



DECEMBER 2011



Coordinator's Corner

I hope you all had a great Walk to School Day. I know I did. I had the privilege of joining students from Crestview Elementary School in Henrico and was impressed by the happy faces and number of students and parents walking and biking to school (see the article below, "Walk to School Day and Beyond" for more information on this event). I'm proud to say we're currently at nearly 80 registered events in Virginia- a 50% increase from the 2010 Walk to School Day! A big thanks to all of you who made this year's events successful.



This edition of our Newsletter includes lots of information about Walk to School Day in Virginia. It also includes information about how to use a successful Walk to School Day event to launch, re-invigorate, or keep the momentum going on a SRTS program.

In August, I joined SRTS Coordinators from across the country at the Annual Safe Routes to School National Conference in Minneapolis, MN. One of the hot topics at the conference, and of particular interest to me, is the idea of creating sustainable SRTS programs. Let me explain what this means for SRTS in Virginia.

Virginia receives about \$4 million dollars each year from the Federal Highway Administration for the SRTS program (www.saferoutesinfo.org/program-tools/find-state-contacts/virginia). These funds are used to help communities build or improve walking and biking routes to school, and to provide assistance and support to help schools get SRTS programs started. While \$4 million sounds like a lot of money, it is not enough to fund a safety improvement project or an education/encouragement program at every school in the state. In fact, federal SRTS funds are part of the much larger "transportation bill" which has not yet been renewed by Congress. Here at VDOT, we feel it is important that our SRTS funds be used to plant the seed - to build infrastructure and start programs for towns and schools that enable and encourage them to take it upon themselves to keep their SRTS programs going.

After attending sessions on this issue and discussing it at length with other state coordinators and staff from the SRTS National Center, I came away with several ideas that I feel could benefit Virginia's program.

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CALENDAR

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

JANUARY 2012

19: Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth 3rd annual Virginia Healthy Youth Day

Let us know about SRTS events in your community!

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



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www.virginiadot.org/saferoutes

Identify and Support Local Champions. Many states, including Virginia, use SRTS funds to support local coordinators that manage local programs, including PTA members, teachers or school administrators. In addition to organizing events and completing other tasks, that individuals should also be responsible for building local support for SRTS and looking for ways to institutionalize SRTS into school/town policies and operations. In Virginia, our funding for a local coordinator is generally what results in efforts to organize events and encourage participation. As part of the current strategic planning process, VDOT is looking for ways to fund more local coordinators around the Commonwealth.

Create and Encourage Partnerships. Leveraging partnerships is the best way to get the most out of our available SRTS funds and a great pathway to sustainability. By joining with local police, health groups and bicycling organizations, or even other schools, SRTS programs can tap into existing expertise and resources while also supporting and benefiting the missions and activities of the partner organizations. This idea is not new to our program. In Virginia, VDOT has partnered with Prevention Connections to establish SRTS mini-grants with funds provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The mini-grants provide an easy way for schools looking to start a SRTS program, to boost an existing one, or to get some seed money to get things moving. VDOT and Prevention Connections also worked together for two great events: International Walk to School Day and the Weight of the State Conference (www.preventionconnections.org/weightstate2011.shtml)- both aimed at getting more kids moving for a healthier lifestyle.

Promote, Promote, Promote! The best way to create a strong and lasting program is for decision makers to support AND participate in the program. Positive public relations go a long way toward achieving both support and participation from key stakeholders. (So, always notify the press when hosting an event, completing a project, or even to just announce a successful effort. You'll be pleasantly surprised when you see an article about your event in your local newspaper.) Walk to School events are a great opportunity to invite a local news station, school district administrators and members of local government to show that they support active

lifestyles for youth. In Virginia, we encourage all grant recipients to mark the completion of a project by hosting an event to celebrate and to generate excitement about the new facilities. We included photos from an event at Keister Elementary School in the City of Harrisonburg in our last newsletter (www.virginiadot.org/programs/resources/srts_assets/VDOT_SRTS_Newsletter_July_2011_110707_02.pdf).

-Rob Williams
VDOT Safe Routes to School Coordinator

Friends and Faces: A Tale of Two Michaels

This issue's Friends & Faces column is really a tale of two Michaels - Michael Barnes and Michael Freeman - both of whom play an important role in SRTS in Waynesboro. Michael Barnes heads the City's Planning Department and works on infrastructure improvements along walking routes to schools. Michael Freeman, a Physical Education teacher at Berkeley Glenn Elementary School, works with City schools, planning week-long walk to school events in the fall and spring.

We recently talked with both Michaels and learned how Waynesboro's SRTS program works.

Q: When did you first become aware of SRTS?

Michael Barnes: When I came to the City three years ago, it had already received both an infrastructure and non-infrastructure grant from VDOT, thanks to the efforts of the previous City Manager and Michael Freeman. I really stepped onto a strong foundation and have worked to keep the momentum going.



Michael Barnes



Michael Freeman

Michael Freeman: I learned about SRTS through serendipity - I received an email from a pediatrician doing work on student health that included getting students to walk to school more often. The pediatrician was planning an event for International Walk to School Day. This caught my attention, so I went to the National Center for SRTS website to learn more. I began applying what I'd learned when I started at Berkeley Glenn Elementary School.

Q: What Waynesboro City schools are involved in SRTS?

Michael Barnes: Our first SRTS grants were for Berkeley Glenn Elementary School. We completed a travel plan for this school as part of our grant application. That was really our pilot project, and it paid off! In the past year, we created a single travel plan for Waynesboro's three remaining elementary schools (Wenonah, Westwood, and William Perry) and Kate Collins Middle School. The plan includes 20 physical improvements for all the schools; we plan to apply for 5 or 6 each time there is a call for SRTS infrastructure grant applications.

Michael Freeman: We reached out to all city schools as part of our infrastructure grant application. I visited each school and encouraged them to participate in the Fall 2011 Walk to School Day (or week). Since we host week-long events at Berkeley Glenn, I encouraged the other elementary schools and our middle school to do the same. In all, two elementary schools and the middle school held week-long events. Events at the remaining two elementary schools ranged from one to three days - but the great thing is: they all participated.

Q. You certainly seem to have a wholistic view of SRTS and your community. Is this by design?

Michael Barnes: Yes! We've been working on our Comprehensive Plan, which includes plans to create a city-wide biking and sidewalk plan. The biking and sidewalk element will identify corridors in the City for non-motorized transportation in order to encourage walking to downtown, schools, and parks. The corridors have relatively low ADT (average daily motor vehicle trips), are a relatively direct route to destinations, and

are visible to the general public. SRTS is one element of building this infrastructure, focusing on sidewalks within ½ mile of schools. Because the projects are in our comprehensive plan, we look at a variety of funding opportunities, including SRTS and Transportation Enhancements, and sidewalks built by developers.

Michael Freeman: I'm just being a team player! The SRTS activities I plan build on broader city initiatives such as the downtown façade makeover. Our week-long walk to school event in the spring encourages school families to walk around downtown Waynesboro after school. Themed as "See it on Foot" or "Put a Spring in Your Step", the effort includes activities aimed at getting folks into the shops, such as a scavenger hunt. Businesses promote walk to school week with the promotional poster. Some business owners are parents of students at the schools, so the tie-in is really great. Our YMCA also participates by providing a two-week pass for students walking and biking to school.

Q: What other city departments do you work with on SRTS projects and programs?

Michael Freeman: We mostly partner with the City's Public Works Department, especially for the past SRTS infrastructure grant applications, and now as we move toward construction on sidewalks near Berkeley Glenn.

Michael Barnes: We're working with the City's Public Works Department on a SRTS way-finding project. Thanks to a \$2,000 mini-grant from Prevention Connections, we are converting our temporary program for Berkeley Glenn into one with permanently installed signs. We expect the new signs will be up for our spring walk to school week. Based on the Safe Roadrunner Routes we encourage our students to use, Public Works will install the signs, using existing poles and other structures around town. This will make it easier for students to walk to school throughout the year.

Q: What do you think is the key to your success in Waynesboro?

Michael Barnes: Our biggest success lies in the fact that none

of us can make SRTS happen alone. Each person plays an important part of getting more kids walking and biking - even developers who build sidewalks as part of their projects.

Michael Freeman: Our SRTS program fits our community and its sense of partnership. We have a lot of kids who ride the bus, so we've worked with the school division to create park and walk options for these students, ensuring a very high participation rate. For example, bus riders at Westwood Hills Elementary School got off the bus at a city park near their school and walked to school, escorted by the teachers. Because of their experience during walk to school week, Westwood Hills is exploring more ways to make it safer for kids on a daily basis. The school uses portable "school crossing" signs each day to alert motorists of the presence of child pedestrians during arrival and dismissal. Bus riders at Berkeley Glenn Elementary School were dropped off at the YMCA ½ mile from the school and had a walking school bus from there.

Walk to School Day and Beyond

Just when we thought we were good, we get even better! Walk to School Day 2011 was a huge success in Virginia with events at 80 schools -- many more than participated in 2010. VDOT partnered with Prevention Connections to host the state's flagship event at Crestview Elementary School in Henrico (www.wtvr.com/videogallery/65234763/News/Walk-to-school-day). This event featured First Lady of Virginia Maureen McDonnell, the J.R. Tucker High School marching band and 350 enthusiastic students on a half-mile walk from Christ United Methodist Church to the school.



A list of schools that registered events is at the end of this newsletter, and you can find a description of activities on the International Walk to School Day website (www.walktoschool.org/who/activities.cfm?st=VA).

In addition to the event at Crestview Elementary School, several schools received media coverage of their events, or created their own media via Facebook. We've included a sampling below, but congratulations to everyone!

"Our school participates in the iWalk every year. In addition, we have 3 other "walk-ups" throughout the school year. We also have a walking club every morning that is open to any student that wants to get active."
- Albert Harris Elementary School, Martinsville

- WTS Event in Waynesboro (www.nbc29.com/story/15626017/waynesboro-students-participate-in-walk-to-school-day)
- Ridge ES in Henrico (www.henrico.k12.va.us/hcpstv/ee_WalktoSchool.html)
- Kilmer Middle School and Marshall Road Elementary School in Vienna (vienna.patch.com/articles/video-and-photos-walk-to-school-day-in-vienna#video-8027677)
- WTS Events in Falls Church (www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.382068964963.56956.127398694963&type=1)
- Martinsville (see page 2) (www.martinsville.k12.va.us/news/mcpsweekly/October%202011%20news.pdf)

So, what happens after Walk to School Day? Many schools with established SRTS programs use this day as a way to keep things going with the start of the new school year. Schools that are just starting programs use the day to jump-start their program. Here are some tips for keeping your program going during the rest of the school year:

- Plan other walk to school events throughout the school year:
 - Early January – welcome students back to school after winter break

- Spring – on the first Monday in April, celebrate the arrival of spring and the promises of warmer weather!
- Early summer – right before school ends is a good time to reinforce safe walking and biking habits for the summer
- Use the Marketing Toolkit now available on the Virginia SRTS program website to advertise SRTS events and provide incentives to students who participate in SRTS activities. We've just added a Frequent Walker Biker/Punch Card (http://www.virginiadot.org/programs/srsm_marketing_toolkit.asp)



Calling all SRTS Programs!

The Coordinator's Corner talked about three ways to create SRTS program sustainability: Identify and support local champions; create and encourage partnerships; and promote your program. We believe that you are each other's best resources and want to create a place for you to share your experience and activities in these areas. Send Rob (robertj.williams@vdot.virginia.gov) a brief summary and a photo or two to help us get started.

Remember -- adding a sustainability focus will help to ensure that there is adequate support and resources available to continue encouraging children to walk and bike to school in the future.



Schools Registered for the October 2011 Walk to School Day

ALEXANDRIA

Charles Barrett Elementary School
George Mason Elementary School
Matthew Maury Elementary School
Mount Vernon Elementary School
Patrick Henry Elementary School
James K. Polk Elementary School
William Ramsay Elementary School
Samuel W. Tucker Elementary School
Francis C. Hammond Middle School
Hayfield Elementary School

ARLINGTON

McKinley Elementary School
Nottingham Elementary School
Ashlawn Elementary School
Glebe Elementary School

BEALTON

Cedar Lee Middle School

BERRYVILLE

Berryville Primary School

BLACKSBURG

Margaret Beeks Elementary School

BURKE

Terra Centre Elementary School

CHANTILLY

Poplar Tree Elementary School

FAIRFAX COUNTY

Baileys Elementary School Woodburn
Elementary School
Graham Road Elementary School

FAIRFAX STATION

Silverbrook Elementary School

FALLS CHURCH

Thomas Jefferson Elementary School
Mount Daniel School
Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School

GALAX

Galax Elementary School

GLEN ALLEN

Rivers Edge Elementary School
Longdale Elementary School

GRETNA

Mount Airy Elementary School

HENRICO

Ridge Elementary School

HERNDON

Dranesville Elementary School
Clearview Elementary School

LYNCHBURG

Dearington Elementary School
Perrymont Elementary School
T.C. Miller Elementary School for
Innovation
Linkhorne Elementary School
R.S. Payne Elementary School
W.M. Bass Elementary School

MANASSAS

R.C. Haydon Elementary School

MARTINSVILLE

Albert Harris Elementary School

MCLEAN

Spring Hill Elementary School
Chesterbrook Elementary School

MIDLOTHIAN

Robious Elementary School
Robious Middle School
Bettie Weaver Elementary School
Clover Hill Elementary School
JM Watkins Elementary School

MOKESVILLE

T. Clay Wood Elementary School

PORTSMOUTH

Churchland Primary and Intermediate
School
Churchland Academy Elementary
School

RADFORD

McHarg Elementary School
Belle Heth Elementary School

RESTON

Armstrong Elementary School

RICHMOND

Chimborazo Elementary School
Tuckahoe Elementary School
Patrick Henry School of Science and
Arts

SANDSTON

Sandston Elementary School
SMITHFIELD
Windsor Middle School
Westside Elementary School

SPRINGFIELD

Lynbrook Elementary School
Crestwood Elementary School
North Springfield Elementary School
Ravensworth Elementary School

STAFFORD

Kate Waller Barrett Elementary School

STANARDSVILLE

William Monroe Middle School

STRASBURG

Signal Knob Middle School

VIENNA

Wolftrap Elementary School
Vienna Elementary School
Louise Archer Elementary School
Marshall Road Elementary School
Kilmer Middle School
Freedom Hill Elementary School

VIRGINIA BEACH

Trantwood Elementary School

WAYNESBORO

Berkeley Glenn Elementary School
Wenonah Elementary School

WINDSOR

Windsor Middle School

WOODBIDGE

Forest Park High School
Lake Ridge Elementary School