



Winter 2019



Coordinator's Corner

As we transition from fall to winter, temperatures are dropping, and daylight is becoming shorter. Nevertheless, I commend all students who to continue to walk and bike to school. There is never a bad time to learn safe habits for active travel, and I encourage everyone to advise students on taking additional precautions when walking or biking in the cold.



In this edition of the Friends & Faces column, we speak with Theresa Pusateri, the SRTS Coordinator for Norfolk Public Schools, about her work developing community partnerships. Read on to learn techniques for collaborating with community groups near you.

Curious how to create a walk- and bike-friendly school campus? Is your division considering locations for a new school? Need guidance on how to manage transportation choices at your school? Check out the articles on school siting, the elements of walk- and bike-friendly school campuses, and Transportation Demand Management.

Once again, Walk to School Day (WTSD) was a success across the Commonwealth. Participation in WTSD increased by more than 20 schools from 2018 to 2019. Let's continue this trend next year!

Crossing Guard Appreciation Day is coming up on February 12, 2020, which means it's time to nominate your crossing guard for Virginia's Most Outstanding Crossing Guard award. Find out how in the article below and follow the links to download free materials.

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CALENDAR

DECEMBER

1: Nominations for Most Outstanding Crossing Guard open

JANUARY

24: Nominations for Most Outstanding Crossing Guard close

FEBRUARY

6: Quick Start Mini-grant Applications Due

6: Walkabout Mini-grant Applications Due

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Finally, we provide information on funding opportunities at the state and national levels. 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.

Regards,
Kathy Graham
Virginia SRTS Coordinator



Friends and Faces: Theresa Pusateri

Theresa Pusateri is the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Coordinator for Norfolk Public Schools. A Midwest native and former college basketball director, she promotes walking and bicycling to students, staff, and parents in a division with over 30,000 students.

We talked to Theresa about how she got involved with SRTS and how bicycling is taking Norfolk schools by storm. She's also forged some strong connections to local community groups - from bicycle advocates to the local police department - helping SRTS reach beyond the classroom.

How did you first hear about SRTS?

I first heard about SRTS when I was the Director of Basketball Operations for Old Dominion University. Our student athletes would volunteer for the bike rodeos and walking activities throughout the year. I would attend the events and volunteer as well.



Theresa Pusateri

As Norfolk's SRTS coordinator, you've collaborated with a number of community groups. What do outside organizations bring to Safe Routes to School?

Outside organizations are essential to SRTS. We do many events with the community and having eager volunteers that are experienced with biking and walking in our city helps with the overall success of the rodeos, clinics, and [pedestrian and bicycle] safety lessons.

This year, you worked with Bike Norfolk to create a bike safety video, "Ride Your Own Ride." Could you talk about that process?

Bike Norfolk has been a partner of SRTS for five years. They are a not-for-profit bike group that hosts bike events and community engagements throughout the year. We originally met to talk about the possibility of doing the bike video. They had the camera equipment, green screen, and [did the] overall production. Norfolk's SRTS program identified the school and students that could act in the video. We filmed on a Saturday, edited, and did voice overs. It took one day to film and many hours of editing.

What's the hardest part of working with community partners? Do you have any advice for coordinators or schools interested in working with an outside group?

I don't think it is hard. It is easy when we both have the same purpose, and that is to teach students safe ways to bike and walk to school. Find a group that wants to work together, a group that knows your purpose and goals. Work together as a team and help each other.

Where do you see the SRTS program going - in Norfolk, or beyond?

SRTS is gaining momentum with the middle schools this year! There has been a lot of interest in using our bike fleets and teaching bike safety in physical education classes. Elementary school students enjoy Walk to School Day and Bike to School Day. T-shirts, pencils and anything we hand out is always a hit. In Norfolk, biking is really taking over. It is becoming a major source of transportation for students and adults. Having Bike Norfolk and local bike shops on our team helps spread our message of safety.

Where is your favorite place to walk or bike in Virginia?

I personally love Charlottesville and Williamsburg. Being from the Midwest, I love these areas in the fall and seeing the trees and change in color. Locally, I enjoy riding in downtown Norfolk and Ghent, and along the oceanfront in Virginia Beach.

Crossing Guard Appreciation Day

If you know a crossing guard who goes the extra mile to make walking and biking fun, easy, and safe, make sure he or she is celebrated on Crossing Guard Appreciation Day. While the official date is February 12, 2020, find a day in February that best works for your



school. Celebrate crossing guards with a letter of appreciation, a meet and greet with warm drinks, a poem or cheer, or other ideas found on the [Virginia Safe Routes to School website](#). The website has other resources such as thank you cards, posters, and press release templates.

Crossing Guard Appreciation Day is also an excellent opportunity to remind students how to cross streets safely.

Crossing guards are a valuable community asset, and we want to hear how crossing guards go above and beyond to make the journey to school efficient, safe, and enjoyable. Schools are encouraged to nominate their crossing guard for Virginia's Most Outstanding Crossing Guard Award starting December 1, 2019 through January 24, 2020. A brief nomination form can be found [here](#). Be prepared to share an anecdote that shows how special your crossing guard is and include a photo of your crossing guard with the nomination.

All schools that nominate their crossing guard will receive a decal to add to their Virginia Safe Routes to School banner.

Walk to School Day 2019 in Virginia

**6% increase
from 2018**

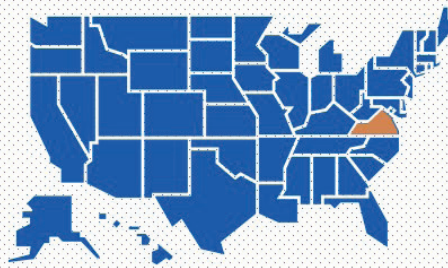


**386
schools**



**42 new
schools**

161 schools have participated for
5 years or more!



2nd highest
number of
events in
the country
(CA led the pack)



Walk to School Day Wrap-Up

It was another record-breaking year for Virginia's Walk to School Day! We exceeded last year's record by more than 20 schools with a total of 386 registered schools. The divisions of Fairfax, Arlington, and Chesapeake Public Schools held the most registered events. Congratulations to all our participating schools and thank you for another incredible year.

We appreciate all students, teachers, staff, crossing guards, parents, local coordinators, and other supporters who made Walk to School Day possible. Your support raises awareness of the many benefits of walking to school. Mark your calendars for next year's event on October 7, 2020.

Making Smart School Siting Decisions

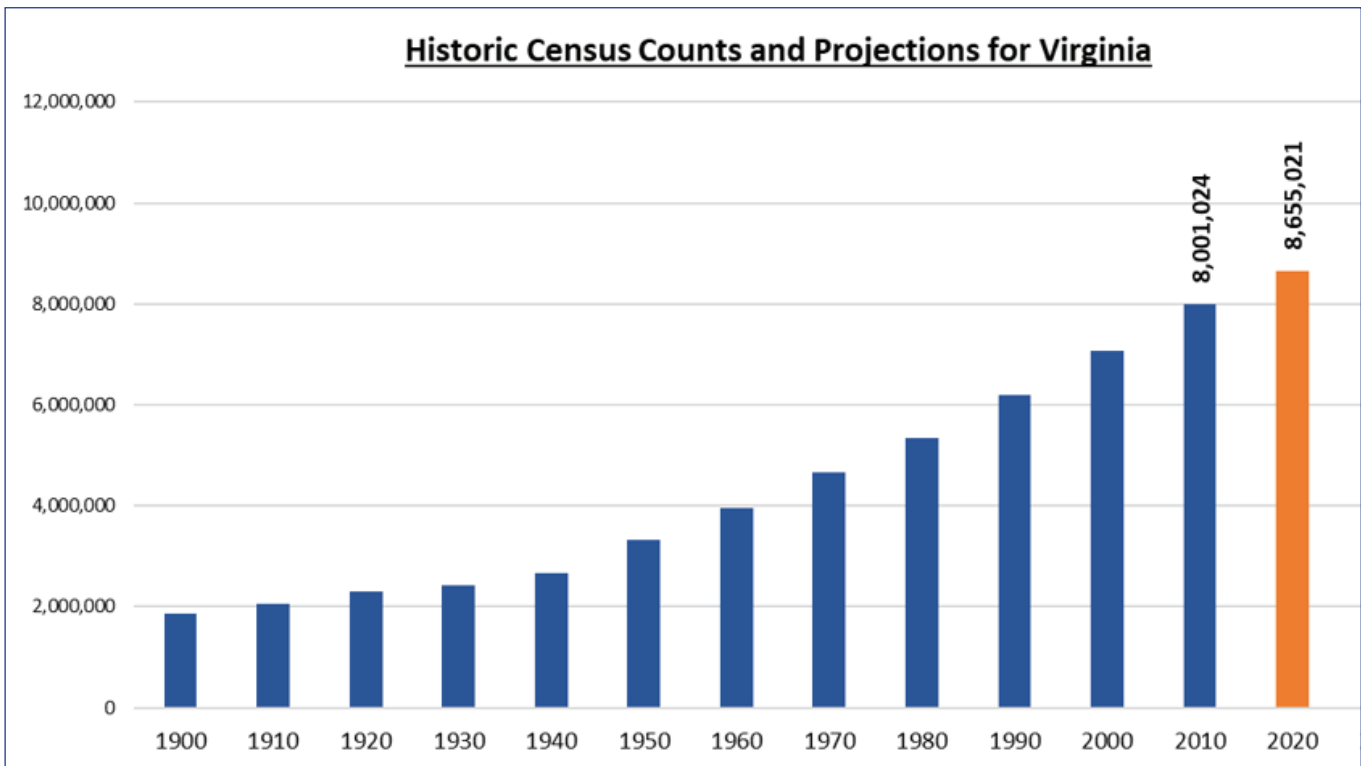
With Virginia's population growth rate of 8 percent expected to hold steady through 2030 (6), many localities in Virginia will be building new schools to accommodate additional students. Schools are major community investments and decisions related to the location and construction of new schools can have lasting impacts at the individual and community levels for many years.

Traffic Impacts

- Low-cost location, design, and construction of a school with inadequate roadway, access, and parking infrastructure can result in a lifetime of higher costs for traffic control, enforcement, busing, and administration time to address ongoing safety and operational problems (3).

Fiscal Impacts

- In Oregon, a study in the Bend-La Pine School District found large, new schools built in a previously undeveloped area often act as a



magnet for new residential development, drawing people and resources away from existing schools and neighborhoods (4).

- Even families without school age children are impacted as school quality has a significant influence on residential property values.

Social Impacts

- If schools are located apart from residential areas, they are less likely to serve multiple community functions such as hosting adult exercise classes, voting, or services in an emergency.
- Proximity to residential areas helps foster increased adult involvement and student learning outside of the classroom (4).

Health Impacts

- A student who walks a mile to and from school each day gets 2/3 of the recommended sixty minutes of physical activity per day.
- When schools are located within or close to residential areas and the trip to school is shorter, more students can walk and bike and less driving

time means less air pollution, fewer greenhouse gas emissions, and reduced traffic congestion in the neighborhood around the school.

If you are interested in learning more about this topic, check out the resources below:

1. [Change Lab Solutions: Smart School Siting](#)
2. [EPA: School Siting Guidelines](#)
3. [ITE School Site Planning and Design Guide \(purchase\)](#)
4. [National Association of Realtors: Smart Growth for Better Schools](#)
5. [Safe Routes Partnership: School Site Selection and Off-site Access](#)
6. [University of Virginia Weldon Cooper Center, Demographics Research Group: Virginia Population Projection](#)



Creating Walk- and Bike-Friendly School Campuses

Does your school have a bike rack? Do sidewalks on the school campus connect to sidewalks on nearby streets? These are examples of issues that can impact the ability of students to safely and comfortably walk and bicycle to school. The good news is these issues can often be more quickly and easily addressed than off-campus pedestrian and bicycle issues. The reason is simple-- the school division owns the property.

Of course, the best way to create a walkable and bikeable school campus is to build it that way from the start. Are there plans afoot to build new schools or expand existing ones? Now's the time to get involved! Review the plans. Attend the planning meetings. Work with the school PTA to send a letter to the school board. These are a few of the things you can do to influence what gets built.

If your school campus is already built, don't despair. It's still possible to make "retrofits" that can

improve conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists. For example, you can apply for a [QuickStart Mini-grant](#) to fund an on-campus marked crosswalk or bike rack. You can work with the school division and broader school community to make more significant changes, such as building paths or sidewalks on campus and improving campus lighting. Do people need some convincing or help understanding the proposed changes? Consider a [pop-up demonstration](#).

Features of school campuses that are walkable and bikeable

- Pedestrians and bicyclists can access the school property and school building from all sides.
- There are safe, convenient, continuous sidewalk and pathway connections between the school building and off-campus pedestrian and bicycle networks.
- Sidewalks and pathways are accessible to people with disabilities, wide enough to comfortably accommodate expected pedestrian and bicyclist volumes, and well-lighted.



Sidewalks should be wide enough to accommodate small groups of pedestrians walking together.



A sidewalk-level driveway crossing.

- Places where pedestrian and bicyclist movements might conflict with motor vehicle movements are minimized.
- Intersection and driveway crossings are as narrow as possible, well-lighted, and designed to communicate pedestrian priority, e.g., through a marked, high-visibility crosswalk or a design that carries the sidewalk surface across the driveway opening.
- The design accounts for the way people actually behave, e.g., pedestrians will always prefer the shortest path and parents are unlikely to wait in long, serpentine drop-off and pick-up queues.
- Campus space is allocated in a way that communicates that the campus is about people rather than cars. Don't give the entire campus over to parking and driveways!

Resources

1. [Institute of Transportation Engineers: School Site Planning, Design, and Transportation](#)
2. [walkBoston: Walk to school? But how do I find the front door?: Strategies for designing a walkable school campus](#)
3. [Safe Routes Partnership: Safe Routes to School Briefing Sheets: School On-Site Design](#)
4. [Safe Routes Partnership: Tip Sheet #3: Bike Parking, Storage and Security](#)

Transportation Demand Management at School

Picture this: Your school has a long queue of cars at arrival and dismissal time, backing up onto nearby streets. The division offers a few solutions: a new, larger drop-off area, a new parking lot, or even a parking garage - all of which require money and space, both of which are in short supply. What's a Safe Routes to School coordinator to do?

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) might be the alternative. It's a set of strategies or policies that looks at how people make transportation decisions and helps them take advantage of the options they may have, including travel modes other than driving. The idea is to maximize the existing transportation infrastructure, rather than creating new facilities that can be costly to build and maintain.



Incentives for walking and biking to school can be one piece of a school TDM program.

TDM is popular with any organization that might have traffic or parking problems, like universities, office parks, and hospitals. In those places, TDM might take the form of shuttles, carpools, transit subsidies, or trip planning help. These programs educate people about transportation options, encourage people to use them, and constantly evaluate their success. Virginia has 16 county- or city-level TDM programs, which work with these organizations to reduce traffic congestion.

All of this might sound familiar! After all, schools provide special, private shuttles to carry students to class every morning, a.k.a the school bus. They educate people on different transportation options and hold events to promote walking and bicycling. In other words, Safe Routes to School is kind of like a TDM program for schools. And for good reason: schools contribute anywhere from 10 to 25% of morning rush hour traffic, according to studies in [Virginia](#) and [Washington](#) state, and TDM programs can reduce driving by anywhere from 8 to 24%.

TDM can come in many forms. Just like SRTS, each division or community may need a unique approach to Transportation Demand Management. At schools, TDM requires buy-in from school administrators, local governments, and where available, transit agencies. Here are some examples of great TDM school programs from around the nation:

- Arlington's APS Go! is a national leader in TDM, involving not only students but parents and staff as well. A key part of this program is extensive data collection and surveying, understanding how people make travel decisions and what influences those choices.
- Roosevelt High School in Seattle, Washington is a school TDM pioneer, beginning in 1999 with a student-led effort to reduce driving. Students organized classroom lessons and a skit on the impact of auto use, published articles in the school newspaper, and held a Transportation Fair with giveaways for students who pledged not to drive. Afterwards, 28% of students said they drove to school less, and 15% stopped driving entirely.
- Head-Royce School in Oakland, California created a brochure of the "Big 10 Driving Rules" to educate parents on better pick-up and drop-off behaviors, establishing community norms. The school partnered with a nearby church to use their parking lot for overflow traffic or to stage afternoon pick-ups, ensuring that parents didn't circle the neighborhood looking for a parking space.
- Montgomery County, Maryland has a "Kids Ride Free" program, where students over age 5 can get a transit card at select schools and ride county buses for free all day. This is a big help for lower-income students, who can't always afford transportation to and from school. Several Virginia school divisions partner with local transit agencies to provide free or discounted bus service, including Arlington, Charlottesville, Fairfax, Prince William, Richmond, and the entire Hampton Roads area.

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.

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

- \$12,500
- Applications due December 16, 2019
- Funding is to develop a Safe Routes to Parks action plan. Can address connections between schools and parks.
- Applicants must be nonprofit organizations under Section 501(c)(3)

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

- \$1,000
- Applications due February 6, March 5, and April 2, 2020
- Small-scale SRTS activities

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

- \$5,000-\$7,000 of technical assistance
- Applications due February 6
- School area walking and bicycling infrastructure assessment and report

[Virginia SRTS Program-Non-Infrastructure Grants](#)

- \$5,000-\$100,000
- Applications due March 2020 (anticipated)
- Multi-school SRTS non-infrastructure activities and SRTS coordinator
- Requires submittal of Activities & Programs Plan (APP)

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.