

# Learn it. Do it. Live it!

## SAFE ROUTES SUMMER PLANNING



School's out, summer's here, but Safe Routes to School (SRTS) rolls on! In fact, summer is an excellent time to begin planning next year's SRTS activities. By planning ahead, you can avoid the start-of-school crunch and work to secure the assistance and funding you need for your program. Below is a list of things you can do over the summer to set yourself up for SRTS success next year.

### Ways to Prepare for a Great Safe Routes to School Year

#### Bring Together Your SRTS Team

An active SRTS Team is a tremendous asset. The team can help plan and implement SRTS activities, and can help foster collaborative partnerships between the school and community. Although it is important to have school representation on a SRTS Team, think about including police officers, city and county planners, health officials, and members of the business community. These are people who may be able to provide additional support and new ideas to your SRTS program.

#### Create a SRTS Calendar

Creating a [SRTS Calendar](#) over the summer can help you remember important events, think about what needs to get done when, and inform others about SRTS program activities. The calendar should identify all of the important dates for your SRTS program for the coming academic year. Be sure to include grant opportunity due dates and special statewide and national events. Also include dates important to the school, such as holidays, semester breaks, and Standards of Learning (SOL) testing dates. Consider adding community events as well.

#### Create a Walking and Biking Map

[Walking and biking maps](#) help parents make decisions about the best way for their children to walk or bike to school by showing them where such things as sidewalks, bike lanes, and crossing guards are located. Use the summer to get outside and map the walking and biking facilities around your school, and find out where crossing guards will be placed. Your map can be printed out and shared with the community at the beginning of the school year and before SRTS activities.



*Students walking home via the W&OD trail in Vienna, VA*

#### Identify Park and Walk/Bike Sites

Summer is also a great time to explore potential park and walk/bike sites. Park and walk/bike sites are off-campus places, like parks, libraries, and churches, with enough space for kids and adults to congregate and for cars and busses to park. They enable children who can't walk or bike from home to participate in SRTS activities and reduce traffic congestion near the school, creating a better walking and bicycling environment. If a suitable location is identified, reach out to the property owner about the possibility of using the parking lot for a park and walk/bike site.

#### Reach out to the Community

Beyond students and the school, the community surrounding a school can provide great support for a Safe Routes to School program. Local businesses, community recreation centers, and police and fire departments can often assist in implementing SRTS activities, provide in-kind services such as space for a park and walk/bike site, walking school bus leaders, bicycle safety trainings, or incentive items. Use the summer to reach out to community members



that could be partners with your school's SRTS program.

### Prepare for Student Travel Tally Week

Student Travel Tally Week is a dedicated week in the school year where schools throughout Virginia conduct a simple "show of hands" tally to find out how students traveled to school and how they plan to travel home. The tally provides valuable information for understanding student travel patterns.

Student Travel Tally Week is in the middle of September, only a few weeks into the school year. So, summer is the perfect time to get everything ready for Student Travel Tally Week. Write an article for the school's newsletter, print out directions for teachers, and create an account with the National Center for Safe Routes to School Data Collection System. If this is your school's first time conducting tallies, you will receive a Safe Routes to School banner that can be hung up at your school to show your commitment to safe walking and biking. And if you have already conducted tallies in the past, your school will receive a Student Travel Tally Week decal to decorate your banner.

### Get Ready for International Walk to School Day

National Walk & Roll to School Day is a great opportunity for students, their families, and the community to celebrate walking and biking to school. The event also gives children the chance to learn about the benefits of walking and biking to school and pedestrian and bicyclist safety. Schools often use Walk & Roll to School Day as the kick-off event for a year long Safe Routes to School program. Walk & Roll to School Day takes place every year in the first full week of October. During the summer you can make plans for Walk and Roll to School Day activities, find local volunteers and sponsors, and search the Walk, Bike, and Roll to School Day website to get ideas as well as register your event.

### Apply for a QuickStart Mini-grant

QuickStart Mini-grants are \$1,000 grants that can be used to purchase incentive items, printing materials, and equipment to support a variety of SRTS activities, including Student Travel Tally Week, Walk & Roll to School Day, and pedestrian and bicycle safety education. In the fall, there are two application rounds for QuickStart Mini-grants, due in August and September. Be sure to apply online for a QuickStart Mini-grant to help support the next walking and biking activity at your school.



*Bike to School Day, Chesterbrook Elementary*

### Begin Preparations for a Transportation Alternative Program Grant Application

The Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) Grant is a good way to fund infrastructure projects such as sidewalks, crosswalks and pedestrian signals to improve the safe walking and biking network at the school and in the community. The grant application is due November 1, but the application is available in July and there will be TAP information workshops in July and August. Use the summer to collect the necessary information and prepare the grant application. Summer is also a great time to apply for a free VDOT SRTS Walkabout, which can help identify infrastructure projects for the TAP grant. Contact your Local Technical Assistance Coordinator to learn more about TAP grants, Walkabouts, and the VDOT SRTS program

**Questions? Contact our Local Technical Assistance Coordinators at [info@VirginiaSRTS.org](mailto:info@VirginiaSRTS.org).**

