



Isle of Wight Safe Routes to School Feasibility Study Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Safe Routes to School Program?

A federal program that helps communities implement safe and successful strategies to promote walking among children up to the eighth grade.

How much will the project cost?

Isle of Wight County has awarded a contract of \$69,941.00 to Land Studio, a Norfolk-based planning and landscape architect firm, to work with the county, schools, and citizens to identify and initiate design of the optimum routes for walking paths within a mile of Windsor Middle School and Westside Elementary School. Specific contract deliverables include developing a complete, State-approved Safe Routes to School Travel Plan for each school to meet SRTS grant application requirements, the development of 30% construction drawings for prioritized routes, and completion of environmental documentation required to meet federal funding criteria.

Who is paying for this project?

The contract is federally funded by the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). It is one of six ARRA projects in the County.

What is the project about?

Land Studio, the consultant team hired by Isle of Wight, will work with parents, teachers, school administrators and other community members to determine safe and feasible routes that will connect existing neighborhoods to Windsor Middle and Westside Elementary Schools, and to tie the new paths into nearby neighborhood sidewalks. The goal is to create an opportunity for students to choose to walk to school, and improve pedestrian access to school facilities for all local residents. Land Studio will also prepare the preliminary construction design for the chosen routes, including completion of required environmental documentation. Windsor Middle and Westside Elementary schools were selected for the study because of close proximity to areas of significant residential density and existing sidewalks.

What happens after the project is completed?

Construction funding will be pursued through multiple avenues by both the County and the Towns. Funding may be available through the National Center for Safe Routes to School. In Virginia, for example, schools from Alexandria to Waynesboro have already received grant funds from the SRTS program to pay for improvements such as crosswalks and sidewalks, bike racks and safety education programs.

A School Travel Plan that includes parent surveys and public input is required as part of the application for grant funds under the Safe Routes Program. Results of the ongoing study will be used to produce a School Travel Plan.



Will the public have a chance to give feedback?

Yes, two stakeholder meetings and public meetings were held at both schools in January and February 2011. Residents within walking distance of the schools were invited and meetings were publicly advertised. Additional public meetings will be held at each school in the coming months as the project moves forward. Meeting notices will be posted on the County's homepage at www.iwus.net, and sent to the schools and local media. Information and summary documents from previous meetings are also available through the County's website. Please visit www.iwus.net and click on the SRTS icon on the left sidebar.

Why Walk/Bike to School?

Providing a means to walk to school helps preserve the vitality of the surrounding neighborhood, encourages a healthier population, improves air quality, reduces congestion around schools, conserves open space, and teaches children important safety skills and independence. Thirty years ago, 60% of children living within a 2-mile radius of a school walked or bicycled to school. Today, that number has dropped to less than 15% nationwide. In Isle of Wight, the percentage is far less. As a result, obesity among children is at all-time high, which contributes to childhood diseases. Safe Routes to School programs are intended to reverse these trends by funding projects that improve safety and promote walking and bicycling as a safe, healthy alternative to vehicle travel. SRTS is a communitywide initiative utilizing a collaborative team that includes parents, schools, and professionals in transportation, planning, engineering, health, and law enforcement.

Where can I go for more information on the Safe Routes to School program?

National Center for Safe Routes to School

www.saferoutesinfo.org/

Virginia Department of Transportation

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www.virginiadot.org/programs/tes_Rt2_school_pro.asp

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