

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

Introduction

Taylor County Primary, Upper Elementary, and Middle Schools are 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:

Nykia Burke	Safe Routes to School Program Representative
Sarah Knight	Safe Routes to School Program Coordinator
Julio Portillo	RVRC Bicycle and Pedestrian Planner
Kayra Velez	RVRC Assistant Planner
Lisa Reddish	Principal, Taylor County Upper Elementary
Wayne Smith	Taylor County Board of Education Superintendent
Patty Bentley	Taylor County Board of Commissioners
Freddie Harmon	Principal, Taylor County Middle School
Debi Nagy	Principal, Taylor County Primary School

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

Taylor County Primary, Upper Elementary, and Middle School are the only schools of their kind within Taylor County; therefore, the schools provide their educational services to all residents within the county boundary limits at a no-cost tuition assistance program. (See attached County Boundary Map)

Bicycling and Walking Assessments

In order to create an efficient and effective Safe Routes to School Plan for Taylor County Schools, 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 Taylor County 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:

1. Need for visible School Zone Speed Limit Signs placed on both sides of Georgia State Highway 137 (E. Main Street).
2. Although there is an existing sidewalk, it ends at the intersection between E Main Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Road, there is not sidewalk leading to the primary and upper school.
3. Need for traffic calming signs.

4. No painted crossing lines for students or pedestrians.
 5. No Bicycle racks in the schools.
 6. Existing sidewalks need handicap accessibility improvements.
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Section 3. - Data Collection and Analysis

The process of collecting Safe Routes to School data for Taylor County Primary, Upper Elementary, and Middle Schools were done through observations, interviews, walk-ability and bike-ability assessments, and parent and student surveys. A total of 725 children were surveyed (see survey in Appendix 4).

Projected Enrollment - Student Characteristics

At the start of 2010-2011, the total student population for all three schools was approximately 1,071 students. According to Mr. Wayne Smith, Taylor County School District Superintendent, they are not expecting a significant change in the size of the student population.

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 (results reflect a total for all three schools):

School Bus	Driven by parents	Carpool	Walk to school	Ride their bicycles to school
447 (41.7%)	316 (29.5%)	18 (1.7%)	7 (>1%)	0 (0%)

These results clearly demonstrate the low number of children who are walking cycling to and from school. However, despite the low number of children walking and 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+)
0	1	3	3	7

Transportation Data

Average Speed of Vehicles

The average speed of vehicles for a 1 mile radius from all three schools was provided by the City of Butler and Taylor County Police Department. According to their records, the average speed of vehicles is as follows:

- 35MPH within the surrounding areas and major roads including E. Main Street (GA Hwy 137), Oak Street, Railroad street, R L McDougald Road, Lockhart Avenue, Annie Lou Sanders Avenue, Mattie Wiggins Avenue, Hill Crest Circle, Laurel Street, Elm Street and E. Ash Street.

Traffic Counts

Traffic counts for Taylor County were provided by the Taylor County Board of Commission and the City of Butler. According to police and sheriff's department records, 71 vehicles travel through the main county roads every hour. This includes major highways within the county as well as residential and commercial areas.

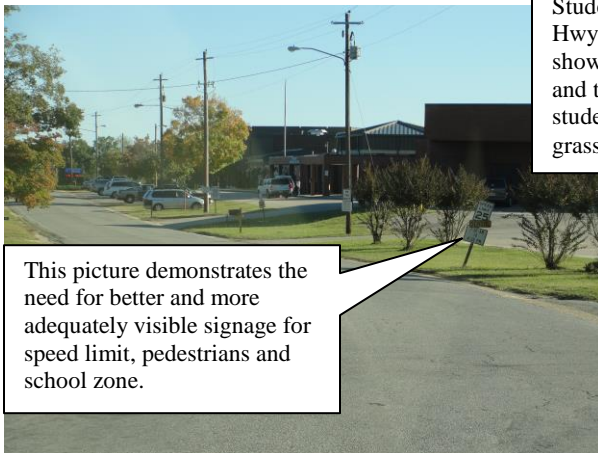
Average Speed of Vehicles

The average speed of vehicles for Taylor County was provided by the Taylor County Board of Commission and the City of Butler, according to their records, the average speed of vehicles is as follows: Major County highways, 55 MPH (rural) and 45MPH (City); Inner city roads, including residential and school areas, 35 MPH

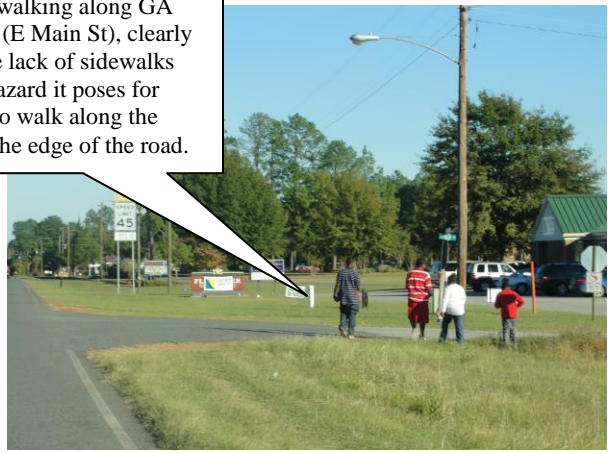
Walk-ability and Bike-ability surveys and observations – project photos



Both these pictures demonstrate the poor condition of the pedestrian crosswalks. This is the Oak Street, the road leading to the middle school.

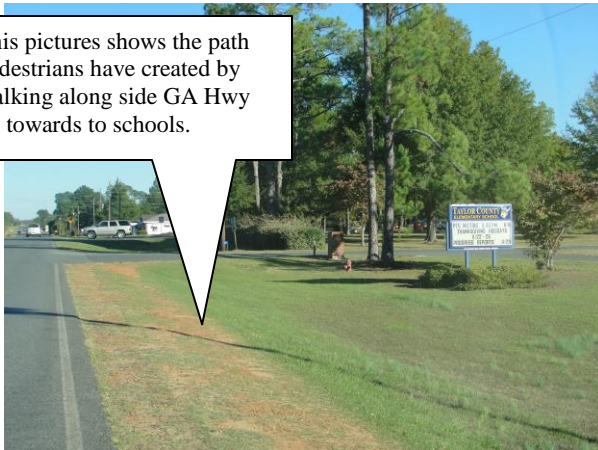


Students walking along GA Hwy 137 (E Main St), clearly shows the lack of sidewalks and the hazard it poses for students to walk along the grass on the edge of the road.



This picture demonstrates the need for better and more adequately visible signage for speed limit, pedestrians and school zone.

This pictures shows the path pedestrians have created by walking along side GA Hwy 96 towards to schools.



Better signage is needed along the GA Hwy 96 to alert motorists of the school zone and pedestrians on the road.

Section 4. - Policies / Plans

Taylor County Primary, Upper Elementary, and Middle Schools do 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 Butler, the number of students walking to school is relatively low (7 students on average). However, there are also several students (828 students on average) that travel to and from school using the school bus. It is therefore evident that Taylor County Schools have 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 Taylor County Schools embrace 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 Bronze 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 the Georgia Walk to School Day in March, 2011.

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 2011-2012 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 2011-2012 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 2011 and participate in the Georgia Walk to School Day in March of 2011.
- 4. Goal:** To increase the number of bicycle racks at all three Taylor County Schools.
Objective: To increase the number of bicycle racks from 0 to 2 by fall 2011.
- 5. 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 2011-2012 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

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 2011-May 2012
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 to be developed and implemented.

Activity	Pedestrian Safety Training
Timeline	September 2011 – May 2012
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	Training to be developed and implemented.

Activity	Bicycle/Pedestrian Safety Awareness Programs and Campaigns
Timeline	September 2011-May 2012
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	Program to be developed and implemented.

Activity	Parental Safety Education Program
Timeline	September 2011-May 2012
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	Program to be developed and implemented.

Activity	“Making Math Fun” - Education using cycling elements
Timeline	September 2011-May 2012
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 to be developed and implemented.

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 2011-May 2012
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	Program to be developed and implemented.

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	Program to be developed and implemented.

Activity	Seasonal Rides
Timeline	September 2011-May 2012
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	Program to be developed and implemented.

Activity	Walk and Ride Bus
Timeline	September 2011-May 2012
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 35 MPH on a 2 mile radius from Taylor County Schools. The City of Butler’s Police Department, as well as the Taylor County Sherriff’s Department commit to enforcing speed limits within a 2 mile radius from the schools. Furthermore, they agree that a 30-35MPH speed limit should be safe for cyclist and pedestrians. 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 staff from all three Taylor County Schools. 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 Taylor County Primary, Upper Elementary, and Middle Schools:

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	Program to be developed and implemented.

Activity	“Pace Your Car Program”
Timeline	September 2011-May 2012
Task	This program will consist of pacing the speed of motor-vehicles on the surrounding roads of Taylor County Primary, Upper Elementary, and Middle Schools. 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 (2011-2012)	<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 2011 End: May 2012
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	<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 Taylor County Schools. ☺ Should address Safe Routes to School 	Begin: September 2011 End: May 2012

2011-2012. This will be an ongoing effort.	as a means of physical activity.	
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Objective	Data Collection / Methodology	Timeline
Participate in the National Walk and Bike to School Day on October, 2011 and March 2011 for the first time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☺ Develop student-designed campaigns. ☺ Involve parents, teachers, and community members. 	October, 2011
Develop an adequate class syllabus for “Safe Walking and Safe Bicycling” class by September 2011 to be used during the 2011-2012 academic year.	<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. ☺ This class can be taught as part of the P.E curriculum or as an extracurricular activity. 	Begin: September 2011 End: May 2012
Increase the number of bicycle racks from 0 to 6 by September 2011. 2 bicycle racks per school.	<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: September, 2011
Increase the number of parents and community members who walk and bicycle with their children by the end of the academic year 2011-2012.	<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. ☺ School should encourage health benefits to both students and parents. 	Begin: September 2011 End: May 2012

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:** Taylor county middle school is the only school which is located outside of GA HWY 137 (E Main Street); it is located in Oak Street and does not provide sidewalks to access the school. Taylor County Upper and Elementary are located along GA Hwy 137 and do not possess any sidewalk or safe means to encourage children to walk or bike to school. Sidewalks are desperately needed and should connect to the sidewalks within the city of Butler and extend out to the schools. Approximate 4,100 linear feet of sidewalk are needed to provide safe pedestrian facilities to the schools and the local Park.
2. **Traffic Calming Signs:** Due to the schools location along HWY 137, 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. 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. Most of the intersections where there is an existing sidewalk, and where the proposed sidewalk would be located, need to have pedestrian crossing

marks in order to provide the necessary safety measures for pedestrian accessing the schools. Also, despite the fact the middle school does possess sidewalks, it does not possess pedestrian crossing marks and no crossing guard, therefore, students going to the middle school must cross a 30ft wide road with no pedestrian crosswalk on the road or a crossing guard.

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 137. Our Safe Routes to School team believes that students could benefit from an electronic crossing sign to cross over HWY 137, or the presence of pedestrian flashing signs to alert motorists of the presence of pedestrians. Also, none of the schools have bicycle racks in place for students cycling to the school campus. This is one of the reasons that both students and parents agreed on why children do not ride their bicycle to school.
5. **Handicap Access:** Currently, the existing sidewalks in the city are relatively new, and do provide for adequate handicap access, however, most of them do not provide truncated domes for the blind. Also, the new proposed sidewalk should address ADA compliance and provide for good handicap access to accommodate all users.

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 seven students from Taylor County Schools are 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.