



**JULY 2011**



**Coordinator's Corner**

SRTS is a federal program, but it's really a way to connect many other programs, activities, and organizations aimed at getting kids more active and healthier. In a way, SRTS is an umbrella that can collect and connect these programs. This issue of the VDOT SRTS Newsletter tells you about the SRTS Umbrella in Virginia – from the work of Thanh Dang, a Planner in Harrisonburg, to a program in Richmond called Fit4Kids.



This issue also showcases a recently completed sidewalk and intersection project in Harrisonburg that is already making a difference in the number of kids that walk and bike to school.

So remember, as you're doing your back to school planning, don't forget your SRTS Umbrella!

-Rob Williams

VDOT Safe Routes to School Coordinator

**IN THIS ISSUE**

- Coordinator's Corner
- Friends and Faces
- Calendar
- The SRTS Umbrella
- Big Step Forward in Harrisonburg
- Mini Grant Reminder
- VA Standards of Learning Support SRTS
- National Center for SRTS Webinars

**CALENDAR**

*Dates specific to VDOT SRTS Program are indicated with \**

**JULY**

10-13: Health for Success Training (Farmville, VA), sponsored by the Virginia Department of Education (register by June 1). Download brochure for more details.

**SEPTEMBER**

30: **New Date!** SRTS mini-grant applications due to Prevention Connections ([www.preventionconnections.org](http://www.preventionconnections.org))

**OCTOBER**

5: International Walk to School Day

Let us know about SRTS events in your community!

Click here to send your information so we can include it in our calendar.

**Friends and Faces**



Thanh Dang, a Public Works Planner for the City of Harrisonburg, wears many hats: she works as a transportation planner, a public outreach facilitator, and a liaison with several city departments and the VDOT District Office. As a result, she has a hand in many pedestrian and bicycle projects – including SRTS. Thanh prepared two successful SRTS infrastructure grant applications, and is working with parents on a School Travel Plan for the next round of SRTS grants. Thanh coordinates the Harrisonburg Bicycle and

Pedestrian Subcommittee, which is composed of citizens, Harrisonburg City Public Schools officials, representatives from local health and bicycle advocacy organizations, and City staff members.

We talked with Thanh shortly after the dedication ceremony for the Keister Elementary School SRTS project (see the article below).

**Q: Harrisonburg's approach to SRTS?**

**A:** The City of Harrisonburg takes both a proactive and responsive approach to SRTS. While the City's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan includes SRTS projects, the City prefers to wait for a school community to state its desire for a SRTS

project before moving forward with a funding request. Our experience is that evidence that when school and community members *want* the project, it results in a stronger grant application. While the Public Works department does the bulk of the infrastructure project work, the school community usually handles the other Es, which are equally as important. For example, next year, a physical education teacher at one school plans to lead a walking school bus home for students living in an apartment complex about ½ mile from school. In the end, a lot of people in the school community are appreciative of the projects and feel they are worthwhile to pursue.

***Q: What aspects of the VDOT SRTS program work well and what aspects could be enhanced?***

**A:** As time-consuming as the Travel Plan is, it is a good tool for organizing SRTS activities and preparing the actual grant application. The Travel Plan brings together partners and community organizations and gives parents a sense of involvement. While our grants have a strong focus on infrastructure projects, the travel plan makes sure we develop education and encouragement programs. Some of the other Es programs have come about because of the travel plan.

We would benefit from having more information on what other communities have done with education and encouragement. We'd like to contact the person in the community or at the school to see how they've done a particular encouragement program. This type of networking would be a big help.

I also believe that we need a better way to do cost estimates for the infrastructure grant application. We have found the cost estimates in our first two SRTS grant applications were too low. The City of Harrisonburg has been fortunate in being able to fill the gap with a capital improvements line item for pedestrian and bicycle projects. But, I'm not sure how other communities solve this.

***Q: How do you explain the City's success rate in getting SRTS Infrastructure grant awards?***

**A:** There are two keys to our success. The first is the SRTS Travel Plan we develop for each school. Putting the plan together requires strong participation by parents and school staff. The parent surveys, student tallies

and walkability audits -- none of these could be done without their support and involvement. The other key is having SRTS projects in our Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. The year-long public involvement process we used to update the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan in 2010 really informed the community about pedestrian and bicycle transportation needs, including travel issues to those to schools. We're also finding that one or two successes inspire more interest in SRTS. The Principal of one of our elementary schools reached out to us upon hearing about the grant awards for Keister Elementary School and Waterman Elementary School.

***The SRTS Umbrella***

The Safe Routes to School Program is a big umbrella that covers connect many activities and programs that share goals with the federal SRTS program.

These activities and programs may be part of your school already, or they may be part of other organizations in your community.

For example, your school may have a student safety patrol program to help students during arrival and dismissal. Or, your school may have a spring field day with a bike rodeo. Both the student safety patrol program and bike rodeo activity are part of the SRTS Umbrella, whether or not your SRTS Team is involved in managing them.



There are a several organizations in the state whose goals fit under the SRTS Umbrella:

**Safe Kids Virginia**

Safe Kids Worldwide ([www.vcuhealth.org/virginiasafekids/about.html](http://www.vcuhealth.org/virginiasafekids/about.html)) is dedicated to the prevention of accidental injuries to children ages 14 and under. Started in 1987, Safe Kids now has a grassroots network in the U.S., with more than 450 local coalitions. Virginia has nine Safe Kids Coalitions and two Safe Kids chapters, each working to addresses risk areas that are significant in their locality. SRTS-related areas include bicycle rodeos, pedestrian safety training, and support for special events such as Walk to School Day. For

locations of coalitions and chapters in Virginia go to [www.vcuchildrens.org/virginiasafekids/contact/chapters.html](http://www.vcuchildrens.org/virginiasafekids/contact/chapters.html)

### **AAA Student Safety Patrols**

Student safety patrols (<http://midatlantic.aaa.com/Foundation/SchoolPrograms/SchoolSafetyPatrol>) are a great way for students to be involved in a SRTS enforcement program. One role of a student safety patrol is to enhance enforcement of drop-off and pick-up procedures at school by increasing safety for students and traffic flow efficiency for parents. Such efforts allow students to participate in promoting traffic safety where they learn skills they can use in their everyday lives. The American Automobile Association (AAA) provides materials that support student safety patrols. For more information go to: <http://midatlantic.aaa.com/Foundation/SchoolPrograms/SchoolSafetyPatrol>.

### **Alliance for Community Choice in Transportation**

The Alliance for Community Choice in Transportation works in the Charlottesville area to promote balanced transportation options and sustainable land-use. The organization has an active SRTS effort, supporting programs at three areas schools: Greenbrier Elementary School, Burnley-Moran Elementary School, and Woodbrook Elementary School. Using funds from the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), the Alliance for Community Choice in Transportation has provided in-school pedestrian and bicycle safety education and facilitated walk to school events.

### **Greater Richmond Fit4Kids City**

Greater Richmond Fit4Kids ([www.transportationchoice.org/saferoutes.html](http://www.transportationchoice.org/saferoutes.html)) is a relatively new organization that works with local schools in the Richmond area to promote physical activity and healthy eating habits and supportive programs. The organization is working to support school principals in Richmond and the surround area to improve the health of students in their schools. SRTS is one of several programs that Fit4Kids will be looking to support during the 2011-2012 school year.

### **BikeWalk Virginia**

BikeWalk Virginia (<http://bikewalkvirginia.org/programs/>) promotes walking and biking through programs, projects and activities. Two current projects support SRTS

programs: Cyclist and Pedestrian Awareness Week, a major outreach event aimed at raising the awareness of safe and respectful road-sharing practices; and educational videos on walking and biking. The videos, offered in English and Spanish, are funded in part by a federal safety grant and are available for public distribution through channels such as YouTube.

### **Safe Routes to School takes a Big Step Forward in Harrisonburg**

On June 3, the City of Harrisonburg and Keister Elementary School held a dedication ceremony for a recently-completed set of improvements to walking routes to the school. Harrisonburg's Vice Mayor Ted Byrd and Public Works Director Jim Baker were on hand to award a certificate of appreciation to Keister Elementary School Principal Anne Lintner and Harrisonburg City Public Schools' Assistant Superintendent Dr. Mike Loso. Third grader Kate Cummings spoke about how much she enjoys the time she has with her dad and dog walking to school.



The idea for sidewalks and a pedestrian crossing along walking routes to Keister Elementary School began in 2006 with RMH (Rockingham Memorial Hospital) Community Health and Safe Kids of the Central Shenandoah Valley. Representatives from these two organizations asked the City to apply for the SRTS grant through VDOT's new SRTS infrastructure grant program. The City worked with the two organizations and the Keister school PTO to submit the application, receiving a grant for nearly \$500,000. Construction on the 1 ¼ miles of sidewalks began in October 2010. The new sidewalks make walking to school safer and more comfortable along streets in residential neighborhoods and across two state routes with high volumes of traffic.



Harrisonburg has received a second SRTS grant that will benefit students traveling to Waterman Elementary School. Construction will begin on sidewalks, bike lanes, pedestrian signals and bike racks in spring 2012.

How will the City know if these improvements are making a difference? Neighborhood residents near Keister Elementary School say the new sidewalks were quickly in use as they were completed during May. The school will administer the National Center for SRTS Parent Survey and student tally next year. Waterman Elementary School administered these tools last year, establishing a base line for comparison once the project is completed.



### **Mini Grant Reminder**

Prevention Connections' second round of mini-grants for SRTS events runs through September 30, 2011. These \$2,000 grants are used for planning and implementing walking/biking events to promote physical activity and prevent obesity. For this second round, all middle and elementary schools in Virginia are eligible to apply. Visit [www.preventionconnections.org](http://www.preventionconnections.org) for more information.

### **Virginia Standards of Learning Support SRTS**

Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) include achievement standards that are compatible with SRTS. SOLs for each grade includes achievement standards such as:

#### **Physically Active Lifestyle:**

*Second grade* -- The student will identify opportunities to participate in regular physical activity outside of school.

*Eighth grade* -- The student will demonstrate a physically active lifestyle, including activity within and outside of the physical education setting.

#### **Health and Education:**

*Second grade* -- The student will explain that personal health decisions and health habits influence health and wellness throughout life.

*Eighth grade* -- The student will analyze and evaluate the relationship between health-risk behaviors and the onset of health problems that can impact health and wellness during the adolescent years.

Knowing about these SOL achievement standards can help connect walking and biking to school with what your child experiences in the classroom. For more information on the Virginia SOLs go to: [www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards\\_docs/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/index.shtml).

### **National Center for SRTS Webinars**

Looking for some techniques to enhance your school's SRTS program? Click here to learn about upcoming and past webinars hosted by the National center for SRTS. You'll find webinars such as How to Start a Walking School Bus from the Grass Roots Up, Going High Tech with SRTS, Ways to Improve Law Enforcement in SRTS, and the most recent webinar – Great Ways to Include Bicycling in Your SRTS Program. All webinars can be downloaded and viewed at a time that works best for you. Consider using these webinars to keep the momentum going on your SRTS program during the summer.