

## PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

### Describe the Problem

**The problem statement should clearly present the traffic-related issues that are distressing the community and causing crashes, injuries and deaths. The statement should provide a concise description for the defined geographic area or jurisdiction. Include consecutive years of the most recent data to establish the conditions and the extent of the problem. (Charts, graphs, and percentages, are effective ways of displaying the data). Use additional pages as needed.**

The loss of lives and the high cost of injuries due to motor vehicle crashes create a significant traffic safety and public health problem in Georgia, especially for children.

Chatham County has the third highest number of pedestrian fatalities in Georgia and is ranked second per capital for pedestrian fatalities in Georgia. The Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety FAST (Fatality Analysis and Surveillance Tool) also states that pedestrian fatalities accounted for 9.2 percent of all motor vehicle fatalities in Georgia in 2006. The highest number of these fatalities occurred within the hours from 9p.m. to midnight; the second most dangerous time period was 6p.m. to 9 p.m. The largest proportion of pedestrian fatalities resulted from pedestrians improperly crossing a roadway or intersection.

2007 data from FARS (Fatality Analysis Reporting System) indicates that Georgia is ranked 18th in the United States for pedestrian fatalities. Data for nonmotorists fatalities by age group, 1994-2007 for Georgia indicates that fatalities for children ages 5-14 have declined over the past 12 years. Chart is included as an attachment. The Georgia Department of Transportation CASI (Crash Statistics and Information) Notebook states that pedestrian crashes represented less than one percent of all motor vehicle crashes. "However, a far disproportionate number of pedestrians die. Pedestrians accounted for one out of nine of the fatalities in Georgia from 2000 to 2006."

A study of pedestrian injuries and deaths in Chatham County, conducted by the Chatham County Health Department 1992-1996 and funded through a GOHS grant, located high risk areas. The data determined the maneuver that caused injury was most likely to occur when pedestrians crossed mid-block. The Savannah Traffic Engineer's Office now maintains a list of high-risk locations in the city of Savannah. School zones as well are treated as high risk due to children crossing in those areas. Abercorn Street continues to be very high risk due to its length, multi-lane traffic, high speed and high volume traffic. Another source of local data for other parts of Chatham County is the Savannah/Chatham Metropolitan Police Department through Uniform Traffic Crash reports.

The Chatham County Childhood Injury Data Profile, 1994-2001, confirms that unintentional injury is the leading cause of death for all childhood age groups over age one in Chatham County. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of injury death for children. Pedestrian injury is the leading cause of injury hospitalization for children ages 10-14 and the second leading cause for children ages 5-9. In 21% of serious child pedestrian injuries, children are struck during the time that they are most likely traveling to and from school. 91% of child pedestrian injuries that require hospitalization occur on a street or highway.

Preliminary data from the updated injury profile, 2002-2004, indicates there has been a shift in hospitalization from pedestrian injuries. During those years the number dropped from being the leading cause for hospitalization for children ages 10-14 to the fourth cause at 10.3%. However, for children ages 5-9, pedestrian injuries during those years were the leading cause of hospitalization at 21.7%. 40% of those injuries occurred while crossing the street.

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When focusing on children, a National Highway Safety Administration report on safe travel to school states that students are at much greater risk traveling to and from school than at any other time in their school day. More children are killed during normal school transportation hours while traveling by passenger car, foot, bicycle, public transportation and school bus. Many more are injured. The most likely time for pedestrian crashes was early morning and late afternoon hours. Children under 18 comprised 46.5% of the pedestrian crashes. In addition, a Center for Disease Control study, Childhood Injuries in the United States: A Report to Congress, determined that 'among children ages 5-9 years, pedestrian injuries nationally were associated with more deaths than any other cause of injury'. In 2007, nearly one-fifth of the children between the ages of 5 and 9 killed in traffic crashes were pedestrians."

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration 'Traffic Safety Facts 2007' states that in 2007, 4,654 pedestrians died (in the US) in traffic crashes - a 13 percent decrease from the number reported in 1997. This is encouraging news. The Child Injury Profile data is encouraging as well. However, in Chatham County during the first few months of 2009 there have been several adult pedestrian fatalities in a variety of locations.

This grant will give us an opportunity to assess the problem and to develop a means of meeting the challenges in Chatham County that include: high ranking per capita for pedestrian fatalities in Georgia, the recent pedestrian fatalities and our continuing concern for the children in our community.