An introduction to bicycle and pedestrian advocacy in Warner Robins.

An introduction.

- Tim Bergl and Stephen Rollyson met at the Warner Robins Area Transportation Study (WRATS) Citizens Advisory Committee meeting in November 2023.

- Tim is an e-bike aficionado and loves exploring cities by bike with his wife.

- Stephen is an avid bicycle commuter, having started some 15 years ago in Gwinnett County where bike lanes are more common.

- Both became interested in urban development and active transportation courtesy of Strong Towns, NotJustBikes, and other similar urbanists.

Goals and vision.

- Walkable and bikeable cities:
  - Are historically how cities have been built.
  - Encourage a more active lifestyle.
  - Are enjoyable to live in and promote getting to know your neighbors.
  - Encourage children's independence.
  - Are more equitable for those that cannot drive.
  - Improve property desirability, which in turn improves the tax digest.

- We would love to see Warner Robins become more walkable and bikeable.

- Warner Robins doesn't have to ditch the car! We feel that bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure can be built in parallel with the existing automobile infrastructure.

Goals and vision, continued.

- Warner Robins is *already* planning on connecting the parks with a greenway. See: https://www.41nbc.com/warner-robins-working-to-create-greenway/ and this 13WMAZ article.

- "Operation Reawaken" is Warner Robins' plan to create a downtown.

- We want to build an organization that supports Warner Robins in these goals.

- We want to build an organization that hosts events, has group rides, teaches classes, helps people maintain their bicycles, and gives input to the city government as they decide *how* to transform our city.

Present day Warner Robins.

- Core of the city is actually fairly walkable and bikeable!

- Unfortunately, dense housing developments and big box stores have been built on the periphery. This is an example of "urban sprawl."

- Watson, Russell, Houston Lake, and Highway 96 have been widened to support traffic volumes. These are "stroads," which are mixtures of "roads" and "streets." These stroads combine high speed with frequent stops.

- The following slides are examples of stroads in Warner Robins and what pedestrian and cycling infrastructure looks like on them.

The bicycle lane and sidewalk ending before the Kroger shopping center on Highway 96.

The pedestrian crossing at Feagin Mill Road and Houston Lake Road.

This stretch of Watson has the highest number of pedestrian fatalities in recent years.
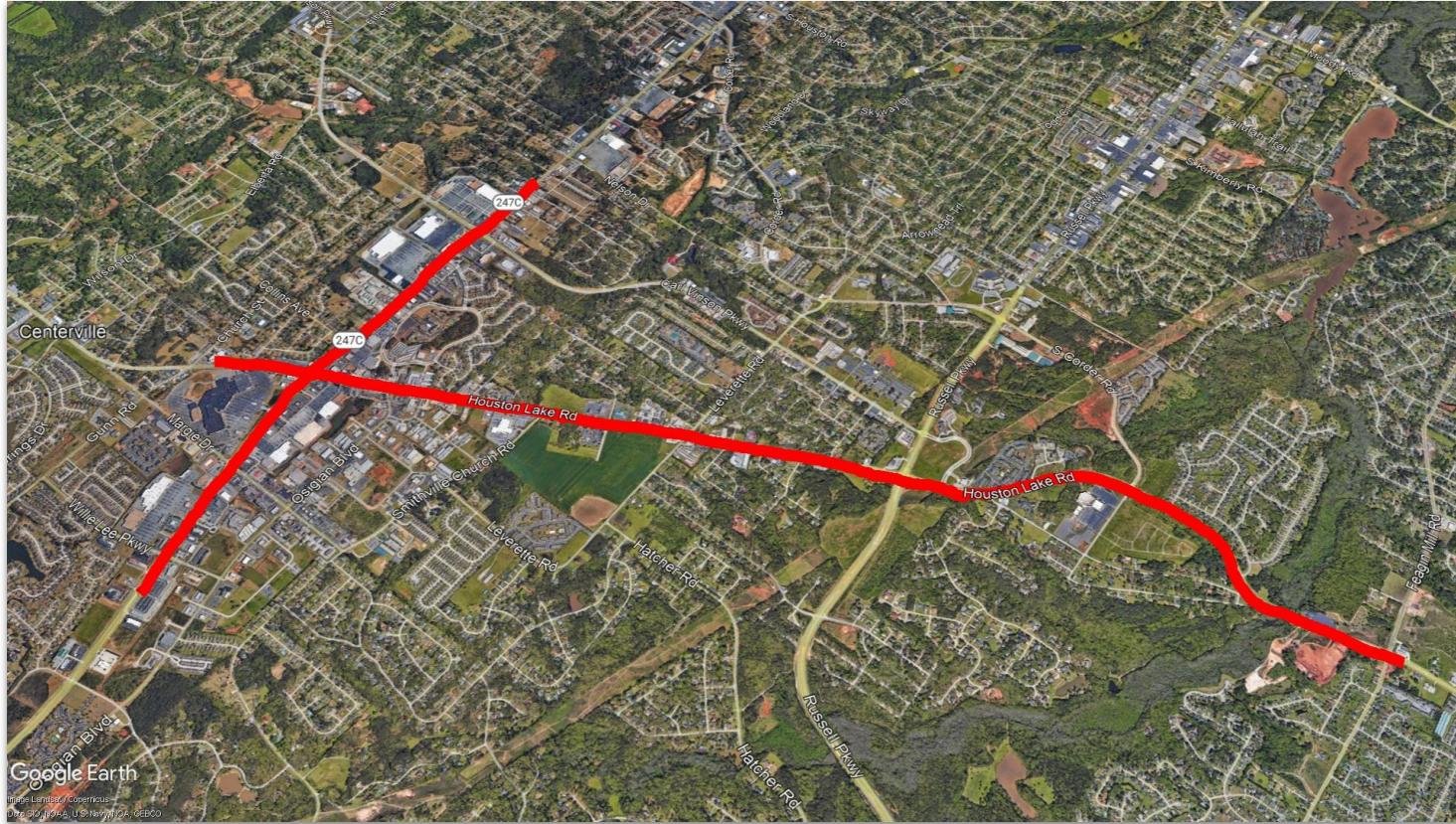
This area of Watson and Houston Lake has the highest number of automobile fatalities.

The pedestrian crossing at Bonaire Primary School.

The pedestrian crossing at Veterans High School.

Present day Warner Robins, continued.

- The older core of the city actually handles pedestrian safety a bit better!

- Speed limits are slower, the roads are narrower, and foliage grows nearby. These are examples of "traffic calming," where people tend to drive slower because the road doesn't have an implicit promise of safety for cars.

- Wellston Trail is a highlight, of course. It gets many visitors– people that want to get a bit of exercise safely and let their kids play.

- Children can and do walk to school by themselves! This is the litmus test we'd like to see applied to *all* sidewalks and bicycle infrastructure going forward.
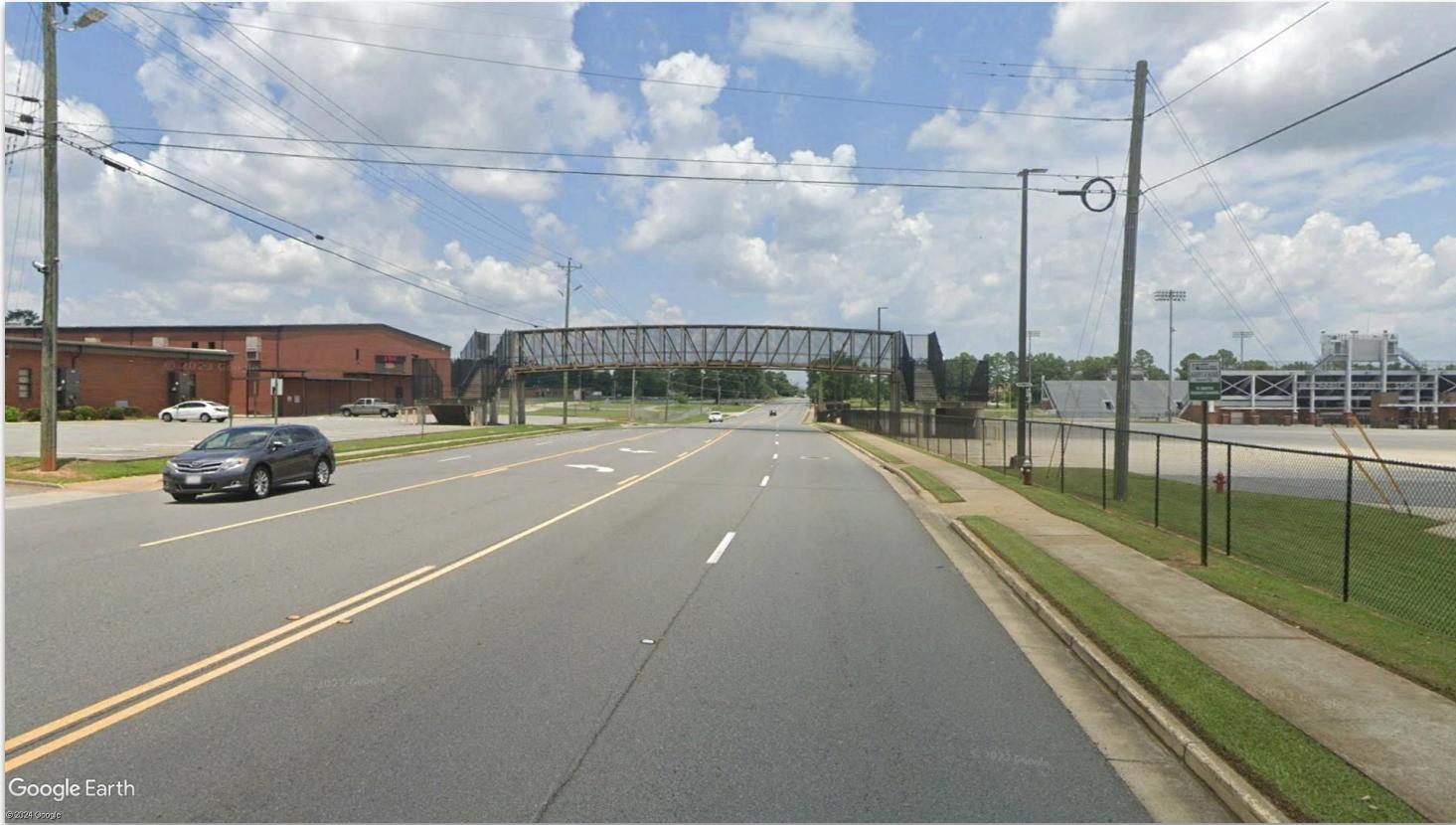
The pedestrian crossing at Warner Robins High School.

The pedestrian crossing at Miller Elementary School.

The sidewalk and road in front of Shirley Hills Elementary School.

Where do we go from here?

- Start building up an organization with group rides and good conversation.

- Pursue low hanging fruit and easy victories to change the mindset from "that could never happen here" to "wow, look at what we have accomplished!"

- Work *with* the city to chase grants and federal funding, such as Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A), which can fund large portions of infrastructure improvements. https://www.transportation.gov/grants/SS4A

- Generally, be a positive and enthusiastic supporter of our elected and appointed government officials as they make improvements to our city.

Our most recent group ride had 20 bicyclists in attendance!

COMMUNITY CORNER

Rolling out Ride Robins
Two locals start up new biking advocacy organization

By BRIEANNA SMITH
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WARNER ROBINS — Biking can be seen as an enjoyable way to get some exercise and get from place to place.

Locally, two biking enthusiasts are banding together to build a community of bicyclists and promote a bike-friendly region. Stephen Rollyson and Tim Bergl are co-founders of Ride Robins, a bicycling and micromobility advocacy organization.

Rollyson grew up in Warner Robins and was among the kids who would take to the streets on their bicycles and ride around neighborhoods. Rollyson would bike to work when he lived in Atlanta.

When he moved back to Warner Robins, he was car-dependent but picked up biking again about a year

aspect is a benefit. He said he stops to chat while on his commute to work, while Bergl counted speaking to eight strangers during his travels Wednesday morning.

"Now and then, I run into one of my neighbors or neighbor's kids. I'm like, 'Hey, how's it going?' and stop and talk. That's something that you don't really do when you're kind of isolated in your car," Rollyson said.

Additionally, Bergl said cutting back on the car can save money on maintenance, while Rollyson said choosing a bike is a more affordable way to promote independence for children and teens.

"We try and instill independence in our children as they start getting up in their teenage years. A car? A lot of people can't afford to give their kid a car. It's

Wrap-up!

- Thanks for having us out to spread the word about our advocacy!

- More info and our email newsletter are available at https://riderobins.org

- Any great ideas or questions?