



Memo

To: Charlton County Schools, Interested Parties, General Public
From: Transportation & Environment Staff, Southern Georgia Regional Commission
CC: Chelsea Carter, Georgia SRTS School Outreach Coordinator – South Georgia
Date: 3/10/2020
Re: Safe Routes to School 5-Year Crash Trends in Charlton County, GA from 2015 to 2019

Introduction

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission and the state of Georgia's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program partner with local governments and agencies to determine how to make roads and public right-of-way safer for all users. Traffic safety around schools is a key concern due to the combination of vulnerable road users (in particular, children who walk or bike to school), periods of high traffic volume (e.g., school pick-up and drop-off times), high-risk drivers (e.g., high school students), and school bus traffic. The purpose of this memo is to provide information regarding traffic safety around schools in Charlton County. This information may be used to help determine future investments in transportation infrastructure; to identify priorities for road user education and law enforcement; and to inform future transportation plans and policies.

This memo examines crash trends for locations within 1 mile of Charlton County public schools. Over the past five years, from Jan. 1, 2015 to Dec. 31, 2019, according to the most recent data provided by the Georgia Department of Transportation, Charlton County experienced 977 crashes in the public right-of-way, with 13 fatalities and 293 injuries. Out of this total, 272 crashes occurred within 1 mile of a school and 71 occurred within ½ mile of a school.

In all of Charlton County in 2015-2019, there were 4 crashes involving school buses. Only one of these resulted in an injury; the party injured was the 18-year-old driver of a car that failed to yield to a school bus. None of the middle school students aboard the school bus were injured. Of the other crashes, one on 9/14/2018 involved a distracted driver rear-ending a school bus that had stopped to drop off elementary and middle school passengers. The other two crashes involved school buses making turns; one bus, on 11/8/2019, struck an electric transformer, likely due to driver error, causing a brief

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neighborhood power outage. The other incident, on 1/10/2018, involved a school bus colliding with a private car while both vehicles were making a right turn.

Of the 12 fatal crashes that occurred during this time period, 2 occurred within 1 mile of a school. Neither appears to have been school-related.

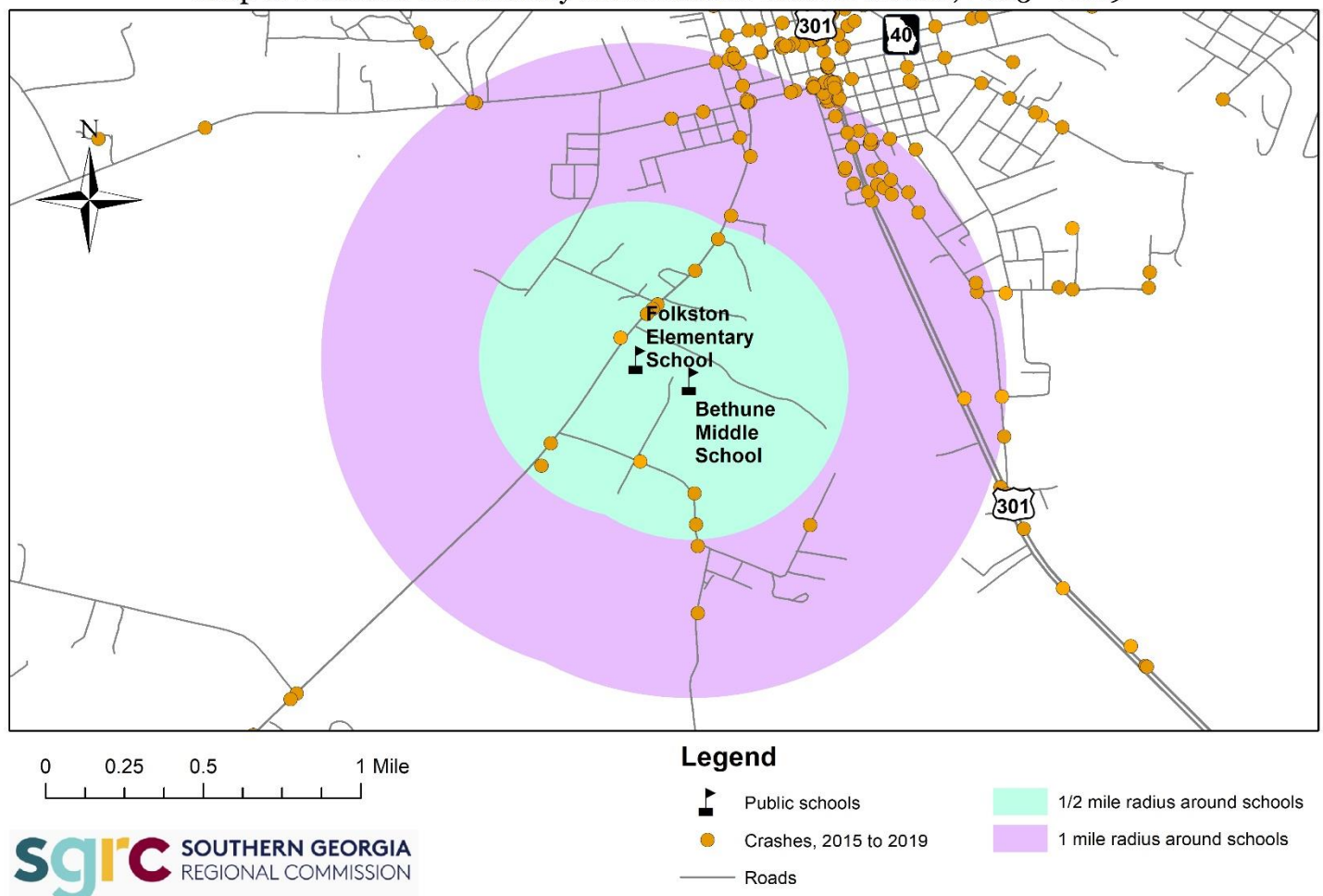
9 crashes within this time period involved pedestrians (with 2 fatalities) and 1 crash resulted in the death of a bicyclist. All those involved were adults, including the victims, and none of the crashes appear to be school-related. One additional crash on 11/17/2019 involved a 14-year-old driving a golf cart, but the incident was not related to school transportation.

169 of the 977 total crashes (17%) involved drivers under age 18, highlighting the need for better training and safety measures for teen drivers. In total, these crashes resulted in 32 injuries, but no fatalities.

In the remainder of this memo, we discuss transportation safety around each school in more detail.

Crashes within 1 mile of Charlton County Schools

Map 1: Folkston Elementary and Bethune Middle School, 2015 - 2019



Map 1: Crashes within ½- and 1-mile radii of Folkston Elementary School and Bethune Middle School.

Data Source: Georgia Electronic Accident Reporting System (GEARS).

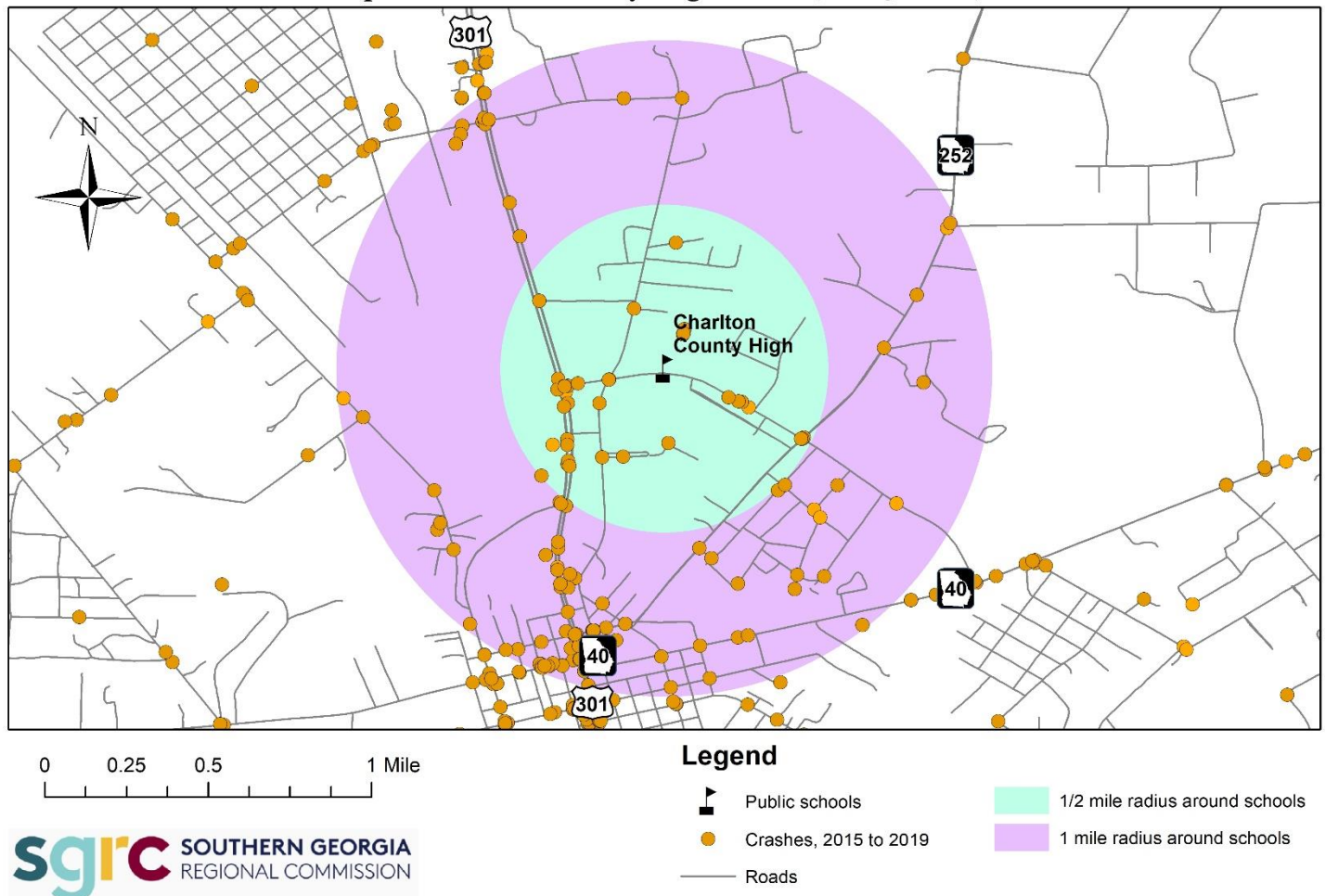
Map 1 shows crashes from 2015 to 2019 in ½- and 1-mile radii around Folkston Elementary School and Bethune Middle School. These schools are analyzed together in this report due to their close proximity to each other. As can be seen on the map, the 1-mile radius includes a portion of the central part of the City of Folkston where there is more traffic and have been correspondingly more crashes, most of which were likely unrelated to school traffic. From 2015 to 2019, 11 crashes occurred within ½ mile of these schools, and 79 within 1 mile.

A few crashes in close proximity to these schools were possibly related to school transportation. One crash near to the schools on 10/31/2015 involved a 17-year-old driver rear-ending another vehicle. Another, on 1/24/2019, involved a minor collision in the elementary school parking lot.

These schools are connected to the residential neighborhoods of Folkston by sidewalks set back approximately 20 feet from the roadway, providing a relatively safe and inviting walking environment. The schools are about 1 mile from Downtown Folkston.

Crashes within 1 mile of Charlton County Schools

Map 2: Charlton County High School, 2015 - 2019



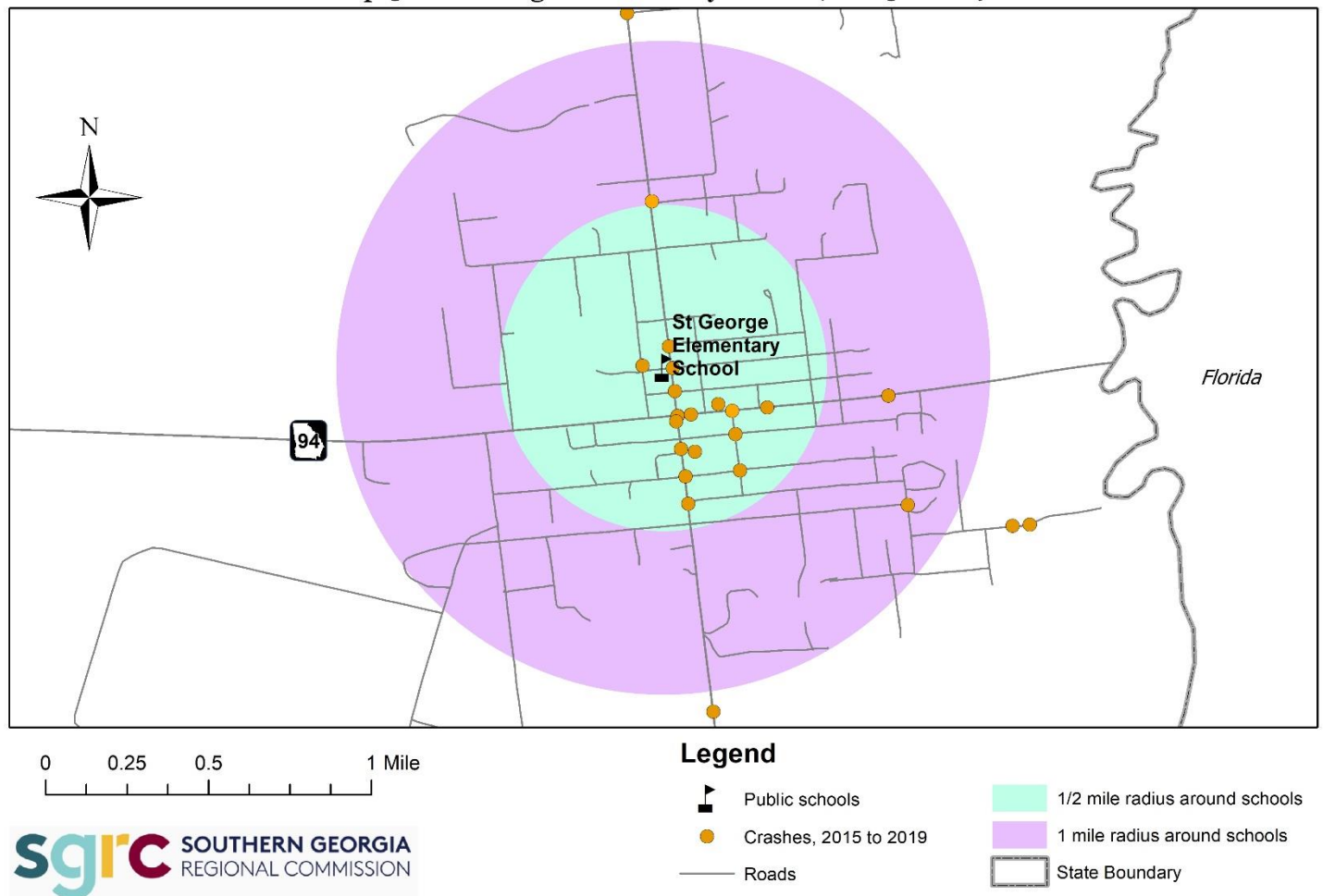
Map 2: Crashes within ½- and 1-mile radii of Charlton County High School.
Data Source: Georgia Electronic Accident Reporting System (GEARS).

Map 2 shows crashes near Charlton County High School. From 2015 to 2019, 40 crashes occurred within ½ mile of this school, and 170 within 1 mile. 40 percent of these crashes involved a driver under age 18 (this percentage was the same for the ½-mile and 1-mile radii), compared with 17 percent county-wide, suggesting there may be a safety problem associated with high school students driving to and from school.

The school is approximately 1.4 miles from Downtown Folkston, and is connected to Downtown and to several residential areas by sidewalks on 3rd Street, Indian Trail, and Burnt Fort Road.

Crashes within 1 mile of Charlton County Schools

Map 3: St. George Elementary School, 2015 - 2019



Map 3: Crashes within ½- and 1-mile radii of St. George Elementary School.
Data Source: Georgia Electronic Accident Reporting System (GEARS).

Map 3 shows crashes around St. George Elementary Schools. The school is in a central location in this small community, and the cluster of crashes observable near the school is most likely related to the population density and higher traffic in this area.

Only one crash appears to be directly related to school traffic. A crash on 4/23/2015 involved a driver backing out of a parking space at the school into the path of another vehicle. There were no injuries.

Actions and Looking Ahead

A clear trend of crashes involving teen drivers near to the high school is observable, and training programs to address teen driver safety, like the Georgia Department of Transportation's Teens in the Driver Seat (<https://www.t-driver.com/>), are recommended.

Sidewalks are recommended for State Route 23 around St. George Elementary School, if feasible.

Existing sidewalks connecting to the elementary, middle, and high schools in Folkston are adequate but aging. Sidewalks should be repaired, updated, and brought up to modern standards as needed.

Due to the crashes that have occurred involving school buses, community outreach with regard to school bus safety and distracted driving is recommended. It is also recommended that school bus driver training practices should be reviewed and school bus routes reviewed for safety.