

# Macon County Middle School

## Safe Routes to School Comprehensive Travel Plan



2014



**Safe Routes to School Plan FY2013**

**Macon County Middle School**

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## Publication and Publicity

### Disclaimer

*The contents of the publication reflect the views of the author(s), who is (are) responsible for the facts and accuracy of the data presented herein. The opinions, findings, and conclusions in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of those of the Department of Transportation, State of Georgia, or the Federal Highway Administration. This publication does not constitute a standard, specification, or regulation.*

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

### Introduction

Macon County 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 possibly 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 Macon County Middle.

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

<b>Julio Portillo</b>	<i>RVRC Safe Routes to School Project Coordinator</i>
<b>Mia Anderson</b>	<i>RVRC Safe Routes to School Project Coordinator Assistant</i>
<b>Chelsea Carter</b>	<i>Safe Routes Resource Center Representative, South Georgia</i>
<b>Isaiah Ross</b>	<i>Macon County Middle School Principal</i>
<b>Joyce Hardy</b>	<i>Macon County Administrator</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.

### School Description:

Macon County Middle School is located in Montezuma, Georgia, and is the only middle school in the Macon County School District. Students in grades 6th through 8th are taught. As of May 2014, there were a total of 402 students enrolled at the school. One hundred percent of the 402 students are enrolled in the free/reduced lunch program. The demographical breakdown for the student population is as follows:

<b>Female Students</b>	188
<b>Male Students</b>	214
<b>Asian</b>	3
<b>Hispanic</b>	22
<b>African-American</b>	332
<b>White</b>	41
<b>Multi-Racial</b>	4

### Macon County Middle's Mission Statement:

To educate and support our students in order to produce lifelong learners and responsible, productive citizens.

**Macon County Middle’s Motto:**

“Every child matters and every minute counts.”

**Community Profile:**

Montezuma is one of four municipalities located in Macon County. The town was incorporated in 1854 and was named after the Aztec leader. As of the 2010 census, the town’s population is 3,460. The town is situated on the east bank of the Flint River and downtown Montezuma is on the National Register of Historic Places with architecture dating to the 1850s. There is an active Mennonite community in Montezuma.

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**Section 2. - Evaluation of existing conditions**

**Mapping – School Boundary**

Macon County Middle is the only middle school in Macon County that provides its educational services to all residents within the county boundary limits at a no-cost tuition assistance program. *(See attached Map in Appendix 1)*

**Walking and Cycling Assessments**

In order to create an efficient and effective Safe Routes to School Plan for Macon County Middle School, current conditions and feasibility for the children to either walk and/or ride their bicycles to the school must be evaluated. These assessments took place within a 0.5-1.5 mile radius from the school campus towards to the most highly populated areas where Macon County Middle School children live. A completed walk-ability and bike-ability assessment form was completed as provided by the National Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center and Georgia Department of Transportation. The results from the observations are as follows:

**Walk-Ability and Bike-Ability Assessment Photos**



These photos demonstrate the existing sidewalk along the main route that leads to the school entrance. The current networks of sidewalks within a ½ mile radius is extensive; although approximately 80% of the intersections do not provide handicap accessibility for their sidewalks.



These photos show the different angles, as well as the length of the existing sidewalk leading to the school campus. Sidewalks are in place on both sides of the street along the main access road. Furthermore, sidewalks are also buffered by a 4ft grassed area and a raised curb from the main road. All sidewalks leading to the school campus end inside the school gates up to the student drop off roundabout.

### Section 3. - Data Collection and Analysis

#### Projected Enrollment - Student Characteristics

At conclusion of the 2013-2014 school year, the student population for the school was approximately 402 students. The estimated enrollment for the 2014-2015 school year is 356.

#### Student Survey Analysis

The following table illustrates the current method of transportation to and from the school campus:

	Walking	Biking	School Bus	Family Vehicle	Carpool
	30	2	302	50	0
% of Total	7.5%	5%	75%	12.5%	

## Transportation Data

### Traffic Counts

Traffic counts for major streets surrounding Macon County Middle School were provided by the Georgia Department of Transportation. Traffic counts are as follows<sup>1</sup>:

Street	Traffic Count
Spaulding Road (Between Clifton Bradley Dr and HWY 90)	7,240
(Between HWY 90 and Vienna Rd)	5,850
(Between Vienna Rd and HWY 224)	6,230
Vienna Road (Directly across from the Middle School)	3,220

### Average Speed of Vehicles

The average speed of vehicles for a 2-mile radius from Macon County Middle School was provided by the Montezuma Police Department. According to their records, most vehicles drive at a speed between 35 and 45 MPH within most surrounding streets inside the 2-mile radius to include Vienna Rd, Spaulding Rd, HWY 90, and Drayton Rd. This speed limit is in clear accordance with the regular speed limit of 45 MPH, but poses a serious issue for students who wish to safely walk and cycle to school.

### Crash Data

Automotive crash data for Macon County was provided by the Georgia Department of Transportation. The most recent data available compiles information from 2006:

	Macon County (2006)
Actual Number of Crashes	346
Rate per 10,000 Licensed Drivers	323.6

### Conclusion of Traffic Findings:

While streets within the identified 2-mile radius have relatively low numbers in terms of accidents, the streets are still heavily traveled. Because a majority of the surrounding streets are major state highways, this poses a problem for children wanting to feel safe if they decide to walk or bicycle to school.

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## Section 4. - Policies / Plans

Macon County 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. While the school is located in the center of a residential area within the city of Montezuma, the number of students walking to school is relatively low (30 students on average). However, there are many students (302 students on average) that travel to and from school using the school bus. It is therefore evident that Macon Middle 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 Macon County Middle School embraces physical activity for its students, they do not have a wellness policy in place; hence there is no current reference to any Safe Routes to School Program. But due to their

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<sup>1</sup> Most frequently used streets

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 Bronze level with the Safe Routes to School Resource Center.

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 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 2% over the next 2014-2015 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 2014-2015 academic year.
3. **Goal:** To participate in 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 2012 and participate in the Georgia Walk to School Day in March of 2015.
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 January 2015 to be used during the 2014-2015 academic year.
5. **Goal:** To increase the number of bicycle racks at Macon County Middle School.  
**Objective:** To increase the number of bicycle racks from 0 to 1 by Spring 2015.
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/or bicycle with their children regularly from # by the end of the 2014-2015 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.

<b>Activity</b>	Bicycle Safety Training
<b>Timeline</b>	TBD
<b>Task</b>	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.
<b>Who</b>	Students, parents, and teachers.
<b>Status</b>	<a href="#">Program to be developed.</a>



<b>Activity</b>	Pedestrian Safety Training
<b>Timeline</b>	TBD
<b>Task</b>	To teach student the basic pedestrian rules and how to safely use the roads as means of transportation. Sessions will be held quarterly.
<b>Who</b>	Physical Education teachers, students, and parents.
<b>Status</b>	<a href="#">Program to be developed.</a>

<b>Activity</b>	Bicycle/Pedestrian Safety Awareness Programs and Campaigns
<b>Timeline</b>	TBD
<b>Task</b>	Involve children in the creation 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.
<b>Who</b>	Students, parents, and teachers.
<b>Status</b>	<a href="#">Program to be developed.</a>

<b>Activity</b>	Parental Safety Education Program
<b>Timeline</b>	TBD
<b>Task</b>	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.
<b>Who</b>	Students, parents, and teachers.
<b>Status</b>	<a href="#">Program to be developed.</a>

<b>Activity</b>	Personal Safety Program
<b>Timeline</b>	TBD
<b>Task</b>	Develop a personal safety program that 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.
<b>Who</b>	Students, parents, teachers, and law enforcement.
<b>Status</b>	<a href="#">School has continued 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.</a>

<b>Activity</b>	"Making Math Fun" Education using cycling elements
<b>Timeline</b>	TBD
<b>Task</b>	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.
<b>Who</b>	Students, parents, and teachers.
<b>Status</b>	<a href="#">Program to be developed.</a>

### **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 by 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:

<b>Activity</b>	Park and Walk
<b>Timeline</b>	TBD
<b>Task</b>	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.
<b>Who</b>	Students, parents, and teachers.
<b>Status</b>	<a href="#">Program to be developed.</a>

<b>Activity</b>	Activity Day "Giveaways"
<b>Timeline</b>	During the days of a bicycle/pedestrian activity
<b>Task</b>	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.
<b>Who</b>	Students, teachers, school staff, parents.
<b>Status</b>	<a href="#">Program to be developed.</a>

<b>Activity</b>	Seasonal Rides
<b>Timeline</b>	TBD
<b>Task</b>	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.
<b>Who</b>	Students, teachers, school staff, parents.
<b>Status</b>	<a href="#">Program to be developed.</a>

<b>Activity</b>	Walk and Ride Bus
<b>Timeline</b>	TBD
<b>Task</b>	Walking and Riding buses consist 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 Macon Middle School and wish to get organized to walk and bike to school together.
<b>Who</b>	Students and parents.
<b>Status</b>	<a href="#">Program to be developed and implemented.</a>

### **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 40 MPH in a 2-mile radius from Macon County Middle School. According to officials at the Montezuma Police Department, this average speed may not provide for a safe walking and cycling environment, for it is only 5 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 Macon County Middle School Staff. Following the development of such policies and procedures, enforcement efforts can begin.

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

<b>Activity</b>	“Pace Your Car Program”
<b>Timeline</b>	TBD
<b>Task</b>	This program will consist of pacing the speed of motor-vehicles on the surrounding roads of Macon County 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.
<b>Who</b>	Students, parents, teachers, traffic engineers, law enforcement.
<b>Status</b>	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:

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Data collection / Methodology</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Increase the number of student cyclists by 10% over the next academic year (2014-2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☺ Developing cycling awareness campaigns (including giveaways)</li> <li>☺ Parent and teacher initiative to support program and get children involved.</li> </ul>	Begin: September 2014 End: May 2015
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 2014-2015. This will be an ongoing effort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☺ Georgia Department of Health plays a key role in developing the policies.</li> <li>☺ Must be approved by the Macon County Board of Education and Macon County Middle School.</li> <li>☺ Should address Safe Routes to School as a means of physical activity.</li> </ul>	Begin: September 2014 End: May 2015

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Data Collection / Methodology</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Continue to participate in the National Walk and Bike to School Day on October 2014.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☺ Develop student-designed campaigns.</li> <li>☺ Involve parents, teachers, and community members.</li> </ul>	October 2014
Develop an adequate class syllabus for “Safe Walking and Safe Bicycling” class by September 2014 to be used during the 2014-2015 academic year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☺ Using a previous model, develop a Safe Walking syllabus for teachers.</li> <li>☺ Using a previous model, develop a Safe Bicycling syllabus for teachers.</li> <li>☺ This class can be taught as part of the P.E curriculum or as an extracurricular</li> </ul>	Begin: September 2014 End: May 2015

Increase the number of bicycle racks from # by May 2015.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🚲 activity.</li> <li>🚲 Request and/or generate funds to purchase bicycle racks.</li> <li>🚲 Should be supported by school officials and will promote bicycle riding to the students.</li> </ul>	Deadline: May 2015
Increase the number of parents and community members who walk and bicycle with their children by the end of the academic year 2014-2015.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🚲 Developing walking and cycling campaigns.</li> <li>🚲 Developing awareness posters and banners.</li> <li>🚲 Promoting the program to parents and the community through students and teachers.</li> </ul>	Begin: September 2014 End: May 2015

### 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:

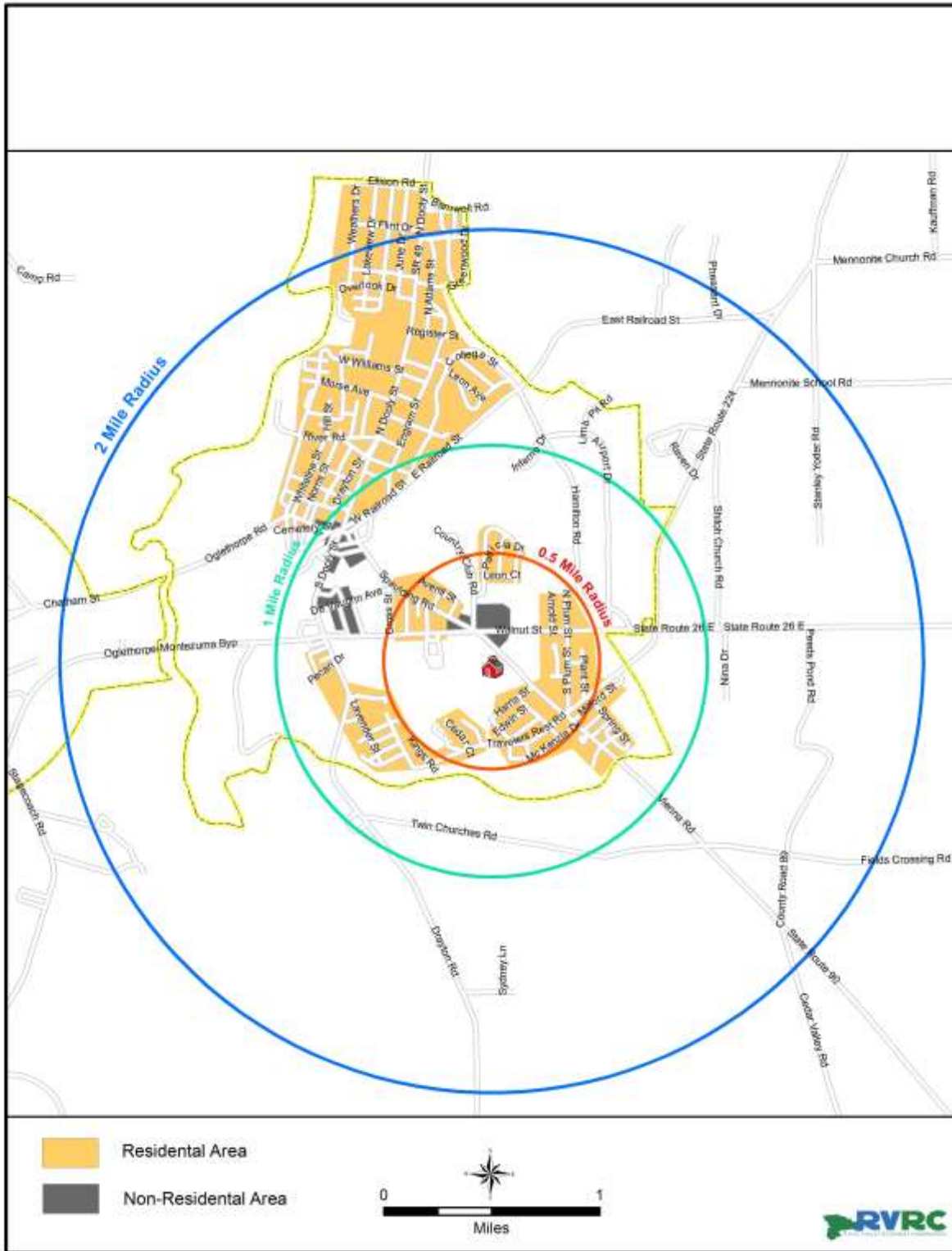
1. **School Zone Speed Limit Signs & Traffic Calming Signs:** There is currently only two School Zone Speed Limit signs, which are in great condition. These signs are only placed on Vienna Road East-West bound; there is no sign north-southbound signs which poses a clear threat to children who are walking or biking to school. Other traffic calming mechanisms, such as rumble strips, could also have a tremendous impact, due to the higher number of vehicular traffic, as well as the road width (4 lanes) which children have to cross.
2. **Painted Crossing Lines:** While children and parents that have the ability to walk to school within a 1 mile radius have adequate safety measures and infrastructure to do so, there are still improvements that can be made. Several crosswalks within the identified two mile are currently present, but due to high volume of vehicles, along with the longer width of the road, a raised cross-walk with STOP FOR PEDESTRIANS IT’S THE LAW signs could provide a safer area for children to cross. Furthermore, installing a refuge island for children to cross could also be beneficial.
3. **Electronic Crossing Signs and Bicycle racks for the school:** Our Safe Routes to School team believes that students could benefit from an electronic crossing signs at each crosswalk within a 2 mile radius of the school campus. Also, the school has no bicycle racks in place for students who wish to ride their bikes to school. This is one of the reasons that both students and teachers agreed on why children do not ride their bicycle to school.
4. **Sidewalk Construction and Road Paving:** Currently, there is a good network of sidewalk within the school and its surrounding neighborhoods. However, several areas closer to the school do not provide handicap accessibility on their sidewalks, and several crossings are not properly marked/stripped.

As stated above, there were some issues resulted from both our walk-ability and bike-ability assessments. Our final evaluation of the physical conditions of the roads and lack of sidewalks verify the need for engineering activities to take place in order to address the aforementioned issues. Our research and evaluations suggest that a number of children who attend Macon County Middle School are not walking or cycling to school due to lack of proper infrastructure. Funding for such activities will not only alleviate the current 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.

# Appendix 1:

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## Two-Mile Radius Map and School Boundary



# Appendix 2:

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## Georgia Department of Transportation Traffic Counts