

Experience Schuyler County and Provide Access to all vulnerable road users
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Rural transportation safety needs are unique and often different from those in urban areas. Schuyler County has lost members of our community including Judge Ramon Escapa, that have led us to demand better transportation safety measures for our residents. These preventable accidents have only strengthened our resolve to instill a culture of safety through education, collaboration, and improvement of existing and future assets. We are a dedicated group of volunteers committed to improving pedestrian and vulnerable road user safety in Schuyler County. Our long term vision is to reduce injuries and fatalities to zero, our short term goal is to reduce injuries and fatalities by 50% in the next decade.

Outside of the county seat of Rushville, there are less trafficked areas which need improved safety practices implemented. The Illinois Department of Transportation reported that there have been a moderate number of traffic accidents in the county, including fatal accidents. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, in 2016 there were no fatality crashes in Schuyler County. Two years later, in 2018, there were three fatality crashes. Another two years later, in 2020, there were five fatality crashes. All five of the fatalities happened outside of the county seat in rural areas involving intersections or corners (NCSA, 2020). This increase shows the need for reevaluated rural safety measures to be put into effect.

With its county seat in Rushville, Schuyler County, Illinois is a farming community that encompasses 441 square miles in rural, west-central Illinois. County and city governments, along with private and public entities, have continuously advocated for strategies to maintain Schuyler County as a productive, prosperous, and safe place to live and work. Underscored in these strategies are those that focus on safety. Through a coordinated and strategic approach, Schuyler County ensures the safety of its residents and visitors at both the city and county levels. Among the agencies that actively guide these local safety initiatives are the Rushville City Police, Rushville Street and Water Department, Schuyler County Sheriff, Schuyler County EMS, the 10 Fire and Rescue Departments, Schuyler County State's Attorney, Schuyler County Health Department, Schuyler County Highway Department, Culbertson Memorial Hospital, Schuyler-Industry Community Unit School District #5, and the Schuyler County Farm Bureau. These various agencies maintain a robust system of communication to ensure the physical safety of the county's 6,902 citizens (2023 census estimates).

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As local leaders look to the future, they are building on Schuyler County's array of current safety strategies with an important initiative to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries that are a result of crashes on county roads, while providing safe routes of travel for all road users within Schuyler County by 2035. Central to this plan is an analysis of Schuyler County's current strengths and weaknesses when considering the transportation safety of its highways, streets, and pedestrian byways.

The county has two major highways: U.S. Highway 24 and U.S. Highway 67, which intersects Rushville. These routes connect it to other parts of the state. U.S. Highway 67 is a major north-south corridor extending 1,560 miles in the Central United States, and the major U.S. highway for western Illinois. U.S. 24 is a major east-west corridor extending 1,540 miles in the Central United States through central Illinois. In order to commute back and forth from our schools, public parks, community centers, and restaurants, some of our most vulnerable community members must cross these heavily traveled U.S. highways.

Despite efforts made over the years to implement safety precautions, the highways that run through the county seat see far more traffic than initially predicted. Due to the rural nature of the area, these roads have fewer safety features – such as median barriers and reduced speed limits as compared to urban areas where traffic is coming from. Our neighboring counties have national manufacturing and distribution facilities, Dot Foods and JBS Foods, which route their semi-trucks through Schuyler County hourly. We are also a transportation hub due to the two railroad companies (Burlington Northern Santa Fe and Union Pacific RR) running through our county as well as the Illinois River just south of our county. The Clarkson Grain Company fuels the barge industry, leading to semis transporting goods throughout Schuyler County. These semis use the same roads that elementary and middle school children use to get to the community center on weekdays. There are no pedestrian crosswalks, no sidewalks, no speed bumps, and no street signs to alert drivers to slow down for pedestrians.

Crosswalks are vital to the safety of our residents, especially the adolescents our three schools serve. The most highly-populated of the three is the jr. high & high school, located at the east end

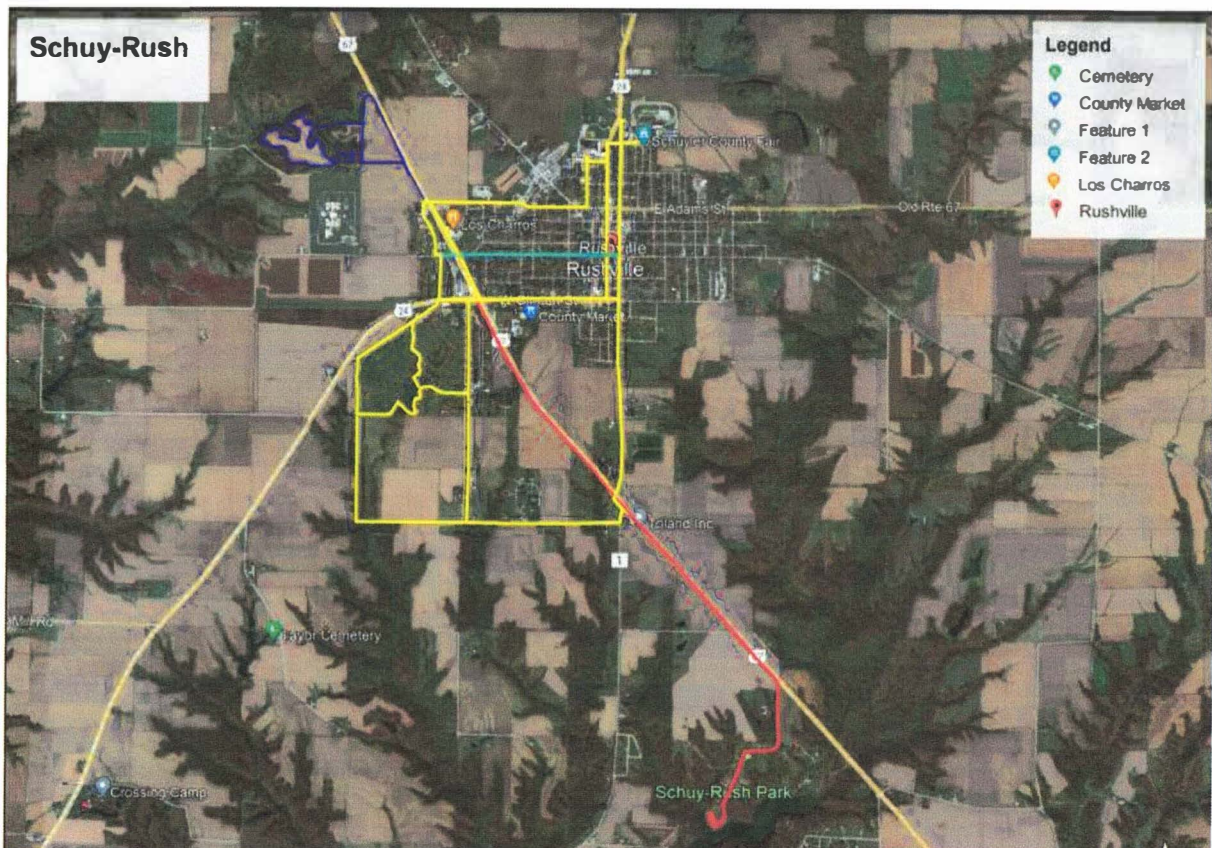
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of Rushville on a major Illinois Highway, U.S. 24. The major concern at this location is that there is no crosswalk for students to safely enjoy the town and make it to their destination safely. Safe pathways to school are nearly inaccessible to students who live on the North East side of Rushville, they must cross U.S. 24 in order to walk to school. (Appendix A) The residents commuting each day (89.9% commute via car), the new student drivers (281 students attending 9th grade-12th grade), and our aging population (1,631 older than 65) are not always on the lookout for children walking to school each morning. Primarily, the underserved populations live on the east side of U.S. 24, which divides the large number of low income students who walk to and from school daily. The school district gives 100% of its students free meals and extra assistance to its 16.6% students living in poverty. Robust after school activities such as reading assistance, English speaking support, and emotional support services are provided at the high school while other after school activities are scattered across town.

Students who participate in afterschool activities walk from school to our town square in order to get food/snacks at our local businesses in between school and events. There are sections of walkway our students travel that either do not have sidewalks or are in need of repair. (Appendix B) Nearly all afterschool activities happen at the newly built Community Fitness Facility. This facility also hosts an afterschool and summer program for our youth. Unfortunately, there is not a multi-use trail for pedestrians/cyclists to travel to and from this asset. (Appendix C) The facility is located on the Northwest side of Rushville, and sits along U.S. 67. Wilson Street, which transitions into West Adams Street, is a street which pedestrians could use to travel from the schools to the fitness center—however there are not sidewalks, bicycle facilities or crosswalk to safely travel across U.S. 67. (Appendix D)

Similar intersections are throughout Rushville. Schuyler County is a poor county, which lacks a large tax base in order to develop multi-use trails and roads for our vulnerable road users. In recent years, Rushville has been gifted several state of the art amenities which include a pool, fitness center, and fine arts auditorium. The city also revitalized our town square, creating and improving crosswalks, sidewalks and roadways. It is our vision to have safe routes to travel between these amenities, along with our schools, restaurants, and businesses while encouraging the physical movement of our community members.

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As shown above, The Fitness and Community Center is also located near Scripps Park. There is also no sidewalk or multi-use trail for vulnerable road users to travel between these amenities. Vulnerable road users must cross U.S. 24, where there is no crosswalk. In order for community members to safely travel back and forth between these locations, crosswalk signals need to be established with plans to build a pedestrian transportation system. This has led to severe underuse of the Scripps Park amenities.

A new amenity added to Scripps Park is an outdoor seasonal pool and splashpad. County residents, as well as those from out of town, enjoy the 18-hole golf course and clubhouse, three Little League diamonds, a playground with two pavilions (built and maintained by a local group PLAY–People Loving Active Youth), a two mile walking trail surrounding the golf course, and a lake for fishing. Also located at the park is the Virginia which is a venue used for receptions or local events. There are two cottages situated near the Virginia maintained for overnight stay by

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individuals traveling through Schuyler County. Scripps Park is also used by the school district to host cross country meets, but the walking trail transitions from a cinder surface to oil and chip, and then to concrete. There is also one portion of the trail which travels through the parking lot of the newly built pool. The trail is used daily, and year round, by our community members, which brings it to the forefront of the repairs needed. Ideally it will be resurfaced and marked as a multi-use trail for pedestrians and cyclists. Currently the trail is not used by cyclists as the cinder is not an ideal surface for a bicycle. (Appendix E) A highly-trafficked road in the park is located in the golf course. Pedestrians use this road as an alternative route. The road includes a dilapidated bridge used to cross the golf course lake and many unrepaired potholes, and is in need of updating as a multi-use roadway. (Appendix F) The parking lots used for the pool, Little League diamonds, and the Virginia could all be upgraded to incorporate a multi-use trail and create a more efficient travel route for vehicles and pedestrians. (Appendix G)

East of Scripps Park, Parkview Road runs along the golf course to Sugar Grove Road, then to U.S. 67, creating a loop back into Rushville. Acting as a cut-through road for local residents, the repairs needed to the pavement are dire. This road poses a large obstacle due to the road extending from the city, into the county. There are three road commissioners responsible for this two mile section of roadway. Unfortunately, because the sections are so small, this section of roadway is oftentimes overlooked. On top of the pavement needing repair, there are several culverts and a bridge that need to be addressed. Where possible, this road needs to be widened in areas, as there is a section where two vehicles are unable to pass safely and encroach on the space allocated for pedestrians. (Appendix H)

Just north, the intersection of U.S. 24 and U.S. 67 separate the park from the rest of the town's amenities. Community members who travel from Scripps Park back into town travel east on Clinton Street (U.S. 24). Along this road, Clinton Street crosses U.S. 67. This intersection was recently upgraded. However, the sidewalks leading to the intersection from the park, and from the city center, have not been upgraded in many decades. This sidewalk also has three bridges in need of repair. Several restaurants, and the only major grocery store located in the county, are on this route. Where W Clinton St., and S. Congress St. meet, U.S. 24 continues. This continuation separates Culbertson Memorial Hospital, Rushville Family Practice, and their parking lots.

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Pedestrians would have to cross U.S. 24, and there is no pedestrian crosswalk leading to a sidewalk in order for community members to safely travel back and forth between these locations. (Appendix I)

North Congress St. runs parallel to North Liberty St, where the Schuyler County Mental Health Association, churches which offer youth services, restaurants, banks, and The Hub Arts and Cultural Center. Continuing North, when trying to connect Parkview Road to make a loop back to Scripps Park, crossing U.S. 67 is dangerous due to the lack of a multi-use trail, crosswalks, signs to slow down, or speed barriers. (Appendix J) During the summer months, the school is still used daily but is flanked by this major highway and lack of safety routes. U.S. 24 from Congress St. intersects with N. Liberty St. leading out of town which passes by the county fair grounds and high school parking lot. The high school parking lot is used by county fair goers in the summer, and hundreds of individuals who cross that busy highway by foot in order to enter the fairgrounds. These are just a few intersections along the safety route in the picture above. (Appendix A)

Schuyler County's population is less than 7,000, where one can find more than half of the population located in the county seat town limits. This means residents in rural areas are more likely to rely on cars and trucks for transportation. The rural roads tend to be narrower, curvier, and have more obstacles such as animals or large farming equipment which can also contribute to a higher risk of accidents. Schuyler County is a large farming community, the USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service noted 544 farms that makeup 211,863 acres of farmland in 2022. Large farming communities have an increased number of large farm implements traveling on all roads. In addition to the oversized farm implements, farming communities also have an increase in truck tractor and semi-trailer traffic during planting and harvest seasons.

Schuyler County has 145,777 acres of wooded areas and forests alone (USDA, 2021). These wooded areas are encroachments of vegetation in parts of the county, leading to less reaction time for drivers to respond to unpredictable conditions caused by animals or debris. In the most recent report by the Department of Natural Resources, there have been 96 deer or animal-induced incidents, making it the leading factor for transportation accidents in our county

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(IDOT, 2021). The natural habitat for wildlife leads to great hunting grounds. Yearly, Schuyler County is visited by hunters from across the United States. These new visitors are unfamiliar with the gravel back roads, and some have never driven on a gravel road before. The lack of upkeep on these roads, along with sharp turns, are road safety hazard hot spots. There are intersections on the back roads familiar to residents with knowledge of local driving etiquette, but no proper signage or visuals for non-native visitors. . Schuyler County lacks simple preventative actions such as clearing trees and brush to improve visibility, installing warning signs for animal crossings, and consistently maintaining the surfaces of gravel roads. Currently, if these roads receive funding for upkeep, it is small and reactionary to a problem. Typical maintenance on these roads is potholes, timber blocking the road, bridge flooding, and adding more gravel covering the road. These are basic maintenance measures to keep the roads open. Improvements and preventative safety measures are beyond the budgetary resources of the agencies responsible for these roads.

The residents of Schuyler County live in a very rural setting: we are more than 60 miles away from the metropolitan areas, and towns of more than 10,000 are a 30-mile drive. In fact, out of the 102 counties in Illinois, Schuyler County ranks 100th for population density (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Parts of Schuyler County are an hour or more from large shopping stores, governmental organizations, entertainment and, most importantly, specialized healthcare facilities. According to the map created by the Environmental Protection Agency, the whole county is considered to be medically underserved. A transportation accident fatality nearly triples due to a lack of medical services, making preventative measures pivotal to attaining zero transportation fatalities in the coming years.

In Rushville, the low-income community boundary covers all intersections of U.S. Highway 24 and 67. According to the ArcGIS Low-Income Community Census Tracts, 84.6% of Schuyler County qualifies as a low-income community. The 13 townships that make up this county are struggling economically to keep up with towns close to urban areas. The lack of government support leads to little or no amount of money budgeted for transportation safety. The lack of pavement upkeep, sparse street lighting, diminishing sidewalks, and no shoulder space for vulnerable road users led to fatalities that could have been prevented. The U.S. Census Bureau

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conducted the five year estimate survey and found that 17.2% of Schuyler County residents live in poverty, with 8.4% being adolescents. Historically, low-income communities have experienced more fatalities than affluent communities.

While Rushville is primarily white, according to the 2021 Census estimates there has been a 25% increase in the Hispanic/Latino population over the past ten years. A majority of Hispanic/Latino families work for a thriving local restaurant, Los Charros. The restaurant sits on the major highway, U.S. Highway 67, which is not accessible by pedestrians or cars without walking on the shoulder of U.S. 67. An interview with the owner revealed that 60% of the workers do not drive their cars to work consistently. A majority of the workers use a bike, walk, or carpool when possible. The restaurant employees wear black to work, which makes it difficult for drivers to see them, especially around the times when they are starting or ending their shifts at night. (Appendix K) This poses a problem due to the lack of a pathway, leading the workers to walk on the road shoulder during low visibility times. The road is on top of raised land with a steep slope on both sides, making little room for pedestrians using that route. A multi-use trail running parallel on the east side of U.S. 67 for these vulnerable road users, along with community members would be ideal.

Due to a pork processing plant in a neighboring community there has also been an increase in African community members which led to the opening of an African grocery store, Passi'. When these community members arrive in Schuyler County they are not licensed to drive and are not able to speak English and are walking to amenities throughout the community, such as: the grocery store, doctor visit, laundry mat, schools, library, parks, and the community Fitness Center.

Schuyler County prioritizes the safety of all its members, including those that tend to be overlooked. The safety of the aging population is a significant concern in Schuyler County. As of 2021, Schuyler County's median age was 47.8 and the percentage of the population over 50 was 46.8% (U.S. Census Estimates, 2021). Multi-use trails play a critical role in ensuring the mobility and independence of our aging residents of Rushville. It is essential to prioritize their

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safety through appropriate trail safety revitalization. Multi-use trails connecting major points of interest—such as Culbertson Hospital, Rushville Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, Schuyler County Health Department, Schuyler County Mental Health, County Market Pharmacy, and Moreland & Devitt Pharmacy—all contain uneven, unaccommodating sidewalks. Previously mentioned, these destinations are located along the safety trail loop along Clinton St. sidewalk. A multi-use trail should be tailored to accommodate all vulnerable road users.

Schuyler County has made commendable efforts to foster an inclusive environment and promote healthy lifestyles. However, to sustain these efforts, it is imperative that we secure funding to enhance the county's transportation infrastructure. Specifically, we aim to establish multi-use trails, repair deteriorating roads, create alternative transportation options, and install proper safety signals to achieve our ultimate goal of zero transportation fatalities. Although Schuyler County may not be home to many, those who reside here value the county's unique offerings and are determined to improve this place called home.

	Population
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Population: 6,902● Adolescents(1-18): 1,210● Elderly(65+): 1,631
Race	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● 93.8 % White● 3.2% Black OR African American (it says African American in the report which is inaccurate. Most of the families are from Sub Saharan Africa, not the US)● 2.4% Hispanic/Latino.● 4% Asian
Native Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● English:98%● Spanish: .8%● Indo-European: 1.2%
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● PK-1st grade: 210 enrolled● 2nd grade- 4th grade: 174 enrolled● 5th grade- 8th grade: 278● 9th grade-12th grade: 281● Receive free lunch: 100%● Children Living in Poverty: 16.6%

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After School Learning Program: 10 students, 9 are African American • Community Recreation Center After School Program: 59 students • Total Bus Mileage for School of 2021-2022 School Year: 210,047 • Total Bus Mileage for Athletics of 2021-2022 School Year: 17,459 • Total Bus Mileage for Band/ Choir of 2021-2022 School Year: 1,580 • Total Bus Mileage for Field Trips of 2021-2022 School Year: 2,107 • Total Bus Mileage for Special Education of 2021-2022 School Year: 106,053 • Total Miles in 2021-2022 School Year: 370,043 • Average Bus Stops Per Day: 848 • Residents with a bachelor's degree or higher: 17.4%
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment Rate of Civilian Workforce: 50.5% • Commute to Work via Walking: 125, 4.3% • Commute to Work via Other Means (bike, scooter, etc): 48, 1.6% • Commute to Work via Car: 2,636, 89.9% • Median family income: \$58,447 • Median non-family income: \$38,365 • People in Poverty: 17.2% • Families Who Make Less Than \$ 50,000 per year: 421 • Children Living in Poverty: 8.4%
	Geography
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State: Illinois • State Region: Western • 64 miles from Springfield
Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial Farms: 544 • Farmland Acreage: 211,863
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total Area: 441 Sq miles • Forest Acreage: 145,777 • Minimum elevation: 420 ft • Maximum elevation: 801 ft •
Roadways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US 67 is a major north - south corridor extending 1,560 miles in the Central United States, and the major U.S. highway for western Illinois • US 24 is a major east-west corridor extending 1,540 miles in the Central United States and travels through central Illinois • US 67 and US 24 intersect in Rushville • IL Route 101 • IL Route 99

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IL Route 103 • IL Route 100
	Community
Townships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brimingham • Brooklyn • Oakland • Huntsville • Buena Vista • Hickory • Woodstock • Rushville • Browning • Camden • Littelton • Bainbridge • Frederick
Education Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washington Grade School • Webster Grade School • Jr. High School • High School • Spoon River Community College
Outdoor activity sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scripps Park • Schuy-Rush Lake/ Campground • Schuyler County Fairgrounds • Weinberg-King State Park • Town Square
Medical Sites/ EMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culbertson's Memorial Hospital • Rushville Family Practice • Schuyler County Health Department • Robert Cox Memorial Therapy Clinic • Schuyler County Mental Health • Schuyler County Fire Protection District • Schuyler County Rescue Squad • Industry Fire Protection District • Hickory-Kerton Fire Department • Browning Fire Department • Schuyler County Emergency Management Agency

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Citation

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Appendices

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Appendix A

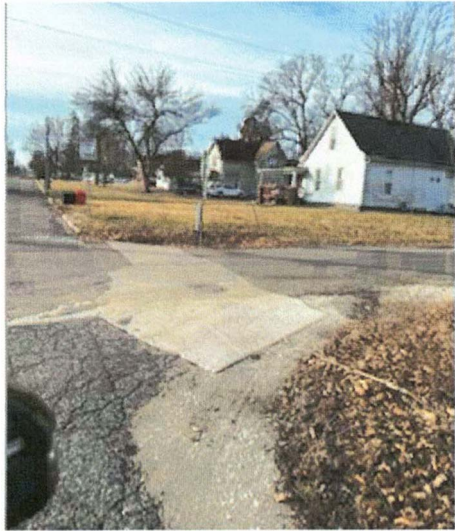
US 24 in front of Schuyler/Industry Community
Unit School #5



Appendix B

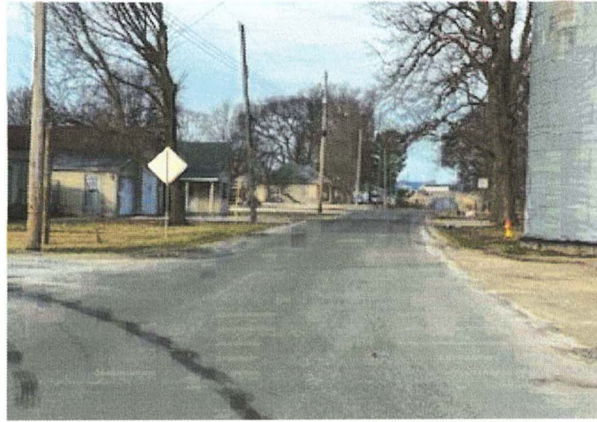
Liberty street parallel to school.

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Appendix C

No sidewalk and bicycle accommodations from Schools to
Fitness Center



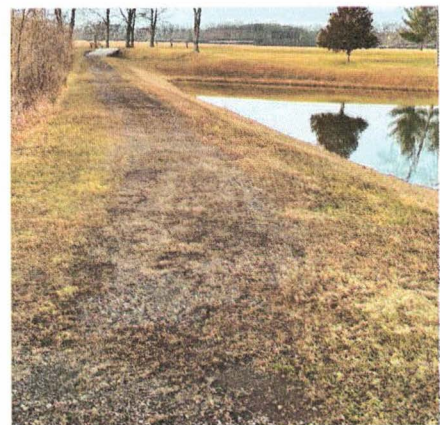
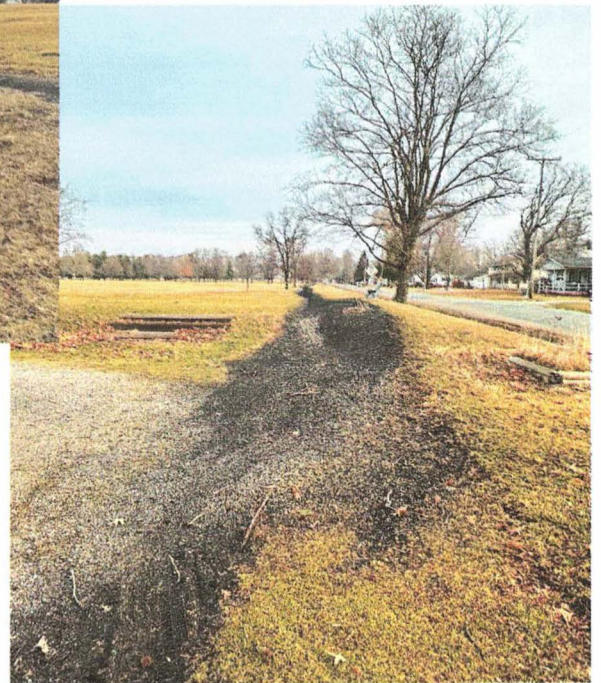
Appendix D



Crossing US 67 to Fitness Center

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Appendix E - Existing Trail



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Appendix F - Golf Course Rd



Appendix G - Scripps Park



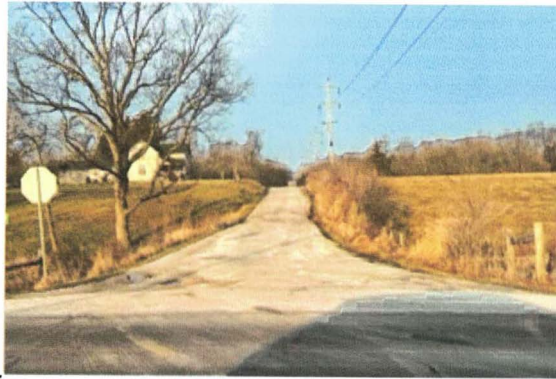
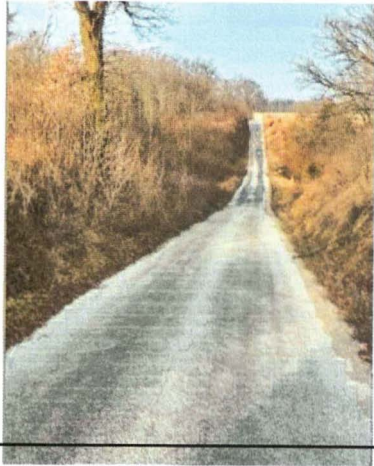
Little League Park



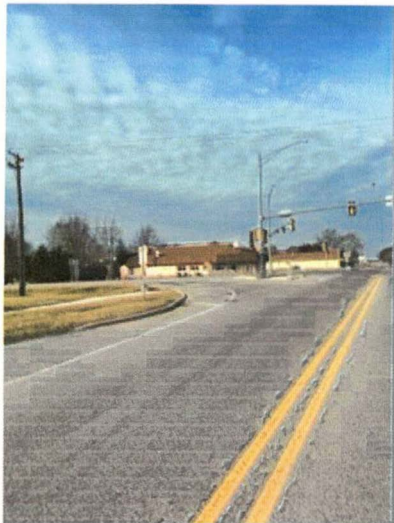
Scripps Park Pool

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Appendix H Parkview



Appendix I 67 & 24



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Appendix J - Connecting Parkview Road to North Liberty



Appendix K - Walking to work along US 67 highway

