



# CONDUCTING A WALK AUDIT

## WHAT'S IN THIS MINIGUIDE?

This Local Motion MiniGuide explains how to conduct a Walk Audit, an assessment of conditions around a school for walking. In this MiniGuide, you will find:

- Basic Steps
- “What to Look For” List
- Infrastructure Bingo
- Mapping
- Real World Examples

## WHAT IS IT?

A Walk Audit is a group exercise in which your team walks around the school grounds and adjacent neighborhoods to experience, identify and document walking and biking conditions.

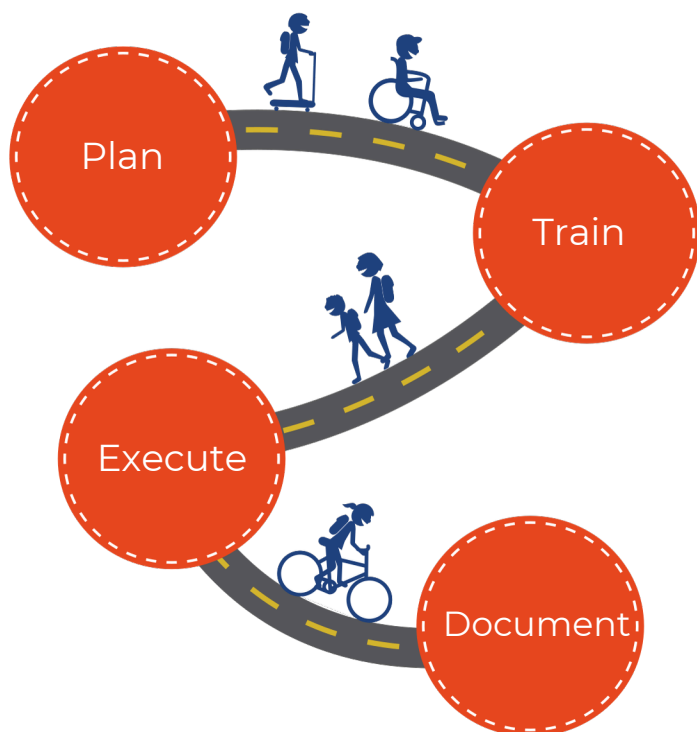
## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Walk Audits are used to identify barriers to walking, bicycling and rolling in the environment surrounding a school. They increase collective awareness of the built environment and are also an important first step in developing solutions that improve safety and accessibility.

## WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF EFFORT INVOLVED?




**Low to moderate:** Assembling a Walk Audit Team, preparing printed materials, leading the walk, and documenting findings.

## WHAT TO EXPECT



## RESOURCES PREVIEW

Additional resources from Local Motion and VT SRTS are linked or available for download:

- **Walk Smart**  : Local Motion’s pedestrian education program requires very little supplies and is a great companion program for a Walk Audit.
- **Bike Smart Sign Up**  : activating students via Walk Audits and Walk Smart increases your chances of receiving Local Motion’s Bike Smart Trailer! Sign up today.
- **State Safe Routes Website**  : There are various resources to be found on the Vermont State Safe Routes to School website.

# BASIC STEPS

A **Walk Audit** is one of the most important steps you can take to improve walking and biking conditions in your school's neighborhood. Follow these steps for a successful Walk Audit.

## FOLLOW THESE STEPS

### 1. PLAN

- Invite participants to the Walk Audit. Ideally, the Champion, principal, and municipal planner or Regional Planning Commission staff should be present. Municipal public works staff are ideal participants as they can speak to local regulations and best practices. Teachers, parents, law enforcement officers, elected officials, or other interested community members may also be helpful.
- Choose the area to audit (typically the school site and/or routes leading to the school).
- Print maps of the area (one for each participant). Printouts from online maps are sufficient.
- Print copies of the **"What to Look For" List** or **"Infrastructure Bingo"** included in this document to frame the conversation and allow folks to take notes.

### 2. TRAIN

- Hand out reflective safety vests to all participants.
- Emphasize the need to maintain awareness of your surroundings and follow traffic rules during the walk audit
- Explain the goal of the exercise (to identify barriers to safe walking and biking to school).
- Review the **"What to Look For" List** and **"Infrastructure Bingo"**
- Instruct participants to record observations on map printouts.

### 3. EXECUTE

- Begin walking and making observations. You may travel as one large group or break off into teams to cover different streets.
- Take photographs of conditions and make observations on the paper maps with colored markers.
- At the end of the Walk Audit, participants should regroup to share observations and next steps.

OPTIONAL: Walk Audit participants may observe arrival and dismissal behaviors. School staff members are ideal for this task since they are familiar faces to parents and students.

### 4. DOCUMENT

- Summarize all notes from the audit into a single list of insights.
- Include maps and photos where needed to help with documentation.
- Work with your local walk-bike group, town planning staff, or Regional Planning Commission staff member to develop strategies to address issues identified in the audit.
- Schedule a follow-up meeting with the Regional Planning Commission and/or municipal staff to create an action plan for implementing strategies to address the infrastructure issues.

OPTIONAL: Continue to build on the walk audit and include findings in a School Travel Plan.

## KEY POINTS

### TIMELINE

2 weeks to plan

< 1 day to execute

## TEAM MEMBERS

School Champion

teachers

regional/local planner

public works staff

law enforcement

elected officials

local walk bike groups

parents

## MATERIALS

Safety vests

clipboards

pens and markers

printed street maps

Infrastructure Bingo

"What to Look For" List

Remember to reach out to  
[education@localmotion.org](mailto:education@localmotion.org)  
with any questions!

# "WHAT TO LOOK FOR" LIST

Use this list as a guide for what to look for on your Walk Audit, though remember you may observe other important issues not listed here. Use your printed map to mark any of these issues you observe while walking your route. Take photos to help document what you see.

## SIDEWALKS

- Missing sidewalk
- Narrow sidewalk
- Wide driveways
- Blocked/cluttered sidewalks (shrubs overgrown, car parked over it, etc.)
- Poorly maintained sidewalks (broken/cracked, ice/snow, puddles, trash/broken glass)
- Missing streetlights

## CROSSWALKS

- Missing or faded crosswalk
- Blocked view of oncoming traffic (note the obstruction: trees, building, parked cars, etc.)
- Inadequate or missing curb ramps (need repair or widening, etc.)
- Missing streetlights

## SCHOOL ZONE

- No signs indicating crosswalks
- No signs indicating school zone speed limit
- Discolored, faded, damaged/vandalized signs
- Posted speed limit is too fast for school zone (above 25 mph)

## OTHER BARRIERS

- Speeding vehicles
- High traffic volumes
- Wide roads
- Driver's sightline is limited/small children walking or biking are blocked from view
- Abandoned/boarded up building(s)
- Area of known (or suspected) crime (drug dealers, gangs. etc.)
- Loose dog(s)
- Dark corners, hiding places, or lack of pedestrian activity


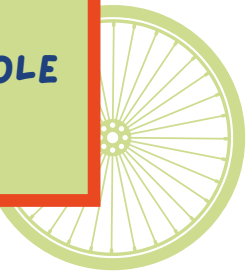



## ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL (IF APPLICABLE)

- Double parking
- Conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians
- Missing sidewalks
- Missing crosswalks
- Idling vehicles Backed-up queue of vehicles



# Walk/Bike/Roll infrastructure **BINGO**

*the good, the bad,  
and the straight up useless...*



PAINTED BIKE LANE	FLASHING BEACON	ROLLER COASTER- ESQUE SIDEWALK	BUS STOP
DESIRE PATH	FADED CROSSWALK	SHOULDER FILLED W/ TRASH	SIDEWALK TO NOWHERE
SHARROWS	SHARED USE PATH	LBS	BIKE RACK
SPEEDING CAR	CURB CUT	DIAGONAL RAILROAD X-ING	POT HOLE

# Walk/Bike/Roll infrastructure



## GLOSSARY

**Sharrows** - shared lane marking, looks like a bike with arrows above. Shows that bikes are allowed and expected in the travelled lane.



**Desire path** - unplanned small trail caused by human or animal traffic, usually represents the shortest or the most easily navigated route between an origin and destination.

**Curb cut** - ramp graded down from a sidewalk to the street, designed to make it possible for those rolling to use the sidewalks.



**LBS** - aka. Local Bike Shop, a brick-and-mortar store in your neighborhood that can repair your bike, help you find a new bike, and connect you to your biking community!



**Shared use path** - designed to accommodate the movement of both bicyclists and pedestrians



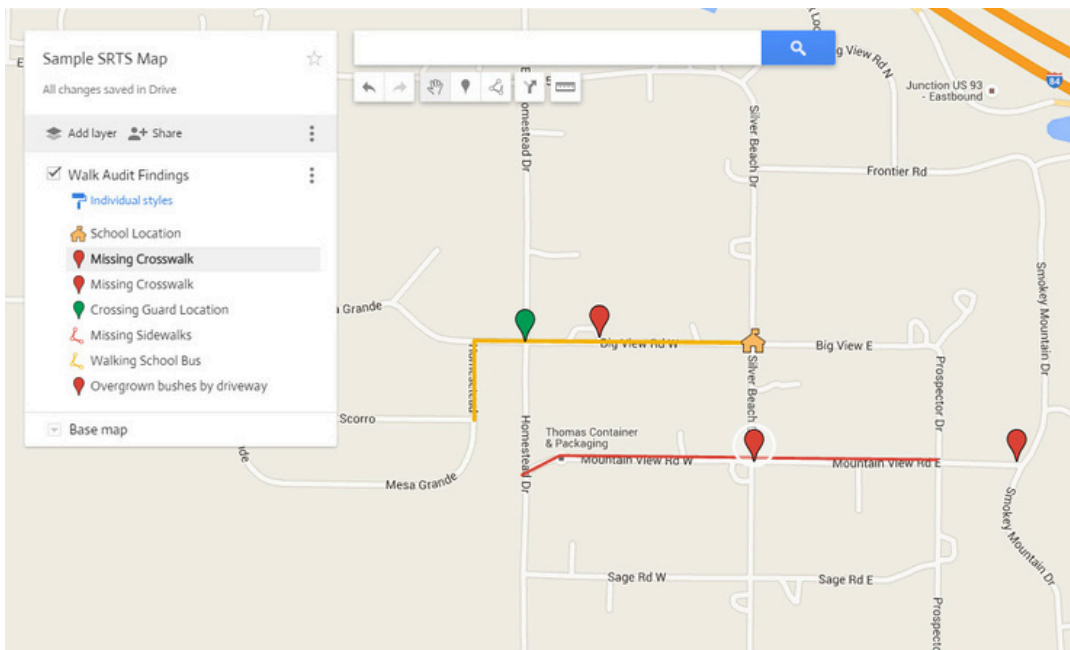
# MAPPING

Maps are important to document your findings from the Walk Audit. When conducting your Walk Audit, you can take notes by hand on a printed map. If there are multiple teams or multiple note-takers, you should combine all data from the various maps into one master map to document all observations from the Walk Audit. This master map can also be created by hand or an online mapping tool (such as Google Maps).

## Instructions for creating a Walk Audit map, using Google Maps:

1. Log into Google Maps using a free google account (necessary for creating maps)
2. Select “My Maps”
3. Select “Create Map”
4. Search for your school’s location and Zoom in
5. Using the line tool  , mark lines to show linear features, such as routes to school, sidewalks (or lack of them), or streets known for being unsafe. You can edit the color and width of these lines after marking them on the map. Label each line.
6. Using the pin tools  , mark spot locations, such as the school, as the school, a missing crosswalk at an intersection, commercial driveway, sidewalk obstruction, or other barriers to walking and biking to school.
7. You can edit the color and style of these points after marking them on the map. Label each point.
8. Save your map. Select the “Share” link.
9. If you plan to share your map, click on the menu next to the “Share” link and set your Privacy setting to “Public.” You will then have a link to your map to share. You can also share an image.

## Sample Walk Audit Map





# REAL WORLD EXAMPLES

1.

**Grand Isle Elementary** recruited local planning commission members, nearby landowners, the town zoning administrator, the Regional Planning Commission, sheriff, and the health department to join them on a Walk Audit. The group identified potential walking routes to school and walked along each, documenting both assets and issues. The team members drafted recommendations to improve the walking routes and are working with their Regional Planning Commission and Town officials to investigate the feasibility of the recommendations.



2.

**Twinfield Elementary** organized a Walk Audit focused on the school site and an existing trail network connected to the school. With the assistance of Regional Planning staff and a Vermont Trails representative, the group explored options to improve a nearby trail to accommodate year-round travel to a village park and ride. After agreeing on a set of recommendations, they created an action plan for implementation.

3.

**Saxtons River Elementary School** staff and parents conducted a series of Walk Audits of the neighborhoods surrounding the school during weekly Walk to School Days. They identified streets with sidewalks, streets in need of sidewalks, and low-traffic streets without need for a sidewalk. The SRTS Travel Plan Team included these findings in their Travel Plan and sought funding from VTTrans to build the highest priority sidewalk—one leading from the main road to the school.



Based on the Vermont Safe Routes Walk Audit Miniguide

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