



June 2014

**Coordinator's Corner**

Summer is fast approaching and just because school will soon be out doesn't mean that students and their families can't go outside and practice safe walking and biking. Let's keep the momentum rolling from a great school year and Bike to School Month into summer and continue to walk and bike.

Bike to School Day was a great success in Virginia with 121 schools participating across the state. You can see photos from some of the great events below.

Summer is also a great time to look ahead and prepare for the next school year's Safe Routes to School plans. Student Travel Tally Week and International Walk to School Day are great opportunities to launch a great SRTS program for the school year, so be sure to plan ahead now to ensure that those events go smoothly.

Finally, the due date for Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grants has been set, so there's no better time than now to get everything in order to apply for a great Safe Routes to School Infrastructure project. Virginia Safe Routes to School offers Walkabout Mini-grant to help schools and communities prepare for a TAP grant application. Read more about the TAP program and how you can prepare for it, below. Read on!

-Rob Williams  
VDOT Safe Routes to School Coordinator



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**CALENDAR**

**MAY**

- 7: National Bike to School Day
- 15: SRTS National Partnership Webinar - SRTS Volunteers, part 1

**JUNE**

- 19: SRTS National Partnership Webinar - SRTS Volunteers, part 2

**SEPTEMBER**

- 8 - 11: Pro Walk Pro Bike Conference
- 15 - 19: Student Travel Tally Week

**OCTOBER**

- 8: 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 & Faces**

*Karen Anselmo started her career at Campbell Elementary School as a Physical Education teacher and has been the Assistant Principal since 2001. Campbell Elementary has been actively participating in Safe Routes to School for the past two years and Karen has seen how events like Bike to School Day can bring together the community and be a great opportunity for families to have fun traveling to school.*



**What did Campbell Elementary School do for Bike to School Day? How did it go?**

This spring, we publicized our Bike and Walk to school day event in our monthly Campbell Turtle Tales Newsletter, sent out flyers for the event in backpack mail, and performed a skit during our school-wide Community Meeting.

We kept the format of the event the same as in past years, with parents serving as Bike and Walk to School Experts who were available to answer specific questions about the safest routes to school. I learned about the QuickStart Mini-grant program from Arlington’s Safe Routes to School coordinator and purchased with the \$1,000 grant water bottles and reflective bike/backpack stickers with the Campbell logo. (The application process was extremely easy!). Students were very excited to get these items for participating in the event and, as a result, our participation almost doubled. Students were already making plans for their participation in the Walk to School Day in the fall.



Students at Campbell Elementary School walk their bicycles on campus during Bike to School Day.

**What steps did you take to plan for the event? Will you change anything for next year?**

There were really three steps to my planning: organizing the information that would go home to families, securing the QuickStart Mini-grant, and identifying staff volunteers.

We’ve used the “Ask the Expert” in the past, so using it again this year was a given. Our parents who served as

experts in the past really enjoyed it and were ready to do it again. One of our Campbell parents set up the “Ask the Expert” email address, which I included on the backpack flyer along with other contact information.

Applying for the QuickStart Mini-grant was quick and easy, since the application is done online. I applied as soon as I learned about the grant. Once I received the e-mail notification that I had been awarded the grant, I placed my order for the water bottles and reflective stickers so that we’ve have the Campbell branded items in time for Bike to School Day.



Students receive water bottles for participating in Bike to School Day. The bottles were purchased with a QuickStart Mini-grant as an incentive item.

Several of our Campbell staff members also agreed to volunteer during the event. Staff took photos, recorded the number of bikers and walkers on a tally sheet, and handed out the stickers and water bottles.

I will keep the same general format for the event that we participate in during the fall, but will most likely add a few things. Things that I am considering adding are:

1. Increasing the number of parents on the "Ask the Expert" e-mail list to include parents from as many neighborhoods as possible.

2. Creating a Walking School Bus from the neighborhood closet to Campbell. This would entail having a staff member meet families at a central location and lead the group to school. A poster that reads "Campbell's Walking School Bus" would be a nice addition to this.

3. More signage around the school property on the day of the event. I do put out a lawn sign, but a poster that the students help make advertising the event would be nice.

### How do you think Safe Routes to School and BTSD will affect student travel going forward?

We are hoping that students and parents will see how easy it is to bike and walk to school after participating in school sponsored Bike and Walk to School Day events. During the morning of this past event, parents commented how nice it was to walk or bike to school with their children. Students were excited and those that were unable to participate spoke about participating in the fall. I know that we won't be able to change everyone's practice, but even if a handful of families chose to bike or walk on a more regular basis then we are making a difference.

*You can hear more from Karen Anselmo and her top tips for planning and hosting a SRTS event [below](#).*

### **National Bike to School Day was a Great Success!**

There was a record breaking number of events in Virginia - 121 registered events, 37 more than last year. Bike to School Day is a great opportunity for schools to encourage their students to use active transportation, be active, and learn about the benefits of bicycling as well as bicycle safety. Check out these great Bike to School Day Events!



Students and their families ride in a Bike Train to Vienna Elementary School



Students ride their bicycles on their fields at Antietam Elementary School



At Mount Vernon Community School, students add their names to the Bike to School Day Banner.



Olde Creek Elementary School offered healthy snacks to students that biked or walked to school.



Students and their families walk and bike to Campbell Elementary School.



Two students ride a tandem bicycle at Thomas Harrison Middle School.

Didn't see your school's event? Send a photo of your school's Safe Routes activities to [Info@VirginiaSRTS.org](mailto:Info@VirginiaSRTS.org) and we'll showcase your school on the VDOT SRTS website!

### **Transportation Alternatives Program Grants**

VDOT's Local Assistance Division will be accepting Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant applications until November 1, 2014, in anticipation of the extension or renewal of MAP-21, the current federal transportation bill. The Transportation Alternatives Program provides funding for six types of activities, including Safe Routes to School infrastructure projects.

The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) is intended to help local sponsors fund community projects that enhance the transportation experience by improving the infrastructure. The program focuses on providing for pedestrian and bicycle facilities, community improvements and mitigating the negative impacts of the highway system. Infrastructure projects that improve safety of students biking and walking to school would generally qualify as eligible TAP grant projects.

The TAP application for the next round of grants is not currently available, but it is expected to be posted online in the near future. Also, over the summer, VDOT will be hosting TAP workshops to provide information regarding the TAP program as well as how to apply for a grant. More information about the Transportation Alternatives Program is available on the [VDOT Local Assistance Division website](#).

Be sure to check to [Safe Routes to School grants webpage](#), as well as the [VDOT Local Assistance Division website](#) for updates.

### **Prepare for your TAP grant with a SRTS Walkabout**

[Virginia Safe Routes to School Walkabouts](#) are a great way to build consensus amongst stakeholders and identify potential infrastructure improvements to make the

area around a school safer for walking and biking. Participating in a walkabout can be a key first step toward applying for a TAP grant. Last year, two of the four Virginia schools that participated in a Walkabout applied for a TAP grant and have been tentatively allocated funding for fiscal year 2015 to improve the infrastructure around their schools.

Rocky Gap Elementary School, in partnership with Bland County, applied for a TAP grant to fund new sidewalks on the road closest to the Elementary school, connecting to the other edge of town. In addition to adding a sidewalk, this project will be part of the town's plan for a new shared-use greenway.

Jackson Via Elementary, along with the City of Charlottesville, applied for a TAP grant to build bicycle and pedestrian improvements including bike lanes, crosswalks, curb ramps, and new sidewalks to fill in gaps in the existing network.



Walkabout participants assess the walking and bicycling network surrounding Jackson Via Elementary School.

Both of these projects will make it safer and more convenient for students to walk and bike to and from school. [Contact your Local Technical Assistance Coordinator \(LTAC\)](#) for more information on Walkabouts.

### ***The Richmond Regional Ride Center Wins the Bell Helmets Dig This. Contest***

The Richmond Regional Ride Center (RRRC) will receive \$33,000 from Bell Helmets to build a bike trail project. The RRRC project will rehabilitate 15 miles of existing mountain bike trails in Pocahontas State Park as well as construct an additional 20 miles of new trail aimed to provide trails for mountain bikers of different skill levels.

The grant is the result of a regional, online voting contest. The RRRC won the east coast region (as well as receiving the most votes nationwide) and earned a split of the \$100,000 prize with the winner of the central and western regions. The RRRC is a collaborative organization that promotes and advocates for outdoor recreation facilities in central Virginia and received over 13,800 votes to win the east coast contest.



The Richmond Regional Ride Center provides mountain biking courses and lessons for bicyclists of all abilities.

### ***Virginia SRTS Walkabouts***

Virginia Safe Routes to School will offer Walkabout Mini-grants to schools and communities who are interested in applying for a Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) grant as well as interested in learning about the bicycle and pedestrian network around their school. Walkabouts are led by the Local Technical Assistance Coordinator (LTAC) and are an excellent opportunity for community

stakeholders to experience pedestrian and bicycle conditions, share perspectives, and build consensus around potential solutions. Walkabout Reports will include a brief description of the conditions observed during the walkabout, recommendations for potential infrastructure improvements (a description and a map), and photos documenting the area, and can be helpful when applying for a TAP grant.

You can apply online for a [Walkabout Mini-grant](#).

### **SRTS Summer Planning**

School may not be in session this summer, but the summer is a great time to lay the foundation for the next academic year's Safe Routes to School Program. There are two big Safe Routes to School Events that happen at the beginning of the school year - Student Travel Tally Week, and International Walk to School Day.

Mark your calendar for September 15-19 -- this year's Student Travel Tally Week (STTW), when schools across the state will take five minutes out of two school days to conduct tallies to find out how students travel to and from school. The data collected help schools get a better sense of student travel patterns and can help identify travel trends. Start planning for your school's STTW participation now by getting the dates on the school calendar (and your calendar) and putting together flyers to advertise the event to parents before school begins. You can also create an account on the National Center's data base, so you'll be all set for September when you will work with your principal and teachers to conduct the tallies. More information, and materials you can use to help promote and conduct the tallies, are on the Virginia SRTS Program Website under [Student Travel Tally Week](#).

October 8th is [International Walk to School Day \(iWalk\)](#), a global event in which schools and communities celebrate safe walking and biking to and from school. Use the summer to prepare for iWalk. Start by creating a map of good walking and biking routes to school from nearby neighborhoods. Make it a fun activity by including school parents and kids in the process. Don't forget to find locations for park and walk sites. Next, reach out to others

in your community to find additional support for walking school bus or bike train leaders, corner captains, and food or other 'motivational' items to distribute during the at-school event. Also, apply for a [QuickStart Mini-grant](#) to get incentive items for participation. Application due dates before iWalk are August 14 and September 11.

STTW and iWalk are only two events that can be made great by planning for in advance during the summer. Check out our new [Learn it. Do it. Live it! SRTS Summer Planning resource](#) to learn about more of what you can do to prepare for a great Safe Routes to School year.

## **QuickStart Mini-grants**

Interested in having a Safe Routes to School activity at your school? QuickStart Mini-grants are a great way to fund safe routes projects like a bike to school day or a walking school bus.



At Keister Elementary School, walking school bus student leaders wear reflective vests, purchased with a QuickStart Mini-grant

There will be a new schedule for the Mini-grant application due dates for the 2014-2015 academic school year.

In the Fall Cycle the due dates are:

August 14  
September 11  
October 20

And in the Spring cycle, the due dates are:

February 12  
March 12  
April 9

We've moved the due dates to be the second Thursday of the month - one week earlier compared to last year - this way, schools will have more time to plan their activities in preparation for statewide activities. You can find more information regarding QuickStart Mini-grants and ideas for activities on the QuickStart Mini-grant Website.

### *SRTS Advice from Karen Anselmo*

**What three things would you recommend for a school that is interested in having a Safe Routes event (e.g. a bike to school day, walk to school day, etc.)?**

First, apply for the QuickStart Mini-grant. The application process is easy and quick. The funding is extremely helpful in supporting the event.

Second, reach out to families who bike and walk to school on a regular basis. They are a great resource! Not only do they know safe routes to school, but they most likely feel passionate about using alternate modes of transportation. They can help answer questions and explain the benefits that they have experienced personally by walking and biking to school (such as exercise, one on one time with children, less traffic headaches, etc...)

Finally, go online and see what things other schools are doing. Looking at photos and hearing what others have planned gives you more ideas. You might not use everything you read about, but taking one good idea and adding it to your program can make a difference.

**What would you tell schools who are interested in having a Safe Routes to School program, but are concerned about time constraints from snow days, SOL testing, etc.?**

I would tell others who are interested in events like this that Bike and Walk to School Day is a great way to bring the community together. Hosting an event does take planning and coordination, but that is really left up to the adults. Finding staff members and parents who feel passionate about biking and walking helps spread the planning responsibilities among several people so one person isn't responsible for everything. Since the event occurs during morning arrival, it doesn't take any additional time out of the school day. Students have to arrive at school one way or the other so, having them bike or walk to school doesn't negatively impact instructional time.

Schools planning events should think about what they already have in place and how they can tap into those things. We already send out a monthly newsletter so adding an article about Bike and Walk to School Day was easy. Backpack mail goes home weekly on Thursdays so including a flyer prior to the event only required copying and distribution to classroom teachers. Our weekly Community Meetings already happens so performing a skit during this activity was natural. Once you host an event, it is easier the next year since you know what to expect. Every year it gets easier and better!

### *Fairfax Workshop generates excellent ideas for local SRTS programs*

A workshop held on May 5 at Mt. Vernon Woods Elementary School in Fairfax County generated a number of excellent ideas for local SRTS program implementation, including:

- Emphasizing policy changes at the school division and/or local government levels that can make a long-term difference in walking and biking to school. An example might be establishing a school division policy that requires consideration of non-motorized transportation access as part of all school construction and renovation projects.
- Testing potential infrastructure changes creatively

and inexpensively. For example, where curb extensions are contemplated, cones or planters can be installed to mimic and test their effect.

- Establishing remote drop-off locations and regular walking and biking days to enable students who cannot walk and bike from home to participate in the SRTS program. You may be surprised by how popular these can be with children and parents!
- Mapping student addresses by how they currently travel to/from school to better understand student travel patterns. One way to do this is to put a map of the school attendance zone on a bulletin board during Back to School Night and then ask parents to add colored push pins to the map to show where they live and how their children get to school.

The workshop was sponsored by LiveHealthy Fairfax and led by Mark Fenton, a nationally recognized expert in public health, planning and transportation. Approximately 30 people attended, including Sally Smallwood, the Fairfax County SRTS Coordinator. Anne Booth, the City of Alexandria SRTS Coordinator, and Jim Elliott, Local Technical Assistance Coordinator for the Piedmont Region.

