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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **4<sup>th</sup>- 6<sup>th</sup> GRADERS JOIN WALKING SCHOOL BUS**

First expansion of walk to school program starts at Fairhope Intermediate

Fairhope, Ala (August 12, 2019) – For the first time, about 20 students at Fairhope Intermediate School will be able to walk to school daily. It is the first expansion of the Walking School Bus that serves Fairhope Elementary, now in its seventh year.

The supervised morning walk to FIS is open this year only to “graduates” of the Walking School Bus at Fairhope Elementary. So far, 17 students have signed up. Many of their parents requested a walking option at the Intermediate School because walking had become a ritual start to their day, and they prefer to socialize and exercise rather than sit in long car lines at the school.

“Children who already know safe pedestrian practices will help us launch this initiative,” says Charlene Lee, director of the Fairhope Walking School Bus, a program of the nonprofit Baldwin County Trailblazers.

Traditions that are familiar to K-3 walkers will be tweaked to appeal to grades 4-6, but outdoor play time before the walk begins is a constant, she says.

Earlier this year, Lee led trial walks for parents and students, accompanied by City public safety and public works personnel to identify challenges along the proposed sidewalk route from Edwards Avenue to Bishop Road. As a result, crews added safety upgrades this summer, including a new crosswalk on Edwards Avenue.

Children and parents will meet each morning on city property fronting Greeno Road, adjacent to Citizens Bank. Fairhope Rotary is providing a gazebo to serve as a student check-in location. The 0.7 mile walk to school takes about 15 minutes.

“We are deeply grateful for cooperation from Citizens Bank, city and school administrators, volunteers, sponsors and the entire community that supports supervised walks to school for the well-being of children and the environment,” Lee says. “After the pilot year, we plan to invite all students and parents who are interested to walk to school.”

Parents with children at other schools have inquired about starting their own walking program, says Lee. “Our goal is to see more schools partner with parents to make walking possible.”

*The Baldwin County Trailblazers is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving opportunities for bicycling and walking in the County. For more, see [thetrailblazers.org/walking](http://thetrailblazers.org/walking)*

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*Cutline: A new crosswalk was added mid-block to connect existing sidewalks along Edwards Avenue. For the first time, some students will walk to Fairhope Intermediate School using this route.*