



# Conducting a Walk Audit

Mini  
saferoutes.vermont.gov  
Guide

## WHAT'S IN THIS MINIGUIDE?

This VT Safe Routes to School (SRTS) 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
- 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?

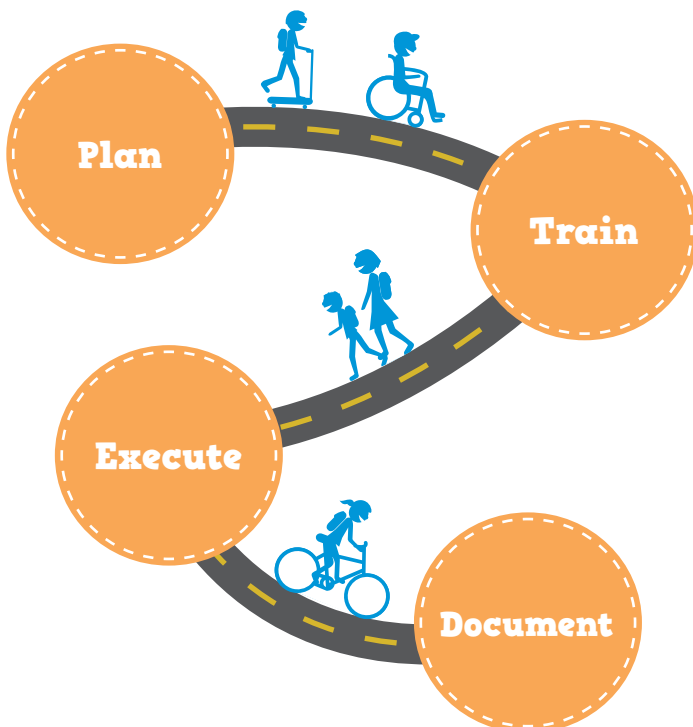
Walk Audits are used to identify barriers to walking and bicycling in the environment surrounding a school. They are also an important first step in developing a Travel Plan.

### What is the level of effort involved?

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




Click this icon  to access the listed resource.

## WHAT TO EXPECT



## RESOURCES PREVIEW

Additional resources from VT SRTS and the National SRTS Resource Center are linked or available for download on the VT SRTS website:

- **Walk Audit Invitation** : An editable sample letter used to invite participants to attend the Walk Audit.
- **Walk Audit Template** : An editable document to document your observations and recommendations after completion of the Walk Audit.
- **Infrastructure Glossary** : A listing of common school zone infrastructure that can support safe walking and biking to school. Your team may recommend installing items from this guide to address issues observed on the audit.

# 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. At a minimum, 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** on the next page.
- Print copies of the **Infrastructure Glossary** [🔗](#).

### 2. Train

- Hand out reflective safety vests to all participants.
- Explain the goal of the exercise (to identify barriers to safe walking and biking to school).
- Review the **"What to Look For" List**.
- Instruct participants to record observations on map printouts.
- Review the **Infrastructure Glossary** [🔗](#) to learn about appropriate signage and infrastructure around a school.
- Review the area of the Walk Audit on the map.
- Instruct participants to avoid taking identifiable photos of children unless you have permission from the school principal.

### 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 the **Walk Audit Template** [🔗](#). Include maps and photos where needed to help with documentation.
- Work with your Regional Expert (Technical), local planning staff member, 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.
- Include findings in your School Travel Plan.

## KEY POINTS

### FREQUENCY

Once every 5 years

### IMPLEMENTATION

2 weeks to plan

< 1 day to execute

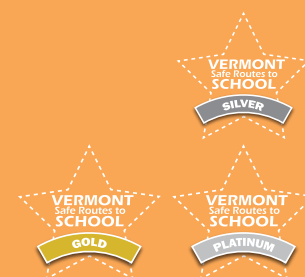
### TEAM MEMBERS

School Champion, teachers, regional planner, local planner, public works staff, law enforcement officers, elected officials, parents

### MATERIALS

Safety vests, clipboards, pens and markers, camera, printed street maps of the Walk Audit area, Infrastructure Glossary, "What to Look For" List

### REQUIREMENT FOR



Remember to update your Partner Progress Report once you've completed this activity to advance to the next level! [🔗](#)

# “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.

See the [Infrastructure Glossary](#)  for any unfamiliar terms used in this list.

## 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

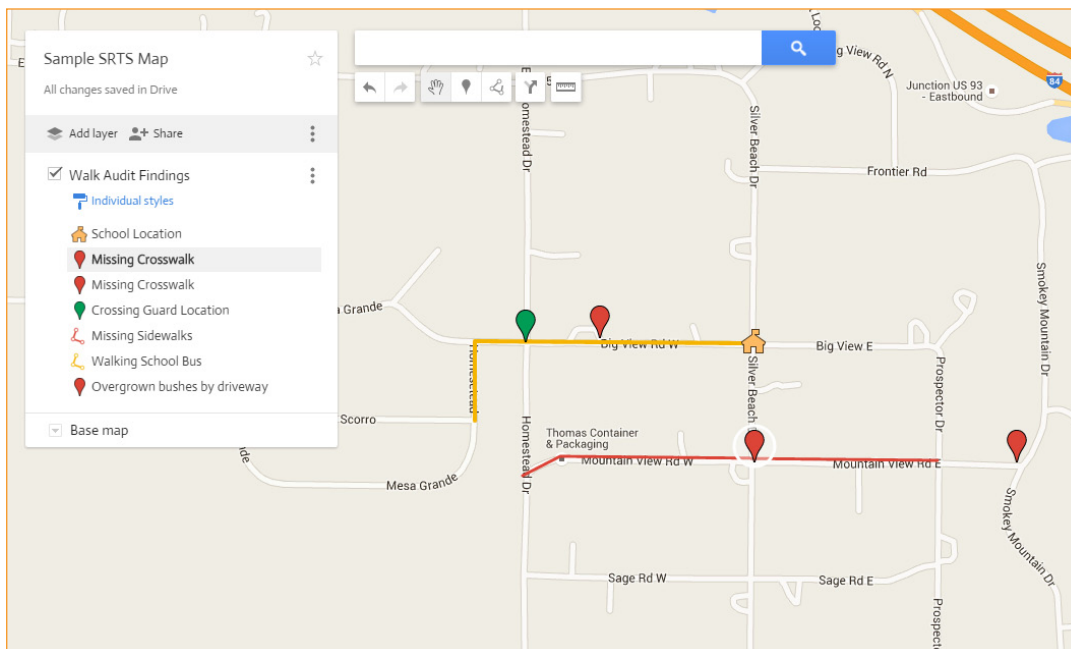
# Mapping

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 you can use a desktop programs (such as Powerpoint) 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 your free Google/Gmail account (necessary for creating maps).
2. Select “My Maps.”
3. Select “Create Map.”
4. Zoom to your school’s location.
5. Using the line tool , mark lines to show linear features, such as routes to school, sidewalk gaps, streets known for speeding, etc. 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, a missing crosswalk at an intersection, commercial driveway, sidewalk obstruction, or other barriers to walking and biking to school. You can edit the color and style of these points after marking them on the map. Label each point.
7. Save your map. Select the “Share” link.
8. If you plan to share your map on a website, 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.

## Sample Walk Audit Map



# Real World Examples

**1** **Grand Isle Elementary's** SRTS Team 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's** SRTS Team 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 VTrans to build the highest priority sidewalk—one leading from the main road to the school.

