

Appendix F

Virginia's Safe Routes to School Program

The Safe Routes to School Program, SRTS, is a national transportation program created through Section 1404 of the 2005 Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users Act, better known as SAFETEA-LU. The SRTS program established a grant program, with administration through the state transportation programs, for providing communities opportunities to improve conditions by which students and residents could safely walk and bike to schools that included grades Kindergarten through Eighth grades. The program has three goals:

4. to enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school;
5. to make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age; and
6. to facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools.

Within Virginia the SRTS funding is available for programmatic development or for construction of physical improvement. Programmatic grants are provided for the purpose of developing SRTS plans and programs within a school or school divisions. These plans must be developed in partnership with a local school, school system, and residents and patrons of the school. The other grant program that is available provides funding to make physical improvements, such as sidewalk plans, instillation of curb ramps, signage, timed signals, or pedestrian inlands. In order to be eligible for the construction funds available to make physical improvements, there must first be the development of a document, or SRTS Travel Plan, that has been developed in partnership with school stakeholders.

Developing a Safe Routes to School Travel Plan

A school or school system Safe Routes to School Travel Plan is the guiding document that summarizes the needs and solutions to create a safe walking and biking environment to access area schools. Specifically a SRTS plan:

- defines the primary issues, needs, and impediments within a specific school or school system that prevents area students from being able to safely walk or bicycle to the school; and
- establishes action-oriented solutions through education, outreach, and system improvements, to encourage walking and biking encouragement and participation by students and residents.

Elements to Include With a Safe Routes Plan

The following provides detailed information on each element that must be included, per VDOT's Safe Routes to School Program Guidelines, to be included within an approved Travel Plan. Details can be obtained at <http://www.virginiadot.org/saferoutes>.

Plan Motivation – Summation of interest and motivation for creating a plan.

Project Team – Must include a core team of school, community, and locality representatives and communicate a core project leader.

Public Input Process – Must show activity that involved public input in determining needs, program gaps, and proposed solutions. The public input process should include administering of a parent and community survey and/or public forums to gather input and comment on possible system improvements recommendations.

Description of School – School description should include location information that will in relation to locality as a whole and to the neighborhoods that are within an are up to two miles from the school. There will also be information on the school district as a whole to include school population.

School demographics –The plan will include information on percentages of students for various ethnic groups, percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch, surrounding area demographics, etc.

Current school travel environment –School travel information should include information on the number of students riding buses, walking, traveling by car. This section will also provide information on the estimated number of students who could walk or are potentially within walking distance of the school. Also information on school travel policies and supporting activities, such as PE classes or other school activities should be provided.

Hazards and Barriers to Active Transportation – This portion of the plan will present the current conditions that hinder safe walking and bicycling of students to the school facility. This can include details on lights, crosswalks, gaps in sidewalks, traffic volumes and speed.

Creating Solutions – This portion provides a summation of activities identified by the school plan team and community to eliminate the barriers to safe walking and bicycling and to increase safety educational knowledge. This section should include each of the five “E’s”, Education, Enforcement, Encouragement, Evaluation, and Engineering, activities that have been identified to improve the school walking and cycling environment.

Maps – Detail map of the school, surrounding areas and developed travel routes.

Action Plan – A detailed overview of how the five E’s will be implemented over time and who are the responsible parties, and how will success be measured.

Project Endorsements – Provide evidence of community support. Include letters, articles, and meeting summaries

Supporting Documents – Resolution of Support from locality