



New Newsletter and Look for the VDOT SRTS Program

Welcome to the first VDOT SRTS newsletter! This inaugural issue includes information on our new SRTS Coordinator, grant opportunities, and a calendar of important dates. Subsequent monthly issues will keep you connected with Virginia's SRTS program with information on upcoming events, funding opportunities, and highlights of projects and programs around the Commonwealth. We want to help you share your SRTS successes, so send us information on what's happening at your school and we'll include it in the newsletter.

You may have noticed that the newsletter is sporting our new SRTS program logo as part of a broader effort to improve communication and marketing for the program. Efforts are now underway to revamp the SRTS website to make it more user-friendly, too. Stay tuned!

New Virginia SRTS Coordinator Joins VDOT



Rob Williams joined VDOT in December as the new Safe Routes to School Coordinator. He is excited about his new position and sees immediate opportunities to improve and strengthen VDOT's SRTS program. "My goal is to streamline the grant application and monitoring process so that grant recipients and VDOT staff can focus on the program's goals." Rob believes the best measure of success is getting more kids, parents and schools involved in SRTS programs throughout the Commonwealth and "making walking to school a safer and more convenient alternative for families."

Born in Virginia, Rob spent several years in New Jersey working at Rutgers University's Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center where he worked on a variety of pedestrian and bicycle projects New Jersey Department of Transportation. At the Voorhees Center, Rob researched topics such as the feasibility of using automated pedestrian counters for regular data collection and pedestrian safety at intersections with right turns on red. He also took part in an effort to strengthen and clarify state laws regarding the responsibilities of motorists towards pedestrians, including a "stop and stay stopped" law. In addition to his research and policy work, Rob hosted training sessions for law enforcement officers on motorist crosswalk enforcement, and for local officials on how to conduct walkability audits. He also managed New Jersey's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Council.

We're happy to have him on board! Contact Rob at robertj.williams@vdot.virginia.gov

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CALENDAR

MARCH

- 8–10: Bike Summit, Washington, DC
Sponsored by the League of American Bicyclists
- 25: School Travel Plans due to VDOT for preliminary review (see article on Travel Plans and Infrastructure grants)
- 31: On-line survey for Strategic Plan closes (see article on the Strategic Plan)

APRIL

- 29: Final School Travel Plans due to VDOT
- 29: Prevention Connections SRTS Mini Grant applications due (see article on Mini-Grant Opportunity)

JUNE

- 3: SRTS infrastructure grant applications due to VDOT



Virginia SRTS Strategic Plan Underway

In late 2005, the U.S. Congress passed new legislation establishing the first national SRTS program, to be administered by State Departments of Transportation in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. From 2006 to the present, VDOT initiated this new program, awarded grants to support local SRTS efforts, and established a statewide committee to provide oversight. With five years of experience under our belt, we're ready to assess progress and look for ways to improve the program.

You can help. *Tell us what you like about the program and ways we can improve it.* The results will be used to craft a Strategic Plan that will guide the future of VDOT's SRTS Program. All comments are welcome!

Click on the link below to get to a brief online survey where you can provide feedback on VDOT's SRTS program. tinyurl.com/VDOTSurvey

Mini-Grant Opportunity for SRTS Projects

Elementary and middle schools throughout Virginia are eligible for \$2,000 mini-grants to support Safe Routes to School programs through Prevention Connections, a Richmond-based non-profit organization dedicated to preventing obesity and tobacco use. Funds can be used to plan and implement walk and/or bike events to promote physical activity and prevent obesity. Eligibility is limited to Title I (or 40% free/reduced lunch enrollment) elementary and middle schools. The deadline for applications is April 29, 2011.

VDOT is partnering with Prevention Connections to mentor grant recipients in setting up Walk to School Day activities.

More information about Prevention Connections' grant opportunities is available at: www.PreventionConnections.org.

Spring Call for School Travel Plans for 2011 Infrastructure Grants

In order to receive funding for new sidewalks, bikeways, and pedestrian crossing improvements, VDOT requires a "School Travel Plan," which is a comprehensive plan to improve walking and bicycling conditions, and to educate and encourage more students to walk and bicycle safely. VDOT is accepting School Travel Plans through April 29, 2011. Local grantees who receive approval of their School Travel Plans will be eligible for the next round of infrastructure funding (the deadline for infrastructure funding grants is June 3, 2011).

VDOT can review and provide feedback on draft travel plans, prior to their submission in final form. The submission deadline for those interested in receiving preliminary feedback on their travel plan is March 25, 2011 with final travel plans due by April 29.

Grant funds can be used for sidewalk, intersection, and bikeway improvements within two miles of an elementary or middle school in Virginia. School Districts and local governments can apply for up to \$500,000 in funds for these types of improvements.

For this next round of funding, we are particularly interested in schools that represent low income and minority populations, programs in communities that experience a high rate of pedestrian and/or bicycle crashes, and programs that encourage and enable students with disabilities to walk and bicycle to school.

Guidelines for the types of projects that are eligible for funding, and other information and materials to help with your School Travel Plan and infrastructure grant application can be found on our website at www.virginiadot.org/saferoutes