



OCTOBER 2013

Coordinator's Corner

Welcome to our first Virginia Safe Routes to School (SRTS) newsletter for the 2013-2014 school year. We've already been very active with SRTS, starting with Student Travel Tally Week and planning for International Walk to School Day on October 9 (or any day in October).

I want to thank all the schools that participated in Student Travel Tally Week. Nearly 130 schools took part, using the new online survey form we created to make the process easier and provide more options for using the data. You may want to attend our November 6 Webinar on options for using your student travel tally data. [Click here to register.](#)



IN THIS ISSUE

- Coordinator's Corner
- Friends and Faces
- Walk to School Day Reminders
- New face on the block
- Regional SRTS Meeting in NoVa
- SRTS Discount on AASHTO Guide
- Student Travel Tally Week Update
- Stepping Up the Competition for Mini-Grants
- QuickStart Mini-grants Gallery
- Walking and Bicycling Helps Students in School

In past years, International Walk to School Day has been both a popular family-friendly event and a great way to get a SRTS program started. As of today, we have 83 events registered for 2013 iWalk. We hope to exceed the number of 2012 events -- 114. If you haven't registered your event, now is a great time to do so - just [click here](#). Remember, it's almost never too late to begin planning an iWalk event. The Virginia SRTS program website offers tip sheets and downloads to make your school's event a lot of fun. Once you've registered, the iWalk website offers more resources, including an online "Map-a-Route" to plan your route to school that day.

Two important grant opportunities are available this fall - the Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) managed by VDOT's Local Assistance Division that can fund SRTS infrastructure projects, and the SRTS non-infrastructure grants to fund other SRTS programs and activities. Please let us know if you plan to apply for one or both of these grants. The SRTS non-infrastructure grant application must include a VDOT-approved SRTS Activities and Program Plan. Our LTACs can help by doing an initial review of your plan.

Lastly, but importantly, if you are considering applying for a Transportation Alternative Program infrastructure grant, be sure to read this issue's Friends & Faces column. Because this is the first time SRTS projects will be eligible for funding through VDOT's Local Assistance Division, the Friends & Faces column features Pam Liston, the TAP program manager.

Read on!

-Rob Williams
VDOT Safe Routes to School Coordinator

CALENDAR

OCTOBER

- 9: International Walk to School Day
- 17: QuickStart Mini-grant applications due*
- 29: National Partnership Regional SRTS Meeting (Northern Virginia)

NOVEMBER

- 1: Transportation Alternatives Program grant applications due
- 6: Virginia SRTS program webinar on using Student Travel Tally data*
- 21: QuickStart Mini-grant applications due*

DECEMBER

- 17: SRTS Non-infrastructure grant application due*

Friends and Faces

With SRTS projects competing for funding alongside other walking and biking projects in the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), it's helpful to understand how this new program works. Pam Liston from VDOT's Local Assistance Division is managing the TAP program. We talked with Pam about the program, especially for SRTS projects.

How is the TAP program different from the Transportation Enhancements (TE) program?

The TAP program is more encompassing than the old TE program in that it now includes not only TE, but the SRTS and Recreational Trails program eligibilities. TAP has kept many of the old TE eligibilities, but has eliminated others and modified still others. Most notably, TAP has eliminated the creation of transportation museums, acquisition of scenic and historic sites including battlefields, and historic preservation except for the restoration of historic transportation facilities such as train depots and lighthouses. MAP-21 has also made significant changes in how the funds are to be allocated - 50% can be allocated anywhere in the state, but the other 50% must be distributed based on population. The legislation also stipulates that MPOs in Transportation Management Areas (TMAs) will make selections in these urbanized areas. In Virginia, this is new - in the past, MPOs would endorse projects, but were never directly involved in project selection.

What types of projects do you think are best suited for a competitive SRTS TAP application?

We have taken this opportunity (passage of MAP-21) to revamp our application and scoring criteria for the TAP program; with this has come a "new" philosophy for project selection. Rather than looking for the "best" project--one with all the bells and whistles, which in the past might have eliminated a SRTS project--we are going to start looking for what we think will be a more "successful" project. We believe this will give all the different types of projects the same opportunities. We are looking for projects with three characteristics:

- A well-defined scope - this typically means smaller projects that can be constructed within four years and not extended through multiple funding cycles
- Identified potential obstacles or special design issues

-projects that have been well thought out and perhaps have had some preliminary engineering work completed - master plan, preliminary cost estimates, or site visits to identify any possible issues that will need to be addressed during design and construction.

- Ready to proceed - have funding in place including the required 20% local match, that have secured all the necessary right of way, and that have experienced staff / supervision.

What is the easiest way for a school to connect with someone from their local government about a potential project?

Keep in mind that with TAP, schools and school divisions are eligible project sponsors - they do not need to have a government entity sponsor. However, a local government may offer staff with experience in these types of projects, making the grant application more competitive. In thinking about whether or how to work with a local government on a TAP project application, consider the size of your local government and in what capacity you want them to assist. For example, do you want your locality to sponsor the project or provide guidance and technical support?

In the past, has the TE program funded projects that affect walking and bicycling to school?

We have funded many sidewalk and shared use paths in the past. In fact, pedestrian and bicycle facilities was our most popular TE category. Several of these projects provided access or completed critical connections to allow better access to schools. Two projects that come to mind are the Augusta County - Scholastic Way project which will provide sidewalks to and between Stuarts Draft Elementary, Middle and High School; and a sidewalk project in Highland County providing walkways along Rte. 250 leading to the Highland County School grounds.

Does Virginia's Transportation Alternatives Program fund design and engineering or just projects that are ready for construction?

In Virginia, we fund all three phases - design, right of way acquisition, and construction.

Are the materials from the August Applicant workshops available?

We are working on this and hope to have the materials available on our webpage at www.virginiadot.org/business/prenhancegrants.asp in the very near future.

Who is the best person to contact for questions about TAP applications?

For general program questions and questions regarding the application - you can contact me or Winky Chenault, also in the Local Assistance Division:

Pam Liston 804-786-2734
pamela.liston@vdot.virginia.gov

Winkly Chenault, 804-786-2264
h.chenault@vdot.virginia.gov

October 9 Walk to School Day Reminders

To-do lists are a great way to itemize important planning tasks. They can also help to organize volunteer efforts. We've created a to-do list to help make sure your Walk to School Day event goes off without a hitch.

Asterisked items are available on the Virginia SRTS website Marketing Toolkit page.

Anytime from now through November 30:

Register your event on the Walk to School Day website: www.walkbiketoschool.org/node/add/event

Within a week:

- Include a reminder flyer* in students' backpacks.
- Send home information about any changes to arrival or dismissal on the day of the event.
- Make announcements* in the classroom and at any school events where parents will attend. Be sure to have information on your Walk to School Day event available for parents.
- Review your event schedule and logistics to make sure your plans reflect current circumstances. If something has changed, make the adjustments now and let everyone know.
- Remind volunteers of their assignments, both those to be done before the event and on the day of the event.
- Confirm invited guests, such as elected or appointed officials, who will speak at your event. Make sure

these guests know when and where to show up and how much time they have to speak. Encourage them to join a walking school bus or bicycle train as a fun way to arrive at the event.

- If you are looking to spice up your event, find unique event ideas at International Walk to School Day in the USA.

Two Days Before:

- Issue a media advisory* and follow-up to see who will attend. Assign one or more of the volunteers to be the point of contact with the media. Let the school principal, invited guests, and others know which media are expected.
- Send home information about any changes to arrival or dismissal on the day of the event. Consider printing it on the back of the reminder flyer.

Day Before:

- Make announcements* in the classroom and at any school events where parents will attend. Be sure to have information about your Walk to School Day event available for parents.
- Issue press release* and complete any remaining calls to media to confirm attendance.
- Offer students "Walk to school with me tomorrow" stickers to wear home as an extra reminder.
- Send home reminder flyers in students backpacks.
- Send home information at arrival and dismissal about any changes for the day of the event. Consider printing it on the back of the reminder flyer.

New Face on the Block



Bryan Barnett-Woods is the new LTAC for Central, Southern & Western Virginia. He is quickly becoming acquainted with this part of the state, having worked on SRTS activities in Galax, Rocky Gap, and Buena Vista. More information on Bryan is on the website under Contact us in the [Local Technical Assistance Program](#) download.

Email Bryan at Bryan@VirginiaSRTS.org or call him on the hotline at 1-855-601-7787

First Regional SRTS Meeting (NoVA) set for October 29

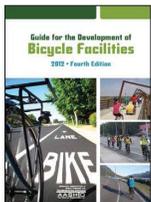
Plan to attend this first Safe Routes to School Regional Meeting to share ideas and learn different ways to implement Safe Routes to School in your community. This is a great opportunity for networking among SRTS programs in Northern Virginia. [Click here to register.](#)

SRTS Discount on AASHTO Publications

Want to get a copy of the most current guidelines for walking and bicycling facilities published by AASHTO (American Association of Highway Transportation Officials), but are concerned about the cost? Sean McCall from Vienna Elementary School has negotiated a discounted purchase cost for those doing SRTS work. Download this flyer for order information. The member discounted price expires on December 31, 2013, so keep this in mind.

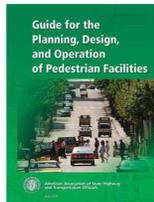
Thank you, Sean!

ATTENTION! SPECIAL PUBLICATION DISCOUNTS FOR SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOLS COORDINATORS



The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) is pleased to offer Safe Routes to Schools Coordinators a special discount on the purchase of two AASHTO publications: the *Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities*, 4th Edition (the "Bike Guide") and the *Guide for the Planning, Design, and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities*, 1st Edition (the "Pedestrian Guide").

Order either publication—or both—online at the AASHTO Bookstore, <https://bookstore.transportation.org>, and receive the discounted AASHTO member price.



Order online at the AASHTO Bookstore, <https://bookstore.transportation.org> by December 31st to purchase these publications at the discounted AASHTO member price when you use **Promotion Code 7UJ8-2MJW-LJUY-75ME** at checkout.

The Bike Guide provides information on how to accommodate bicycle travel and operations in most riding environments. It is intended to present sound guidelines that result in facilities that meet the needs of bicyclists and other highway users. Sufficient flexibility is permitted to encourage designs that are sensitive to local context and incorporate the needs of bicyclists, pedestrians, and motorists. (Item Code: GBF-4)

The Pedestrian Guide provides guidance on the planning, design, and operation of pedestrian facilities along streets and highways. It specifically focuses on identifying effective measures for accommodating pedestrians on public rights-of-way. (Item Code: GPF-1)

To take advantage of this special, limited-time discount—

- Visit the AASHTO bookstore online at <https://bookstore.transportation.org> by December 31, 2013;
- Search the bookstore by the publication item code(s) you wish to purchase, either GBF-4 for the Bike Guide, or GPF-1 for the Pedestrian Guide;
- Select the format you wish to purchase—either print or online downloadable PDF; and
- Enter Promotion Code 7UJ8-2MJW-LJUY-75ME at checkout to purchase at the discounted AASHTO member price!

This offer is available for online orders only. It cannot be combined with any other AASHTO promotions or offers. Special promotional prices do not include shipping charges. Questions? Contact Carolyn Toye, AASHTO Publications Department, at ctoye@ashto.org.



Student Travel Tally Week was a big success -- thanks to you!

Over 120 schools took part, using the new online survey form we created to make the process easier and provide more options for using the data. All schools are receiving an event banner to use for their walking and biking events.

Remember: Enter all student travel-to-school data online by Friday, October 4. Email us if you need the link.

We are hosting a Webinar on November 6 to share the options for using your student travel tally data. You can register now for this Webinar.

Don't forget - student travel tallies can help you in many ways, such as:

- It's a win-win for students and teachers
 - Participation offers teachers a way to incorporate subjects such as math, geography and social science into the school day.
 - Students begin thinking about how they travel to school.
- You'll have student travel-to-school information to use . . .
 - In your SRTS Activities and Program Plan, required for a non-infrastructure grant (due by December 17).
 - In Appendix B of the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant application to apply for an infrastructure grant, making your project more competitive!
 - For tweaking arrival and dismissal procedures.

Register now for the November 6 Webinar on using the student travel tally data.



Stepping up the competition for QuickStart Mini-grants

The QuickStart Mini-grant program has been an overwhelming success, with about 100 grants awarded. Thanks to all who have used their grants for some really great events!

September brought a sharp increase in the demand for mini-grants. As a result, we have only 16 mini-grants remaining for the final two months of the Fall grant round. If you are interested in having a walking or biking event funded for your school this fall, please do not hesitate to apply. If you do, you might miss out!

We have also added a new question to the application, which asks about how the proposed activity will increase the number of students walking and biking to school. This will help you focus on using your mini-grant to boost your SRTS program!

Let us know if you have any questions about the application process. Write to Jim@VirginiaSRTS.org or call the hotline at 1-855-601-7787



Studies Show that Walking and Bicycling is Food for the Brain!

The new school year is a great time to think about ways to encourage your students in and outside the classroom. Several studies now show a connection between physical activity and academic performance.

Take a look at the following sources available on the National Center for Safe Routes to School website.

Active, Healthy, and Ready to Learn: Evidence for SRTS and Children's Health
August 2012 Webinar

Physical Fitness and Academic Performance

J.E.Ponline 2005

The Impact of Transport Policy on Children's Development
May 1999 Presentation at the Canterbury Safe Routes to Schools Project Seminar, London U.K.

The National Partnership for Safe Routes to School also has a research archive dedicated to this topic, available online at this link.

Another source shows that physical activity also helps children reduce stress.

