



**OCTOBER 2012**

**Coordinator's Corner**

This fall is proving to be full of SRTS activities, from Walk to School Day to several funding opportunities. Our new local technical assistance coordinators - Carrie, Danielle, and Mauricio - have been working with many of you on activities for your local SRTS program, as well as providing information on QuickStart Mini-grants and the new travel plan options.



As the school year continues, I hope you will use the energy and enthusiasm generated during Walk to School Day to keep your SRTS program active. If your school participated in Walk to School Day for the first time but aren't quite sure what comes next, take a look at the SRTS Starter Kit on the website. Then, give the LTAC in your region a call.

We promised a year with new resources and hope that these new resources are helpful. In addition to the LTACs, many of you have taken advantage of our new QuickStart Mini-grant program. In this newsletter, we'll include stories about the activities made possible through this program.

-Rob Williams  
VDOT Safe Routes to School Coordinator

**Friends and Faces**

Melody Foster, Regional Planner with the Commonwealth Regional Council, which serves the counties of Amelia, Buckingham, Charlotte, Cumberland, Lunenburg, Nottoway and Prince Edward. Melody works with the Council's Rural Transportation Program for Planning District 14 (PD14).

**How did you become involved in SRTS?**

I serve as the Regional Planner for the Commonwealth Regional Council, which includes support for VDOT's Rural Transportation Program. This program focuses on improving transportation in all rural communities. All seven counties comprising PD14 are considered rural. The Safe Routes to School Program (SRTS) offers a potential funding source for improving sidewalks near schools, which improves walking conditions for all. Localities that can tie in the SRTS program with their needs to repair or install sidewalks create a win-win for both the schools and the local governments. Lunenburg County has already taken advantage of the program and we hope others will learn more about the possibilities.

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**CALENDAR**

**October 2012**

- 3: Walk to School Day
- 18: QuickStart Mini-grant applications due, third round

**November 2012**

- 2: Final day for optional submission of Activities and Programs Plan for guaranteed review
- 15: QuickStart Mini-grant applications due, fourth round
- 16: Final day for optional submission of Comprehensive School Travel Plan for guaranteed review.

**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
- 21: Non-infrastructure grant applications due

**January 2013**

- 25: Infrastructure grant applications due

### **What is the Commonwealth Regional Council's role in SRTS?**

When requested, we assist localities in the seven counties apply for VDOT SRTS funds, write travel plans, and implement projects when funded. For example, we worked with Lunenburg County, including the Towns of Victoria and Kenbridge, in writing a grant for a VDOT SRTS Planning Grant in 2009 to create a School Travel Plan. Once funded, we helped put the Plan together and apply for a SRTS Infrastructure grant for each town. The Town of Victoria's grant for a new sidewalk, crosswalk, and pedestrian warning signs with flashing beacons to assist students walking to Victoria Elementary School was funded. We also helped with implementing the project. Because of the current call for grant applications, we hosted an information session for all schools and localities in the region with the hope of increasing awareness about this opportunity.



### **Does the Council work directly with schools?**

We try to make sure the information about SRTS is sent to the Schools so that they can take advantage of the program. And in doing so, I have had direct contact with several of the schools on questions about the program. On the SRTS project that was funded, our contract was with the Town but of course the Victoria Elementary School was directly involved in the project.

### **What do you feel are the most significant challenges to implementing SRTS programs in the communities within the Commonwealth Regional Council?**

The significant challenge to implementing the SRTS Program in this region is the rural setting of the localities. Most localities and schools probably think this program is more applicable in urban settings where large numbers of kids live close to the school and walk or ride bikes to school. However, we do have several schools located in towns where students also can walk or ride bikes to school. Regardless of walking and bicycling infrastructure, the 'other Es' offer ways to improve safety and enjoyment for students walking and bicycling in general. This is part of an overall education schools and localities can provide to their students, parents and everyone else.

### **What is your vision for SRTS in the Council's planning area over the next couple of years, especially with the new federal transportation bill, Map-21?**

We expect to continue support SRTS when and where it is possible. VDOT has been great about provide updates on MAP-21 and the implications for the various programs included, but it still unclear how each program will be affected. Once VDOT determines how to handle SRTS within MAP-21, we'll have a better idea of how to proceed.

### **QuickStart Mini-grants are a Big Hit!**

Five more schools received QuickStart Mini-grant awards in October. More awards will be announced by the end of October, based on the October 18 application deadline for the third round. Another round is planned for November, with an application deadline of November 15.

### **QuickStart Mini-grants**

Graham Road Elementary School, Falls Church, Northern Virginia Region: Share Graham Road and Bike Rodeo

Hunters Wood Elementary School, Reston, Northern Virginia Region: Multi-faceted encouragement and education activities

Phenix Elementary School, Phenix, Central, Southern & Western Virginia Region: Saturday Safety Initiative

Central Elementary School, Lexington, Central Virginia & Hampton Roads Region: Walk-A-Thon and Bear's Mileage Club

Rockledge Elementary School, Woodbridge, Northern Virginia Region: Bike Rodeo

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.

School receiving these grants used them for walk and bike to school events, bike rodeos and bike racks, walking school buses, and improved crosswalk marking. Here's a sampling from our growing photo gallery of QuickStart Mini-grant events!

### **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. A reference guide and plan template are available on the website under school travel plans and grants.

VDOT offers two opportunities for a review of your draft plan:

- The LTAC in your region can provide a preliminary review your draft plan prior to submitting it to VDOT. The LTAC review will focus on ensuring you have included all required plan elements. The time period for this review is not included on the calendar below, but should be completed prior to the 'optional submission' date for each plan type.
- VDOT will provide an optional review of your draft plan about a month prior to the final submission.

#### **SRTS Activities and Programs Plan ~ Non-infrastructure Grants**

**November 2**, Final day for optional submission of Activities and Programs Plan for guaranteed review

**December 7**, Last day to submit SRTS Activities and Programs Plan for VDOT review and approval

**December 21**, Non-infrastructure Grant applications due

#### **Comprehensive School Travel Plan ~ Infrastructure Grants**

**November 16**, Final day for optional submission of Comprehensive School Travel Plan for guaranteed review

**December 14**, Last day to submit Comprehensive School Travel Plan for VDOT review and approval

**January 25**, Infrastructure Grant applications due

Six schools participated in September's Student Travel Tally Week. These schools can use this information in a SRTS Plan, should they decide to apply for an infrastructure or non-infrastructure grant.

### **SRTS Funds at Work in Blacksburg**

Blacksburg recently completed a SRTS-funded project that improved a key crossing adjacent to Harding Elementary School, just in time for the start of the school year. The \$225,000 SRTS grant awarded in 2010 paid for a pedestrian refuge at the Harding Avenue and Owens Street intersection, as a trail connection to the school through Owens Street Park.

The project was included in the Blacksburg School Travel Plan, developed in 2009 by a local SRTS team comprised of community members, parents, Town and MCPS staff, Harding Avenue Elementary's principal, and others. Blacksburg also received a \$250,000 SRTS grant in the spring of 2012 to install more trail connections to the school. Construction is expected to begin next year.



### **Walk to School Day Around the State**

There were many great Walk to School Day events across the state this year. Events at three schools are described here. Send us information on the WTS event in your community and we will include it in an upcoming newsletter! Be sure to include links to other media coverage.

#### **Albert Harris Elementary School, Martinsville**

Walking is not new to the students at Albert Harris Elementary school. The school has hosted four Walk to School Day events and an ongoing walking program, Wildcats Walking for Fitness (WWF), and nearly all of its 519 students participated in Walk to School Day on October 3. Car and bus riders joined students who regularly walk thanks to several "park and walk" sites. Car riders walked to school from nearby Baldwin Park. School buses made a special stop close to school so students could walk the rest of the way, circling the building before entering. School staff helped students stay on course and safe at several "posts", while local police and firefighters direct traffic at intersections near school.

Mr. Matthew Rowe, physical education teacher and event organizer, said that Albert Harris students love walking, whether to school or at school. Past Walk to School Day events created such enthusiasm for walking that he created the WWF. Each day prior to school, students walk laps around the gym for 25 minutes. With up to 125 students participating, students alternate days by grade. "They don't ask. They just enjoy walking, talking and listening to music," Mr. Rowe said. "It gives them a way to work off some energy. For some of them, if they walk the full 25 minutes, they're walking more than a mile." he said.

#### **Oakridge Elementary, Arlington**

Oakridge Elementary School put a QuickStart Mini-grant to work for its Walk to School Day event, using the \$1,000 grant for t-shirts, reflectors and other small charms to hand out to students and parents during the event. Arlington Public Schools, with the help of the local PTA, organized this year's Walk to School Day event to encourage more students and parents to bike and walk to school more often. The effort paid off, with nearly 100% participation, including bus riders who stepped off the bus at a nearby church, continuing to school as a walking school bus. Arlington County Police kept a close eye on the roads

around the school in the Arlington Ridge neighborhood, including closing S. Arlington Ridge Road to allow a large convoy of kids and adults on bikes to make their way to the school safely from a rest stop at the historic Hume School. Once at school, students participated in a rally led by Principal Dr. Lynne Wright, County Board member Walter Tejada, and marathon runner Michael Wardian who, along with other local athletes and competitive cyclists, led students in a series of light physical activities.

The Oakridge Walk to School Day event was particularly important, in light of recent changes to the school system's busing policies that expands the 'walk zone' for students.

#### **Terra Centre Elementary School, Burke**

The Terra Centre Elementary School Tigers had an extra spring in their step on the walk to school Wednesday morning, thanks to a brightly-decorated walking route and finish line with giveaways such as glow-in-the-dark WTS Day 2012 bracelets and cereal bars. The school's mascot, TC the Tiger, greeted students arriving at the finish line, along with several members of the SRTS Team. Local police officers provided crossing assistance on the Burke Centre Parkway and members of the school's Safety Patrol helped guide walkers through the trail route behind the school. Words of encouragement chalked on the trail and track on the school property were accompanied by balloons, streamers, and student-colored Walk to School Day drawings. The event drew in around 300 walkers, bikers, and boarders (approximately 75% of the school population). The Tigers can't wait to lay down some paw prints at their next walk to school day event, scheduled for spring 2013.

#### **New Resource for SRTS Infrastructure Projects**

The National Center for Safe Routes to School and the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) have created a series of nine instructional briefing sheets for transportation practitioners to use for Safe Routes to School program planning and implementation. The briefing sheets will support transportation engineers and planners as they work to establish safer walking and bicycling routes near schools.

The series of nine free briefing sheets can be accessed on the ITE website and will serve as a hands-on reference

that can be referred to while implementing a SRTS program. The series includes guidance on topics such as school site selection, traffic calming near schools, and walking and bicycling audits.

### **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)*

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*

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

Rockledge Elementary School  
*Bike Rodeo*

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

Vienna Elementary School  
*Walking Wednesdays program*

## QuickStart Mini-grants Gallery



Burnley Moran Walk-a-Thon



Vienna ES QuickStart Mini-grant Walking Wednesdays Program



Clover Hill Elementary School Walk to School Day 2012

## Walk to School Day 2012 Photo Gallery



Albert Harris Elementary School WTS Day 2012



Oak Ridge Elementary School Walk to School Day 2012



Terra Centra Elementary School Walk to School Day 2012