

Virginia's 2011 Safe Routes to School Infrastructure Grant Online Application System Walkthrough



INTRODUCTION

If you have completed a School Travel Plan (STP) for your school(s), submitted it to the VDOT Safe Routes to School Coordinator, and received notice that it has been approved; you may submit an application for funding of projects identified in the plan. Included in your approval notification email are a link and a password to access the application.

However, along with the necessary formatting changes that come with the transition to an online system, there are a few other changes that you should be aware of (covered in greater detail elsewhere in this document):

- To maintain manageable file sizes, pdf is the preferred method for submitting documents, unless otherwise noted. Due to system constraints, travel plans must be under 20MB.
- Prior to beginning the application, you must upload your approved school travel plan into the system and await approval to proceed (approval is a rubber stamp at this stage).
- Separate applications must be submitted for each school, unless the schools are co-located (on the same campus).
- Up to three projects can be submitted on each application. To submit additional projects for the same school, the applicant must complete a separate application.
- The online system includes a fax-to-file feature, which allows users to create an electronic version of their document via a fax machine (not recommended for School Travel Plans or other documents that require color or high-resolution).

In addition to the above listed new features, please keep a few other things in mind when preparing for or completing the application:

- It is recommended that the applicant log-in soon after receiving the link and access password in order to complete registration and LOI process.
- The applicant should review the questions ahead of time to make sure all of the necessary information is available in the proper format.
- It is highly recommended that the applicant identify early on who will need to authorize the application and what resolutions and letters of support will be needed.
- Questions marked * are required before the application can be submitted.
- In several areas you will be asked to upload a file from your computer, please note that the file will not actually be uploaded to the system until you save or submit the form. If you need to change the uploaded file, you may choose a new one to save over the original.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Document format preferences

One of the reasons VDOT chose to move to an online system is to streamline the application process and make it more convenient for the applicant and the administration team. In order to make this process manageable, it is important to use pdf documents whenever possible, as they can be viewed universally and are generally smaller in size. Where document uploads are required the maximum permitted file-size is shown. If you have trouble reducing the size of your pdf below the allotted amount, contact the SRTS coordinator for assistance.

While Adobe Acrobat is one of the best programs for working with pdf files, there are several free pdf creators available for download, as well, that can be found with a Google search. In most cases, pdf creators install in a manner that allows them to be used the same way you would use a printer, except that the pdf creator is chosen at the print window instead of a printer. Specific pages can be extracted from a document already in pdf format by printing via the pdf creator and choosing the desired pages in the print window.

Fax-to-file

On the Application Status page, the toolbar on the left of the screen contains a fax-to-file button. This tool allows the applicant to convert a hardcopy into a digital copy without the use of a scanner. Clicking on the link will bring the user to a page with instructions on how to use the feature, and a button to get started. While this should prove to be helpful to many applicants, it is not recommended for submission of the travel plan or maps, as the resolution is limited to that of your fax machine and likely won't print in

color. The system will provide a number that where the document should be faxed. After sending, the document becomes available to the user to download through the system, and it can then be uploaded to the necessary location.

Funding Requests and Project Grouping

The maximum funding amount for the SRTS program is \$500,000 per locality, **NOT** per school. **Individual applications requesting more than \$500,000 will not be accepted**, users submitting more than one application for a particular school (due to four or more projects) must also be sure to stay within the limit. Localities submitting applications for multiple school may exceed the \$500,000 in the combined total, but are encouraged to carefully prioritize their projects to ensure that the most promising projects are highlighted.

For this round, the application form has been constructed to allow for up the three projects to be submitted at a time. Applicants that would like to request funding for additional projects must submit an additional LOI and application. Additional applications must be treated separately when answering questions about improvement types, total funding requests and number of projects proposed, but the locality must still stay within the funding request limit.

Due to the limited funds available for this statewide program, and VDOT's desire to spread the funds out across the state, prioritizing projects, for each school and for the locality as a whole, is an important part of the SRTS grant process. When completing the 'Project' portion of the application form, projects should be added in order of funding priority, as each project will be considered separately.

If proposed improvements are scattered throughout the school attendance zone, each improvement should be proposed as a separate project with separate budgets. (Most funded SRTS infrastructure projects are within a half mile of a school.)

- For each infrastructure project, improvements must be in a single location or along a continuous route traveled by students from home to school.
- Projects must meet Americans with Disability Act requirements and should connect to existing infrastructure that is also accessible.

If you are unsure of how to group your projects, contact the SRTS coordinator.

REGISTRATION

Before you complete the registration, please keep in mind that SRTS projects can vary in terms of the roles and responsibilities of those involved at the local level. In some cases, one individual from the sponsoring agency might create the application and manage the project. In other cases, the sponsoring agency might have another organization manage the project for them, and that project manager might not necessarily be responsible for creating the application.

For this reason, organization and contact information is requested, at different places in the application process, for each of the different roles; Applicant, Project Manager, Sponsoring Agency Contact Person and Signatory. **In cases, where an individual fills more than one role, it is not necessary to fill in the fields for name and title more than once.**

Using the following link will take you to the registration page for the VDOT Safe Routes to School Infrastructure Grant Application.

<https://www.grantinterface.com/virginiadot/Common/LogOn.aspx>

Here, you will be asked to provide information in two groups: "User" and "Organization". The user is the person actually filling out and submitting the application; their information is needed in case there is a problem or question regarding the application. The organization information should be filled out for the local project manager for the proposed project.

LETTER OF INTENT

The letter of intent page is the best way, within the Foundant system, to attach the travel plan to the application. Follow the steps to submit your travel plan and, if you choose, another file for additional documents.

While the travel plan should have already been approved at this point, administrative approval is required in order for the user to advance to the application form. **All LOI submissions that include an approved School Travel Plan will be approved within one business day.** The user will receive an email notifying him/her that the LOI has been approved, and will then be able view and complete the application form.

APPLICATION PAGE

The SRTS application has been structured to be completed using the information contained in your approved School Travel Plan. In most cases, the question labels match the sections of the travel plan where the necessary information can be found. Section headings may vary in travel plans that have been formatted differently than the provided template.

Opening Questions

- Only schools that are co-located (adjacent to each other) may be included on the same application. Schools that are not on the same campus (i.e., are located on different blocks, use separate parking lots or are more than 1/8 mile from each other) are not co-located.
- List all improvement types included in the projects proposed on the current application.

- The maximum funding request allowed is \$500,000 per locality. Those submitting multiple applications for one school must still stay within the allowable amount.
- Title 1 is a designation for schools that are part of a federal funding program designed to help low-income students. Schools are designated Title 1 based on the number of students eligible for free and reduced meals. The principal of your school will know whether or not it is a Title 1 school for the current school year.

Sponsoring Agency

- The sponsoring agency section should be filled out for the department within the locality that will be responsible for the project. If this information was entered at registration, only the agency name and contact person fields are required.

School Travel Plan Information

- Location information should be provided for the Town, City or County in which the participating school is located.
- The Parent Survey, available online from the National Center for Safe Routes to School (NCSRTS), is not required prior to selection for funding, but is strongly recommended in order to measure parent and guardian attitudes towards walking and bicycling to school. If the school has included the results of this survey or a similar one as part of the School Travel Plan's "Public Input Process" (Section 3), briefly describe how they have been used to develop your application. **Do not attach any surveys to the application.**
- Information from the Action Plan section of the travel plan determines which projects are eligible for funding. Upload the SRTS Team (Section 2) and Action Plan (Section 9) portions of the travel plan in this section.
- List the people and organizations who have demonstrated support for SRTS efforts on behalf of students at the participating school(s). This should include your team members, as well as people who have included support letters and anyone else that has demonstrated support for the program, regardless of their role. *Please note if a letter of support or resolution from them is attached.*
- Use the space provided to upload letters of support, including those that are in your travel plan. These must include a letter from the school principal as well as a resolution of support from the local governing body.
- Current Travel Mode and Distance information is generally included in Section 5 of the travel plan. Use the form provided to enter your data and submit the file. If your proposal is funded, this baseline information will be important for measuring the project's impact.

Projects

- See "**Funding Requests and Project Grouping**" section for information on how to group projects.
- Complete the questions clearly, describing the project that you are proposing for funding, the location of the project, what barriers the project is addressing, how it will

- All “project” questions are required for any projects included in the application.

Budget and Project Schedule

- Create a budget for infrastructure improvements using the sample provided in the application. You must provide budgeted amounts for Environmental Documentation, VDOT review, Preliminary Engineering, Right of Way and Construction; and include any local (or other) funds for the project. Choose the appropriate option if an engineer has developed the final estimates and schedule for this application (this is strongly recommended); if the budget, estimate and schedule was not prepared by an engineer, please explain how these were determined. For the project schedule, the start date should be no earlier than November 2011.
- Each project included on this application should have a separate budget and schedule but should be combined into one file for uploading.

Maps

- Please upload the maps included with your School Travel plan, noting the 15MB file size limit.
- Use the appropriate box to describe the information that each map contains.
- **Only include maps that contain information relevant to the projects listed in this application.**

Application Endorsement

- Download the form through the provided link and have it signed by an individual authorized to do so on behalf of the locality or sponsoring agency.
- Fill out the contact information for the Signatory, as they will need to be contacted about the agreement and other matters, should the project be awarded.

SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION

Once all of the required fields are completed to your satisfaction, you may submit it to the SRTS coordinator for initial review. If the SRTS coordinator has any questions, the individual listed as the user will be notified via email.

The next steps in the review process are listed below. Award notifications will be sent in September; if the review team recommends partial funding for one or more of your projects, you will be contacted prior to the award notifications for approval.

In the meantime, contact the SRTS coordinator if you have any questions regarding your application or the SRTS program.

APPLICATION SCHEDULE

March 25th 2011 (5:00PM) – Final date to submit School Travel Plan to the VDOT SRTS Coordinator for optional **Preliminary Review** and comment.

April 29th (5:00PM) – Deadline for submittal of final School Travel Plans to be eligible to apply for the 2011 SRTS funding cycle.

June 3rd (5:00PM) – Deadline for Applications (Instructions to follow)

June/July 2011 – VDOT conducts review of School Travel Plans and initial screening of applications and to ensure eligibility and compliance with all requirements. SRTS Coordinator or VDOT District SRTS Coordinator performs site visits of projects.

July/August 2011 – VDOT SRTS Advisory Committee reviews and ranks applications and makes recommendations to VDOT Commissioner and Secretary of Transportation.

September 2011 – VDOT notifies selected funding recipients.

October 2011 – VDOT sends draft agreements to sponsors for signatures.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Robert Williams, VA SRTS Coordinator

Email: robertj.williams@vdot.virginia.gov

Phone: 804-371-4868 / Fax: 804-225-4785

Mailing address: Virginia Department of Transportation
Safe Routes to School Coordinator
1401 E. Broad St., 1st Floor
Richmond VA 23219