Strong in the Winter

With the seasons changing and days getting shorter, it can be a challenge to keep students and parents energized about walking and biking to school. Weather does not have to be an excuse. A refresher on safety and readiness coupled with an incentive program will help keep students encouraged about staying active. Consider some of the following ideas to spice up your SRTS Program.

- **Identify Winter Safe Routes to School** - Adults should help students identify safe routes for walking during wintery conditions. For example, which sidewalks and streets are cleared first in your neighborhood and are easier to access? Students may then draw up their own maps and put them on display at school. A school wide contest could make the mapping experience fun!
- **Hold a Walking and Biking Safety Assembly** - Use student skits to discuss pedestrian and bicycle safety. Address tips unique to being prepared for winter conditions. For example, when walking in low light conditions, it may be difficult for others to see you. Consider wearing some reflective clothing or putting a visible reflector on your back pack or jacket. An incentive program may include inexpensive reflectors, which are a hit with kids. And of course, stay layered for cold weather.
- **Greet Walkers and Bikers with Warm Apple Cider** - Adults may greet walkers and bikers with a warm cup of apple cider when they arrive at school. What a delightful way to start the day!

Walking and biking to school is fun but it's important to be safe while doing it. Be sure to remind students that an active lifestyle will promote good health and academic performance in the classroom!

QuickStart Mini-grant Will Keep Students Biking in Winter

One of the recently awarded QuickStart Mini-grants will make bicycle education a year-round thing. With the help of their \$1,000 grant, Prince William County Public Schools will purchase 15 indoor wind resistance bike trainers to use with the Bike Smart Virginia safety instruction and education program that is as part of their schools' health and physical education curriculum. PWCPS has two bicycle fleets used for bicycle safety education, which usually remain unused in cold weather. The rollers will keep things - well - rolling in PE classes, before and after school programs, and wellness programs. In all, nearly 1,000 students will get Bike Smart instruction by using the trainers in 6 schools over the winter months.

The winter training program benefits all students, especially those that haven't ridden a bike. The trainer allows students to learn how to ride a bike more comfortably, leading up to getting on a bike without using the rollers and riding on their own.

Want to learn more about...

the Prince William County program? Contact Beth Tomanek, Health and Physical Education Specialist

Bike Smart Virginia? Contact Heather Board,

QuickStart Mini-grants? See the Virginia SRTS website, or write to info@VirginiaSRTS.org



Indoor bicycle instruction with rollers.

Keep Your Heart Rate Up When the Temperature Drops

The temperature may be dropping, but that doesn't mean that activity levels have to plummet as well! There are many easy outdoor and indoor activities to keep your family healthy and moving during winter break. For example, if there's snow on the ground, hold your own winter Olympics with games such as the snow shoe dash, the snow ball roll (who can roll the biggest ball in a specified amount of time), or snow sculpture freestyle. Use diluted food color to spray games such as hopscotch into the snow, or to create a yard-sized work of art.



Outdoor bicycle instruction.



If it's really too cold to spend a lot of time outside, alternate sedentary video games with games that require you to get up and dance, hop, kick or swing! Visit your local YMCA for access to their indoor basketball courts, pools, and ice skating rinks. Visit <http://www.ymca.net/> to locate your nearest YMCA.

Ever wonder...
What is the SRTS infrastructure administration process for locally administered projects?



A SRTS project must follow the standard federal project development format. This is often the biggest challenge for a local government. Designing and constructing a federally-funded project brings into play a wide range of requirements, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) standards, and the Manual for Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) standards, as well as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Civil Rights Act, and a host of Federal Highway Administration and Virginia Department of Transportation policies, procedures, and contracting requirements. Assisting the locality in navigating this sometimes confusing maze of requirements is the role of the VDOT SRTS coordinator. ---Doug Miller, NoVa District Engineer

Let's Take a Bus or a Train to School -- a Walking School Bus or Bicycle Train, that is!

The upcoming winter break from school shouldn't be a break from walking and biking. In fact, it's a great time to form a new walking school bus or bicycle train - or improve the one you have. Kids in places much colder than Virginia - like Isle La Motte, VT or Calgary, Canada - don't let the weather stop them from getting to school on their bikes. Check out the photo, below, of a bike train in Vermont with temperature of only 19° ,or see how a bike train in snowy Calgary works.

Snow and ice shouldn't stop you from going for a walk or bike ride. Just wear warm boots with soles that grip well and go a bit slower. Be sure to do your part in keeping sidewalks clear so you and your neighbors can walk and bike safely. Many cities and towns around Virginia ask their residents to clear sidewalks on their property for their own safety and the safety of others!

For more information on shoveling policies, consult your locality's website. And for tips on how to start up a walking bus program visit the National Center for Safe Routes to School website at http://apps.saferoutesinfo.org/training/walking_school_bus



QuickStart Mini-grant Awards to Date

The following QuickStart Mini-grants have been awarded to date:

Bayview Elementary School
Walk to school event

Bensley Elementary School
BikeSmart curriculum in grades 4-5

Berkeley Glenn Elementary School
Berkeley Glenn Elementary SRTS new sidewalk ribbon cutting event

Burnley Moran Elementary School
Burnley Moran Walk-A-Thon

Central Elementary School
Walk-A-Thon and Bear's Mileage Club

Clover Hill Elementary School
Safe SWARM to School

Crestwood Elementary School
Crestwood Safe Travels Program

Cumberland County Elementary School
Instructing students on how to ride a bicycle properly

Daniel's Run Elementary School
Walk and Bike to School Day event

Garfield Elementary School
Garfield Bike Rodeo

Graham Road Elementary School
Share Graham Road and Bike Rodeo

Hunters Wood Elementary School
Multi-faceted encouragement and education activities

Jennie Dean Elementary School
Bike rodeo and bike/walk safety promotion (at Harvest Moon Family Fun & Fitness Festival)

Kent Gardens Elementary School
Bike it!

Louise Archer Elementary School
International Walk to School Day; Walking Wednesdays; Vienna Bike/Walk to School Challenge

Marshall Road Elementary School
Monthly "Walking Wednesdays" and "Bike Trains"

Nottingham Elementary School
Walk to school event, Bike Safety Unit

Oakridge Elementary School
Walk to School Event

Phenix Elementary School
Saturday Safety Initiative

Prince William County Public Schools
Bike Safety and Education Program

Robious Elementary School
A Walking School Bus on Our New Sidewalks!

Rockledge Elementary School
Bike Rodeo

Rockingham Memorial Hospital
'Risk Watch' Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Education

Russell Middle School
Bicycle Rodeo

Shoemaker Elementary School, Gate City Middle School
Crosswalk designation and proper marking

Vienna Elementary School
Walking Wednesdays program



QuickStart Mini-grants Gallery



Bayview Elementary School Safe Walk and Bike to School Week



Garfield Elementary School Bike Rodeo



Central Elementary School PTA Walk-a-Thon