

2016-2020 Annual Crash Report

Valdosta-Lowndes
Metropolitan Planning Organization

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Contents

Introduction	3
I. Safety Performance Measures	5
II. Crash Analysis	9
1. Fatalities.....	9
2. Serious Injuries.....	9
3. Serious injuries per 100 million VMT.....	9
4. Fatalities per 100 million VMT.....	10
5. Unrestrained fatalities.....	10
6. Alcohol-related fatalities.....	10
7. Speed-related fatalities.....	10
8. Motorcyclist fatalities.....	10
9. Un-helmeted motorcyclist fatalities.....	11
10. Young drivers in fatal crashes.....	11
11. Pedestrian fatalities.....	11
12. Bicyclist fatalities.....	12
13. Seat belt usage.....	12
14. Truck Crashes.....	12
15. School Bus Crashes.....	13
16. Contributing Factors.....	13
III. High-crash Locations	13
Year-by-year Trends for High-crash Locations.....	16
IV. Maps	22
Appendix: Proposed Actions for Local Communities	34
Engineering Countermeasures.....	34
Educational Countermeasures and Campaigns.....	35
Enforcement Countermeasures.....	36

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Cover photo: Valdosta Daily Times

LIST OF MAPS

Map 1. Crashes in the VLMPO area, 2016–2020.

Map 2. Fatal crashes in the VLMPO area, 2016–2020.

Map 3. Serious injury crashes in the VLMPO area, 2016–2020.

Map 4. Alcohol-related crashes in the VLMPO area, 2016–2020.

Map 5. Crashes involving motorcycles in the VLMPO area, 2016–2020.

Map 6. Crashes involving drivers under age 21 in the VLMPO area, 2016-2020.

Map 7. Crashes involving pedestrians in the VLMPO area, 2016–2020.

Map 7a. Detail: Crashes involving pedestrians in the VLMPO area, 2016–2020.

Map 8. Crashes involving bicyclists in the VLMPO area, 2016–2020.

Map 9. Crashes involving tractor/trailers and log trucks in the VLMPO area, 2016–2020.

Map 10. High-crash locations in Valdosta and Remerton.

Map 11. High-crash locations in the unincorporated VLMPO area, Dasher, Hahira, and Lake Park.

Introduction

Since 2007, the Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC), as the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Valdosta Urbanized Area (also referred to as the Valdosta-Lowndes MPO, or VLMPO), has produced an annual Crash Report analyzing motor vehicle crash trends within the MPO's Metropolitan Planning Area. The report is used to supplement the development of the MPO's Metropolitan Transportation Plan and to inform efforts to reduce crashes, injuries, and fatalities through a comprehensive range of actions.

This year's report, like the previous year's, includes data from a five-year period. The timeframe covered by this report is January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2020.

During this 2016 to 2020 timeframe, according to the data available, 18,632 crashes occurred in the Metropolitan Planning Area. There were 85 fatalities and 206 serious injuries. In terms of vehicle miles traveled, collector roads remain the most dangerous road type, with the highest rates of crashes, injuries, and fatalities; while the interstate highway has the lowest rates.

The total number of crashes that occurred in the Metropolitan Planning Area during the 2016-2020 decreased from the previous 5-year (2015-2019) timeframe by 2.16%; the number of serious injuries decreased by 11.6%; however, the number of fatalities as a result of crashes only decreased by 2 persons from the previous crash report. One factor for this decrease in crashes could be a result of the impact from the COVID-19 Pandemic that occurred in 2020. There was a period of shelter in place orders that may have impacted the way and time that people spent traveling to work, school, stores and recreational facilities. This may have resulted in less crashes for the year 2020, thus decreasing the overall crash totals for the 2016-2020 timeframe.

This report examines various characteristics of crash data to determine trends in location, time, contributing factors, crash severity, and vehicle

types, among other variables. The report also identifies the highest-frequency crash locations in the MPO area.

This report can be used to inform local governments and public agencies of the most pressing issues in the safety of the area's transportation system. It will serve as a background for identifying actions that can be taken to reduce crashes, injuries, and fatalities, from the standpoints of education, engineering, enforcement, and emergency medical services.

The report can also be used by the MPO and local jurisdictions to evaluate projects for the Vision2045 Transportation Plan and annual Transportation Improvement Program updates. It will help identify future safety-related infrastructure projects and make data available to the MPO and local jurisdictions to allow analysis of the most beneficial projects and actions based on past crashes at specific locations.

Local jurisdictions, agencies, and other groups can use this report to inform education and enforcement efforts to help reduce crashes of all types on the roadways of the MPO area. The past Crash Reports have identified particular geographic areas of concern, population groups, and crash types that are prevalent in the region. This report continues to evaluate particular areas of concern and works to determine crash causes and what can be done to improve these areas.

This report is designed to be consistent with the 2019–2021 Georgia Strategic Highway Safety

Plan¹, which outlines measures to reduce highway crashes on Georgia roads.

The Georgia Strategic Highway Safety Plan utilizes the “4-E” approach to reduce crashes in Georgia. Crash prevention and response is not the duty of just one agency, but of many different agencies with different priorities and responsibilities. Each agency must respond accordingly to crash reduction efforts in their own areas of expertise. The 4 E’s of Highway Safety – Education, Engineering, Enforcement and Emergency Medical Services – are where those many different responsible agencies come together to each do their own part in reducing crash frequency and severity.²

Education includes working with young and old people alike to educate drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, and passengers of the rules of the road and other important safety factors. Education includes diversion programs for underage drinking; general public education campaigns; safety belt and child seat inspections; and expanded and improved driver training courses and materials.

Engineering includes working with local and state departments concerned with transportation systems to improve the physical characteristics of the roadway and right-of-way. The Engineering “E” focuses on improving the infrastructure of intersections and roadway corridors.

Enforcement includes working with law enforcement agencies to educate drivers to prevent crashes, as well as improving the efficiency of response and analyzing crash sites. The Enforcement “E” includes employing checkpoints for DUI or seatbelt usage; enforcement of laws for underage and excessive drinking; targeted speed and intersection use

enforcement; and proper data collection for future analysis.

Emergency Medical Services includes all first responders to crash sites and the medical treatment victims receive immediately after a crash. The Emergency Medical Services (EMS) “E” includes efficient response by medical personnel to crash sites, rapid evacuation of victims to trauma centers, and education of the public on proper usage of safety restraints.

Each of the 4 E’s is not mutually exclusive to the various agencies described above. For example, education is spread out between all the different agency partners, including law enforcement agencies, highway departments, and EMS responders. Also, engineers may get ideas from suggestions from law enforcement agencies or schools about concerns with children walking to school or school bus drivers. Each of the various agencies has their own role to play, as well as an interconnected role with other agencies to reduce crash frequency and severity on our roadways.

It should be noted that the 2019–2021 Georgia Strategic Highway Safety Plan does not call for any substantial reduction in crashes or fatalities; indeed, the plan’s goals include a potential large increase. For example, the plan projects 2,050 traffic fatalities in the state in 2021, a 57% increase from the 1,304 fatalities that occurred in 2016. The plan’s goal with regard to fatalities is merely “To maintain the 5-year moving average traffic fatalities under the projected 2,050 (2017-2021) 5-year average by December 2021.”³ In this sense, if there are 2,049 fatalities on average per year from 2017 to 2021 (which would be a large increase), the state can consider its safety plan goals to have been achieved. In contrast, 30 other states have set

¹ 2019 –2021 Georgia Strategic Highway Safety Plan <https://www.gahighwaysafety.org/fullpanel/uploads/files/2019%202021%20shsp-compressed.pdf>

² Developing a Transportation Safety Plan, Federal Highway Safety Administration

https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/processes/tribal/planning_modules/safety/chapter02.cfm

³ 2019–2021 Georgia Strategic Highway Safety Plan, p. 9

goals to reduce the number of traffic fatalities,⁴ and one state (Washington)⁵ and several cities⁶ (including Macon, GA)⁷ have “vision zero” goals, aiming to achieve zero fatalities. The Georgia Strategic Highway Safety Plan goals are listed in Table 1.

I. Safety Performance Measures

In March 2016, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) published regulations outlining performance safety measure targets in accordance with the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) along with MAP-21.⁸ This final rule went into effect in April 2016 and required all state DOTs and MPOs to establish safety performance measure targets by August 2017 and February 2018, respectively. The safety performance measures are consistent with national highway planning goals aimed to reduce fatalities and injuries along the nation’s highways and shall examine the following based on 5-year rolling averages:

- a. Number of fatalities
- b. Rate of fatalities per 100 Million VMT
- c. Number of serious injuries
- d. Rate of serious injuries per 100 Million VMT
- e. Number of non-motorized fatalities and non-motorized serious injuries

The MPO can fulfill this federal requirement either through programming projects that support the state of Georgia’s safety performance measure targets, developing independent safety performance measure targets, or a combination of these two options. In February 2018, the MPO Policy Committee chose to support the state’s targets and has continued to do so.

As was mentioned above, the 2019–2021 Georgia Strategic Highway Safety Plan does not call for a reduction in crashes or fatalities. The state goals, along with the relevant statistics to show the MPO’s attainment of those goals, are shown in Table 1.

In order to calculate the MPO’s attainment of these performance measures, 2019 estimates (the most recent available) of daily vehicle miles traveled (VMT) were used for all of the MPO area.⁹ The MPO area consists of all of Lowndes County (including the five cities of Dasher, Hahira, Lake Park, Remerton, and Valdosta), plus small portions of Berrien, Brooks, and Lanier Counties (the portion of Lanier County also includes a small area that is within the city limits of Ray City).

To estimate VMT in those portions of Berrien, Brooks, and Lanier Counties, the total VMT for those counties was multiplied by the percentage of the total mileage of roads for each county that

⁴ Smart Growth America. “Dangerous by Design 2020.” <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/app/uploads/2020/01/DbD-2020-Report.pdf>

⁵ Washington State Department of Transportation. “Target Zero: Strategic Highway Safety Plan.” <https://www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/SHSP.htm>

⁶ Vision Zero Network. Vision Zero Cities Map. <https://visionzeronetwork.org/resources/vision-zero-cities/>

⁷ 41NBC. “Vision Zero: a plan to keep pedestrians safe.” By Chip Matthews, October 16, 2019.

<https://41nbc.com/2019/10/16/vision-zero-a-plan-to-keep-pedestrians-safe/>

⁸ National Performance Management Measures: Highway Safety Improvement Program, Federal Highway Administration <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/03/15/2016-05202/national-performance-management-measures-highway-safety-improvement-program>

⁹ Georgia Department of Transportation. Mileage by Route and Road System Report 445 for 2019. http://www.dot.ga.gov/DriveSmart/Data/Document/s/400%20Series/445/445_Report_2019.pdf (accessed 6/20/2020).

is within the MPO portion of those counties, broken down by road functional classification. For example, the estimated total 2019 VMT on minor arterial roads in all of Brooks County was 159,355; 7.15% of the total mileage of minor arterial roads in Brooks County are within the MPO area; therefore, the estimated VMT on minor arterial roads in the portion of Brooks County that lies within the VLMPO area is 12,256. Table 2 shows the VMT and road miles in the MPO area.

As of 2019, the MPO has 1.164% of the total VMT in the state. The current estimated VLMPO area population is 121,318,¹⁰ which is 1.143% of Georgia's total population as of 2019 Census Bureau estimates. These percentages are used to evaluate the MPO area's attainment of state goals. Table 1 shows the VLMPO's share of each state goal, both by VMT and by population. Number of metrics that are normally measured as integers (such as numbers of fatalities and injuries) are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Several other local plans and policies aspire to improve the safety of the transportation system in the MPO area, including the 2014 Common Community Vision (CCV). The CCV's Aspirational Goal and Transportation Objective 18 is to provide regional connectivity through an efficient, safe, accessible, and affordable multi-modal transportation system that is developed through a fully funded transportation plan that identifies multi-modal transportation options. The MPO's current Metropolitan Transportation Plan and the Joint Comprehensive Plan for Lowndes County and the cities of Dasher, Hahira, Lake Park, Remerton, and Valdosta also identify road safety as a priority item.

¹⁰ The Census Bureau's 2019 population estimate for Lowndes County is 117,406. The estimated combined population of the portions of the VLMPO

area that are in Brooks, Berrien, and Lanier Counties is 3,912, according to data supporting the VLMPO 2045 Transportation Plan.

Table 1. 2019-2021 Strategic Highway Safety Plan Goals and VLMPO Attainment Measures

Goal	Performance Measure	VLMPO share of state goal by VMT (1.164%)	VLMPO share of state goal by population (1.143%)	VLMPO 5-year total, 2016–2020	VLMPO annual average, 2016–2020
1. To maintain the 5-year moving average traffic fatalities under the projected 2,050 (2017-2021) 5-year average by December 2021.	Traffic fatalities	23.86	23.43	85	17
2. To maintain the 5-year moving average serious traffic injuries under the projected 24,229 (2017-2021) 5-year average by December 2021.	Serious traffic injuries	282.03	276.94	206	41.20
3. To reduce the 5-year moving average serious traffic injuries for every 100 million vehicle miles travelled by 18% from baseline 19.6 (2012-2016) 5-year average to 16.1 (2017-2021) 5-year average by December 2021.	Serious traffic injuries for every 100 million VMT	16.1	16.1	-	4.87
4. To maintain the 5-year moving average traffic fatalities per 100M VMT under the projected 1.51 (2017-2021) 5-year average by December 2021.	Traffic fatalities per 100 million VMT	1.51	1.51	-	1.05
5. To maintain the 5-year moving average unrestrained traffic fatalities under the projected 631 (2017-2021) 5-year average by December 2021.	Unrestrained traffic fatalities	7.34	7.21	32	6.4
6. To maintain the 5-year moving average alcohol related fatalities under the projected 658 (2017-2021) 5-year average by December 2021.	Alcohol-related fatalities	7.66	7.52	60	12
7. To maintain the 5-year moving average speed related fatalities under the projected 396 (2017-2021) 5-year average by December 2021.	Speed-related fatalities	4.61	4.53	6	1.20
8. To maintain the 5-year moving average motorcyclist fatalities under the projected 164 (2017-2021) 5-year average by December 2021.	Motorcyclist fatalities	1.91	1.87	12	2.20
9. To reduce the 5-year moving average un-helmeted motorcyclist fatalities by 50% from baseline 8 (2012-2016) 5-year average to 4 (2017-2021) 5-year average by December 2021.	Un-helmeted motorcyclist fatalities	0.05	0.05	4	0.80
10. To maintain the 5-year moving average young drivers involved in fatal crashes under the projected 543 (2017-2021) 5-year average by December 2021.	Young drivers involved in fatal crashes	6.32	6.21	9	1.8
11. To maintain the 5-year moving average pedestrian fatalities under the projected 285 (2017-2021) 5-year average by December 2021.	Pedestrian fatalities	3.32	3.26	7	1.4
12. To maintain the 5-year moving average bicyclist fatalities under the projected 31 (2017-2021) 5-year average by December 2021.	Bicyclist fatalities	0.36	0.35	2	0.40
13. Increase the 5-year moving average seatbelt usage rate from 95.8% (2012-2016) to 97.7% (2017-2021) 5-year average by December 2021.	Seat belt usage rate	97.7%	97.7%	-	82.9%

County	Road Type	Total road miles	Road miles in VLMPO area	Percent of road miles in VLMPO area	Total 2019 VMT (whole county)	2019 VMT within VLMPO area (extrapolated for Berrien, Brooks, and Lanier)	2019 VMT per road mile in VLMPO area
Berrien	Local	597.4	0.75	0.13%	131,397	171	219.95
	Total	597.4	0.75	0.13%	131,397	171	219.95
Brooks	Minor Arterial	79.01	5.65	7.15%	171,415	12,256	2,169.54
	Collector	167.86	3.41	2.03%	120,217	2,440	716.17
	Local	506.93	15.74	3.10%	107,409	3,330	211.88
	Total	753.8	24.79	3.29%	399,041	18,026	529.37
Lanier	Minor Arterial	31.62	2.79	8.81%	100,183	8,826	3,168.34
	Collector	71.84	0.41	0.57%	89,580	511	1,246.94
	Local	231.02	21.49	9.30%	45,734	4,253	197.97
	Total	334.48	24.68	7.38%	235,497	13,590	704.07
Lowndes	Interstate	31.36	31.355	100.00%	1,559,455	1,559,455	49,727.52
	Principal Arterial	61.58	61.582	100.00%	733,044	733,044	11,903.93
	Minor Arterial	103.35	103.348	100.00%	878,517	878,517	8,500.41
	Collector	229.66	229.658	100.00%	560,411	560,411	2,440.18
	Local	894.24	894.24	100.00%	635,819	635,819	711.02
	Total	1,320.18	1320.18	100.00%	4,367,246	4,367,246	3,308.07
MPO Area	Total	–	1370.4	–	–	4,399,033.	4,761.46

II. Crash Analysis

The following sections will examine crash trends in the MPO area, organized in the same order as the Strategic Highway Safety Plan goals and metrics listed in Table 1, followed by some additional factors. Crash data were accessed through the Georgia Electronic Accident Reporting System (GEARS) Portal¹¹. Map 1 shows all crashes in the MPO area from 1/1/2016 to 12/31/2020.

1. Fatalities

Between Jan. 1, 2016 and Dec. 31, 2020, there were 85 fatal crashes in the MPO area, causing a total of 91 deaths. This is an average of 17 road deaths per year, or approximately one fatality every 3 weeks. Most of the fatal crashes caused only one fatality; only six crashes (7%) resulted in two fatalities, and no single crash resulted in more than two fatalities during the 2016–2020 time period.

13 percent of fatal crashes involved young drivers (under age 21). 10 percent of fatalities were alcohol-related, according to the available data.

The road class with the highest rate of fatal crashes per vehicle mile traveled was the collector road, although Interstate highways had the highest fatality rate per road mile (see Table 3). Locations of fatal crashes are shown on Map 2.

Road Type	Fatal crashes per road mile
Local	0.01
Collector	0.07
Arterial	0.10
Interstate	0.55

2. Serious Injuries

From 2016 to 2020, in the MPO area, there were 206 crashes in which the injury was recorded as “Suspected Serious Injury,” with a total of 391 people seriously injured. Most of these crashes (90%) resulted in only one person being seriously injured. One crash resulted in 28 serious injuries; this crash was due to a tractor trailer crashing into a school bus on I-75. Four crashes resulted in six serious injuries, 5 crashes resulted in 5 serious injuries, 13 crashes resulted in four serious injuries, 22 crashes resulted in 3 serious injuries and 54 crashes resulted in two serious injuries.

Similarly, to fatalities, collector roads have the highest rate of serious injury crashes per vehicle mile traveled, although interstate highways have the highest rate per road mile (see Table 4). The locations of serious injury crashes are shown on Map 3.

Road Type	Serious injury crashes per road mile
Local	0.09
Collector	0.33
Arterial	0.45
Interstate	2.49

3. Serious injuries per 100 million VMT

As was mentioned above, according to the data available, there were 391 serious injuries from 1/1/2016 to 12/31/2020. As is shown in Table 2, the total daily Vehicle Miles Traveled in the MPO area in 2019 (the most recent year for which data are available) is estimated at 4,399,033. To obtain the annual figure, total daily VMT is multiplied by 365. The five-year total number of

¹¹ Georgia Electronic Accident Reporting System (GEARS). www.gearsportal.com

serious injuries is divided by 5 to obtain the annual average. Therefore:

$$\frac{391 / 5}{(4,399,033 * 365) / 100,000,000} = 4.87$$

The rate of serious injuries per 100 million VMT in the MPO area from 1/1/2016 to 12/31/2020 is 4.87.

4. Fatalities per 100 million VMT

With a total of 87 fatalities in the five-year period examined, and an average of 17.4 per year, the rate per 100 million VMT can be calculated as follows:

$$\frac{85 / 5}{(4,399,033 * 365) / 100,000,000} = 1.05$$

Therefore, the fatality rate per 100 million VMT in the MPO area is 1.08.

5. Unrestrained fatalities

Of the 87 fatalities that occurred in the MPO area from 2016 to 2020, 32 (37%) of the persons killed were recorded as not being properly restrained by seat belts. This statistic highlights the instrumental role seat belts play in saving lives.

Overall, from 2016 to 2020, of the 18,632 crashes that occurred in the VLMPO area, 2,917 (16%) involved occupants who were not properly restrained, according to the data available. Of the 391 serious injuries that occurred during this timeframe, 140 (36%) of those injured were not using proper restraints.¹²

6. Alcohol-related fatalities

Of the 18,632 crashes included in the database for this report, 478 (2.6%) were recorded as involving driving under the influence (DUI, i.e.,

the influence of alcohol or other drugs). This included 6 fatalities and 13 serious injuries.

The locations of DUI crashes in the MPO area are shown on Map 4. Almost all of the DUI crashes resulting in death or serious injury occurred in the more rural areas. This may be a function of higher travel speeds on rural roads compared to urban roads.

7. Speed-related fatalities

According to the data available, the contributing factors of “exceeding the speed limit”, “racing”, or “too fast for conditions” were implicated in eight fatal crashes in the MPO area from 2016 to 2020. Speed was a factor in a total of 492 crashes, causing 27 serious injuries.

8. Motorcyclist fatalities

From 2016 to 2020, there were 223 crashes involving motorcyclists in the MPO area, resulting in 12 motorcyclist fatalities and 19 serious injuries. Therefore, 13.8% of all those killed in traffic crashes in the MPO area during that time frame were motorcyclists.

The locations of motorcycle crashes are shown on Map 5. Geographically, motorcycle crashes tended to be concentrated within the urban area of Valdosta, but a few notable fatalities and serious injuries occurred in rural areas in southern Lowndes County.

In the 12 fatal crashes, driving under the influence was recorded as a factor in only one fatality. “Driver lost control” was recorded as a contributing factor in 4 fatalities, and “failed to yield” was recorded as a factor in 3 fatalities. Studies have shown that in motorcycle crashes involving a perception failure or a decision failure, more crashes are caused by the driver of another vehicle than by the motorcyclist. At the national level, another motorist failing to yield to

¹² In addition to the category of “no safety equipment used,” these crashes also include “Booster Seat (Improperly Used)”, Child Restraint

System (Improperly Used)”, “Lap Belt Only Used”, and “Shoulder Belt Only Used”.

a motorcycle when turning left accounts for about 1 in every 5 motorcyclist fatalities.¹³ In the MPO area during the time frame examined, 3 of the motorcyclist fatalities (27%) involved a left-turning car or truck driver failing to yield to an oncoming motorcyclist, echoing these national statistics. This confirms the need for more educational and awareness campaigns aimed at car and truck drivers, such as “Look Twice – Save a Life” bumper stickers¹⁴ and the USDOT’s “Share The Road” initiative.¹⁵

9. Un-helmeted motorcyclist fatalities

3 out of the 12 motorcyclists (27%) who died in the MPO area from 2016 to 2020 were recorded as not wearing a helmet. This included one person driving a dirt bike that was not legal for road use.

Helmets were reported as being used by the motorcyclists in 156 of the 225 crashes during this time period, meaning that 31% of motorcyclists involved in crashes were presumably un-helmeted.

Future fatalities of this kind may be prevented through educational campaigns, including statistics on the benefits of helmet use (for example, helmets are estimated to reduce the risk of head injury by 69% and the risk of death by 42%¹⁶) and increased enforcement of Georgia’s helmet law (Sec. 40-6-315).

10. Young drivers in fatal crashes

From 2016 to 2020 in the MPO area, 13 out of 87 fatalities (15%) and 66 serious injuries (31.2% of the total) involved drivers under the age of 21.

The locations of crashes involving drivers under 21 are shown on Map 6. Overall, 4,800 of the

total 18,632 crashes (25.8%) involved drivers under 21.

Furthermore, 1,382 crashes (7.42% of the total) involved drivers under age 18. These resulted in 4 fatalities (4.6% of the total) and 22 serious injuries. This confirms the need for better educational efforts and other safety measures for young drivers. The ages of young drivers involved in crashes in the MPO area from 2016 to 2020 are shown in Figure 1 below.

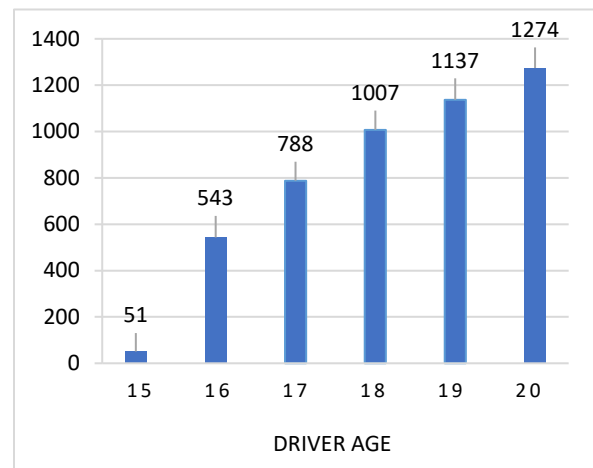


Figure 1. Crashes involving young drivers, 2016–2020

11. Pedestrian fatalities

From 2016 to 2020, there were 139 incidents in which motor vehicle drivers struck pedestrians, resulting in 7 fatalities and 22 serious injuries. Map 7 shows the location of crashes in which drivers hit pedestrians. Four of the fatalities occurred on US Route 84 and three fatalities occurred on Interstate 75. Most non-fatal crashes involving pedestrians occurred in the more urban areas of Valdosta.

¹³ NHTSA. “Traffic Safety Facts: 2017 Data.” <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812785>

¹⁴ Examples of educational materials

¹⁵ U.S. Department of Transportation. “Motorcycle Safety: Share The Road.”

<https://www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov/get-materials/motorcycle-safety/share-road> (accessed 7/6/2021).

¹⁶ Advocates for Highway & Auto Safety. “Motorcycle Helmets.” <https://saferoads.org/issues/motorcycle-helmets/> (accessed 6/10/2019).

Since this report focuses on crashes on public roads, these statistics do not include pedestrians hit by trains. However, at least 2 pedestrians have been killed in collisions with trains in the MPO area between 2016 and 2020.

Approximately 70% of crashes involving pedestrians occurred in the central urban areas of Valdosta and Remerton. Map 7a presents a more detailed view of the crashes within these areas. Notable corridors along which large numbers of pedestrians were hit include: US Route 84 (14 crashes), Norman Drive (6 crashes), Bemiss Road (5 crashes), Baytree Road (4 crashes), North Ashley Street (7 crashes), and Fry Street (4 crashes). There are also small clusters of pedestrian crashes around the intersection of Gornito Rd. and St. Augustine Rd. (4 crashes) and around exit 5 on I-75 (4 crashes resulting in 2 fatalities and 2 serious injuries).

12. Bicyclist fatalities

Between 2016 and 2020 there was two bicyclist fatalities in the MPO area. During this time period, motor vehicle drivers hit a total of 73 bicyclists in the MPO area. Four of the crashes resulted in serious injuries. Approximately 90% of these crashes occurred in the central urban area of Valdosta and Remerton. Corridors on which notable numbers of bicycle crashes occurred were St. Augustine Road (4 crashes), Baytree Road (7 crashes), and River Street (4 crashes). The locations of crashes involving bicyclists are shown on Map 8.

It should be noted that this metric includes only crashes that involved both a bicyclist and a motor vehicle operator. Crashes involving only bicyclists are not reported, nor are crashes involving a collision of a bicyclist with a pedestrian.

13. Seat belt usage

The MPO has not directly collected data on the percentage of vehicle drivers or occupants using seatbelts. However, data on seatbelt use in crashes are available from the GEARS database.

The rates of drivers and passengers involved in crashes who were wearing seat belts correctly can be used to estimate seat belt usage rates in the Metropolitan Planning Area.

From 2016 to 2020, of the 18,632 crashes that occurred in the MPO area, 2,387 (12.8%) involved occupants who were not properly restrained, according to the data available. Thus, the rate of seat belt use for vehicle occupants involved in crashes can be estimated at 87.2%.

Seat belt usage rates varied somewhat by road type. 8.2% of vehicle occupants involved in crashes on the Interstate highway were improperly restrained.

With these statistics, the benefits of proper seat belt use are clear and it is recommended that belt usage be increased through a combination of educational campaigns and enforcement of existing laws.

14. Truck Crashes

In this section, we examine crashes involving tractor/trailers and log trucks. Map 9 shows the locations of these crashes. Although log trucks anecdotally have a significant traffic impact in the area, the data available show only 8 crashes involving log trucks from 2016 to 2020, resulting in no serious injuries or fatalities.

From 1/1/2016 to 12/31/2020, there were 792 crashes involving tractor/trailers in the VLMPD area, resulting in 17 fatalities (20% of all fatalities) and 27 serious injuries. 265 of these crashes (33.4%), 9 of the fatalities (52.9%), and 9 of the serious injuries (33.3%) were on Interstate 75.

42 crashes involving tractor/trailers and one crash involving a log truck occurred in Downtown Valdosta during this time frame, resulting in no serious injuries or deaths.

81 crashes involving tractor/trailers occurred on US Route 84; of these, 50 occurred on the section running from Downtown Valdosta west to the Brooks County boundary.

Furthermore, 260 crashes involving tractor/trailers occurred within half a mile of an exit on Interstate 75. The number of tractor/trailer crashes within half a mile of each exit is shown in Figure 2.

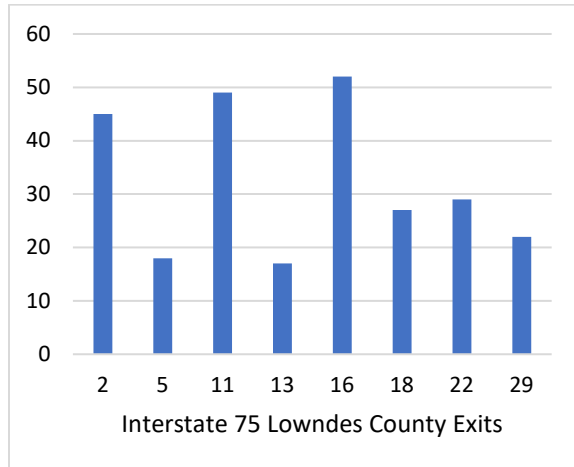


Figure 2. Tractor/trailer crashes within 1/2 mile of each I-75 exit in the MPO area

15. School Bus Crashes

From 1/1/2016 to 12/31/2020, there were 124 crashes involving school vehicles in the MPO area, resulting in no fatalities and one serious injury. The serious injury occurred in May 2017 when a school bus collided with a bicyclist outside of Lowndes High School. No particular geographic trends were identified with regard to crashes involving school buses. A separate report, published by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission in April 2020, contained an analysis of crashes in the areas surrounding each of the schools in Lowndes County.¹⁷

16. Contributing Factors

The single most common contributing factor for crashes in the MPO area from 2016 to 2020 was “Following too Close” (27% of crashes).

Educational campaigns to educate drivers to

increase following distance could result in a considerable reduction in crashes.

“Failed to Yield” was a contributing factor in approximately 17% of crashes. Other major contributing factors were “Changed Lanes Improperly” (5%), “Improper Backing” (5%), and “Disregard Stop Sign/Signal” (4%).

III. High-crash Locations

To identify high-crash locations, a geographic analysis was conducted in which a 250-foot radius was drawn around every intersection point in the VLMPO area. The number of crashes within each 250-foot radius was then calculated. All intersections with 20 or more total crashes occurring within a 250-foot radius between 1/1/2016 and 12/31/2020 were identified (147 intersections total). The rate of crashes relative to the Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT)¹⁸ of the road with the highest ADT in each intersection was then calculated. The 20 intersections with the highest rate of crashes relative to ADT were then identified for two areas: (1) the Cities of Valdosta and Remerton (which are contiguous and almost entirely urbanized) and (2) the unincorporated areas of the VLMPO area and the Cities of Dasher, Hahira, and Lake Park. These two areas were analyzed separately in order to identify high-crash locations in the predominantly urban and predominantly rural areas of the VLMPO area.

The top 20 high-crash locations in the Cities of Valdosta and Remerton are shown in Table 6 and on Map 10. The top 20 high-crash locations in the unincorporated areas of the VLMPO area and the Cities of Hahira, and Lake Park are shown in Table 7 and on Map 11. (None of the top 20 high-crash locations are in Berrien, Brooks, or Lanier Counties or in the Cities of Dasher or Ray City.)

¹⁷ This report is available on the SGRC website at: <https://www.sgrc.us/documents/bicycle/coreyfile-Lowndes%20School%20Crash%20Report%20Final.pdf>

¹⁸ AADT data were acquired from the Georgia Department of Transportation at <http://www.dot.ga.gov/DS/Data#tab-4>.

Table 7. High-crash Locations in the Cities of Valdosta and Remerton, 2016–2020.

Location	Entering AADT	Total Crashes	Fatalities	Serious Injuries	Crashes per 1,000,000 AADT	Rank, 2016-2020	Rank, 2015-2019	Planned / Completed Improvements
N Valdosta Rd @ Country Club Dr	40550	207	0	0	4.18	1	2 ↑	Added travel lanes
N St Augustine Rd @ Norman Dr	30750	177	0	2	2.61	2	1	Intersection improvements; intersection has been identified in the TST* study and is on the TIA* list
N St Augustine Rd @ Gornto Rd	28750	161	0	2	3.07	3	3	Intersection improvements; has been identified in the TST study and is on the TIA list
Inner Perimeter Rd @ Bemiss Rd	22600	182	0	0	2.21	4	4	Intersection is identified in the TST study
Northside Dr @ Ashley St	15850	162	0	2	2.8	5	5	Planned for upgrades under GDOT PI 0010116
Bemiss Rd @ Northside Dr	15830	164	0	0	2.84	6	7 ↑	Intersection is identified in the TST study
Inner Perimeter Rd @ N Oak St Ext	21550	151	0	1	3.84	7	6 ↓	Added travel lanes; Intersection is identified in the TST study
Baytree Rd @ Jerry Jones Dr / Melody Ln	15400	126	0	0	2.8	8	9 ↑	Intersection improvements; will be impacted by GDOT PI# 0014134
N Valdosta Rd @ Oak St Ext	17075	125	0	1	2.01	9	8 ↓	Intersection improvements
W Hill Ave @ Norman Dr	28200	121	0	0	2.35	10	10	Intersection is identified in the TST study
Baytree Rd @ Gornto Rd	14933	98	0	0	2.4	11	12 ↑	Intersection improvements
Baytree Rd @ Norman Dr	17000	106	0	0	3.42	12	11 ↓	Intersection improvements
W Hill Ave @ N St Augustine Rd	17025	105	1	0	1.69	13	14 ↑	
Smithbriar St @ N Patterson St / N Ashley St	13000	81	0	1	1.71	14	17 ↑	Added travel lanes
Inner Perimeter Rd @ Lake Laurie Dr / Brookfield Rd	24650	106	0	0	4.71	15	15	Intersection identified in the TST study
Jerry Jones Dr @ Gornto Rd	24695	96	0	2	2.13	16	13 ↓	Added travel lanes
N St Augustine Rd @ Ellis Dr / Clubhouse Dr	24500	105	0	0	4.18	17	16 ↓	
Country Club Dr @ Jerry Jones Dr / Eager Rd	19915	83	0	0	2.28	18	20 ↑	Added travel lanes; will be impacted by GDOT PI# 0014134
N St Augustine Rd @ Twin St	27500	74	0	0	2.95	19	19	
N Valdosta Rd @ Inner Perimeter Rd	27033	92	0	0	1.77	20	18 ↓	

*TST – Traffic Signal Timing Study

*TIA – Transportation Investment Act

Table 8. High-crash Locations in unincorporated areas, Hahira, and Lake Park, 2016-2020.

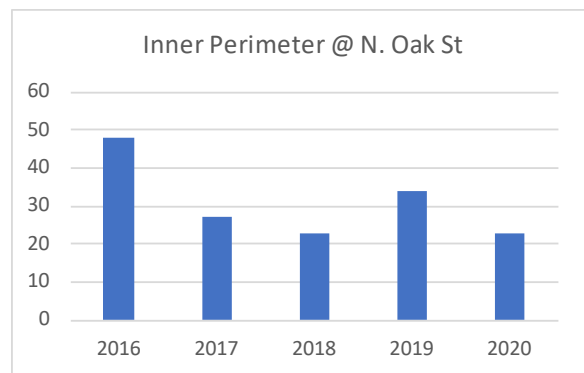
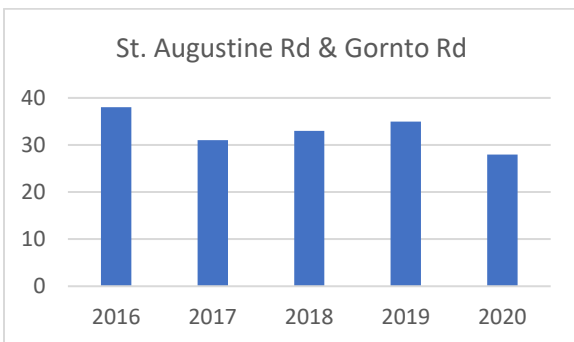
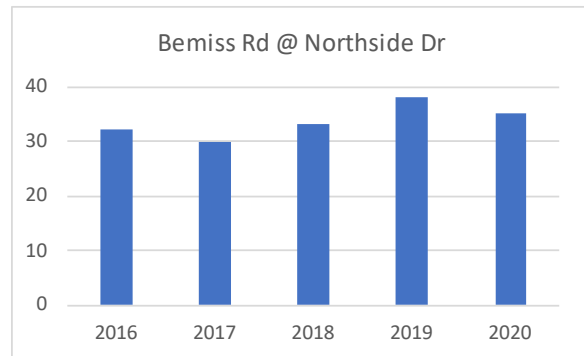
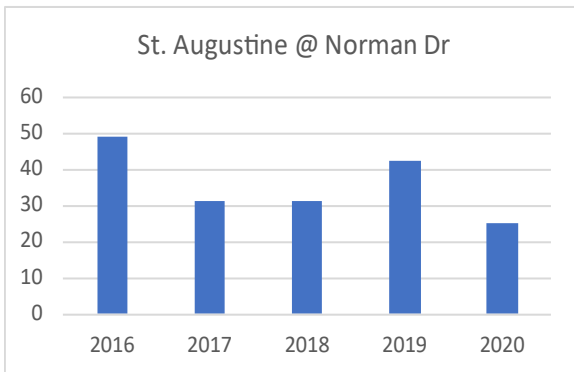
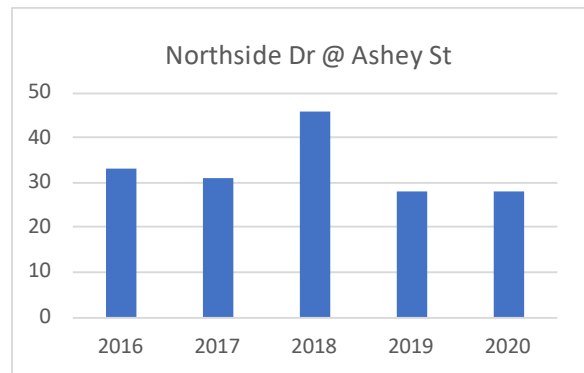
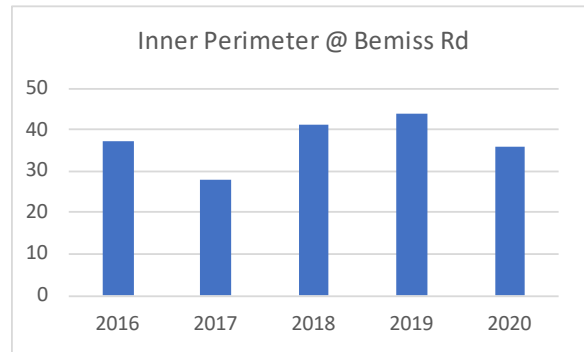
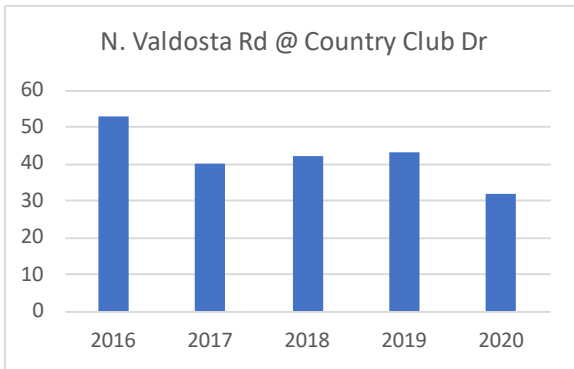
Location	Entering AADT	Total Crashes	Fatalities	Serious Injuries	Crashes per 1,000,000 AADT	Rank, 2016-2020	Rank, 2015-2019	Planned / Completed Improvements
N Valdosta Rd @ Val Del Rd / Old US 41 N	29970	98	0	0	1.79	1	1	Intersection improvements
Inner Perimeter Rd @ US Hwy 41 S	5450	92	1	4	9.88	2	11 ↑	
Bemiss Rd @ Mt Zion Church Rd	14800	78	0	0	2.89	3	2 ↓	
Shiloh Rd @ I-75 SB Ramp	6720	60	0	1	8.26	4	6 ↑	Interchange improvements
N Valdosta Rd @ Foxborough Ave / Old US 41 N	10050	61	0	0	3.33	5	3 ↓	Added travel lanes, TIA* list
N Valdosta Rd @ Coleman Rd N	10050	48	0	0	2.62	6	5 ↓	Interchange improvements
Lakes Blvd @ Millstore Rd	5250	36	0	0	3.76	7	4 ↑	Will be impacted by GDOT PI# 0013987 (interchange improvements)
N Valdosta Rd @ Flythe Rd / I-75 NB Ramp	10050	47	0	1	2.56	8	7 ↓	Interchange improvements made, further improvements listed on TIA list
Main St @ Church St (Hahira)	2625	30	0	0	6.26	9	8 ↓	Intersection Improvements
GA Hwy 122 W @ I-75 NB Ramp (Hahira)	3545	32	0	0	4.95	10	9 ↓	Interchange improvements made
Madison Hwy @ Carroll Dr	4515	30	0	0	3.64	11	10 ↓	Will be impacted by GDOT P# 0010297 (interchange improvements)
Bemiss Rd @ Davidson Rd	7900	30	0	2	2.08	12	13 ↑	Added Travel Lanes
Shiloh Rd @ Val Tech Rd	1610	20	0	0	6.81	13	12 ↓	Interchange improvements made at Exit 22
Madison Hwy @ I-75 SB Ramp	3455	27	0	0	4.28	14	14	Interchange Project GDOT PI# 0010297 (interchange improvements)
W Marion Ave @ Lakes Blvd	5250	25	0	1	2.61	15	15	
Madison Hwy @ I-75 NB Ramp	4480	25	0	0	3.06	16	16	Interchange Project GDOT PI# 0010297 (interchange improvements)
Bemiss Rd @ Cherry Creek Church Rd	14800	22	0	0	0.81	17	17	
Val Del Rd @ Bethany Rd	2295	20	0	1	4.78	18	19 ↑	Intersection Improvements
Madison Hwy @ Clyattville Lake Park Rd	2480	30	0	0	6.63	19	20 ↑	Project on TIA list for Clyattville Road
Coleman Rd N @ Flythe Rd	N/A	5	0	0	N/A	20	18 ↓	

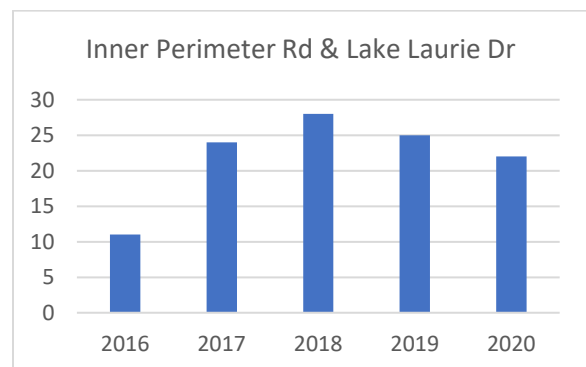
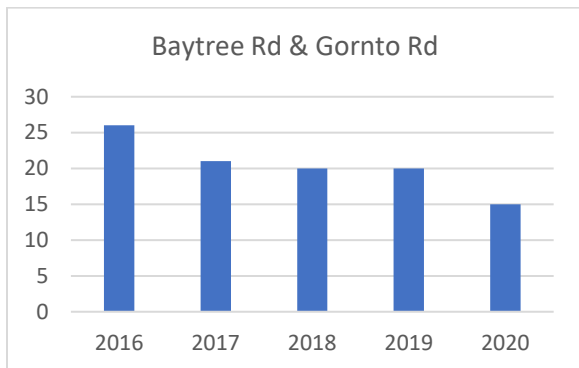
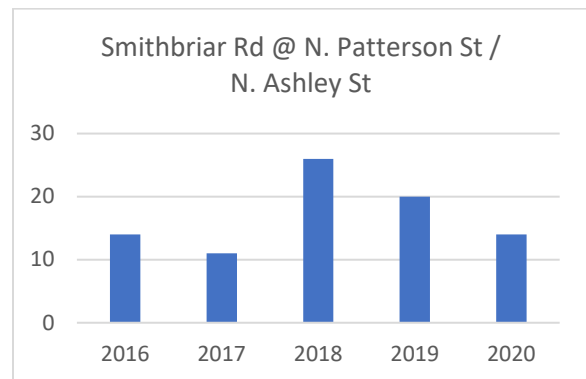
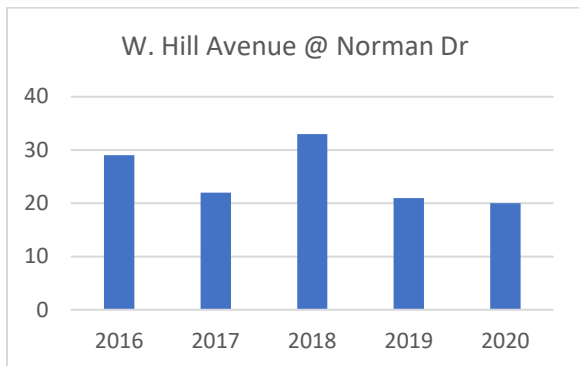
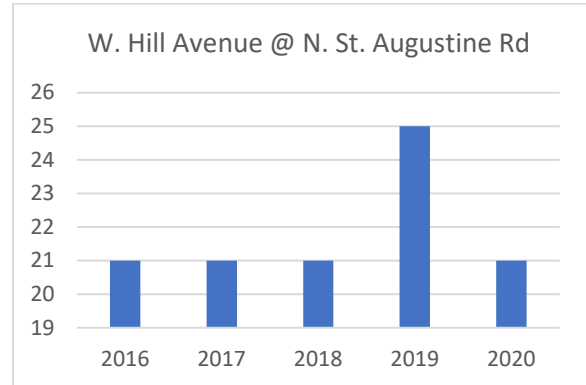
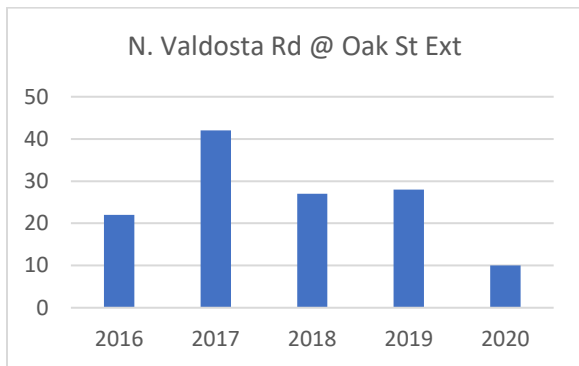
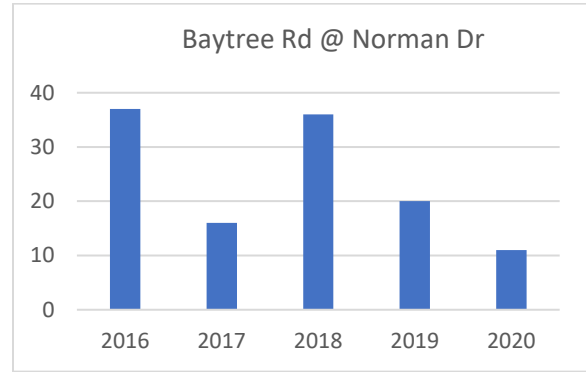
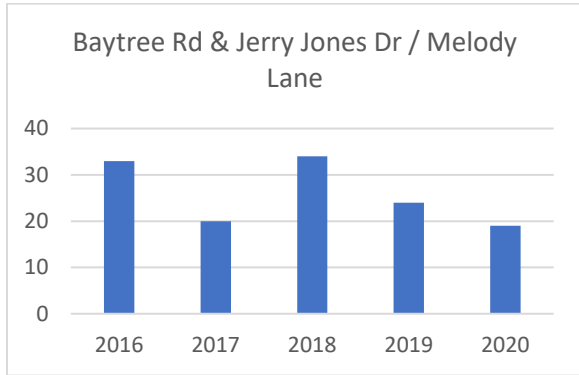
*TIA – Transportation Investment Act

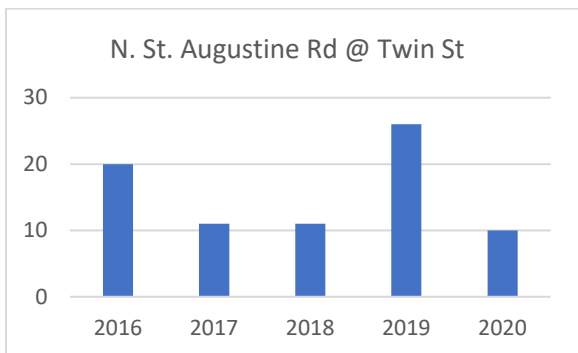
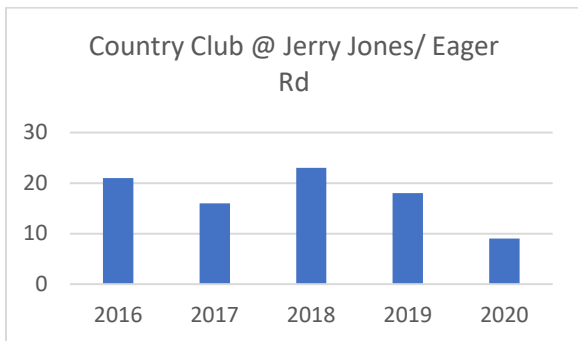
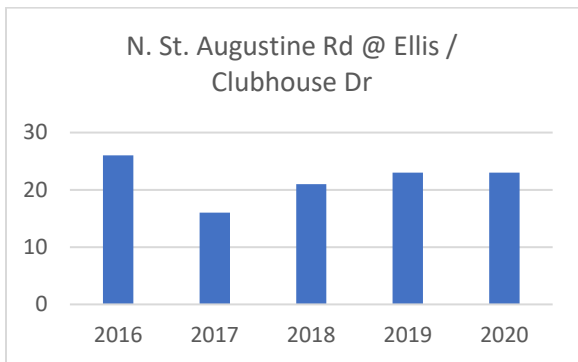
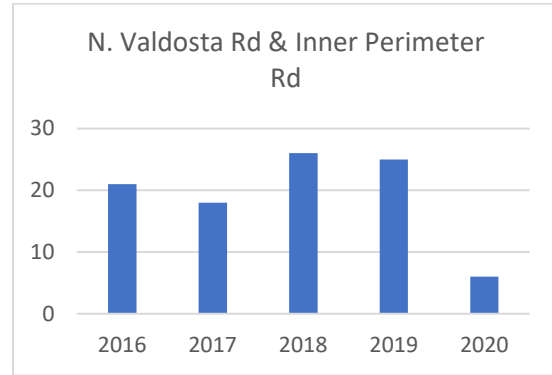
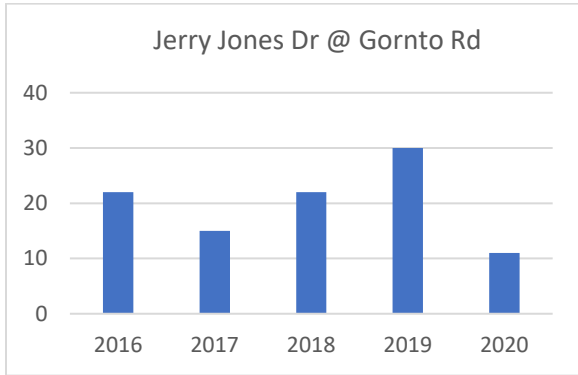
Year-by-year Trends for High-crash Locations

The charts in this section show the year-by-year crash trends for the high-crash intersections that have been identified. The charts are in ranked order according to Tables 7 and 8.

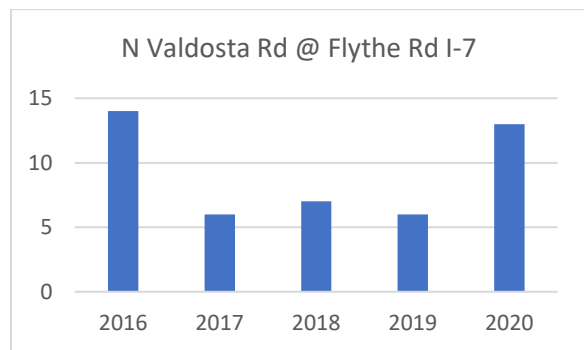
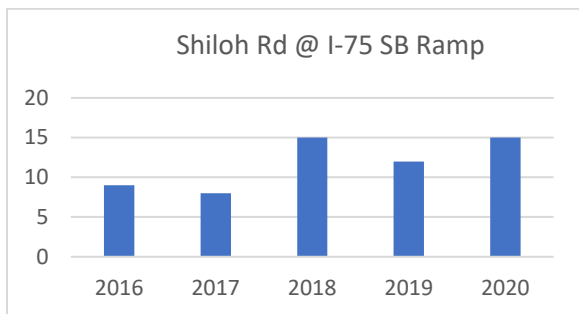
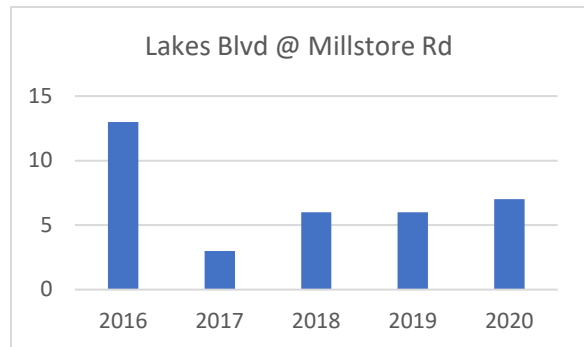
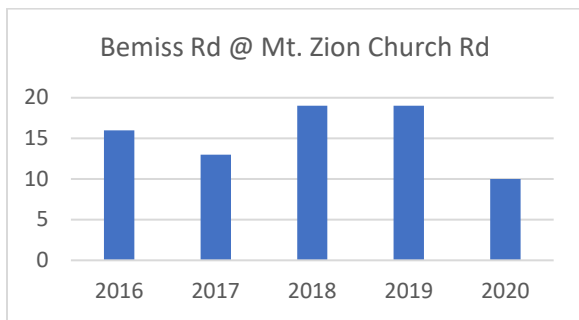
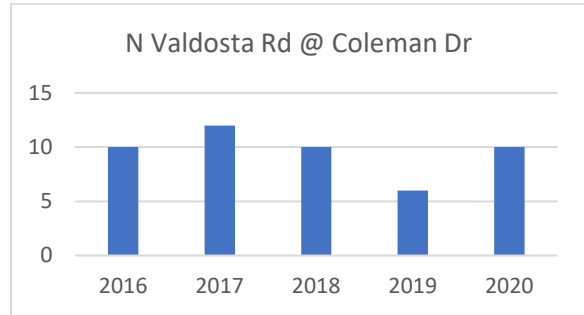
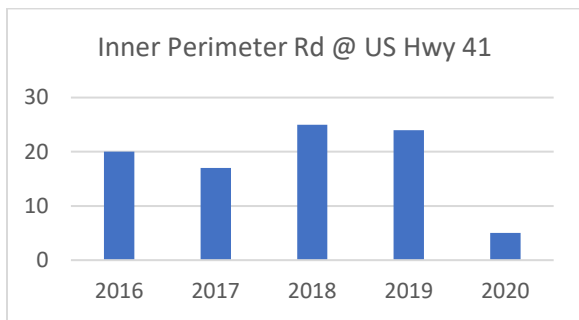
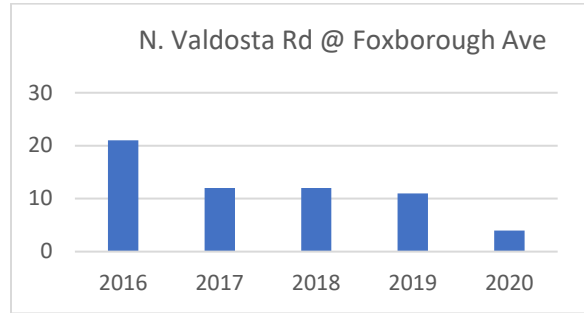
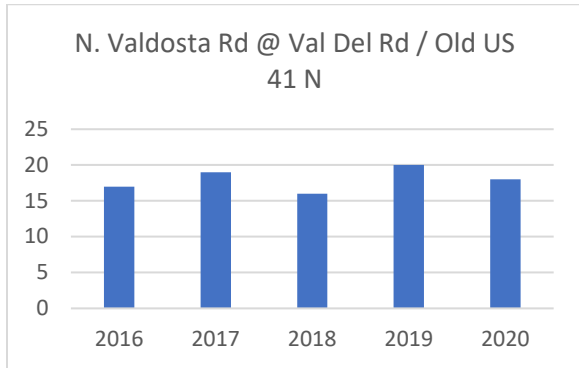
Valdosta/Remerton

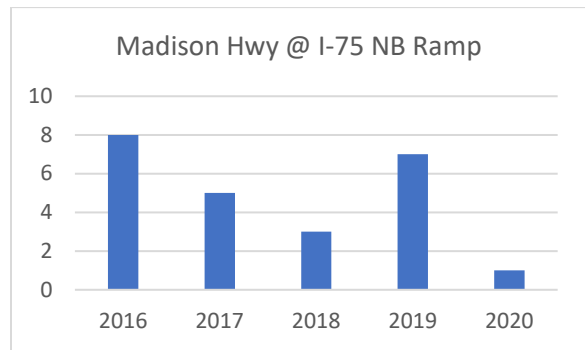
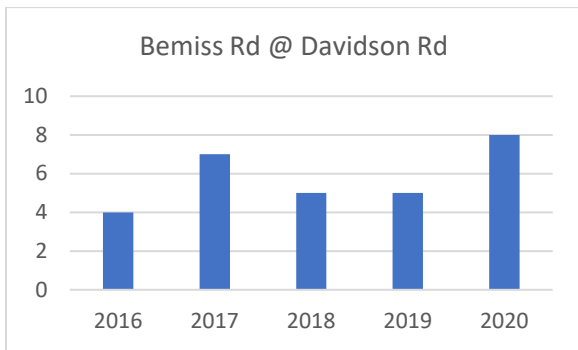
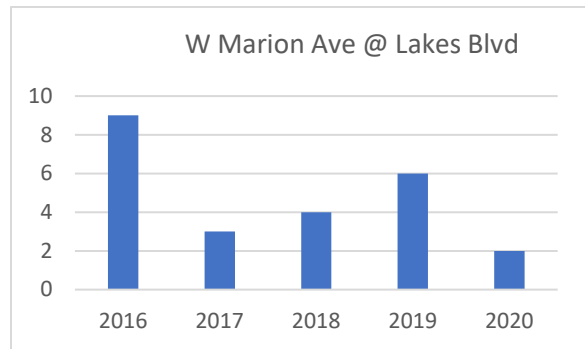
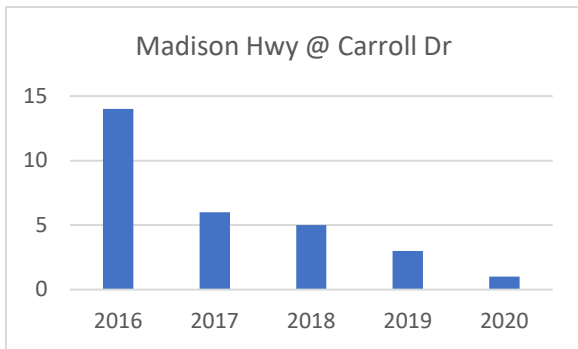
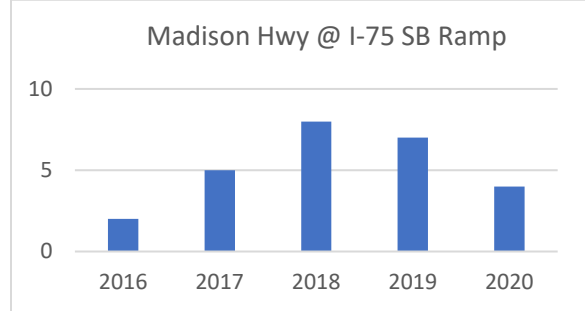
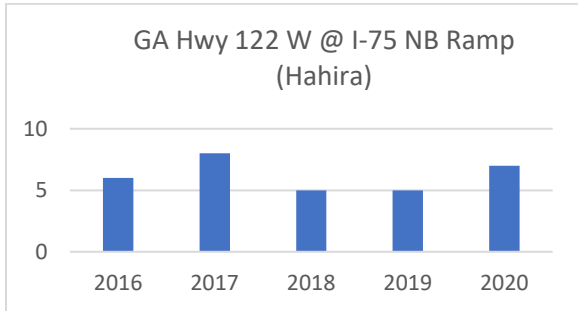
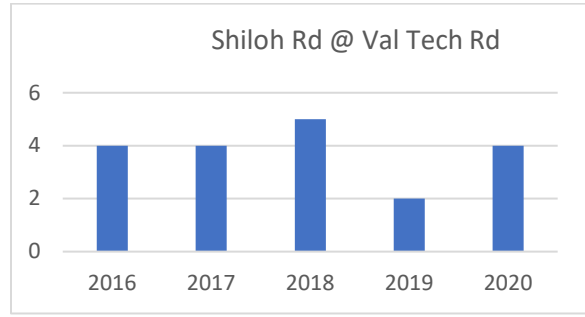
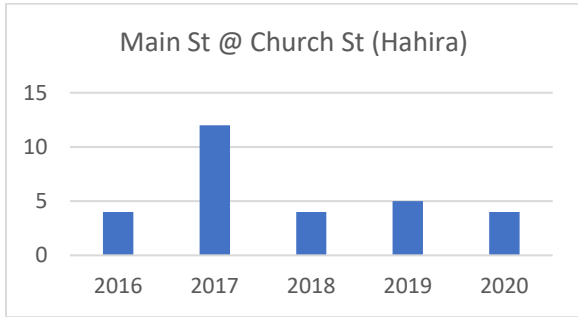


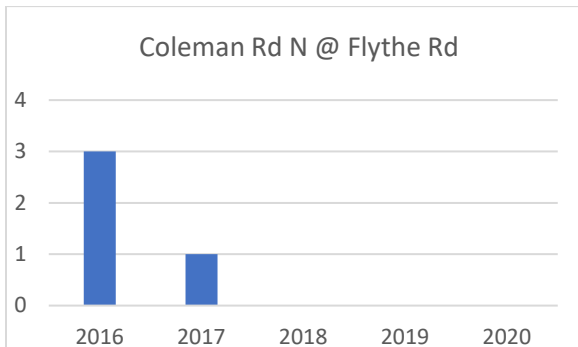
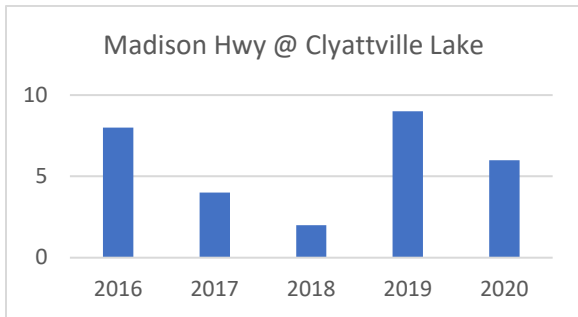
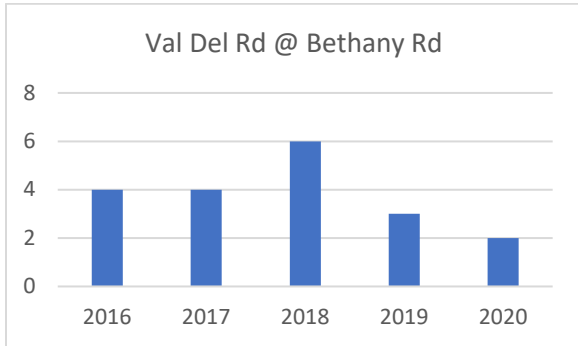
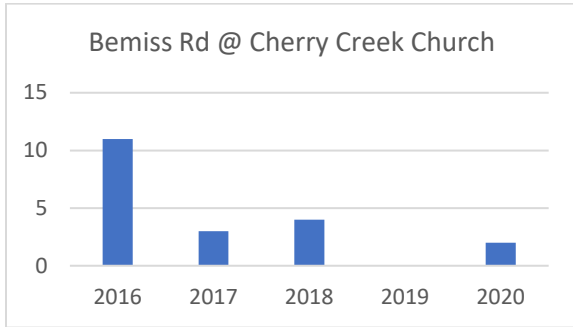




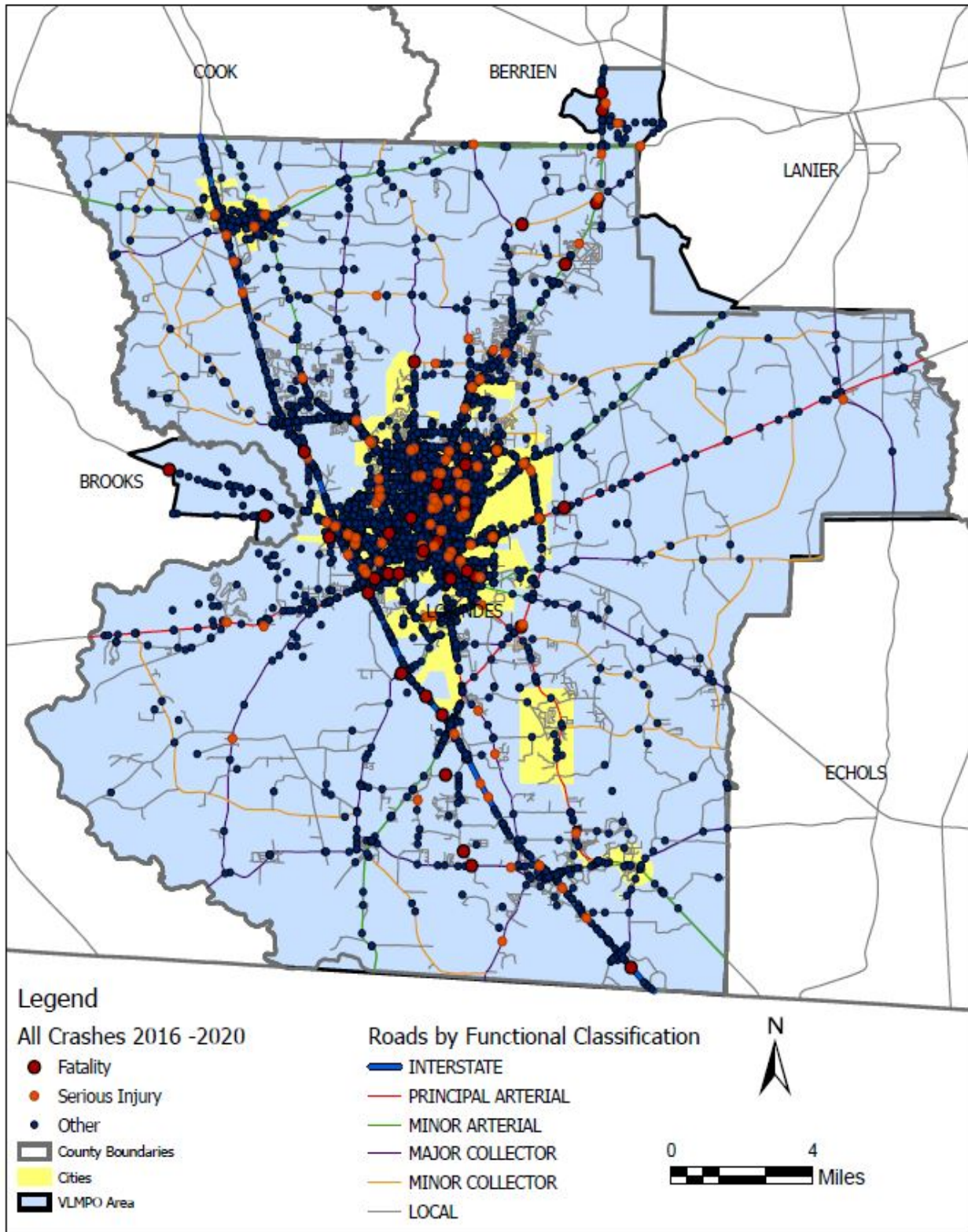
**Unincorporated Lowndes County /
Hahira/Lake City**



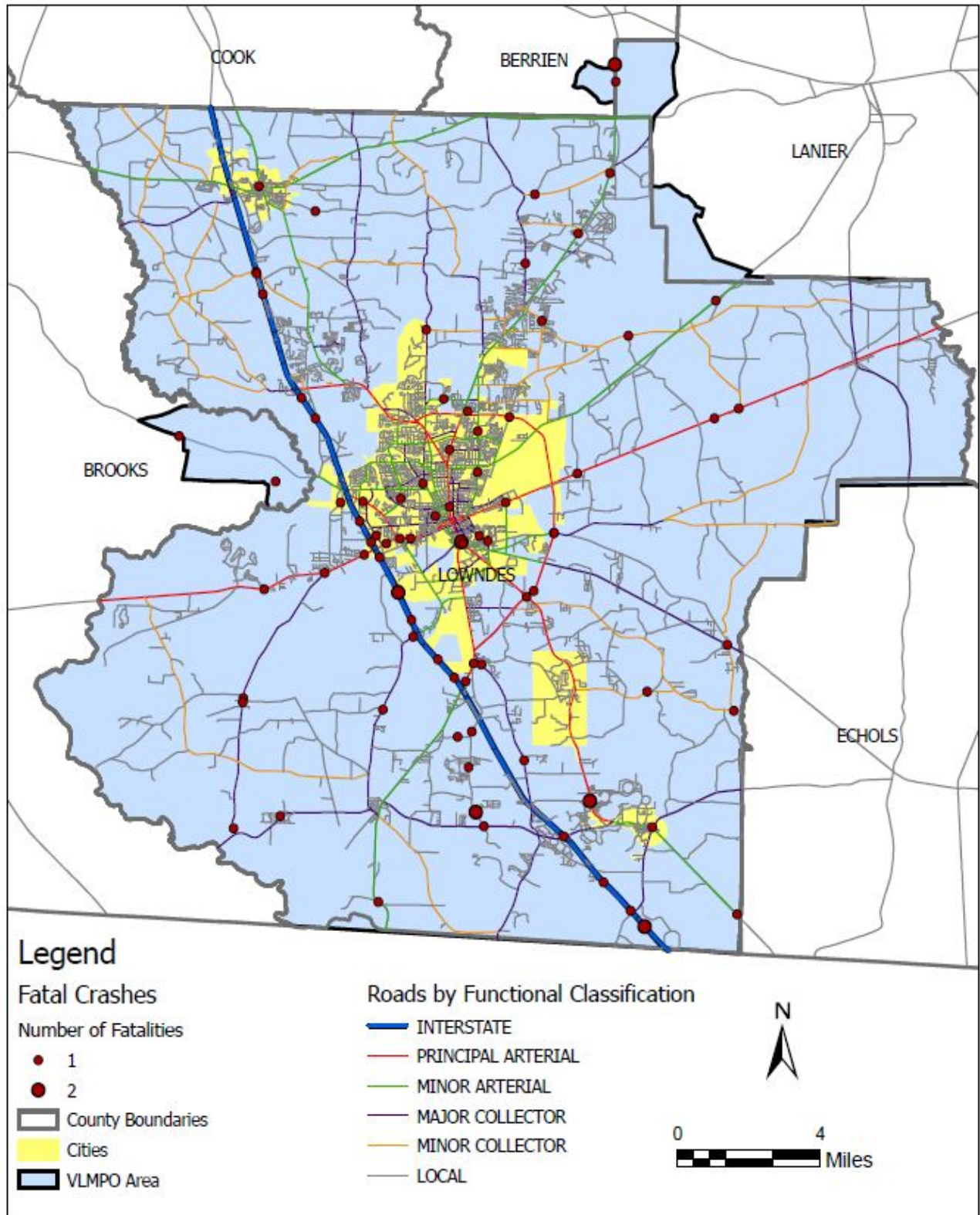




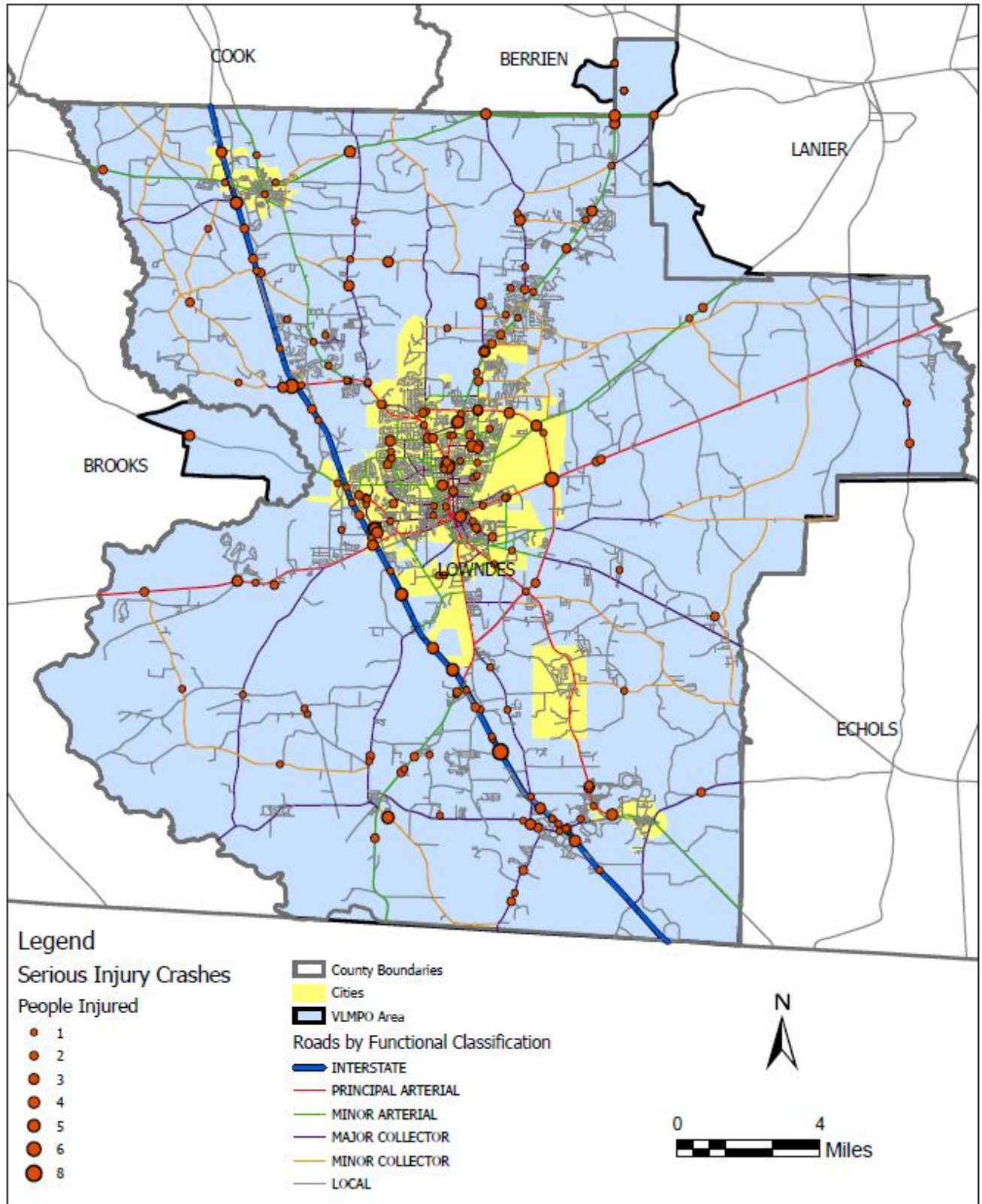
IV. Maps



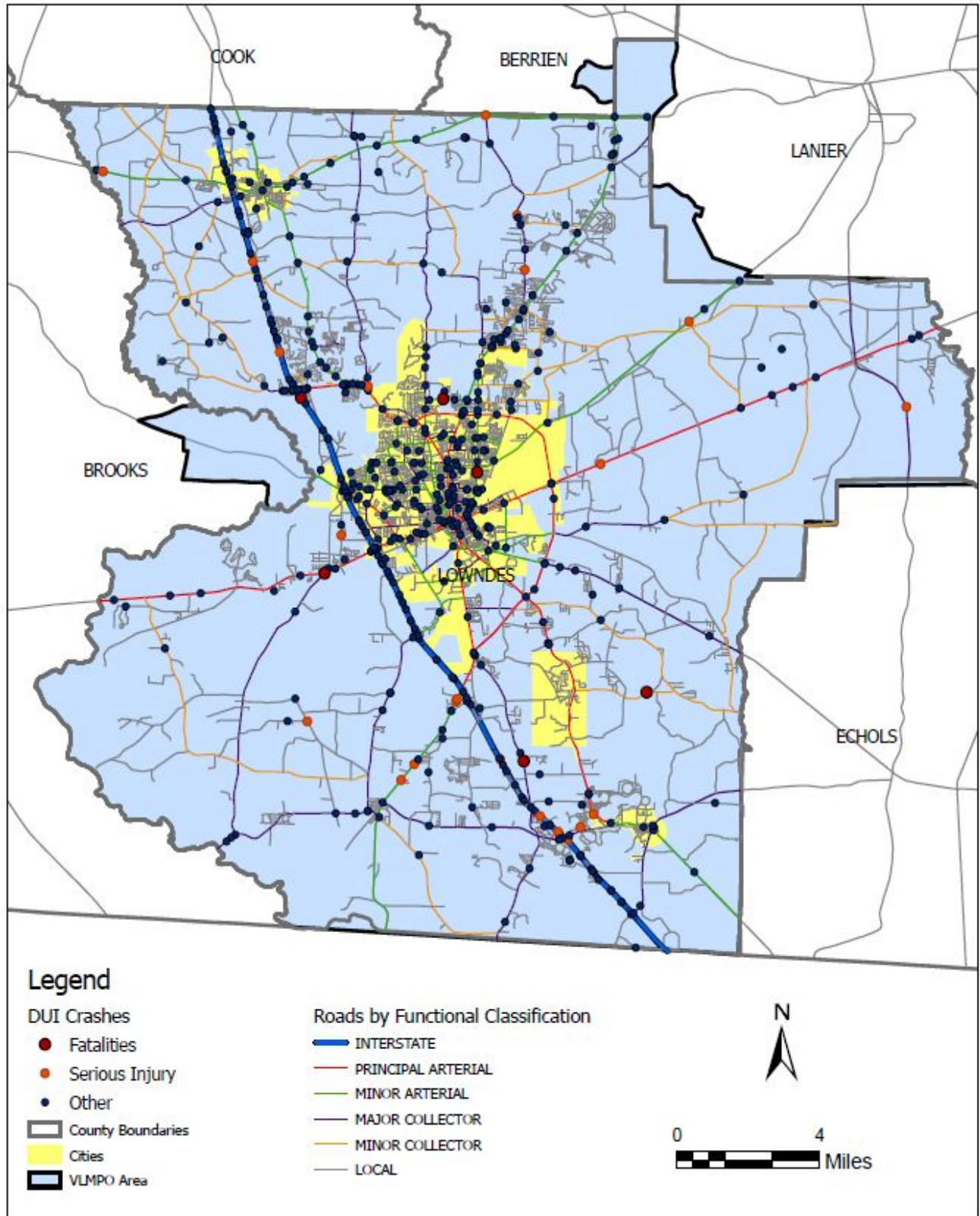
Map 1. Crashes in the VLMPo area, 2016-2020.



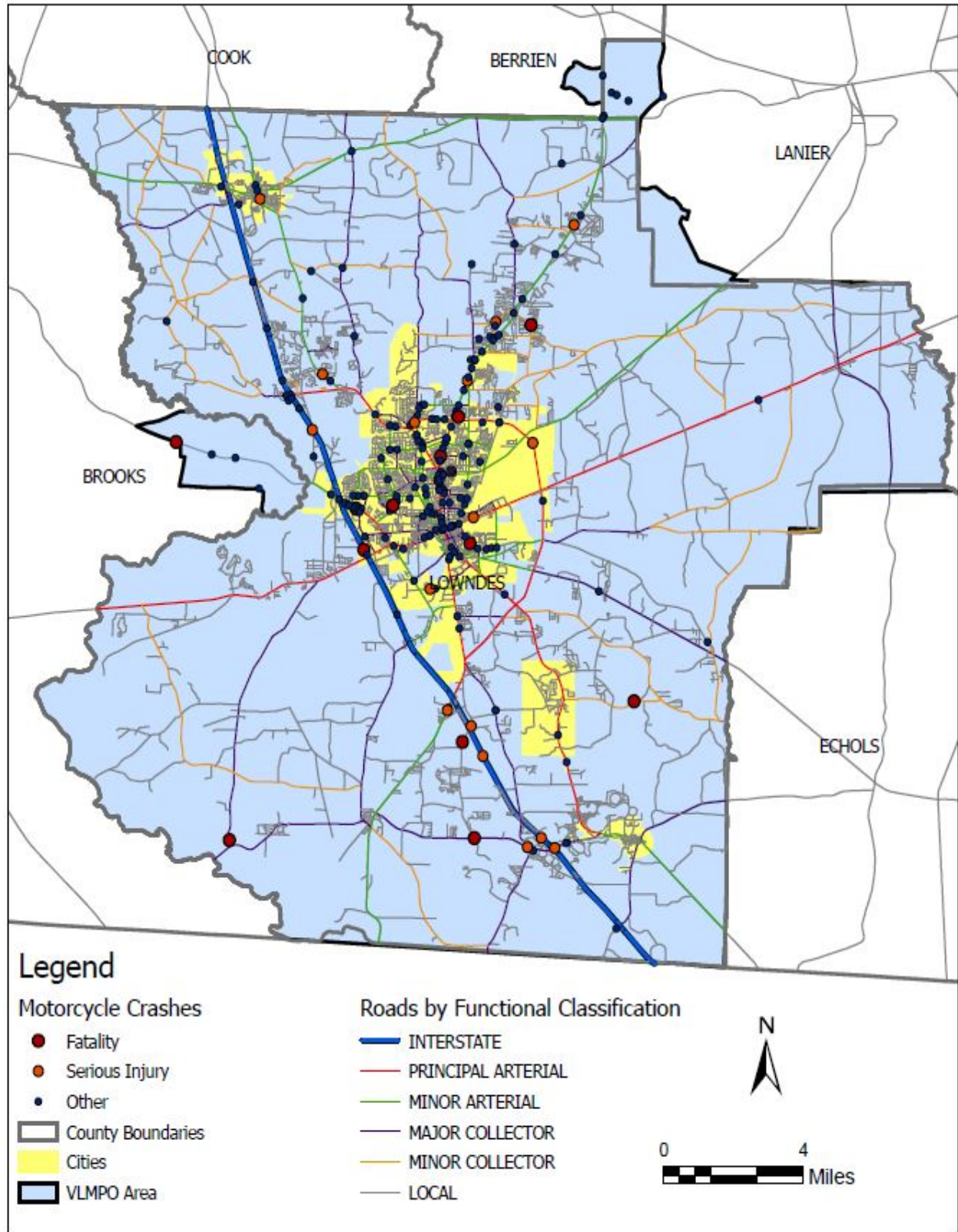
Map 2. Fatal crashes in the VLMPO area, 2016-2020.



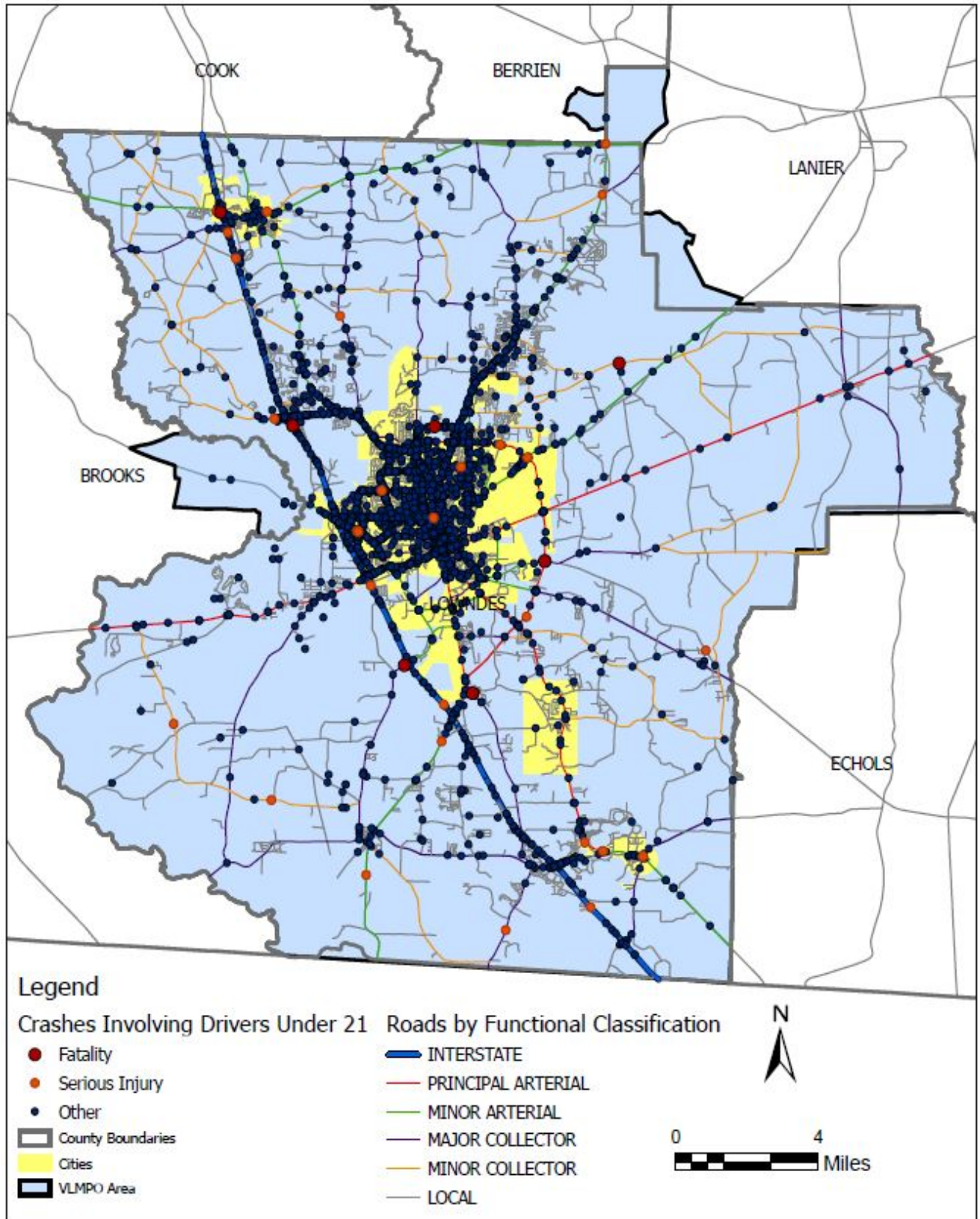
Map 3. Serious injury crashes in the VLMPO area, 2016-2020.



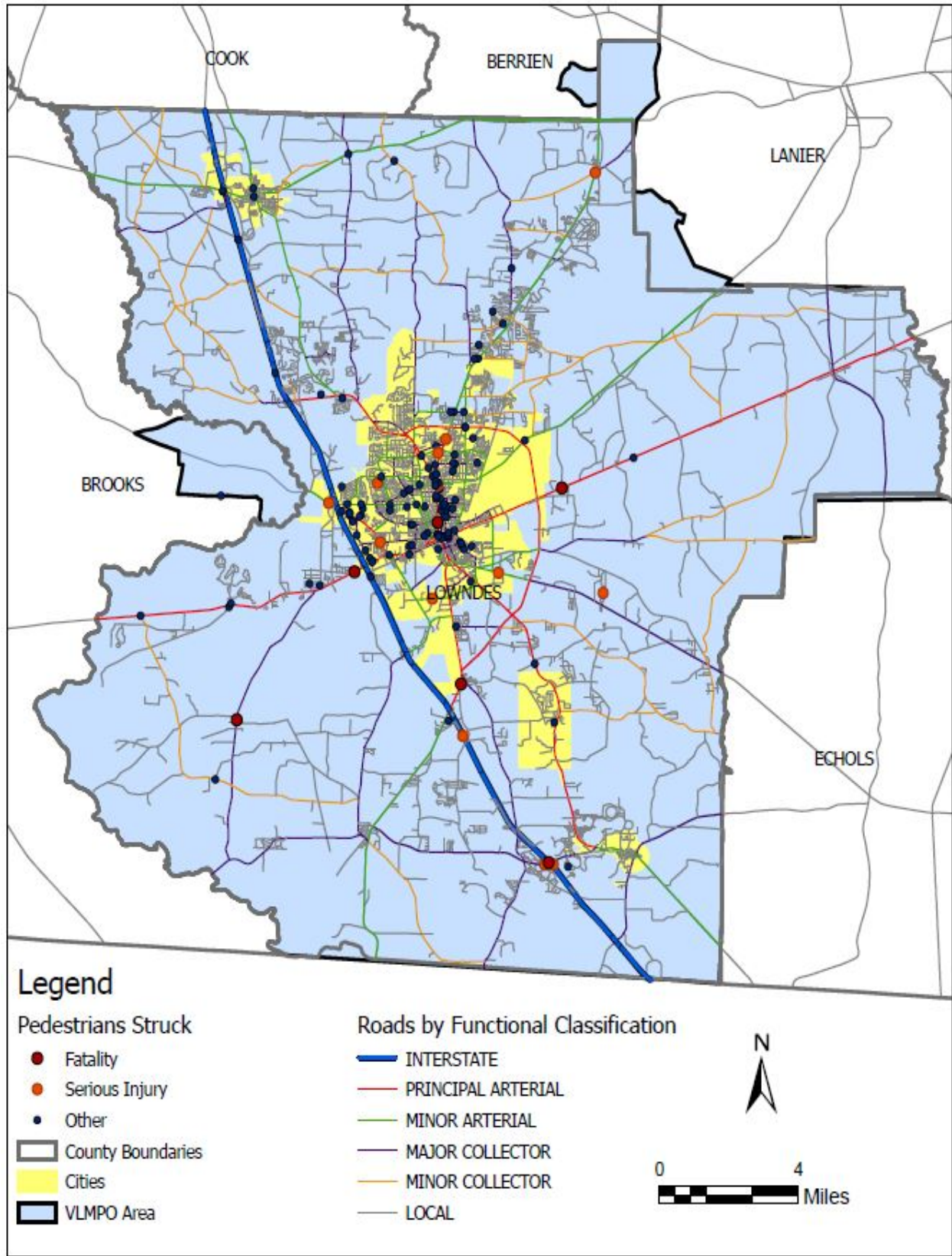
Map 4. Alcohol-related crashes in the VLMPo area, 2016-2020.



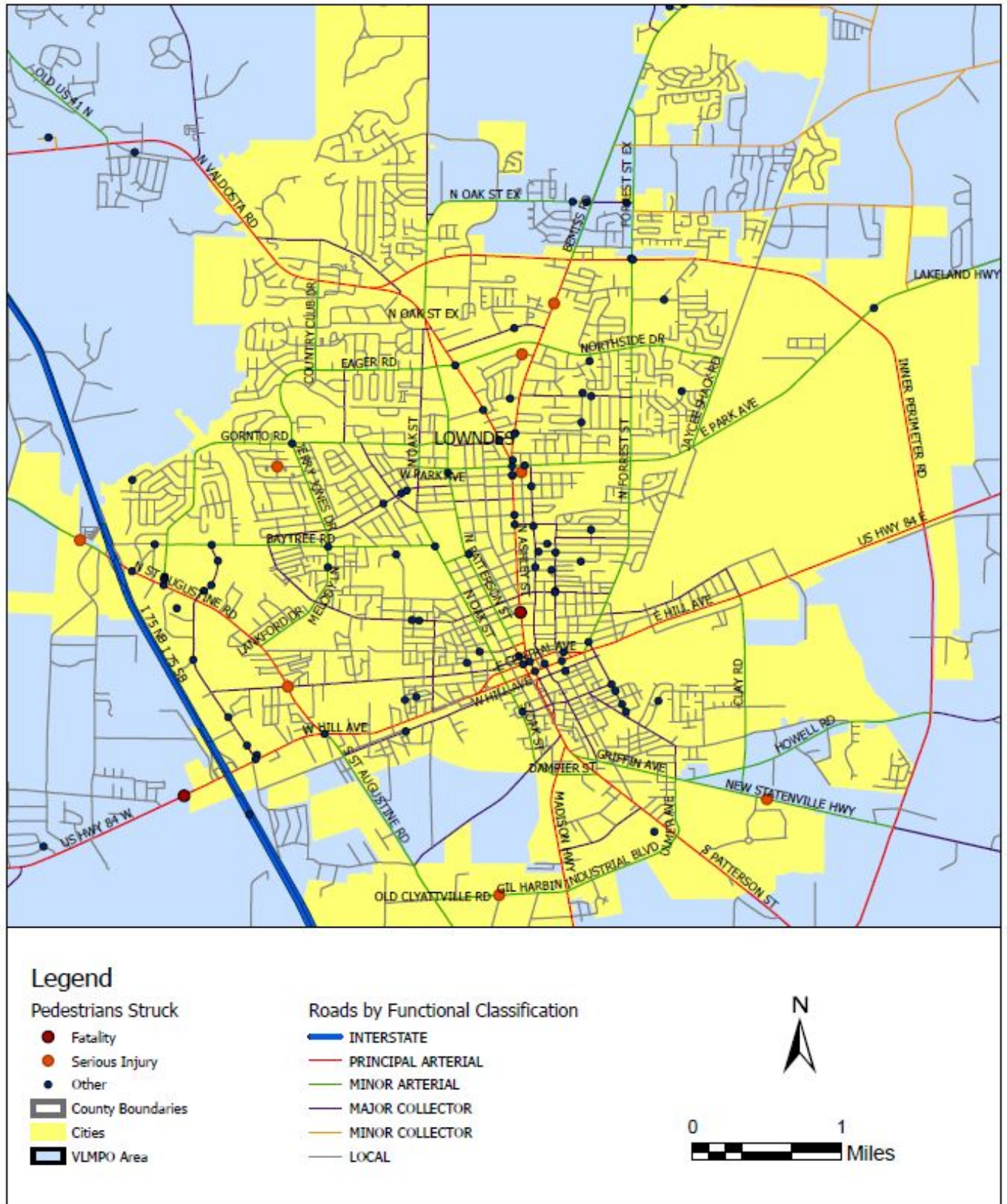
Map 5. Crashes involving motorcycles in the VLMPO area, 2016-2020.



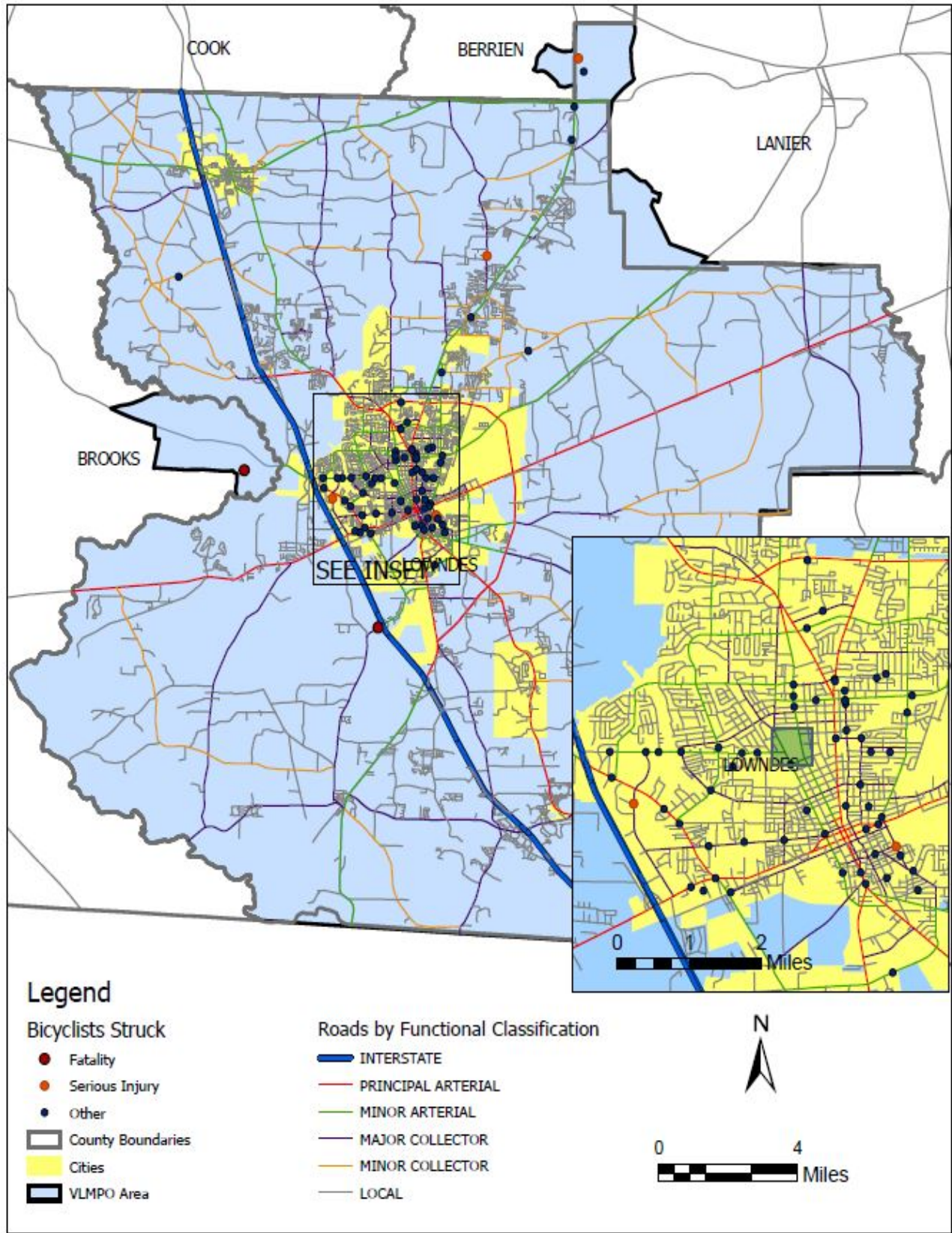
Map 6. Crashes involving drivers under age 21 in the VLMPO area, 2016-2020.



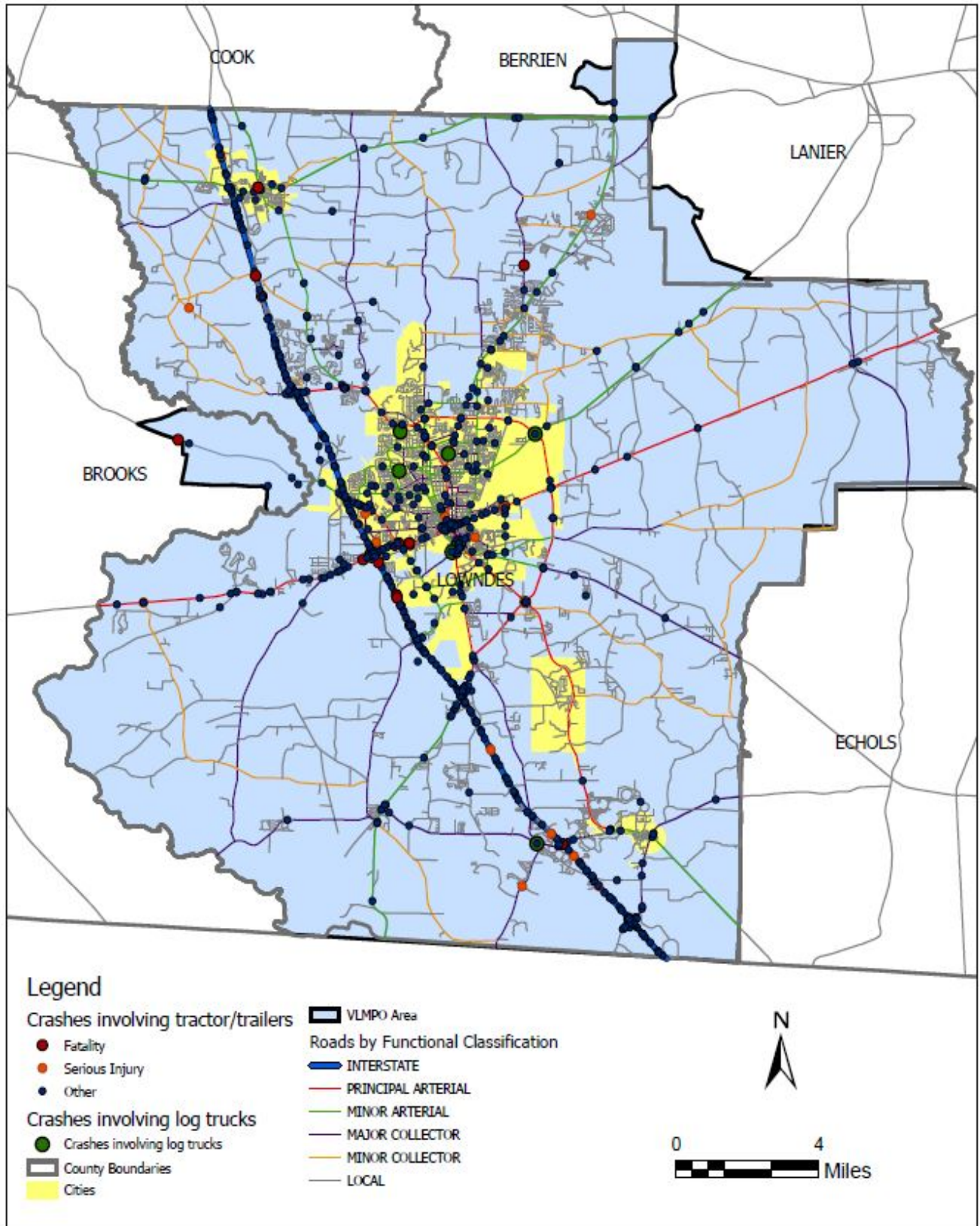
Map 7. Crashes involving pedestrians in the VLMPO area, 2016-2020.



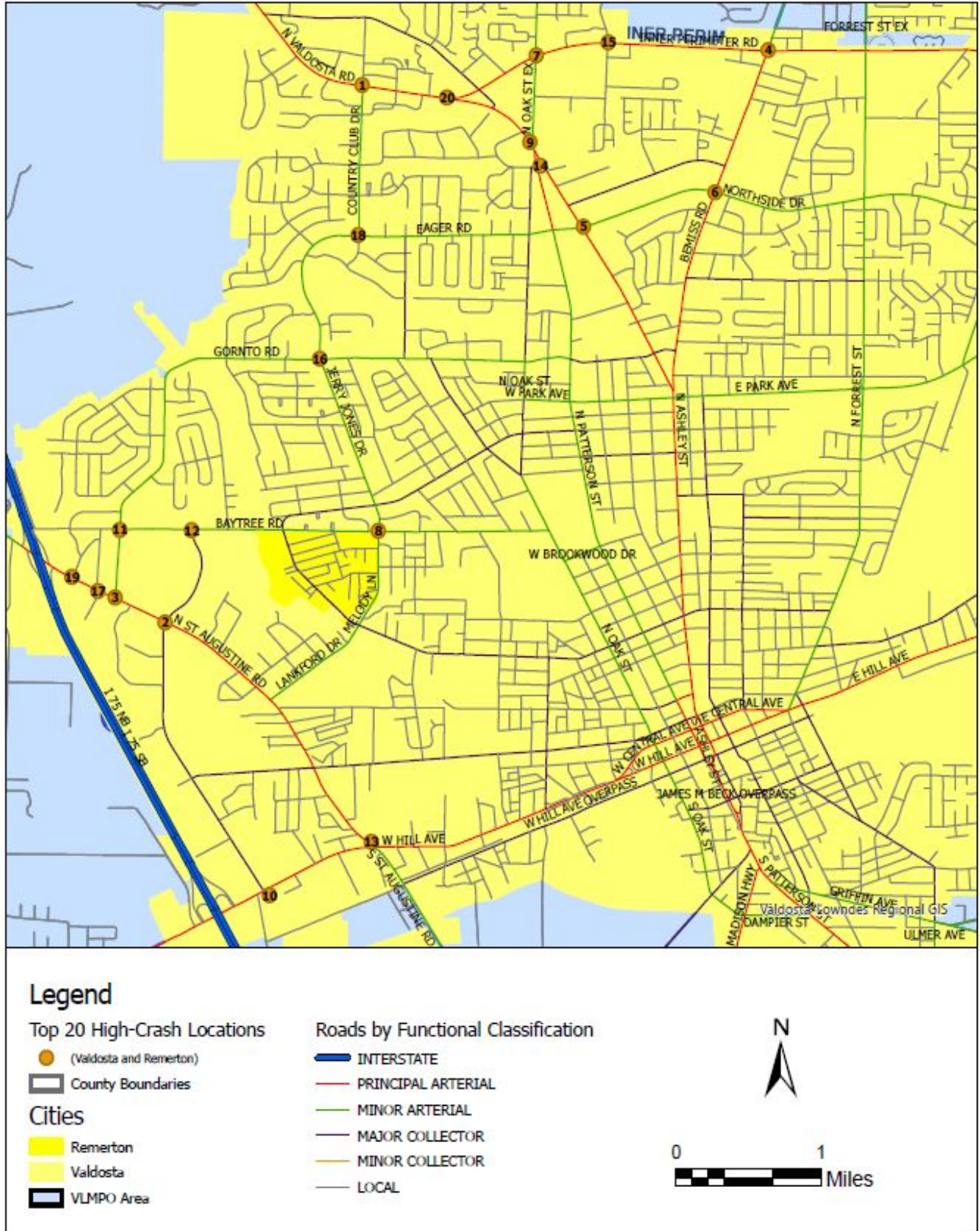
Map 7a. Detail: Crashes involving pedestrians in the VLMO area, 2016-2020.



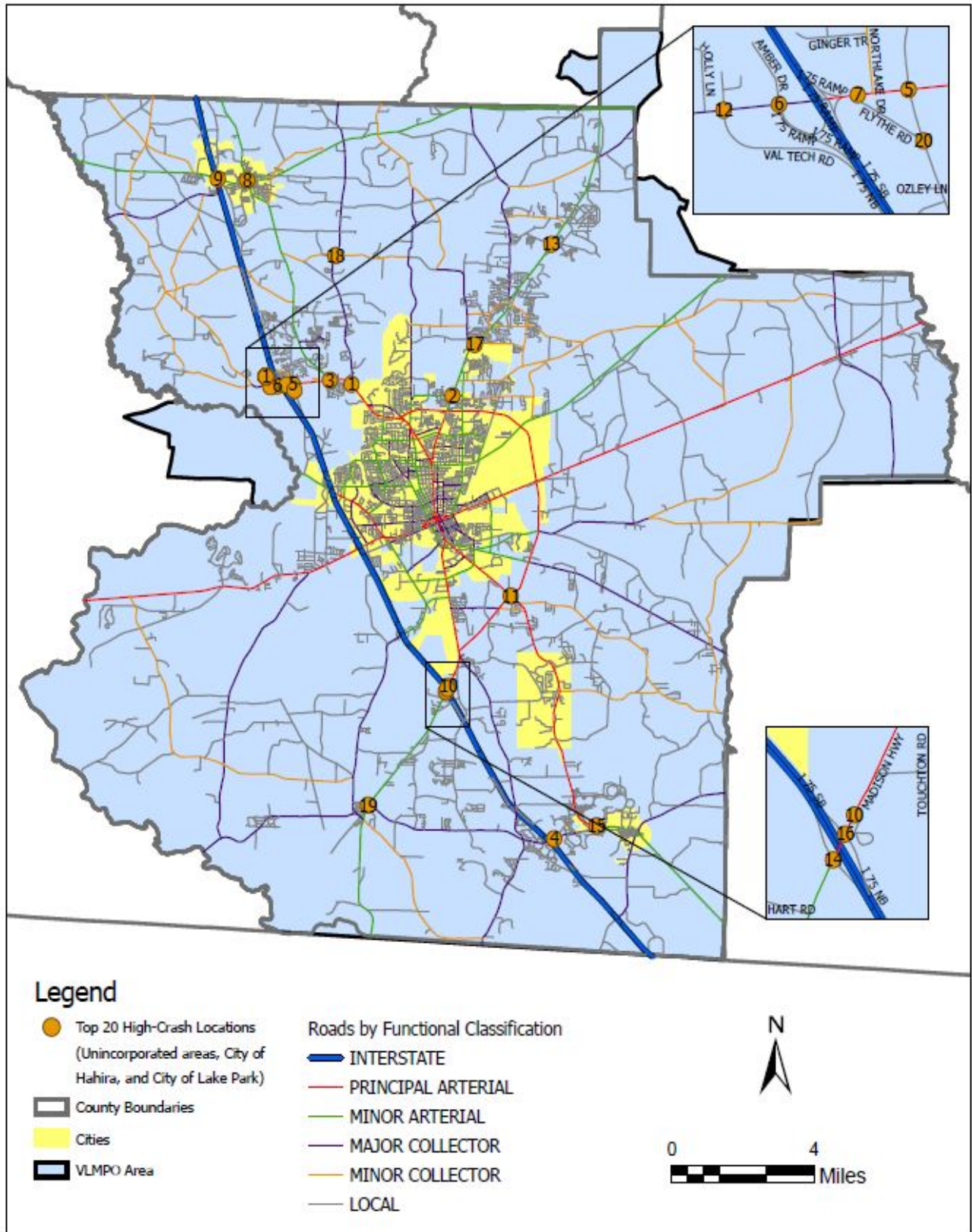
Map 8. Crashes involving bicyclists in the VLMPO area, 2016-2020.



Map 9. Crashes involving tractor/trailers and log trucks in the VLMPO area, 2016-2020.



Map 10. High-crash Locations in the City of Valdosta, with rank weighted by ADT.



Map 11. High-crash Locations in unincorporated areas, Hahira, and Lake Park, with rank weighted by ADT.

Appendix: Proposed Actions for Local Communities

This Appendix contains a list of actions and resources local communities can take to improve traffic safety.

Engineering Countermeasures

Backplates with Retroreflective Borders: Backplates added to a traffic signal indication improve the visibility of the illuminated face of the signal by introducing a controlled-contrast background. These are already present on most state highways in the MPO area.

Corridor Access Management: Thoughtful access management along a corridor can simultaneously enhance safety for all modes, facilitate walking and biking, and reduce trip delay and congestion.

Enhanced Delineation and Friction for Horizontal Curves: This proven safety countermeasure for reducing crashes at curves includes a variety of potential strategies that can be implemented in combination or individually.

Leading Pedestrian Intervals: Gives pedestrians the opportunity to enter an intersection 3-7 seconds before vehicles are given a green indication. With this head start, pedestrians can better establish their presence in the crosswalk before vehicles have priority to turn left.

Left and Right Turn Lanes at Two-Way Stop-Controlled Intersections: Auxiliary turn lanes—either for left turns or right turns—provide physical separation between turning traffic that is slowing or stopped and adjacent through traffic at approaches to intersections. Turn lanes can be designed to provide for deceleration prior to a turn, as well as for storage of vehicles that are stopped and waiting for the opportunity to complete a turn.

Local Road Safety Plan: Provides a framework for identifying, analyzing, and prioritizing roadway safety improvements on local roads. The LRSP development process and content are tailored to local issues and needs. The process results in a prioritized list of issues, risks, actions, and improvements that can be used to reduce fatalities and serious injuries on the local road network.

Longitudinal Rumble Strips and Stripes: Milled or raised elements on the pavement intended to alert drivers through vibration and sound that their vehicles have left the travel lane. They can be installed on the shoulder, edge line of the travel lane, or at or near center line of an undivided roadway. Several roads in the MPO area already have these strips installed.

Median Barriers: Longitudinal barriers that separate opposing traffic on a divided highway and are designed to redirect vehicles striking either side of the barrier.

Medians and Pedestrian Crossing Islands: Nationally, pedestrian crashes account for approximately 15 percent of all traffic fatalities annually, and over 75 percent of these occur at non-intersection locations. For pedestrians to safely cross a roadway, they must estimate vehicle speeds, adjust their walking speed, determine gaps in traffic, and predict vehicle paths. Installing raised medians or pedestrian crossing islands can help improve safety by simplifying these tasks and allowing pedestrians to cross one direction of traffic at a time.

Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons: A traffic control device designed to help pedestrians safely cross busy or higher-speed roadways at midblock crossings and uncontrolled intersections. The beacon head consists

of two red lenses above a single yellow lens. The lenses remain "dark" until a pedestrian desiring to cross the street pushes the call button to activate the beacon. The signal then initiates a yellow to red lighting sequence consisting of steady and flashing lights that directs motorists to slow and come to a stop. The pedestrian signal then flashes a WALK display to the pedestrian. Once the pedestrian has safely crossed, the hybrid beacon again goes dark.

Reduced Left-Turn Conflict Intersections: Geometric designs that alter how left-turn movements occur in order to simplify decisions and minimize the potential for related crashes.

Road Diets: A Road Diet typically involves reducing the total number of travel lanes on a road that has more capacity than is necessary. It can also refer to a reduction in travel lane width, thereby reducing speeds, without reducing the total number of lanes. A few successful road diets have already been implemented in the MPO area. A Road Diet can be a low-cost safety solution when planned in conjunction with a simple pavement overlay, and the reconfiguration can be accomplished at no additional cost.

Roadside Design Improvements at Curves: A strategy encompassing several treatments that target the high-risk roadside environment along the outside of horizontal curves. These treatments prevent roadway departure fatalities by giving vehicles the opportunity to recover safely and by reducing crash severity.

Roundabouts: A modern roundabout results in lower speeds and fewer conflict points than a signalized intersection, and also leads to improved operational performance. Roundabouts provide substantial safety and operational benefits compared to other intersection types, most notably a reduction in severe crashes.

USLIMITS2: A free, web-based tool designed to help practitioners assess and establish safe, reasonable, and consistent speed limits for specific segments of roadway. It is applicable to all types of facilities, from rural and local roads and residential streets to urban freeways.

Walkways: A walkway is any type of defined space or pathway for use by a person traveling by foot or using a wheelchair. These may be pedestrian walkways, shared use paths, sidewalks, or roadway shoulders.

Yellow Change Intervals: Since red-light running is a leading cause of severe crashes at signalized intersections, it is imperative that the yellow change interval be appropriately timed. Too brief an interval may result in drivers being unable to stop safely and cause unintentional red-light running, while too long an interval may result in drivers treating the yellow as an extension of the green phase and invite intentional red light running. Factors such as the speed of approaching vehicles, driver perception-reaction time, vehicle deceleration rates, intersection width, and roadway approach grades should all inform the timing calculation.

Educational Countermeasures and Campaigns

Child restraint awareness campaigns and child seat safety check programs can increase the rate of proper use of restraint systems for children in vehicles.

Drive Alert Arrive Alive: a statewide safety campaign to educate drivers about simple changes they can make in their driving behavior to prevent crashes, improve safety and save lives.

Driver education programs may focus on driving techniques, risks, mastery of traffic situations, decision-making skills, and other aspects of driving. Programs may be aimed at new drivers, young drivers, or also older and more experienced drivers.

Operation Lifesaver (<https://oli.org/>) helps to spread information about safety around trains and to encourage safer behavior at railroad crossings and on train tracks.

Railroad Safety Program: Georgia DOT's Office of Utilities handles railroad coordination and safety activities for the more than 5,300 public highway rail grade crossings across the state.

Safe Routes To School: This program works to make it safe, convenient, and fun for children in grades K-8 to walk or bike to school every day.

Scholastic Youth Safety Partnership: In partnership with the company Scholastic, Georgia DOT has launched the Recognizing the Risk campaign in an effort to help better educate the next generation of Georgia drivers.

Seat belt awareness campaigns may include billboards, flyers, social media outreach, and other materials.

See & Be Seen: Georgia DOT's See & Be Seen campaign aims to make it safer to walk in Georgia. See & Be Seen is the pedestrian component of Georgia DOT's Drive Alert Arrive Alive campaign to reduce crashes and fatalities on Georgia's roadways.

Teens in the Driver Seat: Teens in the Driver Seat is a peer program for teens that focuses solely on traffic safety and addresses all major risks for teen drivers.

Work Zone Safety: This GDOT program raises awareness for motorists to pay attention, watch out for workers, and drive safely when traveling through work zones.

Enforcement Countermeasures

Automated Traffic Enforcement Safety Device (ATESD): School systems can apply for a permit to place an Automated Traffic Enforcement Safety Device within a school zone.

Drunk-driving checkpoints have been shown to reduce DUI crashes in some studies.

Hands-Free Law: Georgia's Hands-Free law requires hands-free technology when drivers use a cell phone or other electronic device.

Increased law enforcement presence on high-crash corridors has been shown to improve safety.

Law enforcement presence at crosswalks has been shown to improve drivers' yielding to pedestrians in some studies.

Law enforcement presence in school zones has been shown to reduce crashes.

Red Light Running Photo System: This system is designed to improve safety and promote compliance at signalized intersections.

Further resources:

Federal Highway Administration, "Proven Safety Countermeasures."

<https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/provencountermeasures/>

Staton, Catherine, et al. "Road Traffic Injury Prevention Initiatives: A Systematic Review and Metasummary of Effectiveness in Low and Middle Income Countries." *PLoS One*, 2016: 11(1).
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4703343/>

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Georgia Department of Transportation. "Safety & Operation."
<http://www.dot.ga.gov/DS/SafetyOperation>