



Memo

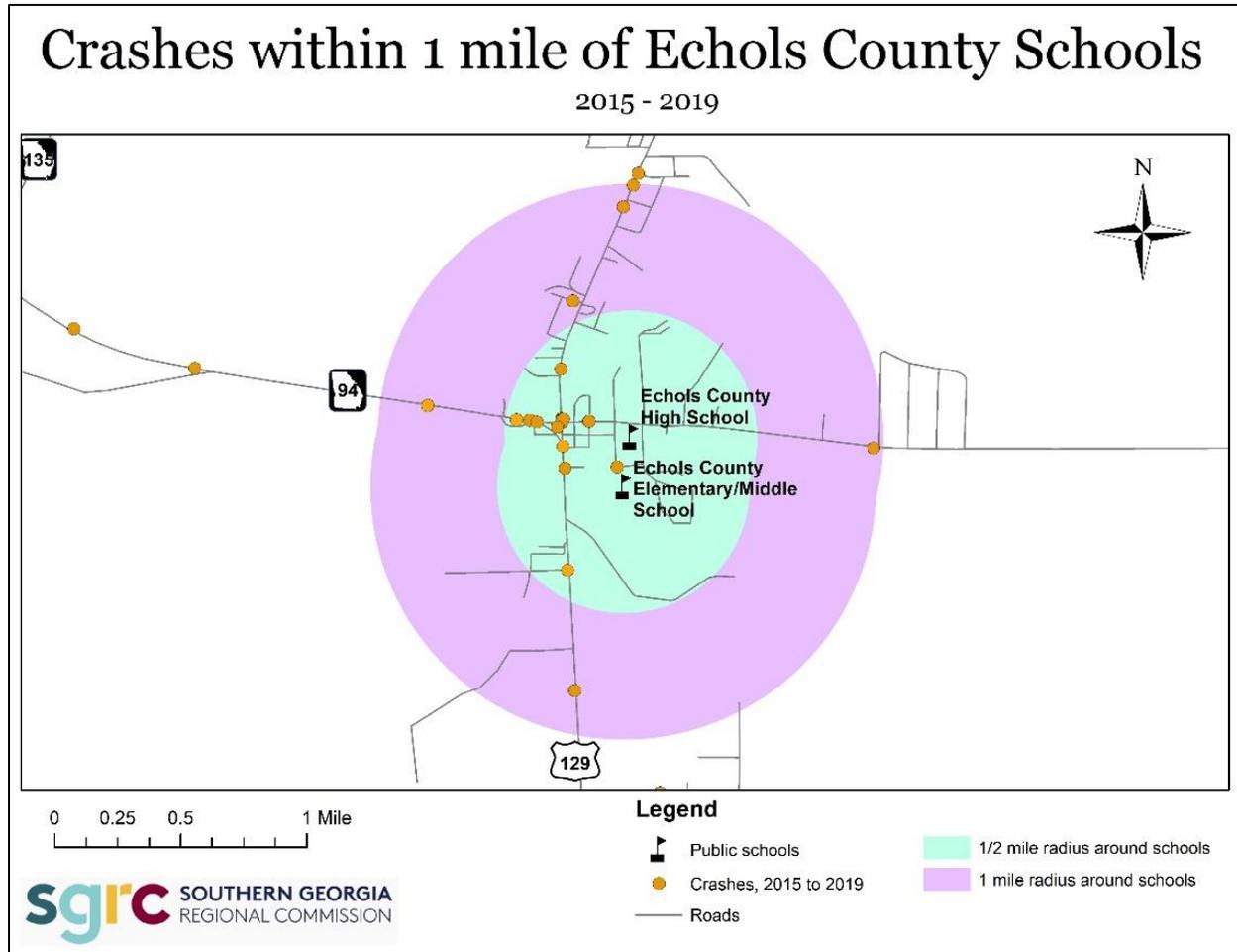
To: Echols County Schools, Interested Parties, General Public
From: Transportation & Environment Staff, Southern Georgia Regional Commission
CC: Chelsea Carter, Georgia SRTS School Outreach Coordinator – South Georgia
Date: 3/10/2020
Re: Safe Routes to School 5-Year Crash Trends in Echols County, GA from 2015 to 2019

Introduction

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission and the state of Georgia's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program partner with local governments and agencies to determine how to make roads and public right-of-way safer for all users. Traffic safety around schools is a key concern due to the combination of vulnerable road users (in particular, children who walk or bike to school), periods of high traffic volume (e.g., school pick-up and drop-off times), high-risk drivers (e.g., high school students), and school bus traffic. The purpose of this memo is to provide information regarding traffic safety around schools in Echols County. This information may be used to help determine future investments in transportation infrastructure; to identify priorities for road user education and law enforcement; and to inform future transportation plans and policies.

This memo examines crash trends for locations within 1 mile of Echols County public schools. Over the past five years, from Jan. 1, 2015 to Dec. 31, 2019, according to the most recent data provided by the Georgia Department of Transportation, Echols County experienced 204 crashes in the public right-of-way. Out of this total, 23 crashes occurred within 1 mile of a school and 18 occurred within ½ mile of a school.

An Equal Opportunity Employer / Program



Map 1: Crashes within ½- and 1-mile radii of Echols County schools.

Data Source: Georgia Electronic Accident Reporting System (GEARS).

The intersection of US Highway 129 and State Route 94 is less than half a mile from Echols County's two schools. Since it is one of the busiest intersections in Echols County, many of the crashes that occurred were most likely not directly related to school operations.

Of the 23 crashes that occurred within a 1-mile radius of the schools, 3 involved pedestrians. One of the pedestrians injured was an 11-year-old child (on 1/31/2018). The only fatality that took place within this radius and timeframe was another 11-year-old child, on a motorized minibike (on 7/3/2017). Although both these incidents show a need for improved traffic safety measures, they do not appear to have been directly related to travel to or from school.

Almost all of the 23 crashes occurred outside of school drop-off and pick-up times. Only two crashes were clearly related to school traffic. The first occurred in the Echols County School parking lot on 8/12/2016 at 7:40 a.m., and involved a collision in the school drop-off line. There were no injuries.

The second school-related crash occurred on SR-94 at 2:40 p.m. on 10/30/2017. According to the crash report, traffic was backed up on SR-94 due to school letting out. A vehicle driven by a 16-year-old rear-ended a vehicle driven by an 18-year-old. There were no injuries.

8 of the 23 crashes involved a commercial vehicle (including the 11-year-old pedestrian injury crash on 1/31/2018), reflecting the large proportion of traffic on these two state routes that is commercial in nature. According to the data, none of these were log trucks. No crashes on record involved school buses.

Out of 205 total recorded crashes in all of Echols County from 2015 to 2019, 28 (14%) involved drivers under age 18. This demonstrates the need for improved driver education and safety measures for this age group.

Actions and Looking Ahead

A new sidewalk was recently installed on US Route 129 for slightly over a mile from central Statenville north to Wesley Road. This provides much-needed pedestrian connectivity from several residential areas to central Statenville, including the schools.

Echols County is one of the few jurisdictions in Georgia that has no zoning or land development regulations. Haphazard development has taken place over the years, resulting in a pattern of fragmented residential developments off of US-129 and SR-94 reaching approximately 1 to 1 ½ miles north, east, and south of Statenville. For residents of these areas, the central part of Statenville is a comparatively long distance by foot, and SR-94 still lacks sidewalks to connect to residential areas on the east side of Statenville. Land use planning to concentrate future development nearer the center of Statenville would help to build a more walkable community for the future. The schools are centrally located within the community, and sufficient sidewalk infrastructure exists on much of US-129 and part of SR-94 to allow walking and biking to school.