

Memo

To: Tift County Public and Private Schools, Interested Parties, General Public

From: Michael Williams, Southern Georgia Regional Commission

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

Date: 06/22/2021

Re: Vehicle Crashes near Schools in Tift 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 Tift 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 Tift County. Over the five-year period from January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2020 according to data provided by the Georgia Department of Transportation, Tift County experienced 8,880 crashes in the public right-of-way. Out of this total, 2,402 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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On May 4, 2021, the Tifton Grapevine published an article "TOO MANY DRIVERS SPEED IN SCHOOL ZONES, STUDY FINDS" highlighting a private company that monitored speeding in school zones in Tifton. In a review of the crashes that occurred between the drop-off and pick-up times throughout Tift County a total of 49 crashes (out of 1,870) had a contributing factor of "exceeding speed" or "too fast for conditions", often among other various contributing factors. Speed did not appear to be a significant contributing factor in the analysis of the crash data. "Failure to yield" and "following too closely" were the most frequently cited contributing factors among all crashes in school zones during drop-off and pick-up times.

Tift County Schools

There are a total of 12 schools in Tift County, of these 12, there are 8 elementary schools, 2 middle schools and 1 high school. There is also a private school in the county. Each school's drop off and pick up times differ but are between the hours of 7:00-9:00 a.m. and 2:00-4:00 p.m.

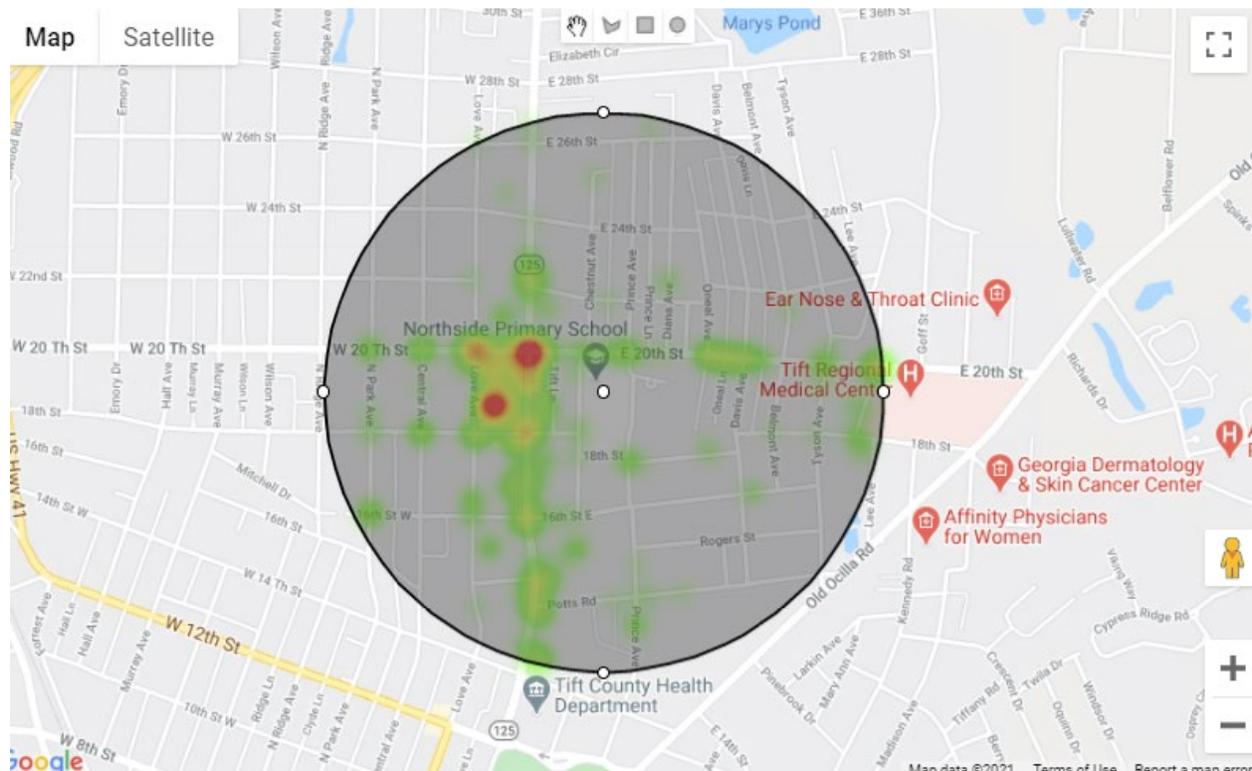
There were significant crashes in Tift County but most of them are not directly correlated with the school zone traffic in the morning and evening.

Elementary Schools

There are a total of 8 elementary schools in Tift County. The drop-off times are from 7:30-8:30 in the morning and the pickup times are from 2:30-3:30 in the evening. These are the times we will be using to calculate the crash results in this report. All of these schools are located in the city limits of Tifton except Omega Elementary which is in the City of Omega. Most of these schools have appropriate school zone indicators and it seems that most of the crashes are a result of following too closely.

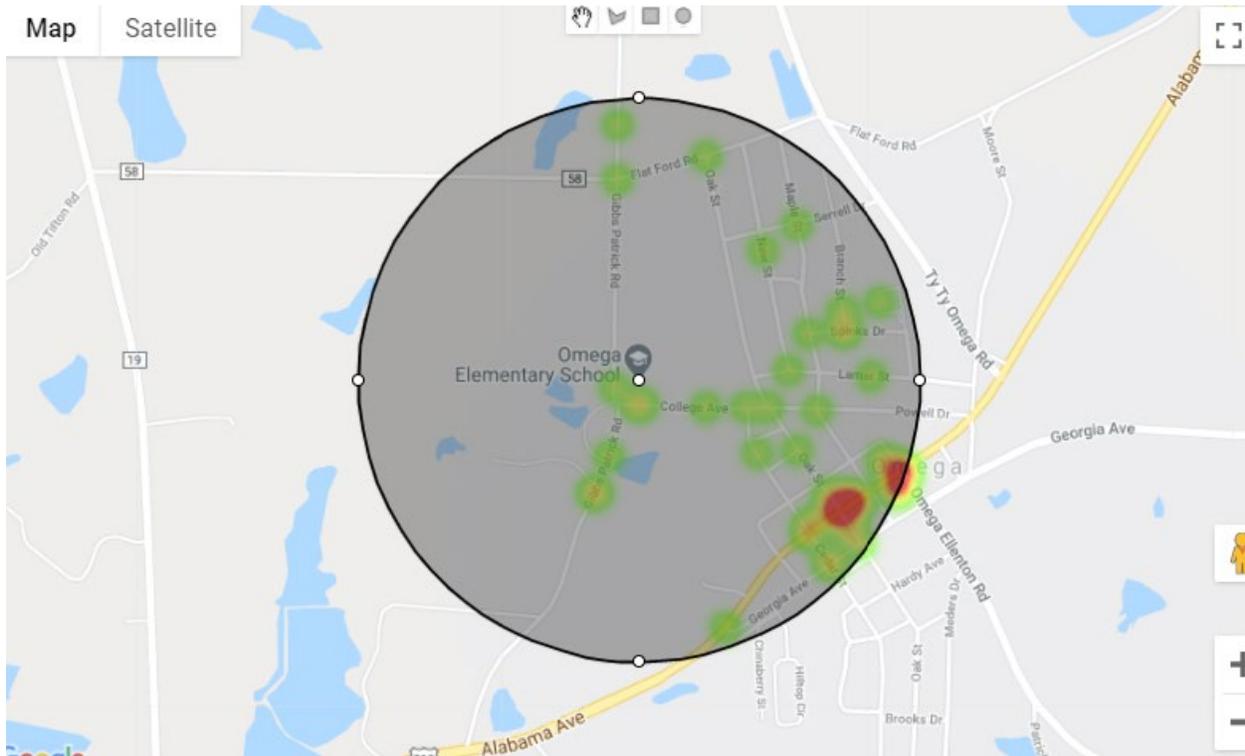
Northside Elementary

Northside Elementary is located on the corner of East 20th Street and Chestnut Avenue. In this school zone, there have been a total of 466 collisions which include 393 property damages and 71 injuries. Of these crashes, 53 occurred during the pickup times and were mostly caused by distracted driving resulting in rear-ends. There were 9 injuries out of the 53. In the drop off times, there were 20 crashes almost entirely caused by people failing to yield to traffic. There were 5 injuries out of these 20 crashes. The crashes in this school zone were mostly minor but additional education of drivers to pay attention in this school zone may be appropriate.



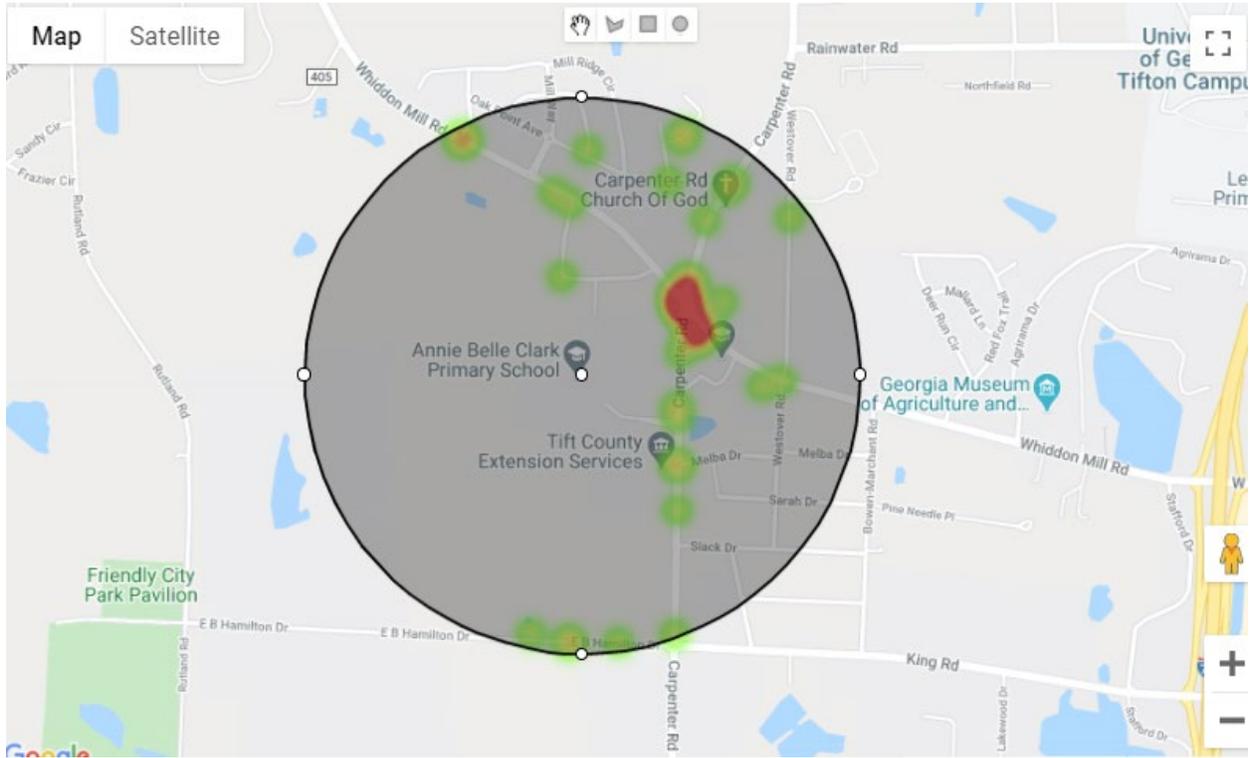
Omega Elementary School

Omega Elementary School is on the corner of Gibbs Patrick Road and College Avenue. There were a total of 61 crashes and 3 injuries in this school zone. Only 4 crashes occurred during the drop off times. An additional 4 crashes occurred during the pickup times. There were no injuries in any of these collisions. Many of them occurred because of people backing into cars or hitting telephone poles. Changes to on-street or street adjacent parking may be a solution in these cases. Consideration should be given to having the parked cars be required to back into each space, resulting in safer conditions in this area.



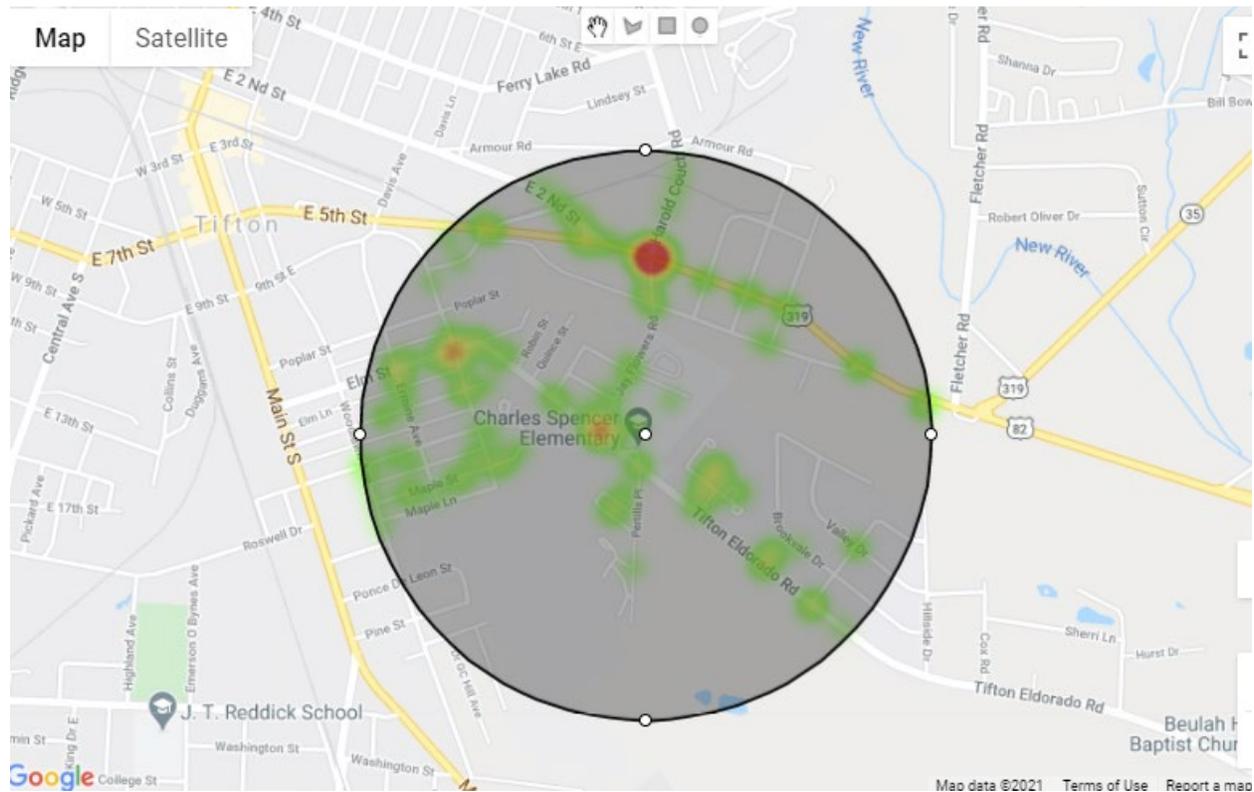
Annie Belle Clarke Elementary

Annie Belle Clarke Elementary is located on Carpenter Road South. There were a total of 62 collisions which include a total of 10 injury crashes. During the drop-off times, there were 10 crashes with 1 injury. The majority of these collisions were a result of distracted driving. During the pickup hours, there were 4 minor crashes and 1 injury. The injury was from an illegal U-Turn.



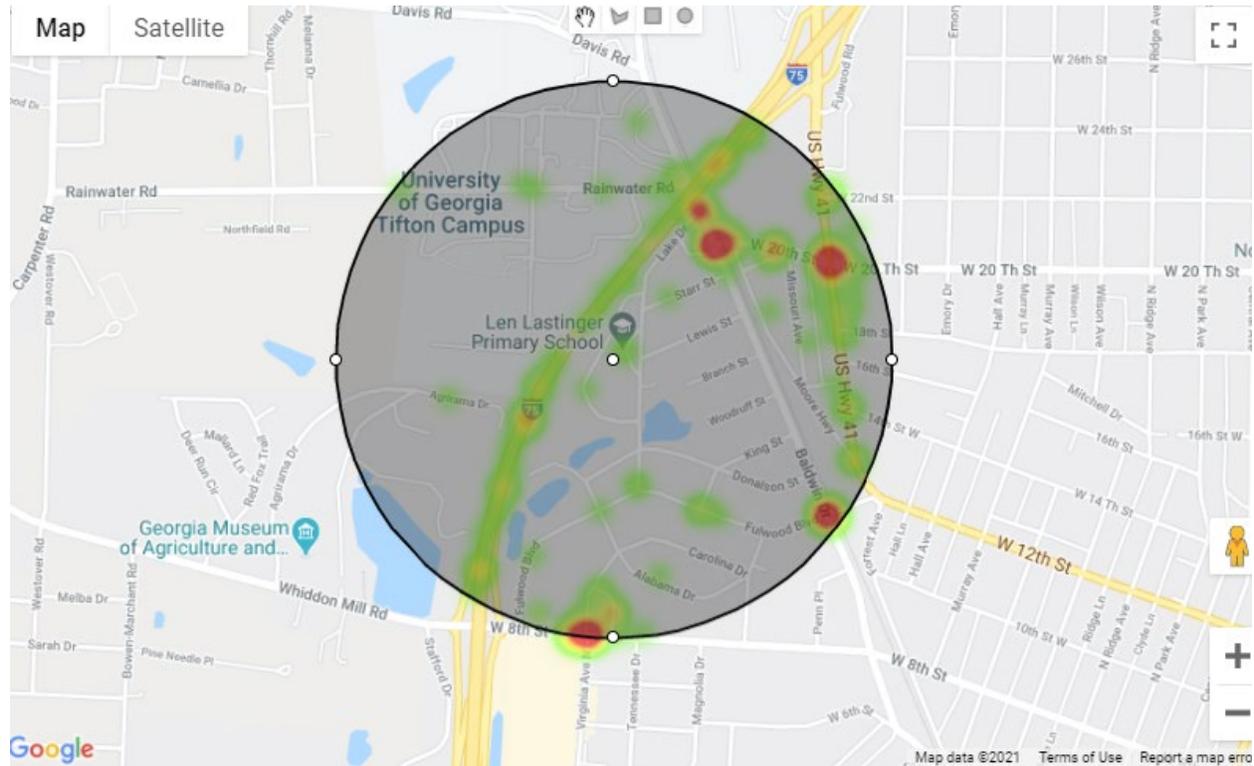
Charles Spencer Elementary

Charles Spencer Elementary is located on Tifton Eldorado Road which is in the southern part of Tifton. This school zone experienced a total of 222 collisions which include 47 injuries and 1 fatality. Of these 222 crashes, 19 occurred during the drop-off hours with 3 injuries. These injuries were a result of 2 rear-end crashes. In the pickup times, 20 crashes occurred which include 4 injuries. Almost all of these 4 injuries were a result of a rear-end collision. This could be a result of high traffic in the school zone but these crashes during school hours do not seem to be directly correlated with the school traffic.



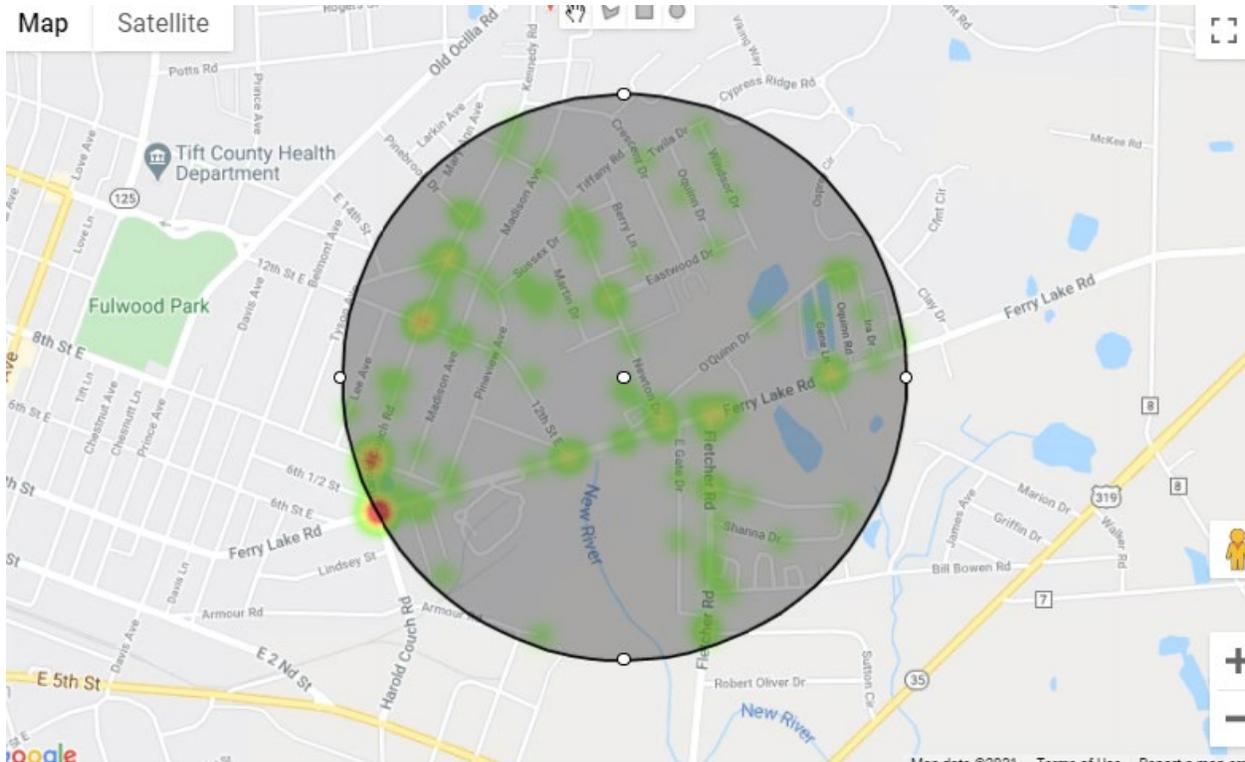
Len Lastinger Elementary

Len Lastinger Elementary is located on Lake Drive and it is adjacent to I-75, resulting in a higher number of total crashes identified. There were a total of 274 crashes in this ½ mile radius which include 35 injuries. During the pickup and drop off times, 50 crashes occurred which resulted in only 5 injuries in the 5 year period. Many of the crashes shown are a result of traffic coming directly from the interstate exits and they are mainly on the state highways and routes, not immediately near the school.



G.O. Bailey Elementary

G.O. Bailey Elementary is located on the corner of Ferry Lake Road and Newton Drive. In the 5 years reviewed, this school zone experienced a total of 151 collisions which included 30 injury crashes. During the morning hours, there were 19 crashes and 1 injury. This injury was the result of a head on collision. During the pickup hours, there were 13 crashes with also 1 injury. This injury was from a car hitting a cyclist.



J.T. Reddick Elementary

J.T. Reddick Elementary is located on Martin Luther King Jr. Drive. This school is located on the southern part of Tifton and it experienced a total of 190 crashes; 34 injuries and 1 fatality. During the drop off hours, there were 12 crashes including 1 injury. During the pickup hours, there were also 12 crashes but there were 2 crashes with injuries. The amount of collisions seems to be heightened by the I-75 exit (Central Avenue) which is about a half mile from the school. Highway 41 is also a major road which contains a high amount of crashes in the vicinity of this school.

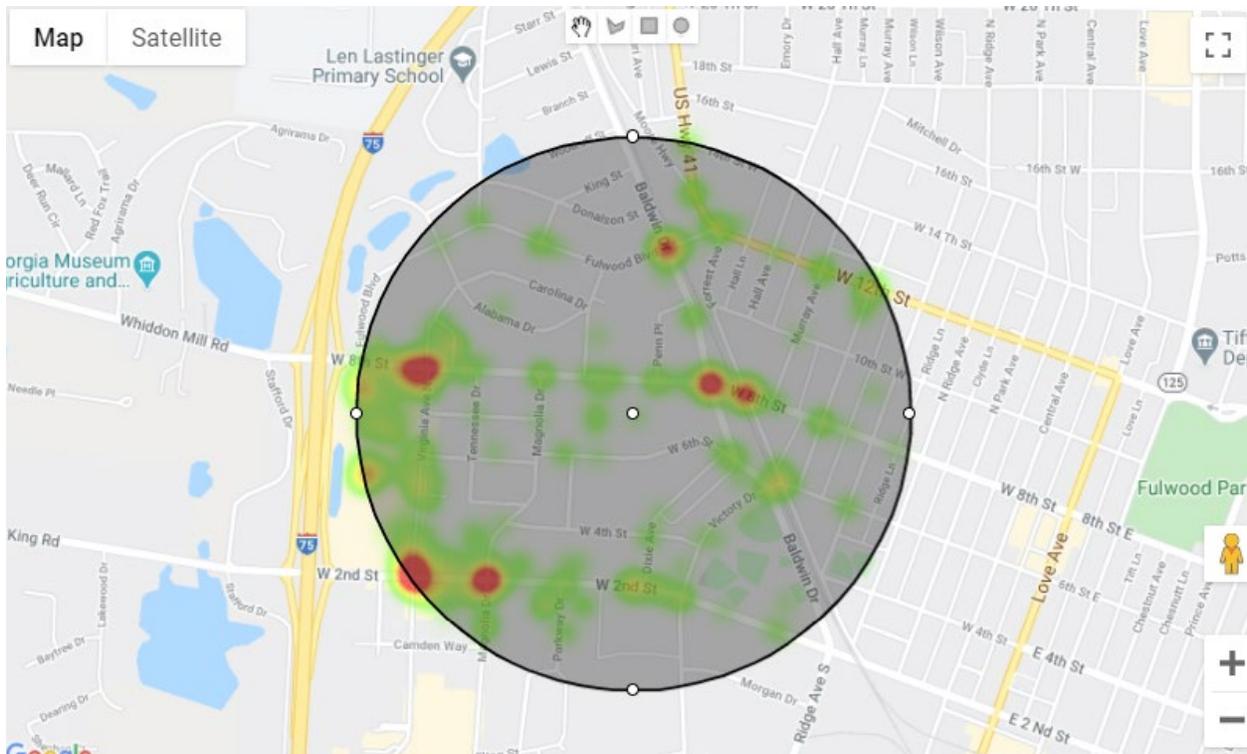


Middle Schools

There are 2 middle schools in Tift County, Eighth Street Academy and Northeast Middle School. For the drop off times, we will use 7:15-8:15 and for the pickup times we will use 2:30-3:30. Both of these schools are located in the Tifton city Limits.

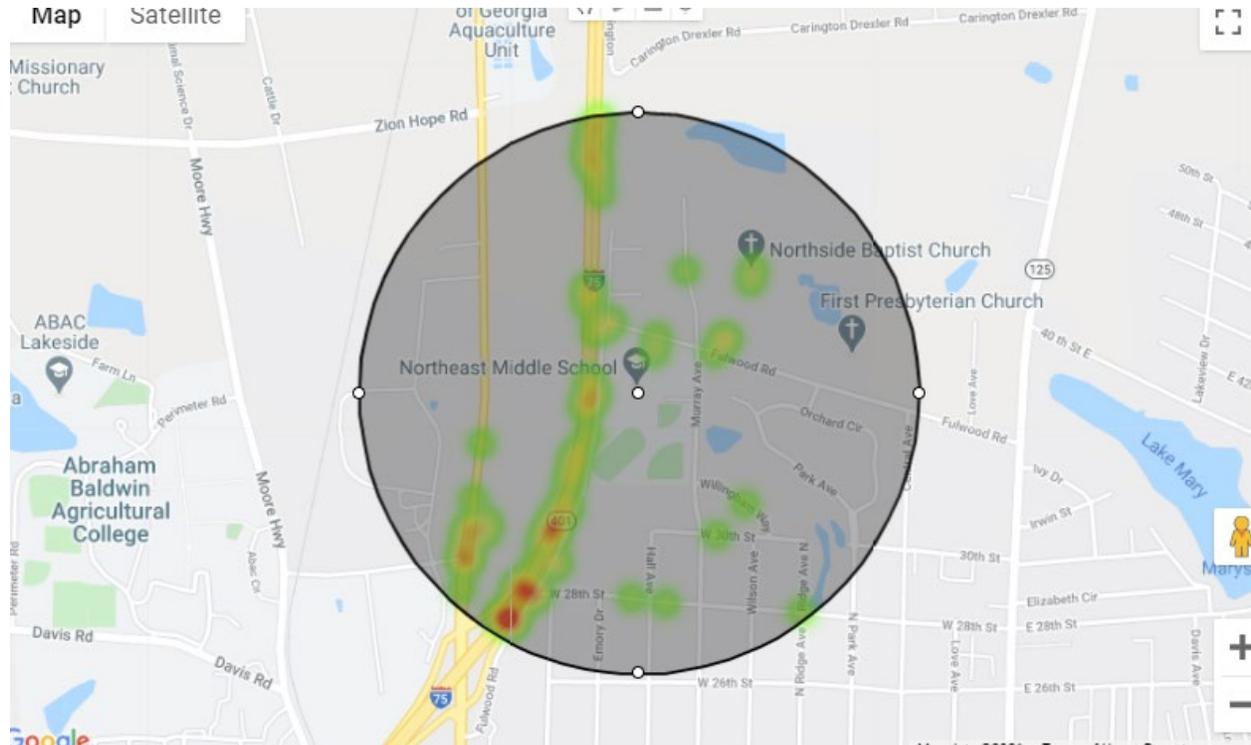
Eighth Street Middle

Eighth Street Middle is located on West 8th Street and the highest number of crashes in Tift County was reported in this school zone. There were 542 crashes including 72 crashes with injuries in the radius. During the drop-off hours, there was a total of 19 crashes which include 1 injury. During the pickup hours, there was a total of 55 crashes that included 7 injuries. Of the total number of crashes in this zone, 369 crashes occurred on 8th Street, 2nd Street, and Virginia Avenue combined. It does not seem that these crashes are a result of school related traffic because of the times at which they occur and the nearby commercial land uses on these streets.



Northeast Middle

Northeast Middle is located on Fulwood Road which is in the northern suburb of Tifton. This school zone reported a total of 76 crashes with 15 injury crashes. Over 30 crashes from this total were reported on the interstate. During the morning drop-off hours, there was a total of 2 crashes which were both rear ends. There was also 1 injury. During the pickup hours, there was a total of 4 crashes of which 2 occurred on the interstate. This school zone is free of any major incident and has signage to warn of a school zone.



Tift County High School

There is only 1 high school in Tift County, Tift County High School. The drop-off hours for Tift County High School are from 7:30-8:30 and pickup hours are from 2:30-3:30. Tift High is located on Blue Devil Way which is on the north eastern side of Tifton. The total number of crashes in this school zone was 101 collisions including 20 with injuries. During the morning hours, there was a total of 24 crashes with 6 injuries. During the pickup hours, there were 26 crashes with 2 injuries. There were more crashes from 7:30-8:30 and 2:30-3:30 than any other hours of the day. During these hours, 17 crashes were reported on Blue Devil Way which is the entrance to the school. These crashes are a direct result of school traffic. Of these 17 crashes, 13 of them involved a teenage driver. Additional warning signs and education may be necessary in order to increase awareness among these young drivers.

