

Section 1. - Safe Routes to School Team and Community Involvement

Introduction

Clay County Elementary & Middle School is committed to ensuring that all of its students can utilize a physically active transportation method, such as walking and bicycling, for a safe and enjoyable trip to school. This Safe Routes to School Plan aims to address the issues that will impede active transportation and seeks to strategically solve these problems by implementing a Safe Routes to School program.

Our community is motivated to pursue Safe Routes to School because:

- ☾ We value student physical activity and health
- ☾ We wish to improve unsafe or insufficient walkways, bikeways, and crossings
- ☾ We are committed to reducing speeding and reckless driving near school
- ☾ Our students are threatened by illegal behaviors near school

The Safe Routes to School Committee

Our Safe Routes to School Team believes that having an active participation from diverse members in the community will allow us to develop a more successful Safe Routes to School Plan. Our team is comprised of a variety of stakeholders and community leaders, each lending their own unique perspective and expertise in order to make walking and bicycling to school more safe, accessible, and fun for students at Clay County Elementary and Middle School.

Our Safe Routes to School Team is composed of the following:

Julio Portillo Kayra Velez Nykia Burkes	<i>RVRC Safe Routes to School Project Coordinator</i> <i>RVRC Safe Routes Project Assistant</i> <i>Safe Routes Resource Center South GA</i>
Michael Johnson	<i>Clay County Elementary & Middle School Principal</i>
Mrs. Johnnie Grimsley	<i>Clay County Board of Education Superintendent</i>
Hon. Samuel T. Johnson	<i>Mayor, City of Fort Gaines and Clay County Elementary & Middle School Teacher</i>
Marion B. Lindsey	<i>City of Fort Gaines, City Clerk</i>
Sonny Davis	<i>City of Fort Gaines, Police Chief</i>

The participation of each of the stakeholders in this committee has been of great importance in the development of the Safe Routes to School Plan. Each of the members of this committee contributed to developing and administering student surveys, walk-ability and bike-ability assessments, observed and documented pedestrian and traffic behavior during school rush hours, and developed the goals, objectives, and recommendations to the plan.

Section 2. - Evaluation of existing conditions

Mapping – School Boundary

Clay County Elementary & Middle School is the only school within Clay County; therefore, the school provides its educational services to all residents within the county boundary limits at a no-cost tuition assistance program. However, the school also welcomes students from the surrounding areas outside of their county boundary, providing services for students from Randolph and Georgetown-Quitman County. (See attached County Boundary Map)

Bicycling and Walking Assessments

In order to create an efficient and effective Safe Routes to School Plan for Clay County Elementary & Middle School, we must first evaluate the current conditions and feasibility for the children to either walk and/or ride their bicycles to the school. These assessments took place within a 0.5-1.5 mile radius from the school campus towards to the most highly populated areas where Clay County Elementary & Middle School children live. A completed walk-ability and bike-ability assessments form was completed as provided by the National Pedestrian and Bicycle

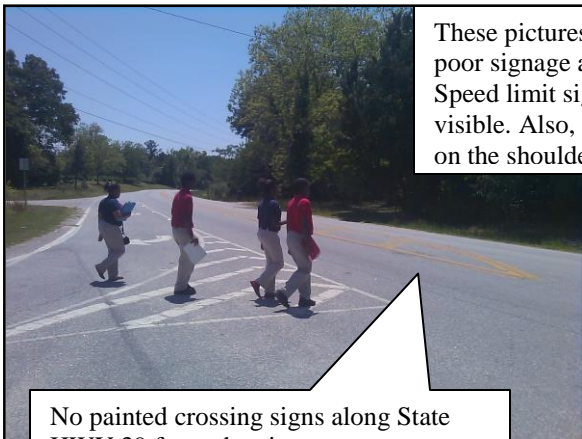
Information Center and Georgia Department of Transportation. Parents were also given a short survey where they could rank the school's infrastructure needs in order of importance, as well as provide comments. The results from the observations and survey are as follows:

1. Need for visible School Zone Speed Limit Signs placed on both sides of Georgia State Highway 39.
2. No sidewalks in place leading to the school campus and youth baseball facilities.
3. Need for traffic calming signs to alert motorists of pedestrians and bicyclists.
4. No pedestrian crossing at any of the intersections within the city.
5. Electronic crossing signs and bicycle racks for the school
6. Poor handicap accessibility to the sidewalks, in some cases, no access at all.

Walk-ability and bike-ability assessment photos



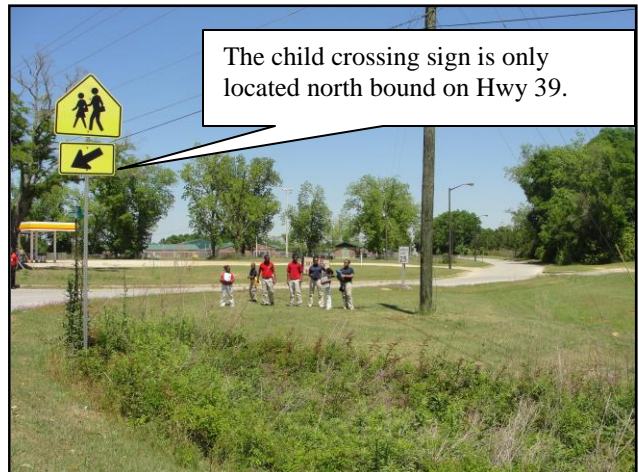
No sidewalks along both sides of Hobbs Lane, the main road leading into the school campus and baseball field.



These pictures demonstrate the poor signage around the school. Speed limit sign is barely visible. Also, children walking on the shoulders of the road.



No painted crossing signs along State HWY 39 for pedestrians to cross over into the neighboring residential area, from which several children walk to school.



The child crossing sign is only located north bound on Hwy 39.

Section 3. - Data Collection and Analysis

The process of collecting Safe Routes to School data for Clay County Elementary & Middle School was done through observations, interviews, walk-ability and bike-ability assessments, as well as a parent and student survey. A total of 317 children were surveyed (see survey in Appendix 4). Traffic counts, average speed of vehicles, and crash data were provided by Fort Gaines officials and Police Department.

Projected Enrollment - Student Characteristics

At the start of 2009-2010, the student population for the school was approximately 315 students. There are currently 317 students enrolled at Clay County Elementary & Middle School from grades Pre-K to Fifth. According to Mr. Johnson, School Principal, they are not expecting a significant change in the size of the student population, despite the fact that this school's services children from Clay County and Georgetown-Quitman County.

Student Survey Analysis

The following table illustrates the number of children surveyed and their preferred and current method of transportation to and from the school campus:

School Bus	Driven by parents	Carpool	Walk to school	Ride their bicycles to school
192 (60.5%)	68 (21.4%)	3 (>1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

These results clearly demonstrate the low number of children who are cycling to and from school. However, despite the low number of children cycling, our research reflects that both distance traveled and age affects the parents' and children's decision to walk to school; therefore, children can travel as far as 2 miles from the school.

Distance that you live from the school (Miles)				
¼ or less	¼ - ½	1.6-2.0 miles	½ - 1	1-2 (2+)
6	6	23	15	21 (37)

Transportation Data



Traffic Counts

Traffic counts for Clay County Elementary and Middle School were provided by the Georgia Department of Transportation. Traffic counts are as follows*:¹

Road	AADT
Coleman Road	790
Eufaula Street	1930
Hartford Road	1060

Average Speed of Vehicles

The average speed of vehicles for a 1 mile radius from Clay County Elementary & Middle School was provided by the Fort Gaines Police Department. According to their records, the average speed of vehicles is as follows:

- 35MPH within the surrounding areas and major roads including Eufaula HWY (State HWY 39), Commerce Street, Jefferson Street, Jackson Street, N. Hancock and Elm Street. Hobbs Lane, the road leading to the school campus, has a speed limit of 25 MPH.

¹ Only some roads within the school campus

Crash Data

Automotive crash data for a 2 mile radius from Clay County Elementary & Middle School was provided by Fort Gaines city officials. The following table demonstrates the number of crashes within the 2 mile radius:

On roadway:

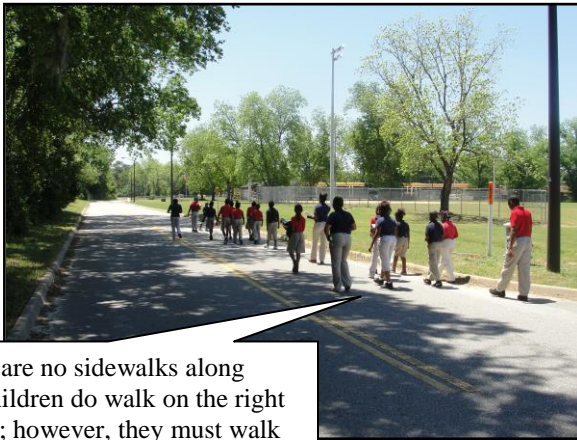
- 1/19/2010 Mallard St. and Hwy. 37 one vehicle accident no injury at 12:34 a.m.
- 2/19/2010 Washington and Calaboose St. two vehicle accident no injury at 10:35 a.m.
- 4/29/2010 Eufaula Rd. and Mt. Zion Rd. one vehicle accident 1 injury at 8:50 a.m.
- 6/3/2010 Eufaula Rd. and Hobbs Lane two vehicle accident no injury at 2:35 p.m. (Hobbs Ln. is the street the school is on)

Private property:

- 1/28/2010 Pepper Ridge Apt. (Hancock St.) hit and run vehicle parked.
- 3/3/2010 Fort Gaines Food Mart (M.L.K. Parkway) two vehicle one back into the other at gas pump no injury

Observing Clay County Elementary & Middle School Student's Pedestrian Behavior

Disclaimer: These photos were taken outside of Clay County Elementary & Middle School with the authorization and supervision of the School Principal Mr. Michael Johnson



Although there are no sidewalks along Hobbs Lane, children do walk on the right side of the road; however, they must walk on the road and/or its shoulder due to lack of adequate pedestrian facilities.



Children walk in groups when leaving the school campus as instructed by their professors. However, lack of sidewalks forces them to walk on the road or shoulder surrounding the school campus and baseball field.

Section 4. - Policies / Plans

Clay County Elementary & Middle School does not prohibit walking and/or biking to the school campus. However, our research shows that the school has not yet implemented a health and fitness policy in its student handbook. Since the school is located in the center of a residential area within the city of Fort Gaines, the number of students walking to school is relatively low (1 student on average). However, there are also several students (150 students on average) that travel to and from school using the school bus. It is therefore evident that Clay County Elementary & Middle School has a School Bus Policy in place for students and parents to follow. Such policy states measures to ensure both the children's and motorists' safety while on the road.

Despite the fact that Clay County Elementary & Middle School embraces physical activity for its students, they do not have a wellness policy in place; hence there is no reference to any Safe Routes to School policy yet. But due to their recent involvement in the program, as well as the partnership with the Safe Routes Resource Center, the school has decided to begin drafting a Health, Fitness, and Wellness Policy along with their support and involvement in the Safe Routes to School Program. Their involvement with this program has earned them a Silver Sponsorship level with the Safe Routes to School Resource Center. Also, as part of their new Health, Fitness, and

Wellness Policy, the school will participate in both the International Walk to School Day and the Georgia Walk to School Day.

There are currently no current or future developments within a 2 mile radius from the school.

Section 5. - Goals and Objectives

After carefully reviewing traffic data, student and parent survey results, walk-ability and bike-ability assessments, school policies, and overall students' means of transportation, our Safe Routes to School team was able to determine a set of goals from which to guide the development and implementation of our program.

1. **Goal:** To increase the number of children riding their bicycles to and from school. **Objective:** Increase the number of student bicycle riders by 10% over the next 2010-2011 academic year.
2. **Goal:** To develop and implement a Health, Fitness, and Wellness Policy which addresses the Safe Routes to School Program.
Objective: To develop the Health, Fitness, and Wellness policy within a 6 month period of approving the Safe Routes to School Plan and implement this policy within the remaining 6 months of the 2010-2011 academic year.
3. **Goal:** To participate and include the National Walk and Bike to School Day and Georgia Walk to School Day on the school's Wellness Policy.
Objective: To participate in the National Walk and Bike to School Day on the first Wednesday of October of 2010 and participate in the Georgia Walk to School Day in March of 2011.
4. **Goal:** To develop and conduct a "Safe Walking and Safe Bicycling" class for all children attending elementary school.
Objective: To develop an adequate class syllabus (program) by September 2010 to be used during the 2010-2011 academic year.
5. **Goal:** To increase the number of bicycle racks at Clay County Elementary & Middle School.
Objective: To increase the number of bicycle racks from 0 to 2 by spring 2011.
6. **Goal:** To build community awareness and participation in the Safe Routes to School Program.
Objective: To increase the number of parents and community members who walk and bicycle with their children from 0 to 15 by the end of the 2010-2011 academic year.

Section 6. - Action Steps and Implementation Strategy

This section is based on using the data analysis, survey results, and community input in order to address the Five E's (Engineering, Evaluation, Education, Encouragement, and Enforcement).

Non-Infrastructure Education

"Everyone Should Know How to Be Safe"

The education section of this plan consists on the development and implementation of educational programs that teach safety skills to pedestrians, motorists, and cyclists. Through these educational programs, we intend to increase awareness on the benefits of being physically active (walking and cycling) as well as raising awareness on issues which are related to school safety.

Activity	Bicycle Safety Training
Timeline	September 2010-May 2011
Task	Develop a bicycle safety training session which students can attend quarterly throughout the academic year. This training can also be available for parents who wish to engage in such activities and be taught during extra-curricular school hours. Research demonstrates that middle and elementary school level is the best time to begin this process of early education.
Who	Students, parents, and teachers.
Status	Program has been designed and students have participated in two trainings, including International Walk to School Day safety training.

Activity	Pedestrian Safety Training
Timeline	September 2010 – May 2011
Task	To teach student the basic pedestrian rules and how to safely use the roads as means of

	transportation. Sessions will be held quarterly.
Who	Physical Education teachers, students, and parents.
Status	Program has been designed and students have participated in two trainings, including International Walk to School Day safety training.

Activity	Bicycle/Pedestrian Safety Awareness Programs and Campaigns
Timeline	September 2010-May 2011
Task	Involve children in the development of flyers, posters, banners, etc. in order to raise bicycle/pedestrian safety awareness throughout the school, as well as encouraging other children to participate in cycling/walking to school.
Who	Students, parents, and teachers.
Status	Teachers implemented the awareness programs during arts & crafts class as students prepared signs for Walk to School Day and for their pedestrian parade to kick-off their Reading Campaign.

Activity	Parental Safety Education Program
Timeline	September 2010-May 2011
Task	Educate parents on bicycle/pedestrian safety in order for them to educate their children as well; therefore, increasing the number of educated walkers and riders.
Who	Students, parents, and teachers.
Status	Parents were informed and briefed on safe walking techniques at their monthly PTA meeting and through handouts before Walk to School Day and Reading Kick off parade.

Activity	Personal Safety Program
Timeline	September 2010-May 2011
Task	Develop a personal safety program which allows children to identify bullies and potential predators while on the street. This program is very important in order to provide a safe walking and cycling environment for kids.
Who	Students, parents, teachers, and law enforcement.
Status	School has continues to exercise and enhance a “No Bullying” policy within the school and therefore, provide for a fun and safe environment for children to walk/bike to school.

Activity	“Making Math Fun” Education using cycling elements
Timeline	September 2010-May 2011
Task	Develop an additional element to the current Mathematics curriculum in which teachers can educate children using elements from a bicycle; for example, geometry and standard measurements can be taught through this approach.
Who	Students, parents, and teachers.
Status	Program is currently being development and will be implemented during March Mathness Program at the school.

Encouragement

“Being Fun and Creative”

The encouragement section of this plan will address the ways in which children, parents, teachers, and community members can become involved in developing and maintaining a Safe Routes to School Program active throughout the school year. These encouragement programs will consist of providing fun and educational activities that motivate and facilitate walking and bicycling to and from school. The Georgia Department of Transportation is committed to providing support during these promotional activities, providing fluorescent vests and personnel to attending as many activities as possible. It is important to not only develop student enthusiasm for these activities, but also to encourage parents and teachers to participate in as many Safe Routes activities as possible.

The following is a list of planned activities to support Encouragement efforts for the Safe Routes to School plan:

Activity	Park and Walk
Timeline	September 2010-May 2011
Task	Encourage those children who live outside the 1 mile radius of the school to walk to school through a system (method) known as “Park and Walk”. Through this method, parents can drive their children to a designated parking place usually within 1 mile or ½ a mile so that children can walk or bike to school from this point.
Who	Students, parents, and teachers.
Status	Two park and walk events took place: one for Walk to School Day and one for Reading Kick Off Campaign.

Activity	Activity Day “Giveaways”
Timeline	During the days of a bicycle/pedestrian activity
Task	During the days in which a bicycle/pedestrian activity will take place, giveaways will play an important role for increasing awareness as well as promoting the current and future bicycle/pedestrian activities. Such giveaways include, but are not limited to t-shirts, bumper stickers, hats, reflective gear, etc.
Who	Students, teachers, school staff, parents.
Status	During October and November, the school has given out zipper pools, Safe Routes Pencils, and cycling drawstring bags as part of their promotion of Walk to School Day and Reading Campaign.

Activity	Seasonal Rides
Timeline	September 2010-May 2011
Task	Seasonal Rides consists of organizing bicycle rides or walks celebrate the seasons. For example, “Welcome Spring Ride”, “Celebrate the Autumn Ride”, etc. These rides/walks can be organized once every season or during a festive holiday; “Turkey Ride”, “the Santa Side”, etc.
Who	Students, teachers, school staff, parents.
Status	First seasonal ride is scheduled for April, 2011.

Activity	Walk and Ride Bus
Timeline	September 2010-May 2011
Task	Walking and Riding buses consists of organizing a group of students that meet at the same time and place and walk or ride to school together. Walking and Riding buses should include adult supervision and include active parents who wish to engage in such activities. Walking and Riding buses can also be organized according to neighborhoods where a significant number of residents attend Clay County Elementary & Middle School and wish to get organized to walk and bike to school together.
Who	Students and parents.
Status	Program to be developed and implemented.

Enforcement
“Following the Safety Rules”

This section focuses on the legal aspects of enforcing traffic laws. Developing an adequate enforcement strategy will provide the basis for educating motorists as well as cyclists and pedestrians; however, there is a greater focus on motorist education and safety. Earlier in this plan, crash data, as well as traffic counts and average speed were provided. This information demonstrates an average speed of 32.14 MPH on a 2 mile radius from Clay County Elementary & Middle School. According to officials at the City of Fort Gaines’ Police Department, this average speed provides for a safe walking and cycling environment for it is only 7 miles over the School Zone speed limit. Education and Encouragement efforts deal mainly with training and educating children, parents, and teachers; little is done to educate motorists.

An Enforcement strategy will require active participation from local law enforcement officials as well as parents, teachers and even the students themselves. Developing and establishing Safe Routes to School policies and procedures for drivers will be the initial part of this enforcement strategy. These policies will be created in

conjunction with law enforcement officials, local city officials, and Clay County Elementary & Middle School Staff. Following the development of such policies and procedures, enforcement efforts can begin.

The following are law enforcement strategies which will allow us to educate motorists within the surrounding 2-mile radius of Clay County Elementary & Middle School:

Activity	Hire a full-time crossing guard for the school.
Timeline	Ongoing
Task	To hire a full time crossing guard to aid students who walk and cycle to school in providing safety means of crossing the main intersections by the school campus.
Who	Students, parents, teachers, crossing guards.
Status	The City of Fort Gaines is currently not encouraging much walking or riding to school other than for special events with police escort due to the lack of safe pedestrian facilities in place.
Activity	“Pace Your Car Program”
Timeline	September 2010-May 2011
Task	This program will consist of pacing the speed of motor-vehicles on the surrounding roads of Clay County Elementary & Middle School. We intend to approach this task in a creative manner, using colorful and attractive signs in both English and Spanish, and use specific dates to promote the program.
Who	Students, parents, teachers, traffic engineers, law enforcement.
Status	Program to be developed and implemented.

Evaluation

“Identifying and Addressing the Problem”

Evaluating both the development and progress of our Safe Routes to School Plan will allow us to monitor the effectiveness of our program. Maintaining a close monitoring of our program provides us with the advantage of detecting mistakes at an early stage, hence being able to develop an appropriate solution to the problem. Recognizing mistakes and taking prompt action to solve them ensures the steadiness and consistency of our program during its implementation stages.

The following table illustrates three key elements (Objective, Data Collection/Methodology, and Timeline) which will be monitored in order to ensure the accomplishment of our stated objectives:

Objective	Data collection / Methodology	Timeline
Increase the number of student cyclists by 10% over the next academic year (2010-2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ⓜ Developing cycling awareness campaigns (including giveaways) Ⓜ Parent and teacher initiative to support program and get children involved. 	Begin: September 2010 End: May 2011
To develop the Wellness Policy within a 6 month period of approving the Safe Routes to School plan and implement this policy within the remaining 6 months of the academic year 2010-2011. This will be an ongoing effort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ⓜ Georgia Department of Health plays a key role in developing the policies. Ⓜ Must be approved by the Muscogee County Board of Education and Clay County Elementary & Middle School. Ⓜ Should address Safe Routes to School as a means of physical activity. 	Begin: September 2010 End: May 2011

Objective	Data Collection / Methodology	Timeline
Continue to participate in the National Walk and Bike to School Day on October, 2010.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ⓜ Develop student-designed campaigns. Ⓜ Involve parents, teachers, and community members. 	October, 2010
Develop an adequate class syllabus for “Safe Walking and Safe Bicycling” class by September 2010 to be used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ⓜ Using a previous model, develop a Safe Walking syllabus for teachers. Ⓜ Using a previous model, develop a Safe Bicycling syllabus for teachers. 	Begin: September 2010 End: May 2011

during the 2010-2011 academic year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ⓝ This class can be taught as part of the P.E curriculum or as an extracurricular activity. 	
Increase the number of bicycle racks from 1 to 4 by May 2011.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ⓝ Request and/or generate funds to purchase bicycle racks. Ⓝ Should be supported by school officials and will promote bicycle riding to the students. 	Deadline: May 2011
Increase the number of parents and community members who walk and bicycle with their children by the end of the academic year 2010-2011.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ⓝ Developing walking and cycling campaigns. Ⓝ Developing awareness posters and banners. Ⓝ Promoting the program to parents and the community through students and teachers. 	Begin: September 2010 End: May 2011

**Infrastructure
Engineering**

“Designing Improvements”

This section consists of determining if new road designs and operational techniques are needed in order to reduce traffic volumes, to decrease speed, and to improve bicycle/pedestrian safety. During the scope of performing the walk-ability and bike-ability assessments, we were able to determine areas where engineering would be needed in order to increase bicycle/pedestrian safety. Our findings are as follows:

Problems:

1. **School Zone Speed Limit Signs and Sidewalk Improvements:** The school is located between State HWY 39 and Hobbs Lane within the city of Fort Gaines, GA. Along HWY 39 there is currently only one School Zone Speed Limit sign, which is small, deteriorated, and has no flashing lights. Furthermore, this sign is only placed on HWY39 Southbound; there is no sign Northbound. Sidewalks are another major issue on the roads leading to school campus and surrounding neighborhoods. Although there are a few sidewalks in downtown Fort Gaines, the main sidewalk along HWY 39, which leads towards the school is cut off approximately ½ a mile before reaching Hobbs Lane. These sidewalks also have poor handicap accessibility, and there are no sidewalks along Hobbs Lane leading to the school campus and baseball field. During school hours, or any time there is a baseball game or event at the recreational area, children and parents must walk along the road or the grass to access these facilities.
2. **Traffic Calming Signs:** Due to the school campus location along HWY 39, the number of vehicles traveling along this road tends to be greater. Although there is a posted School Zone Speed Limit sign, vehicles continue to drive through this area at an average of 35MPH, according to the City of Fort Gaines Police Department. Traffic calming mechanisms like rumble strips and flashing speed limit signs for the school zone would have a tremendous impact on reducing the average speed of vehicles.
3. **Painted Crossing Lines:** Children and parents that have the ability to walk to school within a 1 mile radius do not have the proper safety measures and infrastructure to do so. Students living within the Peanut Mill neighborhood and other neighborhoods around the school have to cross major roads and other intersections. There are no marked pedestrian crossing signs at any of the surrounding intersections within the school campus. This poses an evident danger to any pedestrians.
4. **Electronic Crossing Signs and Bicycle racks for the school:** The major concern for children walking or cycling to school is for them to cross over State HWY 39. Our Safe Routes to School team believes that students could benefit from an electronic crossing sign to cross over HWY 39. Also, the school has no bicycle racks in place for students cycling to the school campus. This is one of the reason that both students and parents agreed on why children do not ride their bicycle to school.
5. **Handicap Access:** Currently, there is very little handicap access within the main sidewalks in downtown Fort Gaines, GA. Also, since there are no sidewalks leading into the school campus, this forces citizens with handicaps to travel along the road, with dirt and debris. Making additions and improvements to handicap accessibility will be a great part of any infrastructure improvements that take place as part of this Safe Routes to School Project.

As stated above, some major issues resulted from both our walk-ability and bike-ability assessments. Our final evaluation of the physical conditions of the roads and sidewalks verify the need for engineering activities to take place in order to address the aforementioned issues. Our research and evaluations demonstrate that only one student at Clay County Elementary & Middle School is walking through these roads, which currently do not provide the necessary safety means for children to walk safely to and from school. However, if we intend to increase the number of children walking and cycling to school, we must provide an adequate and safe infrastructure to these children. Funding for such activities will not only alleviate the poor conditions of these roads, but will also provide safer means for children to walk and bike to school, therefore, accomplishing our main goal of increasing the number of cyclists and pedestrians, and providing a safe route to and from school for these children.