

Memo

To: Ben Hill County Public Schools, Interested Parties, General Public

From: Transportation and Environmental Staff, Southern Georgia Regional Commission

Cc: Chelsea Weldon, Georgia SRTS School Outreach Coordinator – South Georgia

Date: 8/10/2021

Re: Vehicle Crashes near Schools in Ben Hill County

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 rights-of-way safer for all users. Traffic safety around schools is a key concern due to a 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 Ben Hill 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 1/2 mile of public and private schools in Ben Hill County. Over the five-year period from January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2020, according to data provided by the Georgia Department of Transportation, Ben Hill County experienced 1,555 crashes in the public right-of-way. Out of this total, 369 occurred within 1/2 mile of a school. Due to Covid-19, many schools shut down in March of 2020 until the end of the school year leading to much fewer crashes during this time period due to a significant decrease in road traffic.

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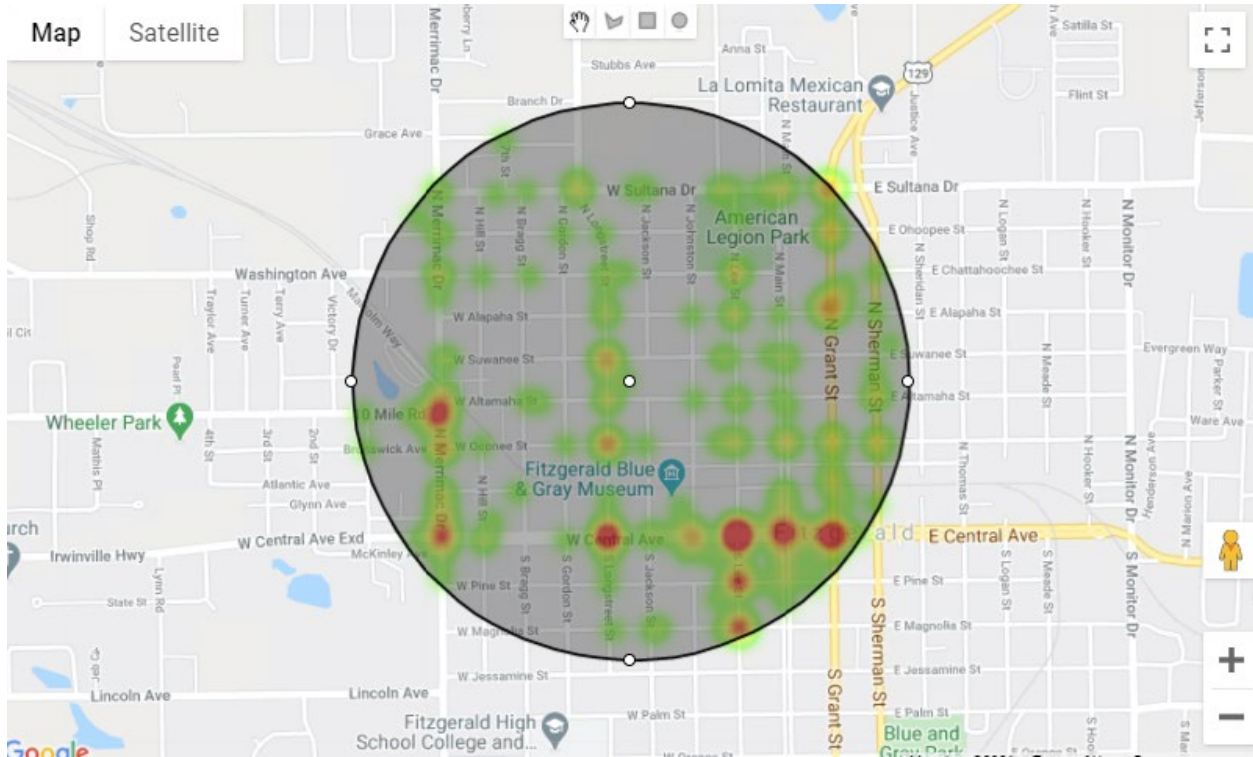
Ben Hill County Schools

Ben Hill County schools has a total of 5 schools. These schools range from Pre-K to high school. For Ben Hill Pre-K, Elementary, and Primary, the drop off times are around 7:30 and the pickup times are around 2:30 so we will assume the pickup and release hours are from 7:00 to 8:00 and 2:00 to 3:00 for this study. For Ben Hill Middle and High School, the drop off time is around 8:15 and the pickup times are 3:30 so we will use 7:00 to 8:00 and 3:00 to 4:00 for this study.

The schools that are within the Fitzgerald city limits reported much more crashes due to the high amounts of traffic, while schools in the county have little to none.

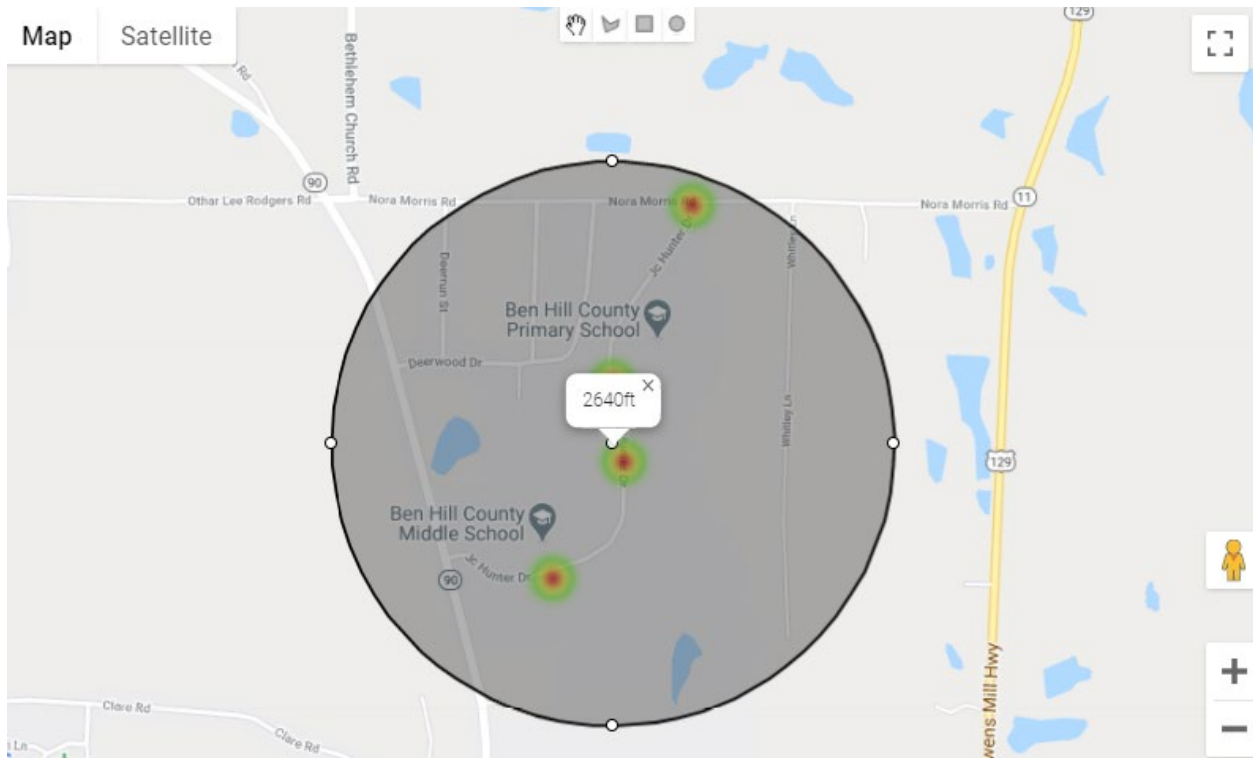
Ben Hill Pre-K

Ben Hill Pre-K experienced many crashes due to its adjacency to the center of Fitzgerald. Much of the crashes occurred on the intersections of South Lee Street and East Central Avenue as well as South Grant Street and East Central Avenue. There were a total of 311 crashes and 69 of these resulted in 106 injuries. There were 2 deaths within this radius. Of these 69 crashes, 5 of them were reported in the morning drop off hours of which all reported injuries. There were also 4 injuries reported in the pick-up hours. Of the injuries reported during school hours, 2/3 of them were a result of failure to yield to traffic while the others were a result of hitting a parked car, swerving into other lanes and following too close. There is no evidence showing these crashes are related to the school traffic



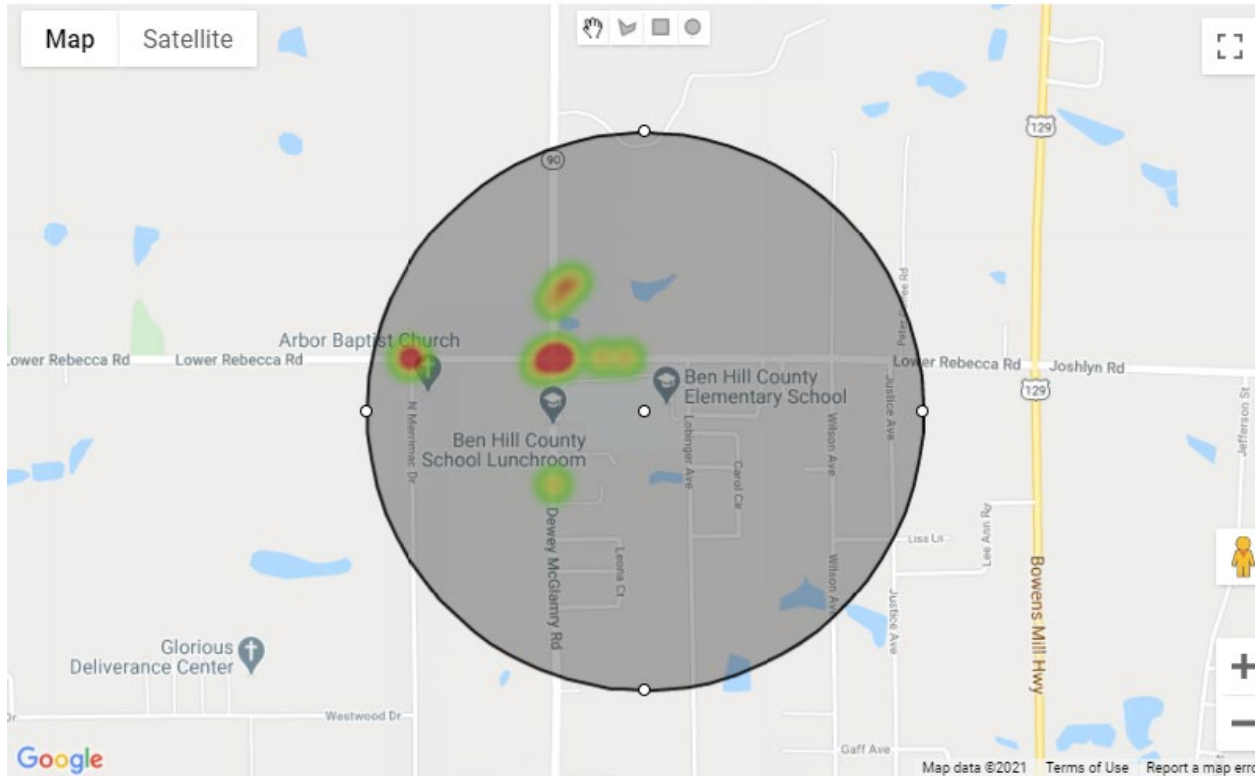
Ben Hill Primary/Ben Hill Middle

Ben Hill Primary and Middle school had almost no crashes at all. There was not a particular area where most of them occurred as they were all evenly spread out. There were only 4 crashes in this school zone and zero of which were injuries. Interestingly though, all of these occurred from the hours 7:00 to 8:00 in the morning except for 1 which occurred at 8:02 which is the school drop of hours. These were minor crashes that may directly relate to school traffic. School related signage may be appropriate around this school zone to prevent further crashes during these hours, such as a slow sign or something to warn of a school zone. Ben Hill Middle and Primary were grouped together due to their adjacency.



Ben Hill Elementary

Ben Hill Elementary had a total of 16 crashes in its school zone. Of these, there were 4 crashes which resulted in a total of 10 injuries. The majority of these crashes occurred at the intersection of Dewey Mcglamry Road and Lower Rebecca Road. Of the 4 crashes with injuries, 2 occurred during school hours and they were both rear ends. The crash reports show no evidence that they are a result of school related traffic.



Ben Hill High School

Ben Hill High School reported the second highest amount of crashes in its school zone in the county. There were 192 crashes reported in this school zone. Forty of these resulted in 52 injuries. Most of the crashes occur along East Central Avenue which is one of the main highways that go through Fitzgerald. Only 1 injury occurred during the drop off hours and it was a result of failing to stop at a stop sign. In the afternoon hours, 4 injuries occurred and 3 of them were failure to yield to oncoming traffic while the other was disregarding a stop sign/light.

