

# Inclusive Walk Audit

Facilitator's Guide

DECEMBER 2020



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This guide was developed based on input from people with a broad range of disabilities.

This guide was supported by the Grant or Cooperative Agreement Number, DD16-1603/DD000009, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the Department of Health and Human Services.

## WORKING GROUP

Alex Stoiaken  
Corwin Morton  
Erik Anderson  
Greg Baker  
Heidi Myhre  
Jane Van Deusen  
Jennifer Lawson  
Jillian Nelson  
Melvin Hagenson  
Nell Coonen-Korte  
Nicole Plans  
Pallavi Shattuck  
Peter Vader  
Robert Waltz  
Scott Engel

## PROJECT TEAM

Emily Smoak  
Susan Bishop  
*Minnesota Department of Health*

Colin Harris  
Kristen O'Toole  
Maria Wardoku  
*Alta Planning + Design*

Kjensmo Walker  
*This Inclusive Life*



**This  
Inclusive  
Life**

# CONTENTS

- GLOSSARY .....01**
- INTRODUCTION.....03**
- PLANNING A MORE INCLUSIVE MEETING.....05**
  - Meeting time and location..... 05
  - Recruiting and communicating with attendees before meeting .....07
  - Self-guided virtual walk audit..... 10
  - Day-of meeting set up .....11
  - Meeting facilitation.....13
- CONDUCTING A MORE INCLUSIVE WALK AUDIT .....15**
  - Walk audit planning.....15
  - Facilitation before the walk audit ..... 19
  - Facilitation during walk audit .....21
  
- APPENDIX..... 23**
  - Connecting with disability organizations .....23
  - Centering the experiences of people with disabilities.....23
  - Writing inclusive meeting invitations .....25
  - Potential accommodations .....27
  - For more information or for assistance .....29
  - Example walk audit worksheet ..... 30



# GLOSSARY

## DISABILITY

A physical or mental condition that may limit or alter one or more major life activities for a person. Disabilities may be temporary or permanent, and people may have multiple disabilities. Disability encompasses differences or limitations to vision, hearing, speech, mobility, cognition, and more.

## ADA FIELD WALK

Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) projects include Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) unit field walks as part of the process of identifying pedestrian facility needs in a specific area. Field walks are a type of walk audit that is technical and focused on requirements to meet ADA standards. They are not typically used as a community engagement tool.

## WALK AUDIT

A walk audit is an activity in which participants evaluate the walking environment and identify issues that impact their comfort and safety. A walk audit can be used as a community engagement tool.

## WALKING

Walking is an inclusive term that includes both ambulatory and non-ambulatory modes. Walking encompasses all forms of mobility devices, including using a wheelchair, cane, walker, or other mobility device that allows the user to travel at human speed.





# INTRODUCTION

A walk audit is an activity in which community members and decision makers observe and identify opportunities to improve the comfort and safety of the surrounding environment.

People do walk audits for a variety of reasons:

- A group of neighbors might do a walk audit of a street or area of their community to build consensus around changes they want to advocate for.
- A city planner or engineer might conduct a walk audit with community members to inform the planning or design process for a street or area of the city.
- Students, teachers, and parents might do a walk audit of the area around a school as part of a Safe Routes to School planning process.

**Walk audits are a common public engagement activity used in pedestrian planning, but often are not accessible to or inclusive of people with disabilities.** People with disabilities are more likely to rely on walking for daily trips and may be more aware of and impacted by problems in the transportation network. Planning and street design processes benefit from incorporating the expertise of people with disabilities; when a street is accessible for people with disabilities, it is accessible for all people.

**This document provides specific guidance and information on how to better include people with disabilities and to highlight disability in walk audits so that planning processes are more inclusive. The document also provides tips on planning more inclusive meetings that are applicable to any kind of meeting.**

People with disabilities are more likely to rely on walking for daily trips and may be more aware of and impacted by problems in the transportation network. **When a street is accessible for people with disabilities, it is accessible for all people.**



*Walk audit facilitators and participants discuss their experience.*

## PLANNING TIMELINE OVERVIEW

The timeline below provides an overview of planning activities leading to a walk audit. The next chapter describes these activities in more detail.

### 1-2 months before walk audit

- Connect with local disability organizations
- Select meeting location and date that works for organizers and key participants
- Plan for compensating attendees for their time and expertise
- Obtain disability simulation devices (if using)

### 1 month before walk audit

- Publicize walk audit and request RSVPs
- Directly invite people with disabilities
- Plan walk audit route(s)
- Develop virtual walk audit materials
- Develop meeting agenda

### 2 weeks before walk audit

- Post screen-reader accessible versions of all visual materials online and/or share with participants via email
- Share information on accessing the meeting location
- Ask participants about additional needed accommodations

### 1 week before walk audit

- Remind participants of the meeting time and location, and what materials are available for them to review in advance
- Obtain/prepare compensation for confirmed attendees



# PLANNING A MORE INCLUSIVE MEETING

## MEETING TIME AND LOCATION

The timing and location of the meeting should reduce barriers to participation for community members, especially people with disabilities.

### What to do

Choose a centrally located, community-oriented meeting location accessible by walking and transit (if applicable).

Consider hosting the meeting at one of the following locations:

- Public library
- Public school
- Park
- Recreation center
- Community meeting room in a public housing apartment building, restaurant, coffee shop, grocery store, etc.

Consult with local disability services and advocacy groups for ideas on accessible meeting locations.

### Why it's more inclusive

- Community members may already be familiar with and comfortable at sites like libraries, schools, and parks. Government office buildings may be most convenient for staff, but may be intimidating for community members.
- These spaces have a greater likelihood of being on transit lines when available.

Schedule the meeting such that the meeting location will be open for at least an hour prior to the meeting start time and for at least an hour after the meeting end time. Organizer should be ready for people to arrive 30 min before start and be prepared to remain until all have departed.

- Allows flexibility for participants arriving via paratransit, which has a larger drop off and pick up window than transit.
- Allows participants to come early and become comfortable in the space prior to the meeting.



Walk audit participants pause to discuss their experience on a walking route and rate their comfort on a scale of 1 to 5 using their hands.

*Continued from previous page*

### **What to do**

- Check that meeting building, meeting room, and bathrooms are accessible, making sure to look for the following:
- Room signs have braille
  - Doors have push buttons
  - There are no stairs between the sidewalk and the meeting room, or ramps/elevators are available

### **Why it's more inclusive**

- Allows participants to access the meeting independently.

## RECRUITING AND COMMUNICATING WITH ATTENDEES BEFORE MEETING

Communication prior to the meeting should aim to decrease participant stress and confusion, set clear expectations, and signal a welcoming environment for people of all abilities. See the Appendix for an example of how to write an inclusive meeting invitation.

What to do	Why it's more inclusive
<p>Contact disability services and advocacy organizations and invite participation from staff and clients. Notice and invitations should be sent at least two weeks prior to event.</p> <p>Tips for connections with disability organizations are in the Appendix.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alerts people with disabilities to planning processes that may impact them. Increases the likelihood that the experiences of people with disabilities will inform your plan, and connects people without disabilities to new perspectives.</li> <li>Advance notice gives people with disability planning time to participate.</li> </ul>
<p>Offer compensation for meeting participants' time and travel costs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bus vouchers</li> <li>Stipend/gift cards</li> <li>Food and drinks at the meeting</li> </ul> <p>Include participant compensation in the project budget (possibly as a materials expense, depending on agency policy). Consider travel and time when determining compensation amount. (ex. \$15 per hour + \$5 for transit to and from meeting= \$50 for a 2.5 hour meeting)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attendees who are not already compensated as part of their work, regardless of their disability status, should be compensated for their time as an expression of appreciation for their contributions.</li> <li>Compensation for time and travel costs especially helps to support participation of people with low incomes, and affirms the value of their input. This is also more inclusive because many people are already attending in a professional capacity and are paid to be there.</li> </ul>
<p>Be clear on what participants can expect at the meeting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helps people decide if the meeting is a good use of their time.</li> <li>Reduces stress and anxiety.</li> </ul>

*Continued from previous page*

<b>What to do</b>	<b>Why it's more inclusive</b>
<p>Prior to the meeting, proactively ask participants what accommodations would help them participate fully in the meeting. Meeting invitations/notices should provide information on who to contact to request accommodations (ex. For accommodations, please contact [NAME and CONTACT INFORMATION] by [DATE]).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relieves some of the stress of asking for assistance.</li> <li>• Allows meeting facilitator time to secure equipment, recruit additional meeting staff, hire an interpreter, etc.</li> </ul>
<p>Share questions you will ask at the meeting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps participants know what to pay attention to and allows them to process questions in advance and prepare answers in a format of their choice (e.g., written, verbal).</li> <li>• Gives people who use assistive technology an opportunity to program their answers in advance so they can participate in real-time during the meeting.</li> </ul>
<p>Provide all written materials in accessible form via email or website in advance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add alt text for any images.</li> <li>• Run accessibility checker tools in word processing and PDF software to identify and fix accessibility problems in documents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows all participants the opportunity to preview materials and process information at their own pace.</li> <li>• Allows people with low vision to follow along during the meeting using a screen reader on a smartphone or computer.</li> </ul>
<p>Provide both a phone number and an email for questions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports different communication needs and styles.</li> </ul>
<p>Send a reminder email in the days leading up to the meeting with logistics.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increases meeting participation, especially for people with memory loss.</li> <li>• Reminds participants to arrange travel.</li> </ul>

*Continued from previous page*

## What to do

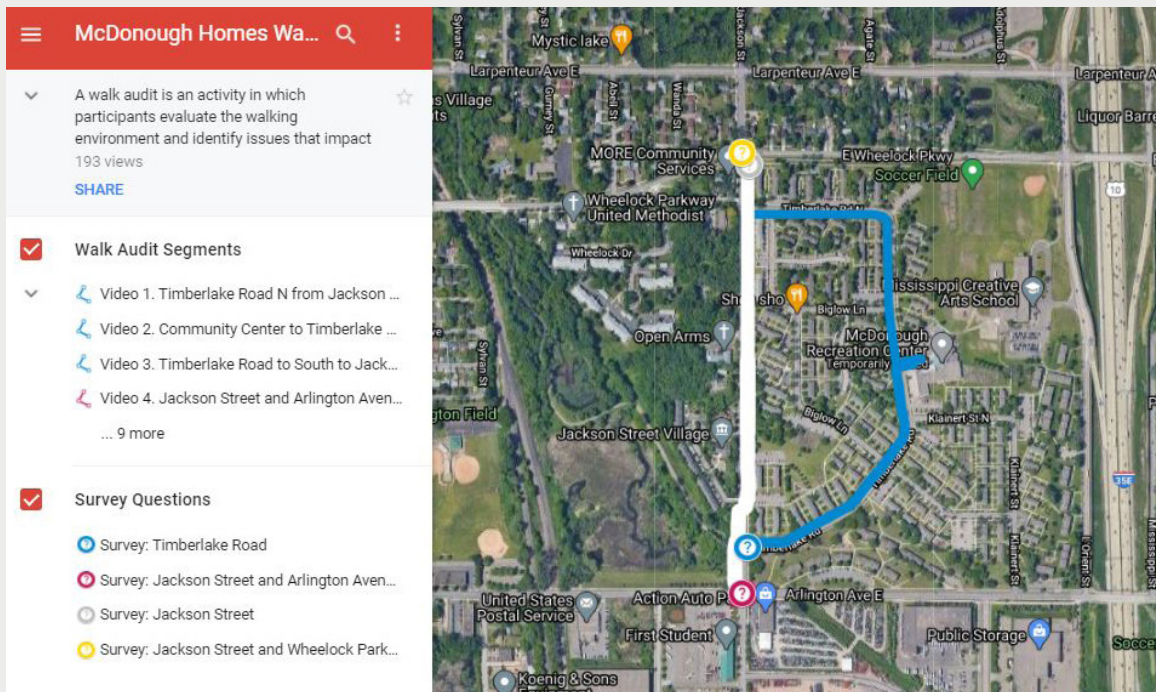
Provide detailed information on navigating to the meeting location at least one week ahead of the meeting date.

- Location of nearest bus stop, bike parking, drop-off area, and accessible vehicle parking
- Location of ramps and elevators if an elevation change is necessary
- Directions from the entrance to the meeting site (ex. Enter through the main building entrance at the corner of Main St & 1st Ave. Turn right at the information desk and walk 200 feet to reach the meeting room.)
- Information on day-of-meeting assistance (ex. Call XXX-XXX-XXXX if you have trouble finding the room; Staff will be available in the lobby to help direct or guide you to the room; Signs will be posted at the building entrances)

Navigation options should allow meeting participants to socialize with organizers or to choose options that do not require socializing (e.g., staff in the lobby to provide direction, posted signage).

## Why it's more inclusive

- Helps participants navigate to the meeting. Signals to people with disabilities that they are welcome.
- Allows participants to plan their trip by transit or paratransit, which often needs to be scheduled far in advance.



*Self-guided virtual walk audits can be created using Google My Maps, Google Forms, and embedded video. They allow people to participate and provide input on their own time, and can also be offered during in-person walk audits.*

## SELF-GUIDED VIRTUAL WALK AUDIT

A self-guided virtual walk audit can act as a standalone form of a walk audit for participants to experience on their own time. This format may also be offered as an in-person opportunity for a group of people. Self-guided virtual walk audits can be created using Google My Maps. This free tool lets walk audit leaders draw lines on a map to represent a virtual walking route. The map description should adequately describe the virtual walk audit. It should explain how the walk audit leader will use participant feedback. Participants may also elect to directly contact the walk audit leader with questions or comments. Contact information for the walk audit leader should be clearly provided in the map's description.

If possible, the walk audit leader should embed video and photos of intersections or segments to enhance the virtual tool. Participants view the map in their web browser and watch the associated videos. Participants can use the map to pan and zoom to locations of interest to virtually “walk” the route. Walk audit leaders can create short surveys in Google Forms to ask participants questions about the videos or general conditions along the walk audit route. Questions asked in the virtual walk audit should be straightforward. They should mirror those asked during in person walk audits.

Please note that although Google My Maps is used to quickly create self-guided virtual walk audits, map imagery may be outdated for some locations.

## DAY-OF MEETING SET UP

What to do	Why it's more inclusive
<p>Arrive 1 hour early to make sure space is open for people arriving early.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attendees are greeted and able to get into the space instead of waiting in a hallway or outside of venue.</li> </ul>
<p>Post wayfinding signs to meeting from the building entrance to the meeting room.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helps participants navigate without having a social interaction.</li> <li>Confirms directions given beforehand or verbally.</li> </ul>
<p>Have a greeter at building entrance; provide their phone number to participants in advance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assures participants that they are in the right place and helps them navigate to the meeting room.</li> <li>Helps participants who are confused or disoriented, or who need assistance reaching the building from the bus stop or their drop-off location.</li> </ul>
<p>Have people sign in and pick up materials before entering the meeting room.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduces chaos in the meeting room, decreasing stress and sensory overload.</li> </ul>
<p>Anticipate that attendees may arrive significantly early.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants may arrive early due to the transportation options available to them, or because being among the first to arrive allows them to feel comfortable and calm.</li> <li>If staff members are not ready for early arrivals, participants may feel stressed or unwelcome.</li> </ul>

*Continued from previous page*

<b>What to do</b>	<b>Why it's more inclusive</b>
<p>Minimize the amount of reading and writing participants must do upon arrival.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If meeting participants have RSVP'd, pre-write nametags and pre-fill any information on sign in sheet (email, phone number, organization, etc.)</li><li>• Provide signature guide card if participants must sign a document</li><li>• Staff the sign in table and offer to write names on nametags</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Minimizes the amount of assistance people with low vision and people with cognitive disabilities must ask for.</li><li>• Streamlines the sign in process for all attendees.</li></ul>
<p>Provide large-print versions of hand outs and offer to all participants at sign in.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Supports participation of people with low vision and people with cognitive disabilities without requiring them to ask for a large print version.</li></ul>
<p>Remove a few chairs from the meeting table.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provides space for someone using a wheelchair without requiring them to ask for assistance removing a chair.</li></ul>



## MEETING FACILITATION

What to do	Why it's more inclusive
Use small groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduces sensory overload.</li> <li>• Provides more opportunities for participants to share ideas.</li> </ul>
Take care to verbally express anything visual. For example, if you ask people to vote by a show of hands, verbally say “I count five hands- I see Patrick, Jamal, etc.” If many participants are nodding, say “I see a lot of nods.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People with low vision may not know if the facilitator counted their vote, and may not be able to tell how others in the room are responding.</li> </ul>
<p>Set shared agreements for participation. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you've spoken once, allow others the chance to speak before you speak again</li> <li>• Speak for yourself, not a group</li> <li>• Respect all perspectives and experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants may not share the same expectations for behavior in a meeting.</li> <li>• Establishing shared understanding helps everyone know how to participate and provides space for that participation.</li> </ul>
Strive to make the content of the meeting as consistent as possible with the information shared prior to the meeting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduces confusion.</li> <li>• Changes to the agenda or the questions asked can be jarring.</li> </ul>
Offer all participants an opportunity to share their background/what informs their experience. Intentionally build time into your agenda to support this sharing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizes the expertise each participant brings to the group and helps others contextualize their responses.</li> <li>• Provides an opportunity for people with disabilities to self-identify without requiring disclosure of disabilities.</li> </ul>
Repeat questions from the group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May help people with hearing impairment and people with cognitive disabilities participate in discussion.</li> </ul>



# CONDUCTING A MORE INCLUSIVE WALK AUDIT

The goal of a walk audit is to meaningfully engage a broad array of people who use streets in the community. To be as inclusive as possible, leaders should reduce barriers to participation such as large groups and long walking routes.

## WALK AUDIT PLANNING

What to do	Why it's more inclusive
<p>Offer multiple options for participating in the walk audit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Routes of varying length</li> <li>• Virtual</li> <li>• Independent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants have a variety of abilities/ preferences and having options allows each of them to choose the optimal conditions for engaging in the walk audit.</li> </ul>
<p>Offer a virtual walk audit option</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For a walk audit designed to identify specific issues in specific locations, walk the route and record on video.</li> <li>• View the video with a small group. For a walk audit designed to identify general issues in an area, “walk” the route on Google Streetview or using pre-recorded video in a small group and display using a computer projector and screen.</li> <li>• Consider providing a self-guided virtual walk audit to broaden participation.</li> </ul>	<p>A virtual walk audit can support participation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For people who are unable or prefer not to go on a physical walk.</li> <li>• If conditions are inaccessible (for example, area has no curb ramps, limiting participation by someone using a wheelchair).</li> <li>• For people who are overwhelmed/over-stimulated outdoors.</li> <li>• If weather conditions are poor.</li> </ul>

*Continued from previous page*

<b>What to do</b>	<b>Why it's more inclusive</b>
<p>Limit walk audit groups to about ten people (including staff/leaders). Prepare for the possibility of breaking into multiple groups by preparing more than one staff member to serve as a walk audit leader.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smaller groups allow more people to participate.</li> <li>• Small groups reduce chaos and confusion.</li> <li>• Small groups allow people to gather more closely together at walk audit stops, making it easier for participants to hear and see the leader and each other.</li> <li>• With a smaller group, participants may feel less anxious about getting lost or left behind.</li> </ul>
<p>Plan for at least two staff per walk audit group (one leader and one or more support staff).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support staff can be available to serve as sighted guides, can walk with participants who would like one-on-one support, and can walk at the rear of the group to ensure no one is left behind.</li> </ul>
<p>Plan a route that is a half mile long or shorter. Additional routes may be longer, but at least one route should be short.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walking more than a half mile may be difficult or intimidating.</li> </ul>
<p>Provide worksheet with walk audit routes, directions, and questions in advance. (Example worksheet included in Appendix)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directions should include which side of the street to walk on and where to cross streets.</li> <li>• Describe the distance participants can expect to walk in multiple ways: miles, steps, city blocks, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing routes, directions and questions in advance helps participants know what to expect, judge for themselves whether they feel comfortable participating, and reduces stress and anxiety during the walk. Allows people to do the walk audit on their own time, if that is more convenient or more comfortable for them.</li> </ul>

*Continued from previous page*

---

### **What to do**

- Plan stops along the route
- Plan at least one stop for every quarter mile (a half mile walk should have two stops, a mile walk should have four stops, etc.)
  - Choose spots where seating is available, there is space to congregate without blocking the sidewalk, and traffic noise is low.
  - Stops should occur in the shade when possible. Limit stops that are in full sun on hot days.

---

### **Why it's more inclusive**

- Stops allow participants walking at different paces to regroup and allow participants to rest.
  - Stopping to have a group conversation rather than having a group conversation while walking allows participants to focus on the questions and to better see and hear the leader and others' responses. While walking, participants may be focused on traffic conditions, their physical stability, and many other factors that make conversing challenging.
-



## FACILITATION BEFORE THE WALK AUDIT

<b>What to do</b>	<b>Why it's more inclusive</b>
<p>Communicate clearly with participants the purpose of the walk audit. What planning process will it inform? What kind of input is useful? Make sure to align questions asked of participants with the purpose.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When participants are invited to share input that ultimately cannot be used, they may feel their time has been wasted and lose trust, harming future engagement efforts.</li> <li>• People with disabilities may have low trust in government due to previous interaction with government systems, so facilitators should be proactive in building trust.</li> </ul>
<p>Provide context on the walking route. Share any current planning processes, upcoming street repaving/reconstruction, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants come to the walk audit with varying levels of knowledge.</li> <li>• Providing context helps everyone understand the bigger picture, and leads to more productive conversations.</li> </ul>

*Continued from previous page*

**What to do**

Explain technical terms/jargon and help participants develop a shared vocabulary.

Potential words to define might include:

- Curb ramp
- Push button
- Tactile domes
- High-visibility crosswalk
- Slope
- Cross-slope
- Arterial/collector
- Design speed
- Right-of-way
- Yield
- Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB)
- High-Intensity Activated crossWalk signal (HAWK)

**Why it's more inclusive**

- Participants may not be familiar with words often used in pedestrian planning, or may use different words to refer to the same thing.
- Participants may appreciate learning new terms and will be better equipped to engage in pedestrian planning and advocate for their needs in the future.

Center disability. If there are people with disabilities on the walk, give them space to share their experiences. Ask people without disabilities to consider what it might be like to navigate the street with a disability. Have devices like wheelchairs and visual impairment goggles on-hand and train participants on how to use them safely and respectfully (see Appendix for tips on centering the experiences of people with disabilities)

- When a street is accessible for people with disabilities, it is accessible for all people. Accessible design also benefits people who may have an injury that temporarily disables them as well as people without a disability. For example, a parent pushing a stroller appreciates curb ramps, and someone carrying a large package appreciates an automatic door push button.



## FACILITATION DURING WALK AUDIT

What to do	Why it's more inclusive
<p>Stick to the planned route and stops as much as possible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deviating from the planned route may increase stress and confusion among participants.</li> </ul>
<p>Ask the same questions you shared with participants in advance. Ask follow-up questions to go deeper into participant ideas and concerns.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking questions participants are prepared to answer supports participation from people who need more processing time.</li> <li>• Asking follow-up questions lets participants know you are hearing them and helps to clarify their input.</li> </ul>
<p>Provide worksheets, clipboards and pens to give participants the option of providing written feedback. (Example worksheet included in Appendix)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some participants may prefer to write down their thoughts rather than voice them aloud.</li> </ul>
<p>Summarize what you heard participants say, and let them know how their feedback will be used. If a specific idea can't be incorporated (for example, the idea requires reconstructing the street but reconstruction is not an option in the near term), explain why.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summarizing helps participants feel heard and understood.</li> <li>• Knowing how their feedback will be used builds trust with participants. When people provide input and feel it is not included in the outcome (plan, street design, etc.) they may feel their time was wasted and may be disinclined to participate again.</li> </ul>
<p>Tell participants how they can contact you if they have further thoughts to share after the meeting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some participants may not have felt comfortable sharing thoughts in a group or may need more time to process.</li> </ul>



# APPENDIX

## CONNECTING WITH DISABILITY ORGANIZATIONS

To include people with disabilities in your walk audit, it is important to connect directly with local disability service organizations and people with disabilities in your community and invite their participation. Some statewide resources that work in local communities include eight Centers for Independent Living across Minnesota, the Arc Minnesota, which has six regional offices, and Special Olympics MN, which has thirteen areas across the state. Also consider where people with disabilities live, work, and play in your communities. The [Minnesota Council on Disability](#) may also be able to recommend people and organizations to connect with.

- [Minnesota Centers for Independent Living](#)
- [Arc Minnesota Regions](#)
- [Special Olympics Minnesota Areas](#)

## CENTERING THE EXPERIENCES OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

### Including people with disabilities in the walk audit

Directly inviting and making your walk audit accessible to people with disabilities is the best way to put disability at the center of your walk audit. People with disabilities can speak from their own experiences, and highlight issues that they experience in other weather conditions or at other times of day.

### Simulating aspects of disabilities for people without disabilities

Providing devices like wheelchairs and low-vision goggles and training participants on how to use them safely and respectfully is another way to help participants without disabilities expand their understanding of how the street is functioning. Consider consulting with a disability services organization to prepare for this activity. The Minnesota Department of Health may be able to assist in finding simulation devices available for lending.

Using simulation devices does not allow participants to fully understand what day-to-day life is like for someone with a disability, but it can be an effective way for them to understand more deeply the impacts of inaccessible street design. This can be especially impactful for engineers, planners, and others involved in the design of streets. For example, a sidewalk that

feels a little uneven for someone walking can feel much more hazardous when that person tries to traverse it in a wheelchair. A faded crosswalk marking may be of little concern to someone without low-vision, but when that person puts on low-vision goggles, they discover that bright crosswalk markings are essential to finding their way across the street.

It is important to train participants on how to use the equipment safely and effectively. Each person using a simulation device should have a spotter to avoid injury.

### *Wheelchairs*

Show participants how to engage and disengage the parking brake, and how to stop the wheelchair. Someone using a wheelchair should stop by pushing their hands on the wheels of the chair, not by putting their feet on the ground, as this could hurt the participant's ankles. If the meeting facilitator is unfamiliar with how to use a wheelchair, consult local disability organizations or the Minnesota Department of Health and refer to resources available online:

- [How to Use a Wheelchair](#)
- [A Guide to Using Your Manual Wheelchair Safely](#)

The spotter should walk behind the person using the wheelchair, ready to help stop the wheelchair by grabbing the handles if the wheelchair user loses control or is in any danger.

### *Low Vision Goggles*

Participants using low-vision goggles should have a sighted guide who acts as a spotter, ensuring that the person wearing the goggles does not run into objects, fall, or otherwise injure themselves. The spotter should walk slightly in front of the person wearing the goggles. The person using the goggles should hold onto the forearm of the spotter.

If the meeting facilitator is unfamiliar with how to use a vision impairment goggles, consult local disability organizations or the Minnesota Department of Health and refer to resources available online such as [Guiding the Blind or Visually Impaired: Techniques for Sighted Guides](#).



*Walk audit facilitators demonstrate how to spot properly someone who is wearing low vision goggles.*

## WRITING INCLUSIVE MEETING INVITATIONS

### Less accessible meeting invitation example

You're invited! Join us in designing a better walking environment for Minnesota City residents and visitors. RSVP for our community walk audit for Minnesota City's pedestrian plan by emailing [staff@MinnesotaCity.gov](mailto:staff@MinnesotaCity.gov).

Date: April 10, 2020

Time: 10:00am

Location: Public Works Building Room 250

### More accessible meeting invitation example

You're invited! Share your experience walking (including using a wheelchair or other mobility device) in Minnesota City by participating in a community walk audit. Join us to evaluate conditions for walking in Minnesota City and identify issues that impact your comfort and safety. Your feedback will help shape Minnesota City's pedestrian plan.

Date: April 10, 2020

Time: 10:00am-11:30am

Location: Public Library, Room 201, 100 Main Street, Minnesota City MN 55670.

RSVP by April 8, 2020 by emailing [staff@MinnesotaCity.gov](mailto:staff@MinnesotaCity.gov) or calling XXX-XXX-XXXX. When you RSVP, please let us know if there is anything we can do to support your participation in the meeting, such as providing a sighted guide to accompany you during the walk.

### *Additional details:*

Below are more details on how to get to the meeting, what to expect at the meeting, and other ways to provide feedback for the Minnesota City Pedestrian Plan.

### *Getting to the meeting:*

The library is on the Number 2 bus route, has a bike rack 50 feet from the front door on Main Street, and has accessible parking spaces by the front door. There is a ramp leading from the sidewalk to the front door. When you enter the lobby, turn right to go up the stairs or use the elevator to reach the second floor. The meeting room is about 100 feet to the left of the elevators on the second floor.

The library opens at 9am. Project staff will be standing in the lobby of the library starting at 9:30am and can help direct or guide you to the meeting room (Room 201). There will also be signs posted directing you to the room. If you would like a staff member to meet you at the bus stop or by a vehicle, or if you have any trouble finding the meeting, please call XXX-XXX-XXXX.

***What to expect at the meeting:***

- Introduction to the [Minnesota City] Pedestrian Plan and how we will use your feedback to inform the plan
- Introduction to the walk audit activity
- Community walk audit (choose one option):
  - » Virtual option: Stay in the meeting room, and use Google Streetview to virtually walk around the downtown area with a small group
  - » Short option: Walk a quarter mile (3 blocks) route around the downtown area with a small group. (15-30 minutes; route with directions posted at [www.MinnesotaCity.gov/PedestrianPlan/WalkAudit](http://www.MinnesotaCity.gov/PedestrianPlan/WalkAudit))
  - » Long option: Walk a mile route (12 blocks) around the downtown area with a small group (45-60 minutes; route with directions posted at [www.MinnesotaCity.gov/PedestrianPlan/WalkAudit](http://www.MinnesotaCity.gov/PedestrianPlan/WalkAudit))
  - » Share thoughts verbally on the walk, or write down your thoughts on the response worksheet (available at [www.MinnesotaCity.gov/PedestrianPlan/WalkAudit](http://www.MinnesotaCity.gov/PedestrianPlan/WalkAudit))

***Other ways to share your ideas:***

- Go on the walk audit by yourself or with friends, and share your thoughts by calling or emailing the project leader at 651-XXX-XXXX or [staff@MinnesotaCity.gov](mailto:staff@MinnesotaCity.gov). Walk audit routes with directions are posted at [www.MinnesotaCity.gov/PedestrianPlan/WalkAudit](http://www.MinnesotaCity.gov/PedestrianPlan/WalkAudit).
- Go on a self-guided virtual walk audit and share your ideas online. A link to the self-guided virtual walk audit is posted at [www.MinnesotaCity.gov/VirtualWalkAudit](http://www.MinnesotaCity.gov/VirtualWalkAudit).
- Add your concerns to our online map ([www.MinnesotaCity.gov/PedestrianPlan/Map](http://www.MinnesotaCity.gov/PedestrianPlan/Map))
- Submit a comment to the Pedestrian Plan website ([www.MinnesotaCity.gov/PedestrianPlan/Comment](http://www.MinnesotaCity.gov/PedestrianPlan/Comment))

## POTENTIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

Proactively offering accommodations helps establish an inclusive environment and relieves some of the stress associated with requesting accommodations.

Task	Accommodations to offer
Writing responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a staff person take notes for the participant.</li> <li>• Share questions in advance so participant can prepare responses in advance.</li> </ul>
Participating in a meeting with a hearing impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a sign language interpreter or a live transcriber. Information for state agencies on contracting for these services is available at <a href="https://mn.gov/mnit/about-mnit/accessibility/contracts-asl-cart.jsp">https://mn.gov/mnit/about-mnit/accessibility/contracts-asl-cart.jsp</a></li> <li>• Use a speaker or assistive listening device to amplify sound. Libraries, schools, and local disability organizations may be able to lend assistive listening systems to you.</li> <li>• Choose locations with minimal background noise.</li> <li>• Have the facilitator repeat questions from participants.</li> </ul>

*Continued from previous page*

<b>Task</b>	<b>Accommodations to offer</b>
Participating in a meeting with low vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide all written materials in electronic form in advance so the participant can view the information with a screen reader. Guidance on creating accessible documents is available at <a href="https://mn.gov/mnit/about-mnit/accessibility/electronic-documents/">https://mn.gov/mnit/about-mnit/accessibility/electronic-documents/</a></li><li>• Ask each speaker to identify themselves when they begin speaking.</li><li>• State aloud any visually communicated information (for example, if voting by a show of hands, say out loud how many hands are raised).</li><li>• Meet participant at the bus stop or at a drop-off location and walk with them to the meeting location.</li></ul>
Signing a form with low vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Email the form ahead of time as a digital version (e.g, Word document, PDF) so the participant can view the information with a screen reader and sign with an electronic signature (<a href="https://acrobat.adobe.com/us/en/sign/electronic-signatures.html">https://acrobat.adobe.com/us/en/sign/electronic-signatures.html</a>).</li><li>• For printed documents, provide a signature card that shows the participant where to sign (<a href="https://visionaware.org/everyday-living/essential-skills/reading-writing-and-vision-loss/signing-your-name-and-handwriting/">https://visionaware.org/everyday-living/essential-skills/reading-writing-and-vision-loss/signing-your-name-and-handwriting/</a>).</li></ul>



## FOR MORE INFORMATION OR FOR ASSISTANCE

The Minnesota Department of Health and Minnesota Department of Transportation are working to expand opportunities for physical activity. Active transportation integrates physical activity into daily routines such as walking or biking to destinations including work, school, and transit stops.

How our communities are planned, designed, and built influences how healthy we are. People tend to be more active where they have convenient and safe places to do so. Public infrastructure including sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, trails, bike parking, trees, lighting, benches, water fountains, and trash removal make a big difference.

Minnesota communities are working with the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) to promote active transportation to provide safe and convenient opportunities for physical activity. [Learn more about SHIP here.](#)

Alta Planning + Design is a multimodal transportation firm that specializes in the planning, design, and implementation of active transportation systems. Alta's planners, designers, and engineers are available to assist communities with bicycle and pedestrian plans and street design projects. You can reach Alta's Minneapolis-St. Paul Office Leader, Colin Harris, at [colinharris@altaplanning.com](mailto:colinharris@altaplanning.com).

This Inclusive Life is a firm dedicated to inclusive pedestrian planning and leading inclusive walk audits. They have wheelchairs and low vision goggles, and can help you plan your next inclusive event. They are also available for technical assistance or to answer questions. This Inclusive Life can be reached at [thisinclusivelife@gmail.com](mailto:thisinclusivelife@gmail.com).

## EXAMPLE WALK AUDIT WORKSHEET

---

**A walk audit is an activity in which participants evaluate the walking environment and identify issues that impact their comfort and safety.** People do walk audits for a variety of reasons, including:

- A group of neighbors might do a walk audit of a street or area of their community to build consensus around changes they want to advocate for.
  - A city planner or engineer might conduct a walk audit with community members to inform the planning or design process for a street or area of the city.
  - Students, teachers, and parents might do a walk audit of the area around a school as part of a Safe Routes to School planning process.
- 

**Date:**

**Location:**

**Walk along the route shown on the map back of this worksheet. You can make notes on the map, and consider the following questions as you walk:**

1. Do you have enough room to walk?
2. Is it easy to cross streets?
3. Do drivers behave safely?
4. Is the route pleasant?
5. Put yourself in someone else's shoes: How comfortable would you feel walking the route with a child? With someone who has low-vision? With someone using a wheelchair?

**Directions for a quarter mile (approximately 3 blocks) walk audit:**

**Start: Library Entrance on Nicollet Mall**

Walking on the west side of the street, head northeast on Nicollet Mall toward S 3rd St and walk 673 ft.

Cross to the north side of S Washington Ave.

**Stop** to consider the questions on the worksheet.

Walking on the north side of S Washington Ave, walk west 269 ft.

Turn left at the light to cross to the south side of S Washington Ave.

Walk on the east side of Hennepin Ave for 656 ft until you reach the library entrance.

**End: Library Entrance on Hennepin Ave**

