

**CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA**



Agenda Date:	February 3, 2025
Action Required:	Resolution for appropriation of grant funds
Presenter:	Kyle Rodland, Safe Routes to School Coordinator
Staff Contacts:	Kyle Rodland, Safe Routes to School Coordinator Ben Chambers, Transportation Planning Manager
Title:	Safe Routes to School Program

Background

This is the 9th year that the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has awarded the City of Charlottesville with a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Non-Infrastructure (Activities and Programs) Grant. This \$229,803 grant will be used to fund education, encouragement, evaluation and enforcement programs related to Safe Routes to School from October 2024 through December 2026. VDOT will provide \$183,843 in federal pass-through funding and require a 20% match of 45,960 from the City. The Non-Infrastructure Grant will also be used to fund a SRTS coordinator who works within the school division to promote and facilitate Safe Routes to School activities.

Discussion

In 2019, the City updated the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Activities and Programs Plan (APP), a written document that outlines a community's intentions for enabling and encouraging students to engage in active transportation (i.e. walking or bicycling) as they travel to and from school. The plan details the number of students living within ¼ to 2 miles of their school and demonstrates the potential benefits that can be accrued from a coordinate SRTS program (nearly 30% of students live within ½ mile of school and nearly 70% live within 1 mile of school). The SRTS APP was originally created through a team-based approach that involved key community stakeholders and members of the public in both identifying key behavior-related to barriers to active transportation and, using the four non- infrastructure related E's (education, encouragement, enforcement and evaluation) to address them.

The APP update reflects minimal changes from last year's plan, but emphasizes lessons learned since our Coordinator was hired in October 2016. The following short-term recommendations were developed to enhance the program:

- Institute bike riding, repair, and safety curriculum
- Develop a division-wide SRTS website
- Facilitate biking and walking incentive program
- Regularly host walk- and bike-to-school days
- Consistently host annual Bicycle Rodeos

- Conduct bike safety check
- Student Transportation Committee
- Expand the bike helmet give-away program
- Administer student travel tallies
- Keep records of participation in workshops, biking and walking trains, bike rodeos, afterschool clubs, and other events

The SRTS Activities and Programs Plan will continue to serve as a guiding document to assist in promoting, encouraging, and enabling walking and bicycling to school. The grant will allow the City to continue to fund part of the salary for the Safe Routes to School Coordinator and the supplies needed to implement the recommendations included in the APP. However, the SRTS program, since 2020 has evolved to include identifying and overseeing implementation of improvements within school zones. The coordinator position, its responsibilities, and its compensation, have outgrown the bounds of the APP-defined role and grant-funded salary limitations. Salary and benefits in excess of the award budget for personnel costs will be moved by journal entry to Neighborhood Development at the end of each quarter.

The grant requires a 20% cash match (\$45,960). We anticipate receiving additional in-kind donations from the Charlottesville Area Mountain Bike Club for bicycle fleet maintenance.

As a reimbursable grant, costs will be incurred in the State Grant Fund and reimbursed by VDOT.

Alignment with City Council's Vision and Strategic Plan

This initiative supports Council's Vision to be a "Connected Community" ("the City of Charlottesville is part of a comprehensive, regional transportation system that enables citizens of all ages and incomes to easily navigate our community") and "America's Healthiest City" ("we have a community-wide commitment to personal fitness and wellness, and all residents enjoy our outstanding recreational facilities, walking trails, and safe routes to schools").

In addition, the project contributes to Goals 1 and 3 of the Strategic Plan, to be an inclusive, self-sufficient community and a healthy and safe city.

The initiative further implements recommendations within the Comprehensive Plan (2023), Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (2015) and supports the City's Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Resolution.

Community Engagement

This grant application implements one of the programming recommendations included in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (adopted 2015), which included significant public involvement. Further, city staff from Neighborhood Development Services worked with staff from the Thomas Jefferson Health District and Charlottesville City Schools (Physical Education and Pupil Transportation) to create a Safe Routes to School Task Force in 2016 that was responsible for outlining elements of the first city-wide Safe Routes to School Activities and Programs Plan (APP). The task force included representatives from city schools, community organizations, multiple city departments (NDS, Public Works, Parks and Recreation), as well as health and enforcement disciplines. The APP was developed by the task force with input from parents (via Parent Survey) and further discussed/refined

at public meeting in February 2016. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee provided feedback on the APP annually through the 2019 update that is the current guiding plan for the program. To continue to understand evolving needs of school transportation in Charlottesville, a parent survey will be conducted in the 2024-2025 school year to better understand some of the barriers and challenges of walking and biking school.

Budgetary Impact

There is estimated to be approximately \$130,000 over two years to cover required match and personnel costs in excess of award budget. The total grant appropriation is \$229,803, which will be recorded and expensed from a grant fund. The grant match will be covered using funds previously appropriated within the Neighborhood Development Services operating budget.

Recommendation

Staff recommends approval and appropriation of the grant funds.

Alternatives

If grants funds are not appropriated, Safe Routes to School programming will continue in an ad-hoc fashion with assistance from community partners and parent volunteers.

Attachments

1. SRTS Resolution \$229,803