



Summer 2019



Coordinator's Corner

I normally use this space to give you a sneak peek about what we'll cover in the newsletter (hint: it's a great one, congrats to everyone for another BTSD record!). In this edition I choose instead to wield my awesome power as Virginia's Statewide SRTS Coordinator to say goodbye.



After eight years of overseeing VDOT's SRTS program, I've been asked to lead our Arterial Preservation Program, which I've helped to establish over the past couple of years. While I'm excited for the new challenge, I realize that nothing can compare to the rewarding efforts in encouraging Virginia to walk and bike that I've been fortunate enough to be a part of for almost a decade.

I'm incredibly proud of the what we've been able to accomplish in that time - the steady increase in Walk and Bike to School Day attendance (313 schools biking this year!), all the Crossing Guards we've been able to celebrate and, of course, the number of kids we've been able to get walking and biking.

To make that happen, it took a lot of effort from a lot of people, so I can't leave without sending a big thank you - to our partners at Toole Design Group for the work they do as our LTACs, to the local coordinators that put our resources to work in schools, to the schools that have invested in the idea of active transportation, and to everyone else that has been a part of this wonderful SRTS community.

(continued on next page)

IN THIS ISSUE

- [Coordinator's Corner](#)
- [Calendar](#)
- [Friends & Faces: Lucy Neher](#)
- [Bike to School Day Wrap-Up](#)
- [Looking Back at SRTS in 2018-2019](#)
- [Our Favorite Kid-Friendly Places to Walk or Bike](#)
- [Focus on Funding](#)

CALENDAR

AUGUST

8: QuickStart Mini-grant due

SEPTEMBER

All month: Take Student Travel Tallies

12: QuickStart Mini-grant and Walkabout Mini-grant due date

OCTOBER

All month: Take Student Travel Tallies

2: Walk to School Day

10: QuickStart Mini-grant due date

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The good news is that I will be nearby, and will undoubtedly find opportunities to help. The even better news is that I'm leaving the program in the very capable hands of Kathy Graham.

Kathy has been with VDOT for 20 years, and much of that experience has been in working on multimodal solutions for Virginia. She has worked primarily on the Statewide Transportation Plan, the Commonwealth's statewide long range multimodal plan that sets the vision and goals for planning for cars, transit, rail, walking and biking. Kathy is well poised to ensure that the SRTS program remains a part of the conversation as we continue to plan for the future of transportation in Virginia.

Thanks again for everything that you've done to ensure that our kids have the choice to lead an active life.

Regards,
Rob Williams
Virginia SRTS Coordinator

Friends and Faces: Lucy Neher

Lucy Neher has been the SRTS coordinator for Takoma Park, Maryland for over ten years. She's also the primary organizer of the Takoma Park Safe Routes to School 5K (TKPK5K), a community-focused, all ages series of races which include a timed 5K (run or walk) a 1 mile fun run and a ¼ mile youth run. The TKPK5K recently celebrated its ten-year anniversary on May 5, 2019. We spoke with her about her thoughts on the 5K and its connection to SRTS.



Lucy Neher

How did you come up with the idea for a 5K to help support SRTS in Takoma Park?

I was mostly looking for a way to get the phrase "Safe Routes to School" into the public consciousness because no one knew what it was. And now, ten years later, we have over 1,400 runners, and have raised tens of thousands of dollars to support safe bicycling and pedestrian programming for five schools and 3,500 kids each year.

How are the proceeds from the race structured?

The proceeds from the race are divided equally between the PTAs of five partner schools, with the caveat that at least 50% of the money is used for pedestrian or bicycling safety programming, healthy snacks and/or fitness activities. I've found it to be a win/win: the schools' PTAs get critical funds which are used to support Wellness Committees, which in turn host events with a health or fitness focus.

Then, the Wellness Committees are my volunteers in the field, helping promote Walk to School Day, Bike to School Day, the 5K race in the spring plus countless other outreach and encouragement activities supporting Safe Routes to School. I also go to their events, often bringing along my "smoothie bike" which is always a huge hit.

How has this benefited your community and SRTS?

There are the small things like the Wellness Committees help families and kids make better choices by changing out sodas and pizza at events for waters with fresh fruit and other healthier options. But there's also big lifestyle changes happening too, with kids really getting into all aspects of strength and stamina training for a big race and tracking their progress.

What kind of organizational or administrative structure do you have between the race and the PTAs? Did you put these in place at the very beginning?

There were a few things I started out doing from the very beginning, like reaching out to the local police department and public works to help with some logistics. The schools do sign an MOU to agree to send one representative to all the race planning meetings and be the leaders of planning committees. Mostly we all really have a lot of fun with it. Some of my volunteers have been working on these committees for the entire ten years that the event has been around!

What advice would you offer to anyone considering starting an event such as a 5K to help fund SRTS and other wellness efforts at local schools?

1. **Go big and bold** to brand SRTS and the goals of SRTS on all race promotions, to tie it inextricably to the event.
2. **Find a partner** who can help underwrite the bigger logistical expenses. Hospitals and school systems have been willing partners.
3. **Meet with your police and public works** departments and develop relationships early and often as they are on the front lines of working the day before to set up or the day of for street closures.
4. **Just go for it!** Start small, and each year you'll find that the event builds and more people come together to create a unique event that the community will be proud of.



Bike to School Day Wrap-Up

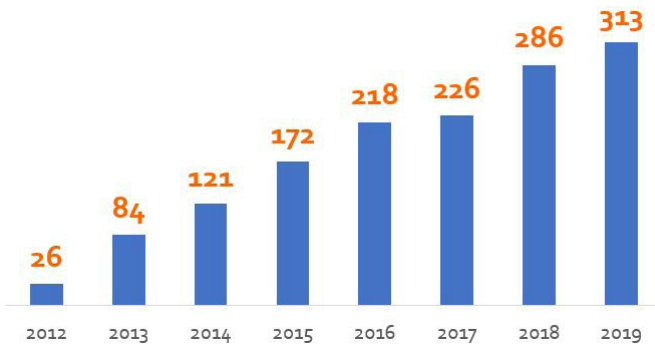
Bike to School Day 2019 was a huge success in Virginia! This year had the highest participation rate ever, with 313 events around the state; a 9 percent increase from 2018. 241 elementary schools, 64 middle schools, and eight high schools took part in Bike to School Day. The school systems with the most events were Fairfax, Arlington, and Chesapeake.

On top of that, Virginia had the second-highest number of Bike to School Day events in the United States, behind California!

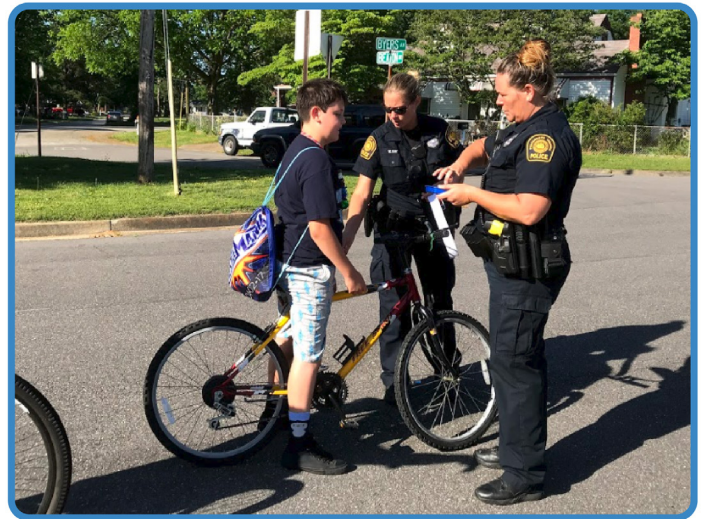


Bike to School Day at Chesterbrook ES (Fairfax County)

Virginia BTSD Participation 2012-2019



Thanks to our local SRTS coordinators, school administrators, teachers, parents, and event organizers! Here's to an even higher turnout next Bike to School Day - Wednesday, May 6, 2020.



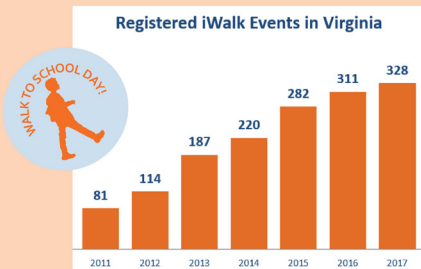
Bike to School Day in Portsmouth

Looking Back at SRTS in 2018-2019

Virginia Safe Routes to School got a lot done in 2018-2019, but in the hustle and bustle of the school year it's easy to lose track. Here's [an infographic](#) looking back at all of our program's accomplishments this year. We're looking forward to doing it all again this fall!

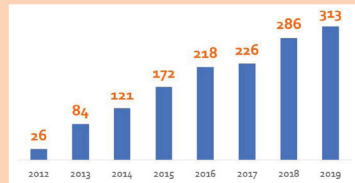
WALK TO SCHOOL DAY

In 2018, Virginia schools hosted a total of **364** events, breaking the previous record for the 9th year in a row!



BIKE TO SCHOOL DAY

In 2019, Virginia ranked 2nd among all states with **313** registered Bike to School Day events, beating last year's previous record by 9 percent.



STUDENT TRAVEL TALLY WEEK

261 schools across the state participated in Student Travel Tally Week during September and October 2018 recording **28,582** walking trips and **2,282** biking trips!



CROSSING GUARD APPRECIATION DAY

The Virginia SRTS Program has designated the second Wednesday of February as Crossing Guard Appreciation Day (CGAD), a statewide event devoted to saying thank you to those who help students cross the street safely on their way to and from school.



In conjunction with CGAD, the Virginia SRTS Program recognizes the state's Most Outstanding Crossing Guards. In 2019, over 200 people submitted nominations for **72** different crossing guards.

NON-INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS

VDOT provided almost **\$1 million** in Non-Infrastructure Grant funds to **16** school divisions during the 2018-2019 school year.

These grants help fund local coordinators within the divisions who are responsible for education, encouragement, evaluation and enforcement programs at **443** participating schools!

QuickStart Mini-grants

We awarded a total of **31** QuickStart Mini-grants for the 2018-2019 school year.

To date, the Virginia SRTS program has awarded **296** of these \$1,000 grants to help kick-start SRTS programs at schools throughout the state.

WALKABOUT MINI-GRANTS

The following schools received walkabouts led by Virginia SRTS Program staff and reports with recommendations to improve walking and biking conditions:

- **St. Patrick Catholic School**, Norfolk
- **Nansemond Elementary**, Suffolk
- **Gordon Barbour Elementary**, Gordonsville

Our Favorite Kid-Friendly Places to Walk or Bike

While Safe Routes to School programs offer students lots of opportunities to walk and bike during the school year, summer vacation provides a great opportunity to take longer walks and bike rides on trails. Here are four great kid-friendly trails all over Virginia, recommended by SRTS coordinators.

Richmond SRTS coordinator Tara FitzPatrick suggests [Belle Isle](#), located on an island in the middle of the city. There, you'll find a pump track, a trail that bicyclists ride by pumping the bike up and down instead of pedaling, which is a great way to teach bike skills. Kids can bike on a wooden boardwalk, dirt ramps, rollers, and wall rides. "My son and I absolutely love the pump track at Belle Isle," Tara writes.

Galax SRTS coordinator Linda Mock recommends the [New River Trail](#), a 57-mile trail that follows the New River through Galax and surrounding areas. This trail was a former railroad line, which means it has a gentle slope that's easy for walking, biking, and even horseback riding. Young people enjoy using it for longer rides: "This week, our elementary school bike club, the Bike Blazers, are going on a 10-mile ride," notes Linda.



Belle Isle Pump Track, courtesy rvaMORE

Portsmouth SRTS coordinator Patrice Billingsley recommends [Buckroe Beach](#), a public beach in nearby Hampton along the Chesapeake Bay with paths for walking and bicycling. "You can't beat the beach!" writes Patrice. "It has a nice wide sidewalk for biking, and walking in the sand is the best."

For young bicyclists with experience, Arlington SRTS coordinator Lauren Hassel recommends the [Key-Chain Bridge Loop](#), an eight-mile trail that runs along both sides of the Potomac River in Arlington and Washington, DC. "A little much for tots," she writes, "but certainly something that can be worked up to for older kids."

Focus on Funding

“Focus on Funding” is a feature of the Virginia SRTS newsletter that alerts you to funding opportunities, new funding resources, and offers advice on how to win at the SRTS funding game.



Here’s a list of upcoming grant opportunities at the state and national levels.

[Voices for Healthy Kids Policy Campaign Grants](#) [*ACT NOW*](#)

- Up to \$250,000
- Letters of Intent due June 7, applications due July 26
- Change local policy to better support active transportation to school



Featherstone ES used a grant to pay for its walking program.

[Virginia SRTS Program, QuickStart Mini-grants](#)

- \$1,000
- Applications due August 8, September 12, and October 10
- Small-scale SRTS activities

[Safe Kids Worldwide, Walk this Way Grant](#)

- \$500 to \$1,000
- Applications due in July (anticipated)
- Walk to School Day events

The opportunities below typically require advance planning and coordination to achieve a successful outcome.

[Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth, Healthy Community Action Teams \(HCAT\) Grant](#)

- \$30,000
- Request for proposals in August (anticipated)
- SRTS planning

[VDOT, Transportation Alternatives Set Aside Program](#)

- \$50,000 to \$1.5 million
- Mandatory pre-application due July 1
- Full application due October 1
- Large-scale SRTS infrastructure projects

See our *Learn It. Do it. Live it!* on [Funding SRTS Projects](#) for time-tested tips for funding SRTS projects, a menu of common funding sources, and links to other valuable funding resources.