**FHWA Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation University Course**

**Module: 14 – Accessibility and ADA**

**Assignment: Walkability Assessment/Audit**

**PURPOSE**

A walkability assessment or audit is a useful process to help communities: 1) see/experience and discuss pedestrian issues and opportunities, 2) document concerns and needs through photos, and 3) engage stakeholders and decision-makers in the conversation about pedestrian safety. Formal audits are usually performed by a multidisciplinary team of trained professionals, including engineers, planners, transportation researchers, pedestrian and bicycle specialists, and others. In observing area facilities, the needs of people with disabilities should be carefully considered. The American with Disabilities Act of 1990 provides specific measures to ensure compliance, but best practices include additional elements not required by ADA. People with disabilities encounter barriers to effectively navigating pedestrian facilities on a daily basis and are not limited to any one specific disability.

**PROCESS**

1. **Form groups** of 3 students each. **If possible, provide each group with one wheelchair or walker to take turns using while walking along the designated route.**
2. **Select an audit tool.** There are many existing checklists, assessment forms, and other audit tools that can be used or adapted for your walkabout (see the “Example walkabout tools” section below for a few examples). Consider the end goals (what type of info do you want to collect), usability of the tool while walking the area, and the types of facilities you will be reviewing (school, transit stop, sidewalk section, etc.). *Don’t get too hung up on finding a comprehensive assessment tool; the tool is just one part of the process to help jumpstart discussions about issues of pedestrian access.*

Audit tools available: <http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/resources/resources_details.cfm?id=5085>

Includes links for:

* Walkability Checklist by the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center
* Active Living Research: Analytic Audit Tool and Checklist Audit Tool
* AARP Sidewalks and Streets Survey
* Easter Seals Project Action Bus Stop Accessibility and Safety
* Universal Design Audit Checklist by the Center for Inclusive Design and Environmental Access (pg. 213)

1. **Walk along a designated route** (*below*) and use your selected tool to document and discuss elements of the built environment that can affect pedestrians (of all ages and abilities), and consider what should be changed. Consider taking photographs of well-designed facilities or those that may require improvements.

**INSTRUCTOR SHOULD SELECT A ROUTE AND INSERT THE MAP HERE**

**- Route should be ≈ 0.5 - 1 mile**

**- Could develop separate routes for each group, or specify different starting points on the same route**

1. **Consider elements such as:**

* Presence or absence of curb ramps and texture pads
* Direction of curb ramps in relation to crossings
* Curb height
* Signal timing length
* Location of push buttons
* Presence/quality/width of pedestrian facilities
* Visibility issues at crossings
* Driveway design and slope
* Potential conflict points with vehicles
* Concerns with landscaping or other amenities
* Facilities around transit stops
* Locations of destinations and entrances
* Other aspects of the built environment

**DELIVERABLE**

Students should write a brief, two-page report describing the activity and the significant findings and observations, including any photos taken as evidence in support of these observations. The report should discuss how the elements in the built environment present a challenge to pedestrians, both those with and without disabilities (including, but not limited to, disabilities requiring the use of a wheelchair). Describe some areas that need improvement and provide suggestions for their improvement, as well some of the well-designed features that were encountered.

**DEPENDING ON STUDENT KNOWLEDGE OF DESIGN CONCEPTS, INSTRUCTOR MAY WANT TO INCLUDE LINKS TO** [**PEDSAFE**](http://pedbikesafe.org/PEDSAFE/index.cfm) **OR RESOURCES REFERENCED IN THE SLIDES OR READING LIST*.***

The following questions may guide your response:

* How well do the road design, junctions, and facilities accommodate all types of travelers?
* Are the current accommodations appropriate for this context? Do the facilities present provide an appropriate balance of access, comfort, and safety for the different modes?
* Is there potential to enhance safety, connectivity, complete a network link, or enhance economic, institutional, recreational, or other street uses for one or more modes?
* What may be issues with balancing user needs for this street?

**GROUND RULES FOR CONDUCTING FIELD WORK**

1. Safety first. Do not put yourself in harm’s way to collect data. Online map imagery may be substituted for photographs from the field as needed to ensure student safety.
2. Travel and collect data in groups of two or more students. Team members must work together to find data collection times that ensure no team member has to collect data alone. Conducting fieldwork alone is not permitted, for reasons of safety, accountability, and accuracy of data.
3. Do not conduct field work after dark. When visibility is poor, you jeopardize your safety and the quality of the data you are collecting.
4. If members of the public are curious about what you are doing, you should inform them that you are university students working on a class project. You may engage with neighbors wanting share their thoughts and ideas about mobility in the study area, but not initiate such conversations.
5. Do not block or otherwise interfere with traffic (motorized or not).
6. Students may take photos but must do so respectfully and carefully. Do NOT take photos of people, their homes, or their vehicles without their permission.