



Fall 2019



Coordinator's Corner

I am so excited to have the opportunity to be involved with Virginia's Safe Routes to School Program. The program has grown considerably since its inception in 2007 when there were eight grants awarded - in 2019 we awarded grants to 18 recipients!



The start of the school year is always busy, but provides new opportunities to work with students and their families, helping them develop healthy, active, and safe practices when it comes to getting to school, which can translate to other aspects of their daily activities.

To kick things off, Walk to School Day is October 2. This is a great opportunity to show kids how much fun walking to school can be and encourage them to make it a regular habit. Registration is open now so be sure to sign up and be counted. In 2018, Virginia schools hosted 364 events across the state. That number has grown consistently since 2010 and we want to break our record again this year. Our goal is 400 events; let's make it happen!

In this newsletter, you'll find helpful tips for getting your Safe Routes to School program off to a great start. We talk to a former SRTS coordinator who's making the Shenandoah Valley a better place to bike. Next, we show you all the ways you can use QuickStart Mini-grant funds, highlight our Zone In, Not Out (ZINO) materials, and introduce Student Travel Tally Week. Finally, grab your popcorn and see how coordinators across Virginia are using videos to promote safe walking and bicycling.

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CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER

All month: Take Student Travel Tallies

12: QuickStart Mini-grant and Walkabout Mini-grant due date

OCTOBER

All month: Take Student Travel Tallies

2: Walk to School Day

10: QuickStart Mini-grant due date

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If you have any questions or would like to learn more about the topics included here, please don't hesitate to reach out! You can call the Virginia SRTS Hotline at **1-855-601-7787** or send us an email at info@virginiasrts.org.

Regards,



Kathy Graham
Virginia SRTS Coordinator

Friends and Faces: Kyle Lawrence

Kyle Lawrence is executive director of the Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition, a non-profit based in Harrisonburg that advocates for bicycle infrastructure, teaches people how to ride bikes, and organizes bike rides. Previously, he was the Safe Routes to School coordinator for Rockingham County Public Schools, and has long been a champion for getting students to walk and bike more. We spoke to Kyle about how he became a bicycle advocate, how Virginia SRTS has grown over the years, and his favorite places to bike.

"The childhood obesity piece that launched a lot of the health industry involvement is the high-level goal. We've found that [reducing obesity] is a secondary benefit, but it doesn't really motivate and change behavior as much as [the program's ability to] strengthen communities and families."

How did you get started in bicycle advocacy?

I started out riding recreationally, mostly mountain biking in high school. I came to college in



Kyle Lawrence

Harrisonburg and got plugged into the community there. What is great about it is that it's very inclusive of all types of bicycling. Mountain biking, road cycling, riding around town. The Shenandoah Bicycle Coalition today represents everyone and does everything: advocacy, mountain biking, road cycling, and club rides.

When did you first hear about SRTS?

While in college at James Madison University, I worked in the local bike shops, and was always involved in the [Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition] as a volunteer. When Sentara Healthcare launched the program for the Harrisonburg City Schools, I remember hearing about it and thinking that it was a great idea. I watched the program from its very beginning, saw how it was working, and then when Sentara launched it for Rockingham County, a new coordinator position opened and I applied and got it. I thought it was great to see the health community leverage their money to join and build this movement.

How have you seen SRTS change and evolve?

It's about building stronger communities, happier families, and making connections. The childhood obesity piece that launched a lot of the health industry involvement is the high-level goal. We've

found that [reducing obesity] is a secondary benefit, but it doesn't really motivate and change behavior as much as [the program's ability to] strengthen communities and families.

Why is SRTS important to you?

It's important to everyone, not just schools. It's the least controversial way to engage people in this work and see the benefits almost immediately. When you get the kids into it, you engage the adults. It's a great way [to generate] funding, build resources, staff, etc. It's a breath of fresh air to see public funding going to support a program like Safe Routes, which impacts so many other aspects of life.

Do you think SRTS and your advocacy worlds intersect in a way that support and grow each other? How?

On a day to day level, you can't underestimate the power of having someone like an SRTS coordinator who is doing this work and that's their entire job focus. You can then leverage more volunteers. The Virginia SRTS program may feel amorphous, but it really is huge and impactful. It's important to empower that coordinator, to do more and make those connections with local non-profits and other groups with similar missions. Those connections outside of schools are important.

SRTS keeps growing bicycling throughout Rockingham County. When kids hear the PE bike unit is coming to their school, they get so excited. Some kids will beg their parents to teach them to how to ride before the bike unit arrives. Rockingham County got the bronze medal for Bicycling Friendly Community from the League of American Bicyclists, and they wouldn't have gotten it without the points earned by having a robust SRTS program in place.

Where do you see the SRTS program going?

In the future, it's Safe Routes to Everywhere. Safe routes for people walking and biking going all over. There's a new high school being built in the city and there's no walking or bicycling access. There's a road and a parking lot. But just a few years ago, the city of Harrisonburg approved a greenways project to connect the new elementary schools. It was a huge, successful campaign and got the city to do something they had never done before. So it gives us hope that there's so much more possible now.

What's your favorite bike ride in Virginia?

What's your favorite walk or hike in Virginia?

Right now, it's the Massanutten Resort western slope trails. It's on private property and Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition volunteers have been working on those trails forever, and they're amazing.

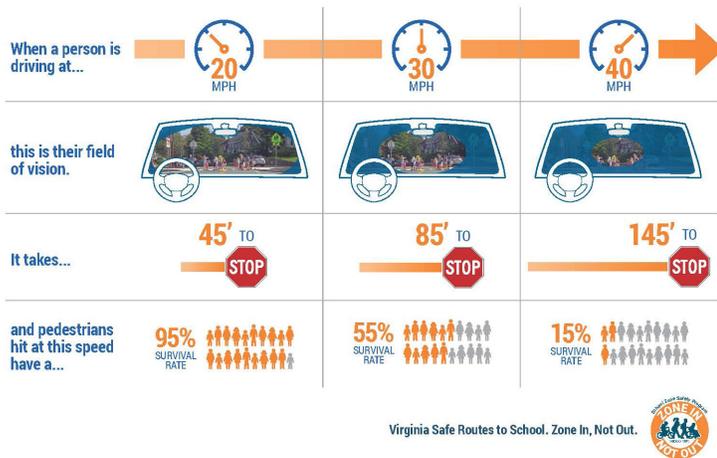
For a great hike, I love the southern section of the Shenandoah Valley. The Austin Mountain trail is one of my favorites.



Zone In, Not Out

According to [AAA](#), over 55 million children across the United States head back to school each fall. With over [11 percent](#) of K-8 students in Virginia walking and biking to school, it's important for all road users to take extra care in the hours before and after school and reduce their speeds when traveling in school zones.

As the graphic below shows, speed matters. As speeds increase, a driver's field of vision gets smaller, the distance it takes to come to a complete stop gets longer, and pedestrian survival rates dramatically decrease.



Remind members of your school community about the importance of traveling safely through school zones with the [Zone In, Not Out](#) materials on our website. Developed by local SRTS coordinators working throughout the state, these resources address issues particular to school zones like: arrival and dismissal, mapping walking and biking routes, and speed reduction.

There's also a press release template to help get the word out, a safe driver pledge kit, and templates to print your own bumper stickers and yard signs. [All of the materials](#) are free to download.

Meet the LTACs!

The new school year is a great opportunity to reacquaint yourself with our Local Technical Assistance Coordinators (LTACs), who are available to assist your SRTS program. Each LTAC serves one of three regions in the state -- Blue Ridge, Piedmont, and Coastal -- and they work with schools, local coordinators, city staff and VDOT district offices.



Coastal - Dan Reed
dan@virginiasrts.org



Piedmont - Jim Elliott
jim@virginiasrts.org



Blue Ridge - Wendy Phelps
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Lights, Camera, Safe Routes to School!

All over Virginia, local SRTS coordinators are celebrating their work and promoting good walking and bicycling habits with videos! Here's a sample of some of the great ones we've seen recently:

Norfolk Public Schools/Bike Norfolk "Ride Your Own Ride"



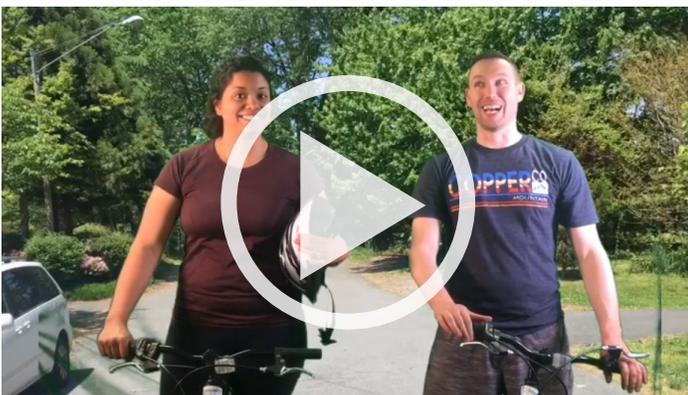
[Ride Your Own Ride](#)

Portsmouth Public Schools "Westhaven Walks!"



[Westhaven Walks!](#)

Fairfax County Public Schools Teacher Music Video



[May 5, 2019](#)

ABC 7 news story on Arlington's Bike to School Day



[Arlington's Bike to School Day](#)

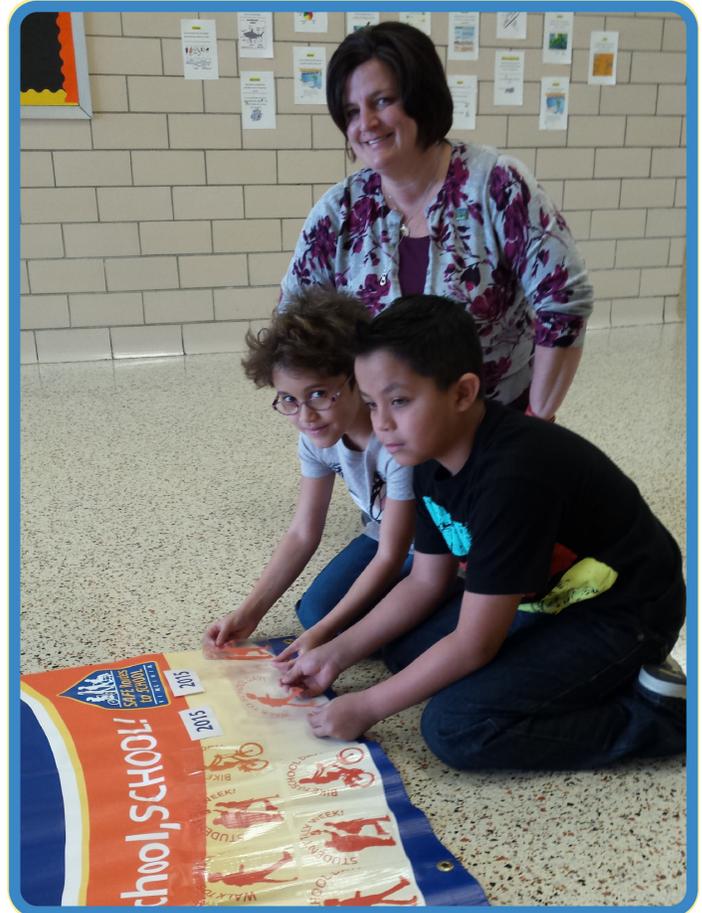
Student Travel Tally Week

The Student Travel Tally is a quick, in-class survey that provides valuable information on student travel patterns and can help you monitor the success of your SRTS program over time. The Virginia SRTS program encourages schools to collect Student Travel Tallies annually during [Student Travel Tally Week](#), which includes any week in September and October.

Our [Student Travel Tally Week](#) page has materials to get you started, including a [Learn it. Do it. Live it!](#) tip sheet with an example letter to school staff from the principal, a morning announcement script, and notes for teachers to use when explaining to students how to participate. Follow these easy steps to plan a successful Student Travel Tally Week:

1. Get buy-in from school administrators;
2. Identify a coordinator;
3. Set the dates;
4. Inform teachers of the tally dates and process to conduct the tallies;
5. Distribute tally forms or online links;
6. Be a cheerleader for the tally collection process and help make it happen; and
7. Collect and submit completed tally information.

First time participating schools will receive a Virginia SRTS banner and event decal. Schools can earn other decals by participating in Walk to School Day (October 2), Crossing Guard Appreciation Day (February 12), and Bike to School Day (May 6).



Students in Galax place decals on their SRTS banner.

Your SRTS banner can be used in a number of ways. Students can carry them during a Walk to School Day parade, they catch the eye when hung from a table at an event, and they make a statement about a school's support for Safe Routes to School when displayed near the school entrance.

Remember: If you already have a banner that is full of decals, we'll send you a new one with our updated design. Please email a photo of the old banner with your mailing address to info@virginiasrts.org.

Focus on Funding: QuickStart Mini- grants



One question we often get via [email](#) and the SRTS hotline is: “What can I do with a QuickStart Mini-grant?”

For those who are unfamiliar, QuickStart Mini-grants are \$1,000 grants from the Virginia SRTS program. In fact, we’re giving away 24 of them this fall!

What’s a QuickStart Mini-grant good for? The short answer is lots of things, as long as they advance the purpose of Safe Routes to School, which is to encourage and enable students in grades K-8 to walk and bicycle to school.

Common examples include:

- Pedestrian and bicycle safety education
- Bicycle rodeos
- Safety towns
- Walk and bike to school day events
- Walk at school events (when combined with pedestrian safety education)
- Walking school buses and bicycle trains
- Frequent walker programs (e.g., weekly “Walking Wednesdays”)
- Student safety patrols

- SRTS youth engagement activities (e.g., activities where students develop SRTS promotional materials or assess walking and bicycling conditions)
- Bicycle racks (when combined with an SRTS encouragement or education activity)

Don’t be limited by these examples. There’s so much more you could do. We love creative, new ideas that advance the mission of SRTS!

Also, check out the [QuickStart Mini-grant](#) page on our website, where you’ll find lots more about QuickStart Mini-grants, including a link to our online application, a Learn it. Live it. Do it! with application tips, a list of items you can and cannot purchase with the grant (unfortunately food and drink are a no-no), and a map showing the hundreds of schools across the state that have benefited from QuickStart Mini-grants.

The next application deadline is September 12. Ready to apply? [Click here](#).