



Fall 2021



## Coordinator's Corner

Virginia schools will fully return to in-person learning this fall, which is a chance to see familiar faces and meet new friends after a long time away. For many families, it's an opportunity to get back into the habit of walking or bicycling to school, or start a new routine. As always, Virginia Safe Routes to School is here to make walking and biking safe and fun as we get back into the swing of a new school year.



In this newsletter, we'll get ready for Walk to School Day next month and offer lesson plan ideas for this fall's Student Travel Tallies. We'll learn about walking school buses, and get some helpful tips about pedestrian safety and listening to crossing guards. Finally, we'll find out about new Virginia road safety laws and hear about some new sources for SRTS funding.

If you have any questions or would like to learn more about the topics included here, please don't hesitate to reach out! You can call the Virginia SRTS Hotline at 1-855-601-7787 or send us an email at [info@virginiasrts.org](mailto:info@virginiasrts.org).

Regards,

*Katherine Graham*

Katherine Graham  
Virginia SRTS Coordinator

### IN THIS ISSUE

- Coordinator's Corner
- [Calendar](#)
- [Walk to School Day](#)
- [Student Travel Tallies](#)
- [Walking School Buses](#)
- [New Road Safety Laws](#)
- [Tips for Safe Walking](#)
- [Focus on Funding](#)

### CALENDAR

#### SEPTEMBER

- 9:** Walkabout mini-grant applications due
- 16:** QuickStart mini-grant applications due

#### OCTOBER

- 6:** Walk to School Day
- 14:** QuickStart mini-grant applications due

## Get Ready for Walk to School Day!

Walk to School Day returns Wednesday, October 6!

While October 6 is the official Walk to School Day, schools, community groups, and families can register a Walk to School Day event on any day in October.

As of September 9, 77 events have been registered in Virginia, putting us first in the nation! You can add your event - no matter how big or small - at [walkbiketoschool.org](http://walkbiketoschool.org) anytime between now and October 31. Every school with at least one registered event will receive a 2021 Walk to School Day decal.

Looking for ideas for what to do? See our [Walk to School Day webpage](#) and check out [walkbiketoschool.org](http://walkbiketoschool.org), which includes 20 great Walk to School Day event ideas for families, neighborhoods, and schools.

We look forward to seeing you out there next month!



## Student Travel Tallies

The Student Travel Tally is a quick, in-class survey that provides valuable information on student travel patterns. Student travel tallies can help you monitor the success of your SRTS program over time and may be especially useful during ongoing COVID-19 pandemic to help the school community understand travel patterns and needs.

Virginia SRTS encourages schools to collect Student Travel Tallies annually during [Student Travel Tally Week](#), which can take place any week in September or October. [Our Student Travel Tally Week page](#) has some great materials to get you started, including:

- [A Learn it. Do it. Live it!](#) tip sheet with an example letter to school staff from the principal, a morning announcement script, and instructions for teachers and students explaining how to participate.
- [A resource with fun and creative ideas](#) for integrating student travel tallies into classroom instruction.
- Two awesome new instructional videos that provide concise explanations for how to use the Safe Routes to School Data Collection System to [enter student travel tally data](#) and [generate a report](#).

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As always, first time participating schools will receive a Virginia SRTS banner and event decal. Schools can earn other decals by participating in Walk to School Day (October), Crossing Guard Appreciation Day (February), and Bike to School Day (May).

Your SRTS banner can be used in a number of ways. Students can carry the banner during a Walk to School Day parade, it catches the eye when hung from a table at an event, and it makes a statement about a school's support for Safe Routes to School when displayed near the school entrance.

If you already have a banner that is full of decals, we'll be happy to send you a new one! Please email a photo of the old banner with your mailing address to [info@virginiasrts.org](mailto:info@virginiasrts.org).

## Walking School Buses

Back to school time often comes with mixed emotions; excitement to be back with friends and the return of school activities, but also uncertainty and nervousness about starting a new grade and different routines.

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic continues to affect back to school plans in big ways. A national school bus driver shortage is causing students without other options to spend hours traveling to and from school and miss classes. Families that can drive students to school are faced with long pick up and drop off lines that snake around school campuses and onto adjacent streets. These are challenges that require multiple strategies to address.

For students and families that live within walking distance of their school and have safe places to walk, a Walking School Bus is one such strategy. It's a group of students that walk to school with adult supervision. Some Walking School Buses are just two families taking turns walking (or biking) their children to school, while others have a fixed walking route with meeting points, a timetable and regular, trained volunteers.

On the following page are some helpful Walking School Bus resources:



*A walking school bus in Galax.*

To learn more about Walking School Buses, the Safe Routes Partnership has an [in-depth guide](#) that covers how to get started, plan the route, recruit students, and maintain a Walking School Bus over time. It includes worksheets to help plan routes and schedules. The Partnership also has a [2021 Back to School Messaging Guide](#) including social media messages and flyer templates you can use to get the word out.

### Walking School Buses in Virginia

You can also revisit our 2018 interviews with two Walking School Bus leaders in Virginia, [Pat Failes of Elkton](#) and [Rachel Arrowsmith in Richmond](#). Both leaders acknowledge the importance of pre-planning and the challenge of ensuring there are enough adults available to help students stay safe. However, the benefits were almost immediate: at one school in Richmond, students who participated were less tardy or absent, and their grades improved. As Arrowsmith said, the Walking School Bus “[was] all about relationships and consistency,” two things critical to a supportive learning environment and successful school year.

### Inspired to start your own Walking School Bus?

You don't need any special materials for a Walking School Bus, but if you'd like to have lights and reflective gear for leaders and participants, you can apply for a [QuickStart Mini-grant](#), which reimburse schools for up to \$1000 to support walking and biking activities. The remaining fall due dates are September 16 and October 14. [Click here to complete the online application.](#)

## New Road Safety Laws

Are you up to date on bicycle and road safety legislation in Virginia? We've got you covered. Here are three laws recently passed in Virginia that seek to protect cyclists and pedestrians:

1. Drivers must change lanes when passing a cyclist if they cannot give the cyclist at least three feet of distance. Previously, this law stated that drivers had to provide at least three feet of space between their vehicle and a cyclist. This new law removes the ambiguity in cases where drivers cannot give at least three feet of space. This law was passed by the Virginia General Assembly and went into effect July 1.
2. Bicyclists can ride side by side in a travel lane. No more than two cyclists can ride abreast. This law was also passed by the Virginia General Assembly and went into effect July 1.
3. Speed cameras may now be used in work zones and school zones. Automated speed enforcement is a technology-based strategy to slow drivers and improve traffic safety with less police intervention. This new law is designed to slow drivers and to protect road workers and students. Any driver caught going 10 mph over the posted speed limit will receive an automated ticket. The maximum fine is \$100. Signs must be posted within 1,000 feet of a speed camera to warn drivers. Governor Northam signed this bill into law in May 2020.

## Tips for Safe Walking and Listening to Crossing Guards



Mary Randolph, Warrenton Middle School  
Most Outstanding Crossing Guard 2019

The first day of school is often the busiest day of the year on local roads. When you're ready to lace up your shoes, here are some helpful tips on how to walk safely near traffic:

**The safest place to walk is on the sidewalk.** Walking on the sidewalk keeps you away from motor vehicles and other traffic, drivers will know to expect people walking there.

**Where there isn't a sidewalk, walk on the left side of the street.** When you walk on the left, you face traffic and can see oncoming cars and drivers.

**Take care when you walk.** Don't run, play around, or push on the sidewalk. If you or a friend were to slip, you could land in the street.

**If you don't know where it's safe to walk, ask.** People you trust like a parent, teacher, caretaker, or an older sibling will know where and when it's safe to walk.

**Make sure you can see and hear what's around you.** Looking at social media or listening to music can distract you.

**Look out for driveways, and check for parked cars.** If you see a person in the car or the lights are on, make sure the car is not moving before continuing. Look left, right, and left again before you keep going.

When you see a crossing guard, the rules for walking can be different than in other places:

**At a crosswalk with a crossing guard, listen to them!** At most crosswalks, drivers can pass once people are out of the crosswalk, but in a school zone, the crossing guard may go back and forth to help all the students cross the street. They'll let drivers know when it's safe to keep going.

**Don't cross in the middle of the street or between parked cars.** Crossing guards may not be able to see you or tell you when it's safe to cross, creating the risk of a collision. Parents, if you are waiting for your students across the street, wait near a marked crossing to reduce the temptation to take a dangerous short cut across the middle of the street.

**More walking and biking makes walking and biking safer.** When more people are walking and biking, it takes cars off the road and allows crossing guards to help more people. Fewer cars on the road mean fewer chances of a crash, and more opportunities to cross the street safely.

*These tips were adapted from [NHTSA's Child Pedestrian Safety Curriculum](#) and [Safe Routes Utah's website](#). Virginia SRTS also has a *Learn It. Do it. Live it!* resource on [Crossing Guard Basics](#), as well as information on how to participate in [Crossing Guard Appreciation Day](#).*



## Focus on Funding

Here's a list of upcoming grant opportunities at the state and national levels:

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

- \$1,000
- Applications due 9/16 and 10/14
- Small-scale SRTS activities

### [Virginia SRTS Program—Walkabout Mini-grants](#)

- \$3,000-\$5,000
- Applications due 9/9 and 2/3/22
- Assessment and report of walking and bicycling conditions around schools

### [Safe Routes to School National Partnership—Safe Routes to Parks Grants](#)

- \$12,500 based on previous grants
- Next application round expected winter 2021-2022
- Funding to develop a Safe Routes to Parks action plan addressing links between schools and parks
- Applicants must be 501(c)(3) nonprofits

### [People for Bikes—Community Grants](#)

- \$10,000 based on previous grants
- Next application round expected winter 2021-2022
- Funding for bicycle infrastructure and advocacy projects

### [Outride Fund—Grants](#)

- \$15,000 based on previous grants
- Next application round expected winter 2021-2022
- Money for schools to equip bike rooms, bike clubs, bike STEM and bike tech programs, and other bike-related activities
- Dollar-for-dollar match requirement

### [Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth—Healthy Community Action Team Grants](#)

- \$30,000 based on previous grants
- Next application round expected in fall 2022
- Action Teams help build community resources and find opportunities to address obesity through policy and environmental changes

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