

## **Texas Safe Routes to School Program**

### **Smithville, TX Safe Routes to School Plan**

**2009-2010**

Amended: October 2010

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### Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	2
1a. Transportation Elements in 2007 Comprehensive Plan.....	4
1b. Connectivity Initiative .....	6
2. The Safe Routes to School Team .....	9
3. The Public Input Process .....	10
4. School description.....	11
5. Travel Environment.....	11
6. Barriers to Active Transportation.....	16
7. Outreach and Publicity Strategy .....	20
8. Creating Solutions .....	21
Goals .....	21
Strategies.....	21
Engineering Strategies within two miles of schools .....	24
9.a. Education Strategies .....	26
9.b. Encouragement Strategies .....	27
9.c. Enforcement Strategies.....	27
9.d. Evaluation Strategies.....	28
10. The Action Plan.....	30
11. Evaluation, Coordination, and Support Activities:.....	31
12. Plan Endorsements .....	32
13. Supporting Files and Images .....	33
Appendix 1 .....	34
1. Caregiver Survey.....	34
2. Student Survey.....	34
How Walkable or Bikeable is Your Community?.....	35
We need you to help the Smithville Independent School District (SISD) and the City of Smithville create the Safe Routes to School Plan! .....	35
Jill Strube, Ph.D. ....	35
Safe Routes to School Caregiver Survey .....	36
Appendix 2 .....	42
Stakeholder Team and Public input about the need for Safe Routes .....	42

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## **Smithville, TX Safe Routes to School Plan**

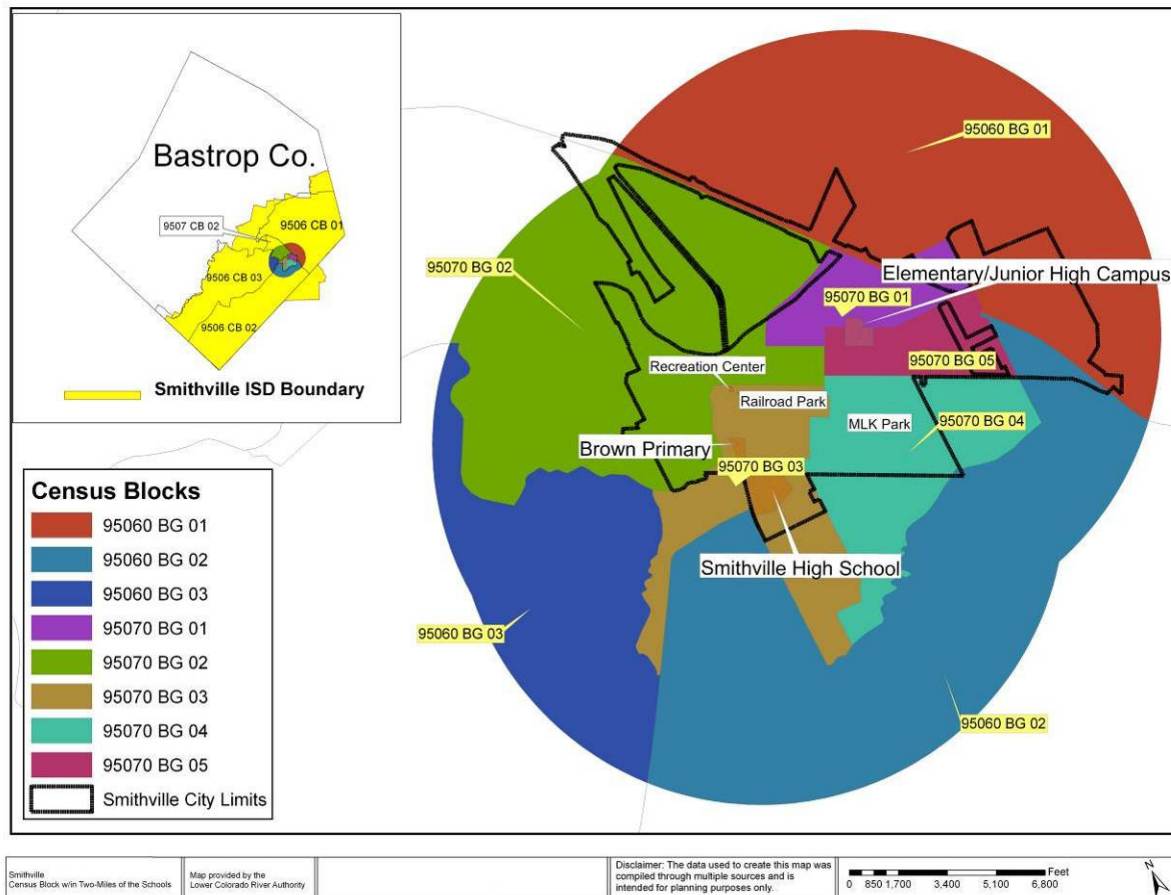
**2009-2010**

### ***1. Introduction***

Community members in Smithville find that transportation is one of the major components of a good quality of life. Transportation and connectivity issues are relevant to many concerned citizens in Smithville, and have brought many partners together to plan, implement, and improve our town. The Smithville Safe Routes to School (SSRTS) Plan was developed through the Comprehensive Planning process, targeted surveys, and public participation efforts to solicit ideas and solutions from as many members of the community as possible. This document describes the Transportation elements of the 2007 Comprehensive Plan, the 2009 development of a broad Smithville Transportation Plan (STP), and the specific Safe Routes to School component of the broader community plan.

At about two square miles in area, the community is small enough to be able to walk or bike to nearly any desired location, in theory. In practice, the lack of sidewalks in most locations and their hodge-podge, chaotic availability, the narrow streets, and the wide ditches discourage school children from wanting to walk, bike, skate, or otherwise avoiding the family roadster to get where they want to go. If the child would be eager to utilize physically active means of getting to school, many parents think twice about allowing them to do so. For this reason, the Smithville Independent School District (SISD) and City of Smithville have become partners in seeking funding through the Safe Routes to School program at the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT).

Figure 1 illustrates the Smithville Independent School District boundaries, the City of Smithville's boundaries, and highlights the four schools that serve our community: Brown Primary, Smithville Elementary, Smithville Junior High, and Smithville Senior High. The schools eligible for SRTS K-8 funding are located approximately a mile from each other, and the High School is located within a mile from the city's center.



**Figure 1: Smithville Independent School District Boundaries and Two Mile Radius around Schools**

### Policy Statement:

The Smithville Independent School District (SISD) and the City of Smithville are committed to ensuring that all our students can utilize physically active transportation, such as walking and bicycling, for a safe and enjoyable trip to school. The Smithville Safe Routes to School (SSRTS) Plan aims to address the issues that 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 highly value student physical activity and health.
- We hope to reduce the number of vehicles at our school campuses (through walking and biking programs, but also through encouraging carpools).
- We want to improve the air quality and environment around our schools.
- We wish to improve unsafe and insufficient walkways, bikeways, and crossings.
- We are committed to reducing speeding and reckless driving near schools.
- We want to address concerns over drug-related activities near the school.

The SSRTS Plan is respectfully submitted to the Texas Department of Transportation for their approval and to seek funding from the Safe Routes to School Request for Proposal. The City of Smithville greatly appreciates the citizen input that was required to create this document, and the Smithville community greatly appreciates the assistance from TXDOT in designing, funding, and implementing this Plan.

Although integral to our economy and historically an important element of city development, the railroad tracks divide the community quite severely. As Figure 1 illustrates, Brown Primary and the Elementary/Junior High school campuses are located approximately one mile of each other. Of our 17 bus routes, six transport children who live within two miles of their schools through the state's Hazardous Route program. Our community is split by the Union Pacific, LCRA railroad tracks. In fact, one neighborhood ("Up on the Hill") cannot get anywhere without crossing tracks from either of two exits from the area.

### **1a. Transportation Elements in 2007 Comprehensive Plan**

In 2007, the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) worked together with the City Council Appointed Citizens' Board to develop the City of Smithville Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan addressed land use, economic and community development, downtown revitalization, and housing, and included an implementation guideline. In 2009, the newly appointed Grants Administrator (hired to fulfill one of the Comprehensive Plan recommendations) reconvened the Board in an open Town Hall meeting to discuss what had been accomplished since the Plan had been approved, what other elements or projects might have come to the attention of the citizens in the meantime, and how to prioritize grant-seeking activities.

The 2007 Comprehensive Plan described Smithville as a "bedroom community that relies on adjacent communities to provide for most of its retail and employment... There is ample opportunity for Smithville to provide for the expected population growth on land that is currently within its ETJ [Extraterritorial Jurisdiction]... The Comprehensive Plan lays out policies that will enable Smithville to grow while protecting and enhancing its quality of life to become more of a complete community that is not so reliant on its neighbors for services and employment" (p. 3-9).

The 2007 Comprehensive Plan identified the need to site future development where it would have a minimal impact on existing land uses, yet be sited to take advantage of existing infrastructure. In addition, the land use inventory was used to identify areas that may be underserved by community facilities, such as parks and schools, in order to target resources to the areas that will be of maximum benefit for the community as a whole. Specific transportation and connectivity projects identified in the 2007 Comprehensive Plan include (discussed in more detail in the next section):

- Increase Pedestrian Safety and Amenities
- Improve Pedestrian Amenities Downtown
- Increase River Accessibility at Gazley Creek
- Build and Improve the Hike and Bike Trail Network

In 2009, the Grants Administrator revisited the Comprehensive Plan and found that “connectivity” is still a very important subject for all community members.

Understanding utilization of our land is instrumental in designing appropriate and efficient infrastructure enhancements. The 2007 Comprehensive Plan found that land use in the Smithville Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) is primarily agricultural in the approximately 2,500 parcels covering about 11,000 acres. Agricultural land also dominates the uses within the city itself. Table 1 describes the various land uses within Smithville city limits.

**Table 1. Land Use in 2007 within Smithville City Limits**

<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Agricultural	586.2	44.4%
Commercial	44.3	3.4%
Industrial	62.9	4.8%
Mixed use	36	2.7%
Office	2.8	0.2%
Public	162	12.3%
Residential	304.7	23.1%
Retail	15.0	1.1%
Railroad ROW	20.7	1.6%
Vacant	84.9	6.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1319.5</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Source: LCRA Smithville 2007 Comprehensive Plan*

*NOTE: 1319 acres equals approximately 2 square miles.*

Street Right of Way (ROW) was not calculated on the table above, but Smithville easements are 70 foot wide. This includes paved roads and alley ways, dirt alleys, drainage ditches, and unpaved portions that can potentially be paved for bike/ pedestrian paths adjacent to street infrastructure. The City will continue to work with neighbors and land owners to establish the need for additional use of the easement adjacent to their property in order to provide for the safety of our children where this becomes an issue. Well-attended public participation events, good relationships with the individuals involved, and goodwill in the community are integral components to making any road project successful.

## **1b. Connectivity Initiative**

Based on the March 2009 town hall meeting to “Revisit the Comprehensive Plan,” the Smithville “Connectivity Initiative” was established. The LCRA did a drive-by sidewalk inventory (which has been posted on the City’s website for comments and corrections) to assist in our discussions of how to manage sidewalk improvements. Employees at Union Pacific have been contacted to negotiate appropriate solutions to improving railroad cross-over conditions for pedestrians, bicycles, and persons in other vehicles. This section will discuss these and several other “big picture” improvements that community leaders and the citizens of Smithville have determined to be important, and will provide a road map for the City Council to consider as they approve various funding and grant-seeking proposals for the next five years. Although this plan will be subject to change based on economic conditions, citizen input, unforeseeable events or need for repair or construction, and so on, as wise planners intrinsically understand: “if you fail to plan, you plan to fail.”

In concert with the 2007 Comprehensive Plan and the 2009 Revisitation, the following proposals are important both conceptually and concretely to better connect the neighborhoods in Smithville, especially to the downtown area and to the schools:

- **Increase Pedestrian Safety and Amenities.**  
Identify common pedestrian routes through town, prioritize needed improvements to enhance connectivity, and identify funding sources for trail, pedestrian, and bicycle improvements
- **Improve Pedestrian Amenities Downtown.**  
Ensure that sidewalks are safe and connected to the rest of the community, provide additional restroom facilities, consider lighting needs, and identify potential for Pocket Parks in the downtown area
- **Increase River Accessibility at Gazley Creek.**  
Include walking trails, picnic facilities, and other amenities; starting at the historic bridge at 4<sup>th</sup> and Hwy 95, ending at the end of Main Street.
- **Build and Improve the Hike and Bike Trail Network.**  
The Comprehensive Plan maps out extensive hike and bike trails to connect city parks (including the public park on the Hill and Riverbend Park on highway 71) and Buescher State Park.
- **Improve Connections across the Rail Road Tracks.**  
Currently, three roads connect the North and South Sides of Smithville. These need to be enhanced to encourage citizens to cross for social, cultural, business, education, and many other purposes. Hwy 95 is a high-speed arterial with no pedestrian/bike amenities and must be improved to increase safety for the children

and adults who use this important corridor by alternative transportation modes. Taylor Street crosses eight railroad tracks taking up two full city blocks with no safe designation for people traveling without a vehicle. Marburger is a small connection located near the widely-used Little League facilities that should be enhanced to better connect the two areas. In addition, we propose to request that LCRA and Union Pacific work with us to re-establish the historic pedestrian pathway at Main Street.

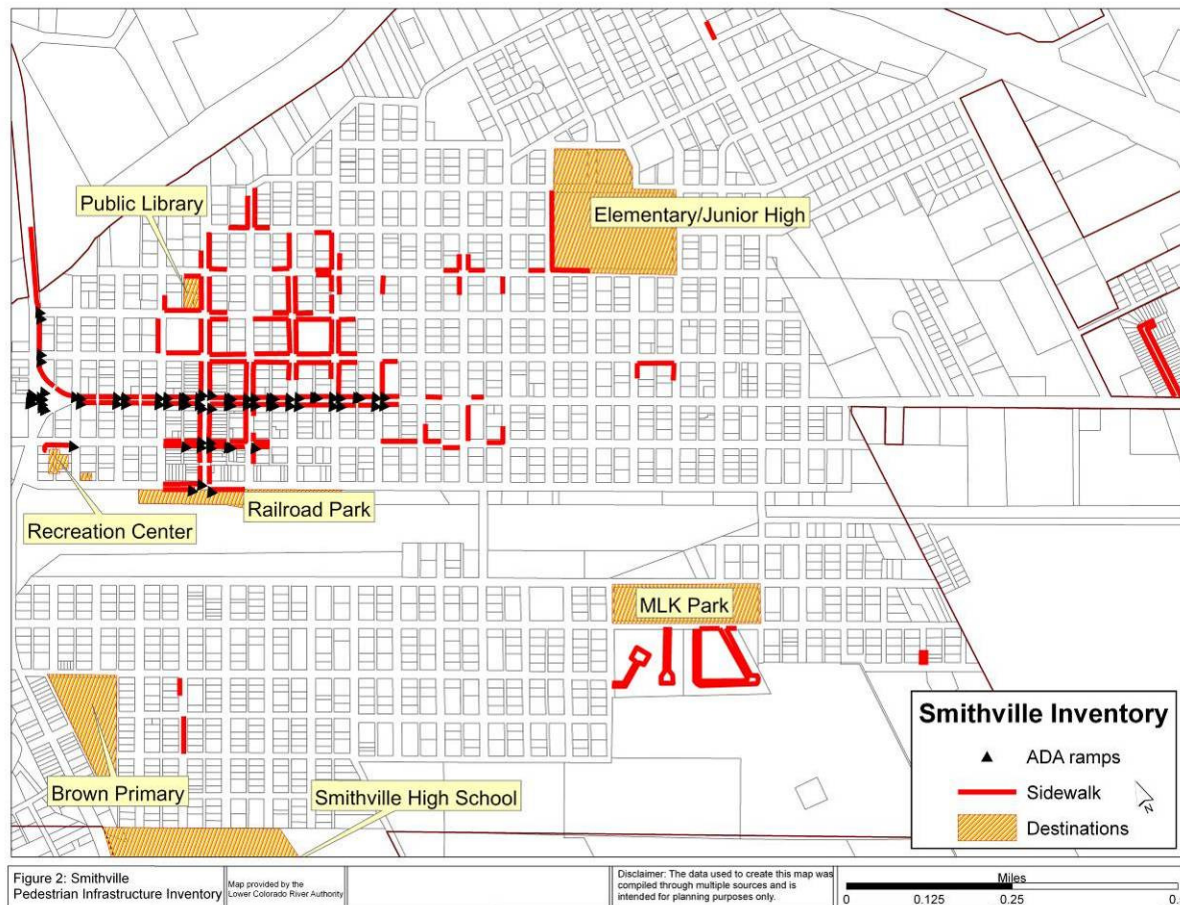
- **Improve Safety at 4<sup>th</sup> and 95 (Entrance to the neighborhood “On the Hill”).**  
Prospective improvements for general safety and active transportation include an additional pedestrian / bicycle bridge built parallel to the historic one-lane car bridge across Gazley Creek, a pedestrian / bike trail up the length of 4<sup>th</sup> to the city park on Maple, and improved signage at the intersection and speed signs along the road. At the intersection, the railroad tracks are located on a dangerous rise, making it difficult to gauge oncoming traffic whether in a protected vehicle or out in the open. Specific improvements designed to facilitate active transportation for school-aged children at this intersection include a marked crosswalk area, a flashing light, and crossing guards during school hours.
- **Improve Signage throughout the Community**  
The City provides signage as required, especially when citizens register their concerns at unsafe intersections. For example, work orders on July 9, 2009 called for stop signs at three intersections (Mills and 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Mills and 7<sup>th</sup> Street, and Mills and 8<sup>th</sup> Street), which were based on a Smithville Police Department survey conducted in May, 2009. The survey was initiated due to a citizen who called in his concern about the safety of these intersections. Additional signage will be provided as the Connectivity Initiative increases the ability of citizens to state their concerns over the internet and throughout various public participation events.
- **Work with the goals of the Bastrop County Comprehensive Transportation Plan**  
Priority projects include re-establishing passenger rail service to Austin and Houston, improving Hwys 95 and 71, building hike and bike trails, and various other projects. The City of Smithville is dedicated to working with Bastrop County to bring the projects relevant to our City to fruition.
- **Improve Safety and Increase Opportunities for School Children to Walk / Bike / Skate to School**  
Specific improvements related to the Safe Routes to School TXDOT grant opportunity for our K-8 schools will be discussed in depth in the next section. Other improvements that are not eligible for funding through this grant opportunity



include a left turn lane from Hwy 95 at 4<sup>th</sup> Street in front of the Bus Barn, traffic calming measures at the two large day care facilities, and a pedestrian / bike path linking the high school with the Colorado River Bridge along Hwy 95.

Figure 2 shows the results of the sidewalk inventory that LCRA provided to the City of Smithville. This has been posted on the city's website for verification, correction, and level of service (LOS) designation. It also illustrates how chaotic and uncoordinated the sidewalk connections are. In this respect, it may not make fiscal sense to try to connect these short paths around town, but creating new on-street designated bike/pedestrian paths may be our best option to encourage transportation that requires physical activity. Extending our vision of a "hike and bike" network to include "urban hiking" may be our most appropriate solution to a clear safety problem.

Not only do pedestrians, cyclists, and skate boarders regularly use the road, many community members choose unique forms of personal transportation such as motorized wheelchairs, small lawn tractors, and golf carts, which our own PD uses. Providing safe, marked, enhanced on-street bicycle / pedestrian facilities for these uses will improve the safety for many community members.



**Figure 2. Lower Colorado River Association City of Smithville Sidewalk Inventory, June 2009**

## ***2. The Safe Routes to School Team***

The importance of the diversity in our community cannot be overstated. Virtually all of our community programs and committees, both through government-related organizations like the Chamber of Commerce and the Health Initiative Task Force as well as private and non-profit organizations like the Food Pantry and the Garden Club rely on the resources and skills that all our community members have to offer. In the mid 1800s, even before the city became a city, residents organized to bring in teachers and build a school; from that time to now, Smithville has a long, rich history of community action to organize significant projects and nurture them to improve the quality of life in this rural town.

Like other citizen organizations, the SSRTS Team brings various perspectives and expertise, and represents various aspects of student needs. Our greatest hope is to make walking, bicycling, and skateboarding to school more safe, accessible, and fun for our students.

The stakeholders on our Team include:

- School Administrators:
  - Dr. Rock McNulty, Superintendent of Schools
  - Zach Harris, Director of Maintenance/Transportation
- Teachers:
  - Sara Swearingen, Elementary Resource Teacher
  - Stacy Campbell, Junior High Technology Applications
- Parents:
  - Melissa Slepekis
  - Tiffany Orsak
  - Dennis Koch
  - Michelle Rutherford
- Elected Officials:
  - Howard Burns, School Board Member
  - Robert Tamble, City Council Member
  - Lenel Tamez, City Council Member
- Law Enforcement:
  - Rudy Supak, Chief of Police
  - Greg Stewart, School Resource Officer
  - Ronald Jones, Municipal Judge
- City Employees:
  - Judy Bergeron, Director of the Library
  - Jill Strube, Grants Administrator
  - Jack Page, Fire Marshall, Director of Public Works and Utilities
- Other Community Organizations
  - Norma Rodriguez, Director of the FBC Sonshine School Daycare

The Champion (primary) contact person for our SRTS Plan is:

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Organization: City of Smithville

Stakeholder contributions to the development and execution of the Plan:

The Stakeholder Team has come together for various meetings, speedy replies through email correspondence, and support in a wide variety of issues, including taking photos, conducting surveys, and public participation efforts. (Please see stakeholder comments in Appendix 2.)

### ***3. The Public Input Process***

Our Team worked to include the entire community in developing our SRTS Plan. To accomplish this, we solicited ideas, input, feedback, and advice using the following methods:

- Administered caregiver and student surveys (surveys and results are in Appendix 1)
  - Every teacher in eligible SISD schools administered student surveys
  - Only a few students who were absent that day did not participate (about 10 in all)
  - Caregiver surveys have been available since August 24, 2009.
- Provided information and updates on the City of Smithville website (<http://www.ci.smithville.tx.us/Smithville-Comprehensive-Plan/Transportation/Safe-Routes-to-School.aspx>)
- Hosted public and Stakeholder Team meetings on August 24, September 8, and September 25, 2009.
- Gave informational reports and solicited additional input at community meetings including City Council Meeting, the School Board meeting, and the “Tiger Team” meeting (which included principals and key staff from all SISD schools).
- Interviewed key stakeholders: School Superintendent, Principals, Director of Transportation/Maintenance, School Nurse, and parents
- Solicited student opinions through an additional interview process
- Incorporated our city’s existing bike, and /or pedestrian plan recommendations (as per our Comprehensive Plan of 2007)
- Incorporated our school wellness policy objectives

#### **4. School description**

Our SRTS Plan addresses the needs of multiple schools in close proximity within the Smithville City's Independent School District. The school district and the primary, elementary, and middle schools included in our SRTS Plan is/are:

Smithville Independent School District  
Red Brick School House, Administrative Offices  
901 NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street  
Smithville, TX 78957

Brown Primary (Pre-K to Grade 2)  
403 SW 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
Smithville, TX 78957

Smithville Elementary School (Grades 3-5)  
800 Bishop Street  
Smithville, TX 78957

Smithville Junior High School (Grades 6 to 8)  
801 Wilkes Street  
Smithville, TX 78957

The environment type is: Rural  
The type of school: Elementary and Middle

**Table 1. Student Participation Data for the 2009-10 School Year**

	<b>Brown Primary</b>	<b>SMV Elementary</b>	<b>SMV Jr. High</b>
Total number of enrolled students	407	363	332
% participating in a free or reduced lunch program	65.3	56.4	50.7

*Source: Smithville Independent School District.*

#### **5. Travel Environment**

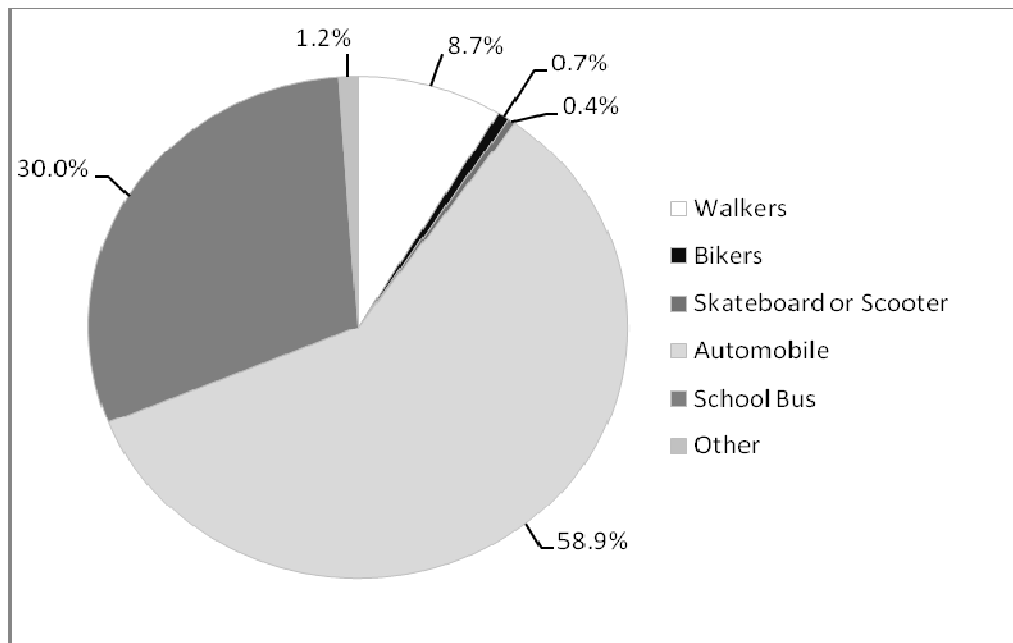
In all grades, by percentage, our students travel to and from school using the following modes of transportation (see Table 2 and Figure 3). The table below also shows the various percentages by school.

**Table 2. Student Modes of Travel**

Mode	Walk	Bike	Skate/ Scooter	Auto- mobile	School Bus	Other
All Grades	8.7	0.7	0.4	<b>58.9</b>	30.0	0.4
Brown Primary (Pre-K to Grade 2)	3.0	0.0	0.5	<b>63.2</b>	32.0	1.3
Elementary (Grades 3 to 5)	9.5	1.4	0.6	<b>54.9</b>	31.4	2.2
Junior High (Grades 6 to 8)	14.2	0.8	0.3	<b>58.2</b>	26.5	0.0

Source: Classroom Survey of School Children in Smithville ISD during the week of August 30, 2009. Total respondents: 1113 (10 students were absent).

NOTE: Although Smithville is home to the Capitol Area Rural Transit System (CARTS), this is not a public transportation system that would take children to school; we do not have a public transportation system per se.



**Figure 3. Travel to school by percentage**

Based on block group data from the 2000 Census, approximately 51% of children ages 5-11 live in the five main census block groups surrounding the schools, or approximately within two miles of the eligible schools. The remaining 49% live in the three block groups that approximate the SISD boundaries (see Figure 1 for a graphic representation of the block group borders within the ISD and that intersect the City of Smithville).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau: Factfinder, 2000 Block Group Data: P36. OWN CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS BY FAMILY TYPE AND AGE [20] - Universe: Own children under 18 years. [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov).

At this time, discussions with several parents outside of the two-mile radius of eligible schools lead us to believe it is not yet feasible to consider a remote drop off situation. Between the dangerous roads making it difficult for students to bike to a pick up point, the railroad barrier between the two campuses making a single drop off point in town unrealistic, and the nature of after-school activities for which parents must come to school anyway to pick up their children after hours, it is not likely to be a solution that many will endorse. However, we believe that we can work with parents to meet other SRTS goals (such as reduced congestion and pollution) by developing a carpool program. For example, Table 2 shows the high numbers of students traveling to school in private vehicles; we plan to pursue the possibility of increasing carpools from areas in the SISD that are very far from the schools in order to reduce the number of students (currently at about 50 percent) who drive to school with their caregivers.

The Smithville Independent School District and the City of Smithville currently partner to provide the following supports and activities during student travel times:

- Staff presence during drop-off/pick up
- Law enforcement support
- School traffic safety plan
- Neighborhood Watch (promoted each year by SPD's participation in the National Night Out program)

Current school arrival and dismissal procedures and maps are available in Attachment A (Brown Primary), Attachment B (Smithville Elementary), and Attachment C (Smithville Junior High School).

At **Brown Primary**, our school arrival and dismissal procedures include the following:

For pedestrians and bicyclists: Walkers and bike riders will line up inside the East end of Building One. They will be released by the teacher on duty approximately 15 minutes after the dismissal bell rings to allow cars to get through the car line prior to letting them go. NOTE: there is one bike rack with a capacity for ~20 bikes at the east side of Brown Primary.

For school buses: The bus circle in front of the school is for bus drop-off in the morning and bus pick-up in the afternoon. There are signs posted where lines of bus riders wait in the afternoon to be put on their bus.

For carpools: No specific procedures are indicated in the handbook.

For private vehicle drop-off/pick-up: There are two locations to drop-off and pick-up car riders. The west side, closest to Hwy. 95 is for ALL Pre-K and Kindergarten students and their siblings. The east side is for everyone else. Faculty and staff are located at the drop-off and pick-up locations before and after school to assist students getting in and out of cars. For both morning and afternoon procedures, vehicles drive through the alleyways (south

to north) in a one-way traffic pattern and remain in a single line to drop off or pick up students at one of three or four designated points near each of the school doors.

For teachers and staff: No specific procedures are indicated in the handbook. Parking for faculty and staff is located at several lots around campus.

Other school travel policies include specific procedures for drop-off and pick-up: Vehicles are not allowed to drive through the bus circle during drop-off, pick-up times because it is designated for school buses. No one may drive in the bus circle at any time during the day when a bus is in the circle. At no time is parking permitted along the curb or drive through area.

At **Smithville Elementary**, our school arrival and dismissal procedures include the following:

For pedestrians and bicyclists: Walkers will be dismissed to Bishop St. and will not be allowed to walk through the Jr. High campus or bus area after school without prior approval from the principal.

For school buses: The bus drop-off and pick-up area is located in the area between the Elementary and Junior High campuses. Students are dropped off in the morning, and make their way to their grade-level morning reporting area. After school, students will line up at designated areas for the specific bus routes until they are escorted as a group, by a staff member to their bus.

For carpools: No specific procedures are indicated in the handbook.

For private vehicle drop-off/pick-up: Please pick up and drop off 3rd to 5th grade students on Bishop Street. It is a one-way street running south to north during school hours Monday through Friday. Vehicles may not drop students off in the south parking lot or in the area between Junior High and Elementary School. These areas are reserved for bus pick up and drop off.

For teachers and staff: No specific procedures are indicated in the handbook; faculty staff parking is located in the lot south of the main building.

Other school travel policies include: A request to drive slowly and carefully in our school area. A little extra time will ensure the safety of all students.

At **Smithville Junior High School**, our school arrival and dismissal procedures include the following:

For pedestrians and bicyclists: No specific procedures are indicated in the handbook.

For school buses: The bus drop-off and pick-up area is located in the area between the Elementary and Junior High campuses. Students are dropped off in the morning, and make their way to their grade-level morning reporting areas.

For carpools: No specific procedures are indicated in the handbook.

For private vehicle drop-off/pick-up: Drop off and pick up points for students are on 9th Street on the north end of the main building. Vehicles should be heading east on 9th Street, pull in to the drop off/pick up area on the north end of the main building, drop off/pick up students and continue east on 9th Street. Drivers may also stop on Wilkes Street on the east side of the main building

For teachers and staff: No specific procedures are indicated in the handbook. Faculty and Staff parking is located in the parking lot north of NE 9th Street, across from the main building.

Other school travel policies include: The interior parking lot by the annex is closed from 7:30 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. for student safety.

NOTE: three bike racks capable of holding up to 50 bikes are shared on the campus for both the Elementary School and the Junior High.

### **Buses and Other School Vehicles**

The District makes school bus transportation available to all students living two or more miles from school. This service is provided at no cost to students, and is partially subsidized by TXDOT. Bus routes and any subsequent changes are posted at the school.

Our school provides “**hazardous route**” busing to students (students who are within walking/bicycle distance are bussed due to serious safety hazard. For example, students who must cross streets with high vehicle speeds and/or volumes, or railroad tracks, etc. are bused to school). In our community, six of 17 buses provide hazardous route service due to the railroad that splits our city and Loop 230.

No buses are available for students who have to cross Short Street, except those that go to the Library for the After School Homework program, as a special service just for those students enrolled. Other students who want to go to the library provide their own means of transportation.

Our school is already engaged in activities that enhance safe and active student travel, including: Staffing of the campus areas where students are dropped off and picked up; staff escorts to buses; crosswalk assistance on a few crosswalks immediately adjacent to the Smithville Elementary campus.



## **6. Barriers to Active Transportation**

The Smithville Safe Routes to School (SSRTS) Stakeholder Team has identified several areas needing improvements that will greatly enhance the safety of our community for our school-aged children attending the three schools in the Smithville Independent School District that teach Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> Grade: Brown Primary School (Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 2), Smithville Elementary School (Grades 3-5), and Smithville Junior High School (Grades 6-8). Community members and the Stakeholder Team reviewed several ideas and possibilities designed to improve our community's access to safe routes to school. The following discussion first describes the three eligible schools and the improvements pertaining to each campus individually. In order to show the comprehensive nature of the planning process and public concern, the SSRTS Plan includes elements that can be accomplished within City / SISD capacities, and also elements for which SRTS funding will be sought.

From June 1 to September 29, 2009, the Smithville Police Department issued 874 citations for various violations, including 371 for speeding and (20 or 5 percent of all speeders, were issued in school zones), driving without a seat belt (9) and with an unrestrained child (6), driving the wrong way on Bishop (2), disregarding a stop sign, stop light, flashing red, and railroad gate (31), and an assortment of other violations. There were nine accidents in city limits during that time, one near Brown Primary during school drop-off hours. The photos below the descriptions of each campus illustrate the dangerous conditions at these intersections and along the main roads to the campus.

The **Smithville Junior High School** (Grades 6-8) and the **Smithville Elementary School** (Grades 3-5) campuses are both located on a single site approximately three city blocks by three city blocks. It is bordered by Bishop Street on the west side, NE 9<sup>th</sup> Street to the north, Wilkes Street to the east, and 6<sup>th</sup> Street to the south. The campuses are closed to traffic during school hours, and vehicular traffic through the campus area (on NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street) is limited to school buses. On the portion of Bishop Street that borders the school campus, traffic is ruled one way (northbound) during school hours. All other thoroughfares bordering the school are two-way traffic (see Figure 3).

### **Problem Statement:**

1. Pedestrians and bicyclists must share a narrow road with vehicles.
  - Missing or insufficient walkways
  - No safe place to ride a bike to school
  - Crossing streets and intersections are difficult or dangerous
  - Walkways are not accessible to students with disabilities
  - Dangerous driving and speeding on streets
2. Drop-off and pick-up process creates congestion and unsafe behaviors
  - Bishop Street is a one way that generates three lanes of traffic during drop-off/pick-up procedures; the middle lane is supposed to keep moving while the other two lanes park

- Congestion at 8<sup>th</sup> Street where parents pull off or merge into traffic is difficult, and is generally out of sight of the policed cross walk area
  - Drainage is inadequate and pooling water during and after rainstorms causes problems for children and caregivers trying to cross from the street to the walkways on school grounds
3. Distance to school is too far for many students, and over the railroad tracks from half of the town

Two main municipal thoroughfares that connect the city to Highway 71 are located three blocks west and three blocks south of the campus area: Short Street to the west of the campus is a main arterial that feeds Highway 71; Loop 230 to the south of the campus connects Hwy 71 to Hwy 95. These thoroughfares have a faster posted speed limit and a much higher traffic load. Short Street is not included as a consideration for the “hazardous route” determination for the SISD bus routes. These intersections are very dangerous for children to cross, and have been the subject of many concerned caregiver discussions.



*Two children riding bikes on 7<sup>th</sup> Street. Notice the quality of the road, which could be paved for a pedestrian/bike path. (Photo by Melissa Slepekis.)*



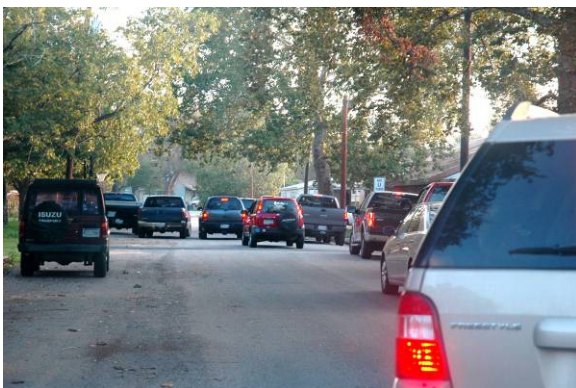
*Bike rider on 8<sup>th</sup> Street. Note that she must put her foot down by the time the car passes her in the third photo in this series. Note also the curb area and the grassy space on which she is riding, which we are seeking funds to pave. (Photo by Melissa Slepekis.)*



*Girl crossing Short Street with instrument case. Notice the numerous cars driving and parked (thus blocking visibility) in the crossing vicinity. (Photo by Melissa Slepekis.)*



*Students walking in the road on 7<sup>th</sup> Street. Note the curb area and the grassy space where cars are parked, which we are seeking funds to pave. (Photo by Melissa Slepekis.)*



*Drop off area at Smithville elementary (facing north on Bishop, which is one-way during school hours) Note cars pulling in and out of line after dropping off and stopping in the middle of the road to unload children. This is a very busy area, dangerous to students and drivers as well. (Photo by Melissa Slepekis.)*



Several proposed improvements radiate out from this campus area. Some improvements are part of a larger plan that are not eligible for SRTS funding or do not have large direct costs; other improvements are eligible for SRTS funding and will be included in the budget submitted to TXDOT.

**Brown Primary School** (Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 2) is located on the south side of the city bordered by 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Streets (north and south, respectively) and access alleys near Gazley and Walker Streets (west and east, respectively). Eleven blocks east of the campus area across from a widely-utilized city park, the Smithville Housing Authority and the Gardens area provides 80 units of subsidized housing. One block north of 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Martin Luther King Drive is a main thoroughfare connecting south side residential and recreational areas to Hwy 95.

**Problem Statement:**

1. Pedestrians and bicyclists must share a narrow road with vehicles.
  - Missing or insufficient walkways
  - No safe place to ride a bike to school
  - Crossing streets and intersections are difficult or dangerous
  - Walkways are not accessible to students with disabilities
  - Dangerous driving and speeding on streets
2. Physical and locational barriers
  - Distance to school is too far for many students
  - A major roadway and railroad divides the school from residential areas
3. Public safety concerns
  - Parents are concerned over the possibility of drug-related activities in the area

Many children and their caregivers walk in this area, but due to the narrow roads, large drainage ditches, and lack of sidewalks, this area has been described as an “accident waiting to happen.” Our youngest, least risk-averse children must walk alongside vehicles that drive too fast along narrow roads, and often are forced into the ditch. The City Public Works Department and SISD Transportation and Maintenance Director often get calls from parents who want this situation fixed. Infrastructure funding to provide bike/pedestrian pathways along this corridor will greatly improve the area. In addition, Washington Street connects a short route where buses, drivers, and walkers must share a narrow road. The Bus Pen is located to the north of Washington, and yellow school bus traffic is high in the area; its vicinity near Brown Primary makes this traffic and caregiver pick-up/drop-off traffic chaotic and dangerous.

Although Brown Primary already has a well-regulated drop-off and pick up process in place for the students, the area still needs paved pedestrian/bicycle routes for students and their caregivers, which will additionally benefit community members in general in this area as bicycling is a primary mode of transportation in this neighborhood; according to 2000 census figures (the last date for which block group data are available for this area), 17.6

percent of the households in the two block groups in this neighborhood do not own a vehicle; among renters (32.3 percent of the population), 37.4 percent do not own a vehicle.<sup>2</sup>



*East-side drop off at Brown Primary. Note the ditch area that the boy to the far left is walking in. (Photo by Melissa Slepekis.)*

## **7. Outreach and Publicity Strategy**

The SRTS Team has begun to implement a comprehensive outreach and publicity campaign to seek public input and inform all residents, not only parents/caregivers and other individuals who might more directly feel the impacts of these efforts.

- A public meeting held in August, 2009 is the kick off the Plan and solicit ideas
- Three additional Stakeholder and public meetings were held throughout August and September
- The new City of Smithville Website (<http://www.ci.smithville.tx.us/>) features special updates and opportunities for additional public input on the various facets of the projects
  - Blog postings
  - “Gasp Moments” collected

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<sup>2</sup> Source: [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) Factfinder: Table H44. TENURE BY VEHICLES AVAILABLE [15] - Universe: Occupied housing units; Data Set: Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF 3) - Sample Data

- Caregiver Survey available on line
- A caregiver survey was conducted in September, 2009 (see Appendix 1)
- Within the first two weeks of school, teachers administered a simple survey to all students in the three eligible schools, missing only 10 absent students (see Appendix 1)

Public outreach will not end here. The SSRTS Plan is only the first formal element of a broader Connectivity Initiative that Smithville will undertake over the next year. This Smithville Comprehensive Transportation Plan will provide community members with many opportunities to submit input and suggestions, and will provide a list of priorities that the Grants Administrator can pursue.

## ***8. Creating Solutions***

### **Goals**

Our primary goals for active school transportation are:

- To increase the number of students walking and bicycling to school
- To improve the safety of students walking and bicycling to school
- To increase the number of parents carpooling and using other means of coordinating transportation to reduce the number of vehicles near the schools
- To maximize the public involvement through the participation of parents, students, teachers, school administrators, and other interested partners and organizations
- To integrate this effort into the existing Smithville Health Initiative Task Force, which links the new Community Health Clinic, Community Gardens, public food sources, and other partners and is developing a comprehensive educational component geared towards healthy eating and sustainable living

### **Strategies**

We have identified strategies involving the 5 E's (Engineering, Education, Enforcement, Encouragement, and Evaluation) of the SRTS Program in Smithville to address the barriers to walking and bicycling in our school community and to achieve our stated goals. We have selected at least one strategy from each of the categories of Education, Enforcement, Encouragement, and Evaluation, in addition to any Engineering strategies that are indicated. The strategies we will use include the following.

The proposed improvements for the **Elementary / Junior High Complex** (outlined below) would provide safer zones in the immediate vicinity of the school by directing traffic and specified student drop-off locations through one-way traffic zones on the streets that border the campus. In addition, these improvements will provide safer routes for schoolchildren through paved pedestrian and/or bicycle lanes connecting the campus to

areas within the city, such as low-income and multi-family housing and the public library. We specifically propose the following:

- Paved bicycle/pedestrian path along the length of 6th Street (from Marburger to Cleveland: 16 city blocks) connecting the neighborhoods on either side of the campus and the Smithville Public Library on Main Street, including a marked crosswalk and crossing guards before and after school to facilitate safe crossing of Short Street to the residential and public areas to the west of the school.

**SRTS funding will be requested through the Infrastructure Grant.**

- Paved bicycle/pedestrian path along Byrne Street connecting the campus to the other side of Loop 230 (5 city Blocks), with a safe crossing route including a marked crosswalk and crossing guards across Loop 230 where there is currently a “school zone” flashing light and signage, connecting the school campus to the residential and public areas on the other side of Loop 230.

**SRTS funding will be requested through the Infrastructure Grant.**

- Paved bicycle/pedestrian path from Bluebonnet Circle up Loop 230 to Marberger, and Marberger connecting to 6<sup>th</sup> Street (approximately 7 city blocks); children are currently walking in the street with traffic that runs at speeds greater than 40 miles an hour, and often are forced to walk in the ditch on the side of the road.

Figure 4 notes the potential for a new development at the blue “X” on the map between Bluebonnet Circle and McSweeney Street may come to building stages by the time any funding might be available for these routes. If that is the case and the developer is amenable, our preferred route from Bluebonnet Circle to the School area will take children completely off of Loop 230 and send them through the new development to Marburger Street.

**SRTS funding will be requested through the Infrastructure Grant.**

- Educational and enforcement components to train crossing guards and to ensure that the students and their families utilize the safe routes to and from school; as well as traffic patterns and drop-off/pick-up procedures at school.

**SRTS funding will be requested through the Non-Infrastructure Grant for training instructors and materials as well as equipment necessary for crossing guards.**

- Increased signage directing traffic patterns and the locations of safe transportation areas and routes.

**SRTS funding will be requested through the Non-Infrastructure Grant for appropriate signage.**

- Improvements to the drop-off/pick-up procedures, which will be fully explained in the on-line student handbook. Interviews with the SRO, parents, and teachers, caregiver surveys, and photos clearly show that the chaos ensuing from current procedures is untenable and unsafe (see current procedures outlined above).  
**SRTS funding not required. SISD leadership will work with the Smithville Police Department and Student Resource Officer to develop better procedures, to train caregivers, teachers, and children, and to post them on line.**
- One-way direction, during school hours, on NE 9th Street (west to east) and Wilkes Street (north to south) where they border the school campuses. This provides safer street crossings for pedestrians and would also result in specific locations at each campus where all car-riding students would be dropped off safely.  
**SRTS funding not required. City Ordinance must be enacted.**

The SSRTS Team specifically proposes the following improvements to the **Brown Primary** campus:

- Paved bicycle/pedestrian path along 4<sup>th</sup> Street connecting the campus from Hwy 95 at the northern end with Eagleston Drive, over one block along Eagleston Drive, and down Martin Luther King Boulevard to its terminus in order to connect residential areas along the length of town (20 city blocks).  
**SRTS funding will be requested through the Infrastructure Grant.**
- Paved bicycle/pedestrian path along Washington Street from its western terminus connecting to the campus (4 city blocks).  
**SRTS funding will be requested through the Infrastructure Grant.**
- A flashing light on Hwy 95 entering the city (which would also benefit the Senior High School) to warn motorists entering the city at high speeds that they must slow down for school children.  
**SRTS funding will be requested through the Infrastructure Grant.**
- Educational and enforcement components to ensure the students and their families utilize safe routes to school.  
**SRTS funding will be requested through the Non-Infrastructure Grant.**
- Increased signage directing traffic patterns and the locations of safe transportation areas and routes.  
**SRTS funding will be requested through the Non-Infrastructure Grant.**



- Surveillance cameras will be installed to allow the Smithville Police Department to monitor, discourage, and gather evidence against persons engaged in drug-related activities near the school.

**SRTS funding will be requested through the Non-Infrastructure Grant.**

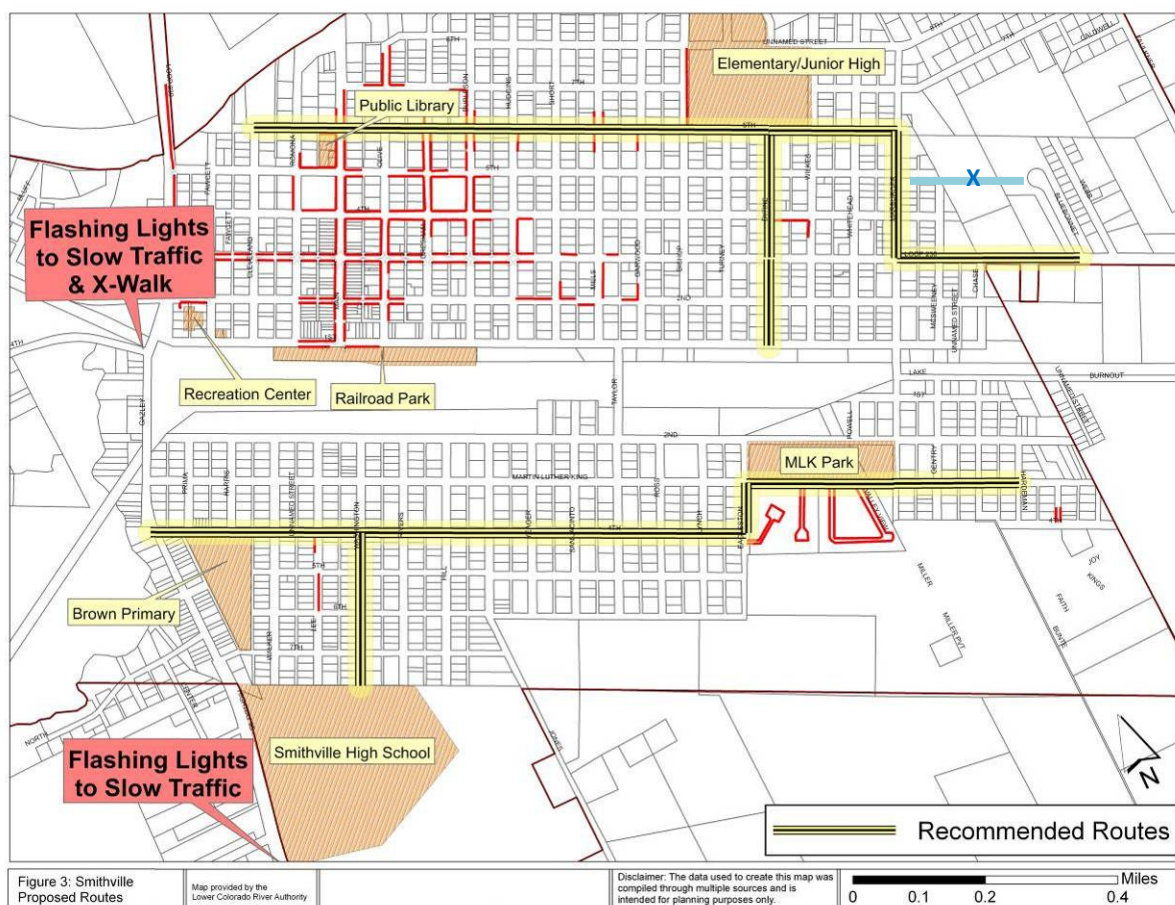
## **Engineering Strategies within two miles of schools**

Two locations on Hwy 95 have been identified for flashing lights. Four corridors have been identified for implementing engineering solutions to improving safety and encouraging bicycle, pedestrian and other alternatives to private vehicle transportation. The Stakeholder Team determined that these corridors would be the most direct, safest routes after evaluating public sentiment as captured in surveys and interviews, interviews with key school officials like principals, the Superintendent, and the Director of Transportation and Maintenance, as well as data on car crashes and standing violations provided by the Smithville Police Department.

These corridors would essentially be widened and painted to provide enough room for a bike/pedestrian way, and crosswalks would be enhanced at strategic intersections. In addition, more signage would be required (including school zone designated signage) and, discussed in more detail in the Education section, driver, bike/pedestrian, and crossing guard training would be required as well.

1. Paved bicycle/pedestrian path along the length of 6th Street from Marburger to Cleveland (16 city blocks). This would include a marked crosswalk and crossing guards before and after school to facilitate safe crossing of Short Street to the residential and public areas to the west of the school.
2. Elementary School/Junior High Complex to the other side of Loop 230 (5 city blocks). This would include better signage, bike/pedestrian on-street improvements, a crosswalk at Loop 230 and two crossing guards along Byrne.
3. Paved bicycle/pedestrian path from Bluebonnet Circle up Loop 230, joining to 6<sup>th</sup> Street by Marberger (approximately 7 city blocks); note the discussion regarding the preferred alternative to this route should development occur between Bluebonnet Circle and McSweeny Street.
4. Paved bicycle/pedestrian path along 4<sup>th</sup> Street connecting the campus from Hwy 95 at the northern end with Eagleston Drive, over one block along Eagleston Drive, and down Martin Luther King Boulevard to its terminus in order to connect residential areas along the length of town (20 city blocks).

5. Paved bicycle/pedestrian path along Washington Street from its western terminus connecting to the campus (4 city blocks).
6. A flashing light and crossing guards at 95 and 4<sup>th</sup> (intersection)  
Long-range transportation plans will seek to improve the section of 95 from the bridge over the Colorado to the High School, but the SRTS component only seeks to slow traffic and provide for pedestrian / bicycle safety during school hours.
7. A flashing light on 95 to the south of the High School.  
This would alert drivers that they are entering the town and two upcoming school zones (for the High School as well as for Brown Primary).



**Figure 4. Proposed Pedestrian/Bicycle Routes and Flashing Lights**

*Note 1: All improvements would be implemented within two miles of an eligible school.*

Note 2: The potential for a new development at the blue “X” on the map between Bluebonnet Circle and McSweeny Street may come to building stages by the time any funding might be available for these routes. If that is the case and the developer is

amenable, our preferred route from Bluebonnet Circle to the School area will take children completely off of Loop 230 and send them through the new development to Marburger Street, along street alignments to be determined.

In addition to these solutions, school and city officials are working with parents to redesign pick-up and drop-off procedures to increase safety and access.

### ***9.a. Education Strategies***

Safety education has been a major focus of the School Resource Officer (SRO) for six years; the Police Department has run two Bicycle Rodeos in that time and the SPD and Library have run a drive to encourage bicycle registration. For example, the SRO and other Police Officers teach proper bicycle safety to all students who want to learn, and provide training and education for parents about bicycle safety as well as minor bicycle repair and maintenance. In addition, officers teach kids to use common sense to stay safe, such as Stanger Danger, don't touch something if you don't know what it is, and don't approach animals or pets you don't personally know.

1. Enhance Smithville Bicycle Rodeos through additional marketing and holding additional rodeos.
2. Create bicycle and pedestrian safety educational materials
3. Market and encourage bicycle registration drives.
4. Conduct a community safe driving awareness and education program.
5. Educate parents and caregivers about safe driving procedures at the schools.
6. Establish in-school pedestrian and bicycle awareness programs.
7. Teach the health, environmental, and sustainable transportation benefits of walking and bicycling to students and parents.
8. Train school and community audiences about SRTS.

### ***9.b. Encouragement Strategies***

The Smithville Safe Routes to School Plan proposes several avenues to encourage school children to bike, walk, skate, and get to school using their own steam rather than in motorized transportation. The SRTS Plan for Smithville includes the following programs:

1. SISD will begin walking/biking mileage club like the library's "summer reading program." The SRTS Plan calls for badges and certificates for students and caregivers who participate in an "alternative transportation" program. They will log in the number of days they got to school by walking, biking, skating, or otherwise being physically active, and will get certificates and badges at the end of each semester. This program would reward the ten students at each school who log in the most miles of alternative transportation will get small prizes, including craft materials, age and learning-appropriate videos and books, bike paraphernalia and glow-in-the-dark clothing, and so on.
2. The parents' associations ("booster clubs") will coordinate a Safe Passage program, which will be promoted through the City and ISD websites as well as at various community events.
3. Each school will establish Walking School Bus and Bike Train Programs, to be coordinated through the City's website similarly to rideshare programs, as well as with school officials and the booster clubs.
4. The City of Smithville will work with the Booster Clubs and the SISD to establish a carpool program for parents in the SISD area to reduce congestion and improve air quality around our schools.
5. Smithville ISD and City will partner to annually host International Walk to School Day starting in October of 2010.
6. The city and SISD will promote SRTS in the community through special pages on the City and ISD websites, and by sending information out periodically through children in the school system to their parents.

### ***9.c. Enforcement Strategies***

The Smithville Police Department (SPD) currently expends many resources to enforce safety rules and to monitor problematic intersections and corridors. The School Resource Officer (SRO) is dedicated to ensure that many school-related issues, including traffic and safety, are addressed properly and adequately enforced. The bicycle registration drive

information goes directly to the SPD to enhance their ability to search for missing and stolen bikes. Additional measures that will be implemented as a result of the SRTS Plan include the following:

1. The School Resource Officer and Police Officers will continue to enforce pick-up and drop-off procedures as designed in the School Handbook; new policies are currently being developed for the Smithville Elementary School/Jr. High School campus.
2. The Police Department will increase traffic law enforcement during school hours.
3. Additional signage and flashing lights will assist officers as they increase enforcement of the existing and new traffic ordinances (lower posted speeds and one-way directions during school hours) around each school campus.
4. Crossing guard training for both adult volunteers and possibly eligible, mature youth no younger than 15 (tied to “encouragement” as described above).
5. Surveillance cameras will be installed at the Brown Primary School to help the SPD detect and discourage drug-related and other criminal activities.

#### ***9.d. Evaluation Strategies***

No one can understand how successful the Plan is or how it may be improved without evaluation. The following evaluation components will be conducted through cooperation with City, Police Department, and School staff. Several have been suggested by TXDOT and will be put in place here. Others have been developed by the SRTS Stakeholder Team.

1. Count the number of students who walk and bicycle to and from school: our student survey from September 2008 sets the baseline data from which we can measure our successes over time.
2. Count the number of bicycles in available racks; over time, we hope to increase the number of bike racks needed due to the increase in bicycle use.
3. Track the number of crashes or other accidents within two miles of school. More informally, track the number and severity of “gasp” moments parents bring anecdotally to the city’s website.
4. Measure parent/guardian perceptions of safety: our caregiver survey from September 2009 sets the baseline data from which we can measure our successes over time. This survey will be provided on an annual basis to see how perceptions change over time.

## Evaluation Tables

### Method 1: Count of walking/bicycling students

	<b>Before</b>	<b>After</b>	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Date</b>	Sept. 2009		
<b>% Walking</b>	8.7		
<b>% Biking</b>	0.7		
<b>Total Students</b>	1113		

### Method 2: Count of the number of racks and bicycles in racks (average of three dates)

	<b>Before</b>	<b>After</b>	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Date</b>	Sept. 2009		
<b># Bike Racks (Primary School)</b>	1		
<b># Bikes in Racks</b>			
<b># Bikes in Racks (Elementary/Jr. High)</b>	3		
<b># Bikes in Racks</b>			

### Method 3: Traffic crashes within two miles of schools

	<b>Before</b>	<b>After</b>	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Date</b>	June-Sept. 2009		
<b># Crashes</b>	9		
<b># Injuries</b>	0		
<b># Moving Violations (Citations and Warnings)</b>	578		
<b># Citations for Unrestrained Child</b>	6		

### Method 4: Parent perception of safety (overall and breakdown by school)

	<b>Before</b>	<b>After</b>	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Date</b>	(Waiting on 2009 Results)		
<b>% "Very Safe"</b>			
<b>% "Safe"</b>			
<b>% "Dangerous"</b>			
<b>% "Very Dangerous"</b>			
<b>% "Don't Know"</b>			
<b>Total Surveys</b>			

## 10. The Action Plan

The SRTS Team is committed to realizing our visions for a safe, enjoyable, and accessible walking and bicycling environment for our students. We will utilize the following Action Plan to keep our efforts focused and on track:

### Smithville Safe Routes to School Action Plan

Strategy	Type	Timeframe	Responsible Party	Funding Source
Bicycle Rodeos	Education	Every Spring	SPD (SRO)	SRTS, Various
Bike / Ped Safety Educational Materials	Education	Start of School Year	SPD (SRO)	SRTS, Various
In-School Bike / Ped Education	Education	Start of School Year	School / SRO	PD / SISD / City
Health / Environmental Benefits	Education	Once per year per school	School	Will seek free materials
SRTS Training	Education	Continuously through City/ISD website	City / SISD	City
Bicycle Registration Drives	Education / Enforcement	Once per year	SPD / Library	SPD / Library possibly with enhancement from SRTS
Caregiver Awareness: Procedures at Schools	Education / Enforcement	Start of School Year	Schools / SRO	Current Funds
Driver Awareness Materials / Training	Education / Encouragement	Summer	SPD	Will seek free materials
Walking / Biking Mileage Club	Encouragement	Throughout the School Year	Schools / Library / SRO	SRTS for awards
Safe Passage Program	Encouragement	Throughout the School Year	City (Grants Administrator with Booster Clubs)	Will seek free promo materials
Walking School Bus	Encouragement	Throughout the School Year	City (Grants Administrator with Booster Clubs)	Will seek free promo materials
Bike Train	Encouragement	Throughout the School Year	City (Grants Administrator with Booster Clubs)	Will seek free promo materials
School-based Carpool Program	Encouragement	Throughout the School Year	City (Grants Administrator with Booster Clubs)	Will seek free promo materials
International Walk to School Day	Encouragement	Annually in October	City / SISD	Will seek free promo materials
Enforce Drop-Off / Pick-Up Policies	Enforcement	Throughout the School Year	SPD (SRO)	Current Funds
Increase Traffic Enforcement during School Hours	Enforcement	Throughout the School Year	SPD	Current Funds
Additional Signage	Enforcement	As Possible	SPD / SISD / City	SRTS

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
Crossing Guard Training	Enforcement	End of Summer	SPD / SRO	SRTS
Surveillance Cameras at Brown	Enforcement	When Possible: Target: Jan. 2010	SPD	SRTS
Count of Student Walkers/ Bikers	Evaluation	Beginning of each semester and end of school year	SISD	Current Funds
Count of Bikes in Bike Racks	Evaluation	Beginning of each semester and end of school year	SISD	Current Funds
Traffic Violations and Accidents	Evaluation	Periodically throughout the school year	SPD	Current Funds
Caregiver Surveys	Evaluation	Beginning and End of each School Year	City (Grants Administrator)	Current Funds
On-Road Bicycle / Pedestrian Paths	Engineering	As Possible	City (Public Works Director)	SRTS
Flashing Lights	Engineering	As Possible	City (Public Works Director)	SRTS

## ***11. Evaluation, Coordination, and Support Activities:***

*Activities that address the monitoring, review, and updating process:*

Various activities are planned to monitor, review, and update the Transportation Plan and the SRTS components:

- Survey parents and schoolchildren on a regular basis
- Provide annual and biannual Town Hall Meetings
- Promote public involvement through the City's website
- Review public safety records and invite additional ideas from the community

*Plan for how the initiatives will be sustained*

The Grants Administrator's duties require reference back to the 2007 Comprehensive Plan and require that subsequent plans, reviews, and modifications to existing plans be developed through the rubric of the Comprehensive Planning process.

*Methods and measures of success for strategies*

As stated in section 9.d. above, various methods will be employed to measure success:

1. Count the number of students who walk and bicycle to and from school: our student survey from September 2008 sets the baseline data from which we can measure our successes over time.



2. Count the number of bicycles in available racks; over time, we hope to increase the number of bike racks needed due to the increase in bicycle use.
3. Track the number of crashes or other accidents within two miles of school. More informally, track the number and severity of “gasp” moments parents bring anecdotally to the city’s website.
4. Measure parent/guardian perceptions of safety: our caregiver survey from September 2009 sets the baseline data from which we can measure our successes over time. This survey will be provided on an annual basis to see how perceptions change over time.

*Reference to or inclusion of a non-motorized master plan or similar document*

Our 2007 Comprehensive Plan, which included several transportation elements, provided the background and initial impetus for our Connectivity Initiative. The Comprehensive Plan transportation components have been outlined in this proposal.

## **12. Plan Endorsements**

We believe that building a strong partnership between schools and the local government is fundamental to the success of a Safe Routes to School Plan. Our Safe Routes to School Plan has been endorsed by the following representatives:

Barbara Maresh, Principal  
Brown Primary School  
512 237 2519  
[bmaresh@smithvilleisd.org](mailto:bmaresh@smithvilleisd.org)

Dr. Rock McNulty, Superintendent  
Smithville Independent School District  
512 237 2487  
[rmcnulty@smithvilleisd.org](mailto:rmcnulty@smithvilleisd.org)

Ana L. Murray, Principal  
Smithville Elementary School  
512 237 2406  
[amurray@smithvilleisd.org](mailto:amurray@smithvilleisd.org)

Mark Bunte, Mayor  
City of Smithville  
512 237 3282  
[mbunte@ci.smithville.tx.us](mailto:mbunte@ci.smithville.tx.us)

Andra Sparks, Principal  
Smithville Junior High School  
512 237 2407 x 412  
[asparks@smithvilleisd.org](mailto:asparks@smithvilleisd.org)

Sophie Weinheimer, R.N., Co-Chair  
Neal Spears, M.D., Co-Chair  
SISD Student Health Advisory Committee  
512-237-5610  
[sweinheimer@smithvilleisd.org](mailto:sweinheimer@smithvilleisd.org)  
[nealspears@yahoo.com](mailto:nealspears@yahoo.com)

**Mayor Mark Bunte:** “The Smithville Safe Routes to School Plan will facilitate needed improvements for the safety of our community and teach students important values about health and sustainability. I am happy to endorse this Plan.”

**Ana L. Murray, Principal of Smithville Elementary School:** “I am excited about the possibilities of increasing the safety for our students going between home and school. I for one am for more children walking and biking to school, but hesitate to encourage those activities due to our street situation. I am encouraged at the possibilities of future bicycle education courses and activities that will promote safety for our community. Whether the grant is received or not, you have brought a very important issue to a higher level of awareness.”

**Neal Spears, M.D. Co-Chair, SISD Student Health Advisory Committee:** “Very impressive plan, would be great to see it put into action just have to find the funds! I'm happy to endorse it.”

### ***13. Supporting Files and Images***

Attachment A: Current Driving Policy Map and Procedures from Brown Primary

Attachment B: Current Driving Policy Map and Procedures from Smithville Elementary

Attachment C: Current Driving Policy Map and Procedures from Smithville Junior High

## ***Appendix 1***

### **1. Caregiver Survey**

### **2. Student Survey**

## How Walkable or Bikeable is Your Community?

### We need you to help the Smithville Independent School District (SISD) and the City of Smithville create the Safe Routes to School Plan!

Dear parents, caregivers, teachers, students, and other interested community members;

As a member of our school community, you may have heard about our development of a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Plan. In order to provide safer and more accessible walking and bicycling conditions for our students, we are working with as many community members as possible to identify ideas for both educational opportunities (student, parent and community education, etc.) and physical improvements (sidewalks, crosswalks, traffic signals, etc.).

It is vital that we receive as much input and feedback as we can so that we can have a clear view of the improvements needed in order to make our community safe and accessible. Your participation in this undertaking is essential and your opinions are greatly valued.

In order for the school traffic safety team to compile accurate results, we are asking for as many caregivers as possible to fill out the enclosed survey and return it to the school your child attends (only one survey per household, please), the Smithville Public Library, the Recreation Center, or City Hall. This survey is also available on the City's new website: <http://www.ci.smithville.tx.us/Smithville-Comprehensive-Plan/Transportation/Safe-Routes-to-School.aspx>.

Feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns about this program and/or the survey, or if you would like to continue to participate in the Safe Routes to School planning process. We will have a public meeting to discuss these issues at the Smithville Recreation Center at our next public involvement meeting; we hope to see you there!

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,



Jill Strube, Ph.D.

Grants Administrator  
City of Smithville  
[jstrube@ci.smithville.tx.us](mailto:jstrube@ci.smithville.tx.us)  
512 237 3282 x 2109

#### *For more information:*

- Email or call Jill Strube, Grants Administrator at the City of Smithville: [jstrube@ci.smithville.tx.us](mailto:jstrube@ci.smithville.tx.us), 512 237 3282 x 2109
- Log on to the City website and follow the Comprehensive Plan Links to the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) planning pages: <http://www.ci.smithville.tx.us/>
- Log on to the Texas Department of Transportation's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) website: <http://www.saferoutestx.org/>

## Safe Routes to School Caregiver Survey

The Smithville Independent School District and the City of Smithville are seeking funds to improve the safety and accessibility for our children around the schools in our community. We want your opinions and input about the transportation issues and options for the school-aged children in your care.

1. What age are your children and what grades do they attend?

Child 1: Gender (circle one): M / F Age: \_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_

Child 2: Gender (circle one): M / F Age: \_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_

Child 3: Gender (circle one): M / F Age: \_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_

Child 4: Gender (circle one): M / F Age: \_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_

Child 5: Gender (circle one): M / F Age: \_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_

Child 6: Gender (circle one): M / F Age: \_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_

(If you care for more than six children in the school system, please list them on the back page)

\_\_\_ My children are not currently in the school system, but I feel strongly about these issues.

2. In your opinion, do you live within walking distance of the schools your children (or child) attend?

\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

3. About how far do you and your children (or child) live from the schools they attend? Mark an X in each of the boxes that describes your children or child.

<i>Distance</i>	<i>Brown</i>	<i>Elementary</i>	<i>Jr. High</i>	<i>High School</i>
0 to ½ mile				
½ to 1 mile				
1 to 1½ miles				
1 ½ to 2 miles				
2 miles or more				
None of my children attend this school				

4. How often do your children (or child) travel to school in an average school week (Monday-Friday) using the following modes of travel?

<i># Times per Week</i>	<i>Brown</i>	<i>Elementary</i>	<i>Jr. High</i>	<i>High School</i>
Drive with caregiver (not on the way to work)				
Drive with caregiver (on the way to work)				
Carpool				
School bus				
Bike				
Walk				
Other (Explain)				
<i>Total:</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>(Not Applicable)</i>				

5. If your children (or child) walk or bike to school, please list the primary streets they use to get to and from school:

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6. Please rate how safe you think the routes to school are for your children in general:

<i>Safety Level</i>	<i>Brown</i>	<i>Elementary</i>	<i>Jr. High</i>	<i>High School</i>
Very Safe				
Safe				
Dangerous				
Very Dangerous				
Don't Know / Not Applicable				

7. How do you feel about the walking and biking conditions in your neighborhood?

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Mildly Agree</i>	<i>Mildly Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Don't Know</i>
People drive too fast					
There is a lot of vehicular traffic					
There are no sidewalks at all or are gaps in the sidewalk network					
The sidewalks that do exist are broken					
The lighting is poor					
Crime is a problem					
There are not enough crosswalks					
There are not enough crossing guards					
It is dangerous to walk or bike to our school on the sidewalks and roads					
I feel comfortable allowing my children to walk or bike to school					
There is a big difference in the conditions of the neighborhoods around each different school					

If you feel that each school is different, please explain:

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8. Which of the following scenarios would influence your decision to consider letting your children (or child) walk or bike to school?

	<i>YES</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>MAYBE</i>
If an adult would walk/bike along with the child			
If other children about the same age would walk/bike together			
If an older child would walk along with the child			
If new paved paths and crossings were built or old ones were repaired			
If police patrols and crossing guards were visible along school routes			
If school provided walking/bicycling safety education and workshops			
If we lived closer to the school			

9. How important are the following factors in influencing your decision to allow your children (or child) to walk or bike to school?

	<i>Very Important</i>	<i>Somewhat Important</i>	<i>Not Important</i>
Crossing guards at all busy intersections			
Continuous paved paths from your house to the school building			
Clearly marked walking and bicycling routes (with signs)			
Separated trails connecting your neighborhood to the school			
Slower traffic in the neighborhood			
Better lighting			
Emergency call boxes and designated safe houses			
Secure places to park bicycles			
School education program on walking and biking safety			

10. Please rate how safe you think the drop-off/pick-up areas are at:

<i>Safety Level</i>	<i>Brown</i>	<i>Elementary</i>	<i>Jr. High</i>	<i>High School</i>
Very Safe				
Safe				
Dangerous				
Very Dangerous				
Don't Know / Not Applicable				

11. How can we improve safety for children traveling to school?

Please mark in order of importance with 1 = Top Priority

(you do not need to mark all choices):

- ☐ Build / repair sidewalks and bike paths
- ☐ Improve lighting
- ☐ Teach bike / pedestrian safety to children
- ☐ Teach driver awareness and safety to drivers
- ☐ Improve paths across railroad
- ☐ Enhance police presence to enforce laws related to drugs, violence, and other crimes
- ☐ Create on-road bicycle lanes
- ☐ Build off-road walking/biking paths
- ☐ Improve signage around schools
- ☐ Promote Safe Routes to School in the community
- ☐ Enhance Neighborhood Watch efforts
- ☐ Other (Explain): \_\_\_\_\_

12. How can we improve safety at the drop-off/pick-up area at school?

Please note which campus: ☐ Brown Primary ☐ Elementary/Jr. High

- ☐ Build / repair sidewalks and bike paths
- ☐ Install bike parking near school
- ☐ Create traffic controls and calm traffic
- ☐ Redesign pick-up and drop-off procedures
- ☐ Improve signage
- ☐ Enhance police presence to enforce laws related to drugs, violence, and other crimes
- ☐ Other (Explain): \_\_\_\_\_

13. What can we do to help encourage your children (or child) to walk, bike, or skate to school?

- ☐ Start a Walking School Bus program
- ☐ Organize a Bicycle Rodeo or training course to teach on-bike skills
- ☐ Start a Bike Training program
- ☐ Train kids who want to learn how to use a skateboard safely
- ☐ Other (Explain): \_\_\_\_\_

14. Traffic safety education programs are a primary component of the SRTS program. Below is a list of potential programs that could be developed at your school. Please check the ones that you would like to learn more about.

- ☐ Becoming a member of the SRTS Stakeholder Team
- ☐ Starting a Walking School Bus (a group of children that walks together with a supervising adult)
- ☐ Contacting parents and updating them on the SRTS program
- ☐ Starting a "Safety Post" program, where parents or other adult volunteers remain present at various locations on route to schools during the morning and afternoon walking/biking times
- ☐ Providing a "safe house" for children who may need assistance
- ☐ Helping organize an annual "Walk to School Week" event
- ☐ Not interested in helping at this time, but would like updates
- ☐ Other (please list ideas below and on the back of the last page): \_\_\_\_\_



15. Do you have any other suggestions on how to improve the safe travel and accessibility of our school to students?

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Please list the nearest street intersection to your home: \_\_\_\_\_

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If you would like to be contacted about volunteering with the opportunities you checked in question 13 or to become more involved with the Safe Routes to School Plan, please provide your contact information in the space below. If you prefer to remain anonymous, please leave this section blank.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this survey to the Smithville City Hall, the Smithville Recreation Center, the Smithville Public Library, or any Smithville Public School.

You may also see more information and updates about this program at the City's website: <http://www.ci.smithville.tx.us/Smithville-Comprehensive-Plan/Transportation/Safe-Routes-to-School.aspx>.

*Thank you for your time and participation!*

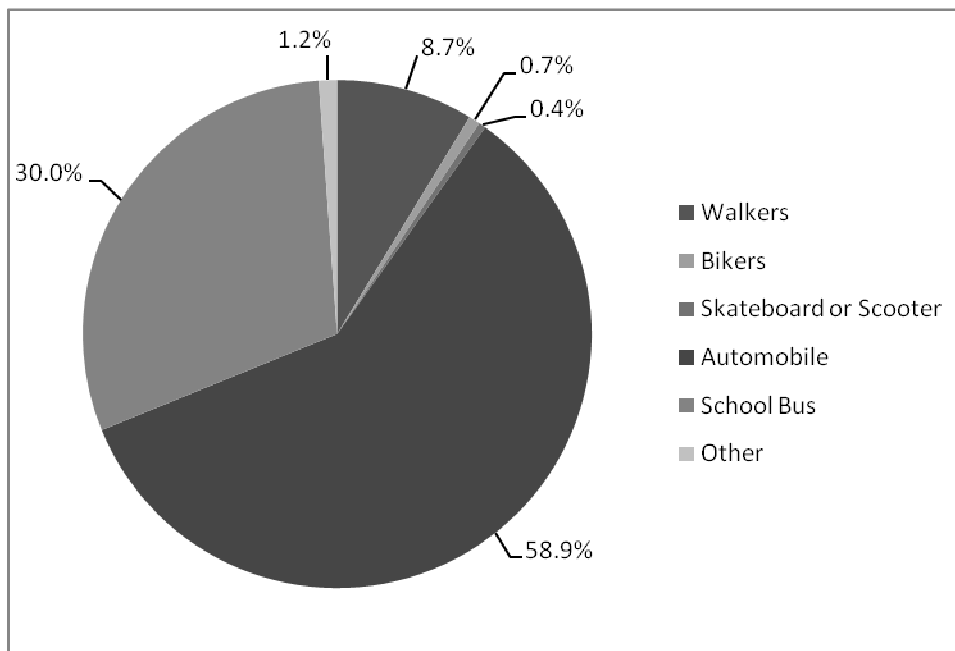
## Safe Routes to School Student Travel Survey

Administered by all teachers, Pre-K to Grade 8 during the week of August 30, 2009

1. Raise your hand if you walked to school today
2. Raise your hand if you rode a bicycle to school today
3. Raise your hand if you rode a scooter or skateboard to school today
4. Raise your hand if you came in a car, truck, or SUV today
5. Raise your hand if you came in a school bus today

### Survey Results (Percentages)

Mode	Walk	Bike	Skate/ Scooter	Auto- mobile	School Bus	Other	Total #
All Grades	8.7	0.7	0.4	58.9	30.0	0.4	
Brown Primary (Pre-K to Grade 2)	3.0	0.0	0.5	63.2	32.0	1.3	397
Elementary (Grades 3 to 5)	9.5	1.4	0.6	54.9	31.4	2.2	357
Junior High (Grades 6 to 8)	14.2	0.8	0.3	58.2	26.5	0.0	359
Total Number	97	8	5	656	334	13	1113



## ***Appendix 2***

### **Stakeholder Team and Public input about the need for Safe Routes**

#### **Judge Ronald Jones**

We are most concerned about the 4<sup>th</sup> Street traffic at Brown Primary. The cars travel up and down 4<sup>th</sup> Street at a high rate of speed. You have parents as well as small children that are walking to and from school that have no real protection from the traffic.

On September 23, we counted 17 cars travelling up and down 4<sup>th</sup> Street during the peak of school hours. At least 6 parents and 12 kids were walking to school this morning. At the 4<sup>th</sup> Street/Washington Street crossing, there were 6 buses moving kids from Brown Primary and also going to the Smithville High School.

Washington Street has become highly traveled, especially in the afternoon with High School kids driving as well as a number of them walking from the High School to MLK Blvd on home.

#### **Judith M. Bergeron, Ph.D.**

As Library Director, I see many students come on foot or bicycle to the library after school. Knowing that they had to come down streets with few, if any, sidewalks and that they had to cross Short Street to get here, I am concerned about their safety. I have seen children crossing Short Street at several different intersections before and after school, and when there are cars parked nearby, or cars traveling fast along Short Street, it is not always easy to see the children trying to cross. The trip to and from school will be safer for children who live near or come to the library if we have one designated intersection that is well-marked, so drivers expect there to be children crossing on school days. In the last few years, all three schools that serve the K-8 grade ranges have had activities that bring them to the downtown area to learn about their community. Primary school students came by bus to the library, then walked to other community facilities such as the U.S. Post Office, the police department and a banking institution. Elementary students walked from school in class groups to the library and to other Main Street business, such as City Hall, the Smithville Times newspaper office, and the Smithville Chamber of Commerce and Railroad Museum. Junior High student council students did a project about municipal leadership and visited the library and City Hall as part of that project. Because there are no safe routes between the schools and Main Street, these students had to walk out in the street to get here. I hope these educational visits to the library and other Main Street businesses continue, as they are very beneficial to the students. Increasing the safety of the student access to these locations can help ensure their continuation.

As a parent, I also worry about safe routes to school. My children are among those who walk from school to the library. I like the chance they get for some exercise before they

come in to tackle their homework, but I worry about their safety in getting here. Due to the teacher presence on Bishop Street as they leave the school grounds, they do get safe access across that chaotic traffic area, but after that, they are on their own. The Short Street crossing is especially scary with the volume of traffic during the after-school hours, and the children trying to cross at several intersections that cross Short Street.

### **Jill Strube**

Transportation issues have been near and dear to me for the past 20 years. I believe strongly that working towards global sustainability must be driven by our willingness to drive less – both in terms of the sustainability of the quality of life in urban and suburban spaces as well as our own personal longevity and health. Alternative means of transportation improves air quality, allows additional avenues for socializing, and reduces our economic dependence on nefarious entities. Building exercise into our daily routine, like walking to school and walking to work, brings great benefits both to our individual bodies and to the environment in which we live. It also reduces the need to make special time out of increasingly busy lives to get enough physical activity to stay healthy and stay away from the doctor.

The Safe Routes to School program will allow our community to instill this value and begin that habit at an early age. Currently, our children risk life and limb to get to school using “active transportation – walking and biking are out of the question for many parents because of the narrow streets and deep ditches, inattentive children and hazardous drivers. As the mother of a young son myself, I want him to be able to walk and bike to school, and I want to feel comfortable allowing him to do so. My family lives in a community where distance is not the issue, but the railroad tracks, the highway, and the crazy-fast drivers are.

This program is important to our community; as many people involved in creating this document have said, whether we get the funding or not, the ball is rolling... we will implement this Plan!

### **Scooter Halamicek**

Our children deserve to be safe and should be able to pursue an active lifestyle without worry.

**Collected from the “Gasp Moments” on the SRTS website:**

<http://www.ci.smithville.tx.us/Smithville-Comprehensive-Plan/Transportation/Safe-Routes-to-School.aspx>

### **“Gasp” Moments!**

Have you ever seen a car come too close to a child walking or biking to school? Have you ever seen a car open a door to let a child out and another car come along too fast?

Let us know about the moments you've gasped and been grateful that no one was hurt. Please be sure to include the date and location of this near accident.

**Anonymous**

I am a teacher at the elementary school and I witnessed a parent that had let their child out of their car and pulled away before the child had cleared the curb. The driver was in such a hurry to leave that they didn't wait to make sure the child was in a safe place first. The boy faltered under the weight of his back pack and almost fell. If he had fallen, his own parents would have injured him in their haste to leave. This was Wednesday 23rd of September 2009

**Anonymous**

Every day I see all ages of pedestrians encountering vehicular traffic dangers on highway 95 between the tracks, since there is no shoulder; and therefore, they must share the highway with these incredible dangers. How this has continued for so long is an incredible mystery.

**Anonymous**

Yes, I have seen parents and children walking down 4th street heading to Brown primary and cars travelling too fast and send the parent and child into the ditch along 4th Street.

**J. Bergeron**

Wednesday, September 16, 2009, ~7:45 a.m.

Smithville Elementary student drop-off Bishop Street

Just as a car in front of the car line finished dropping off a student on the East side of Bishop St. and began to pull away from the curb, another car drove up from behind, passing the other cars in line, and nearly colliding with the one pulling out. This is not the first time I have seen this.

**Anonymous**

For such a beautiful community to have such an ugly mode for pedestrians is a tragedy. As living beings, we have a basic desire to engage with our surroundings. Although, this can only be done through an expectation of unbridled safety. Unfortunately, walking on and along roads is not only an option for Smithville residents, but what is expected.

**Anonymous**

I've seen so many younger kids riding in the middle of the road, unaware that cars are coming up behind them. Then they do realize that there's a car... they make a rash decision and usually swing out in front of the car.