

Adams County Creating Healthy Communities Adams County Health & Wellness Coalition Active Transportation Walk Audit Report 2020

Courthouse Square, West Union, Ohio



Main Street – Cross Street – Mulberry Street – Market Street

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

The Active Transportation Walk Audit Report found here focuses on pedestrian and bicycle improvements in Adams County. The Adams County Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) Program facilitated the development of this plan and was led by members of the Adams County Health & Wellness Coalition (ACHWC).

Active Transportation is an umbrella term for all the ways people can get around without using a motorized vehicle – walking or biking, using mobility assistance devices (such as wheelchairs and scooters), buggies, skating or skateboarding, and more. Physically active forms of transportation play a crucial role in improving community health. The term active transportation reinforces that bicycling and walking are valid forms of transportation, not just forms of recreation. Active transportation planning involves a comprehensive approach to the transportation system which recognizes the importance of active transportation in accessing public transit and addresses associated infrastructure like bike racks and wheelchair ramps.

Inclusivity is essential. People with disabilities are often required to travel for work, medical appointments, and for social outings. Environmental features can support or hinder participation in important activities like walking, particularly for people with disabilities.

Supporting active transportation is one way communities can help make the active choice the easy choice for their residents, by providing comfortable, activity-friendly routes to everyday destinations. Active transportation can provide many community benefits, even beyond personal mobility, such as public health, economic development, quality of life, and environmental quality.

To obtain these benefits, it is important to invest in the infrastructure and programs that support pedestrian infrastructure and other forms of active transportation. Assessing walkability and developing an agenda for change is a first step towards that investment.

Goals

The Adams County Creating Healthy Communities Program (aka Adams County Health & Wellness Coalition) is dedicated to helping facilitate the development of safe, well designed, inclusive places for people to walk by following the principles of safety, comfort and connectivity.

It is widely known that healthy, successful communities need pedestrian infrastructure. People benefit when there are activity-friendly routes to everyday destinations such as parks, schools, grocery stores, restaurants, healthcare facilities, business centers and work sites.

Our goal in completing this walk audit and creating this report is to facilitate these changes in West Union near the Courthouse where many citizens have reason to visit. Suggested improvements will improve safety and increase physical activity for those citizens as evidenced by an increase in one (1) Pedestrian Infrastructure intervention:

- Improved infrastructure changes that support pedestrian infrastructure
- Increase pedestrian safety for people with all abilities
- Increase physical activity

All of these measures make it more convenient, faster, safer and more welcoming for people to walk to community destinations.

Existing Conditions Analysis

For the West Union walk audit, we focused on the “Courthouse Square”, consisting of the block between Main, Cross, Mulberry and Market Streets. This being the main city center for the County, as well as housing one of the largest employers in Adams County, this block also encompasses the intersection of two highly traveled State Routes, 247 and 41/125.



During this audit, numerous concerns were noted:

- Overall disrepair of the sidewalks, both on the interior and exterior of the block, including cracked, uneven pavement, rough gravel-like concrete, angled/sloped surfaces, holes, etc.
- Lack of high visibility painted crosswalks.
- Unacceptable location of two truncated domes leading pedestrians into the center of an intersection.
- Crossings that didn't line up appropriately/squarely so that a visually impaired person would not access the ramp directly across from the starting point at the right place, or the crosswalk went to a step, not a ramp.
- Handicapped parking spaces that required people with disabilities to move into oncoming traffic to access handicapped ramps to sidewalks.
- Lack of ADA complaint ramps at corners/intersections, in some cases.
- One ramp that doesn't meet the ADA specifications for wheelchairs at corner of Mulberry & Market.
- Driveways crossing sidewalks.
- One poured concrete ramp and rounded sidewalk into a business that wouldn't pass ADA compliance (Snappy Tomato Pizza).
- Lack of ramps into businesses, some with more than one step.
- Drains/grates in crosswalk where bicycles or wheelchairs could get caught.
- Parking such that vehicles pull onto the sidewalk impeding adequate ADA compliant space on the sidewalk.

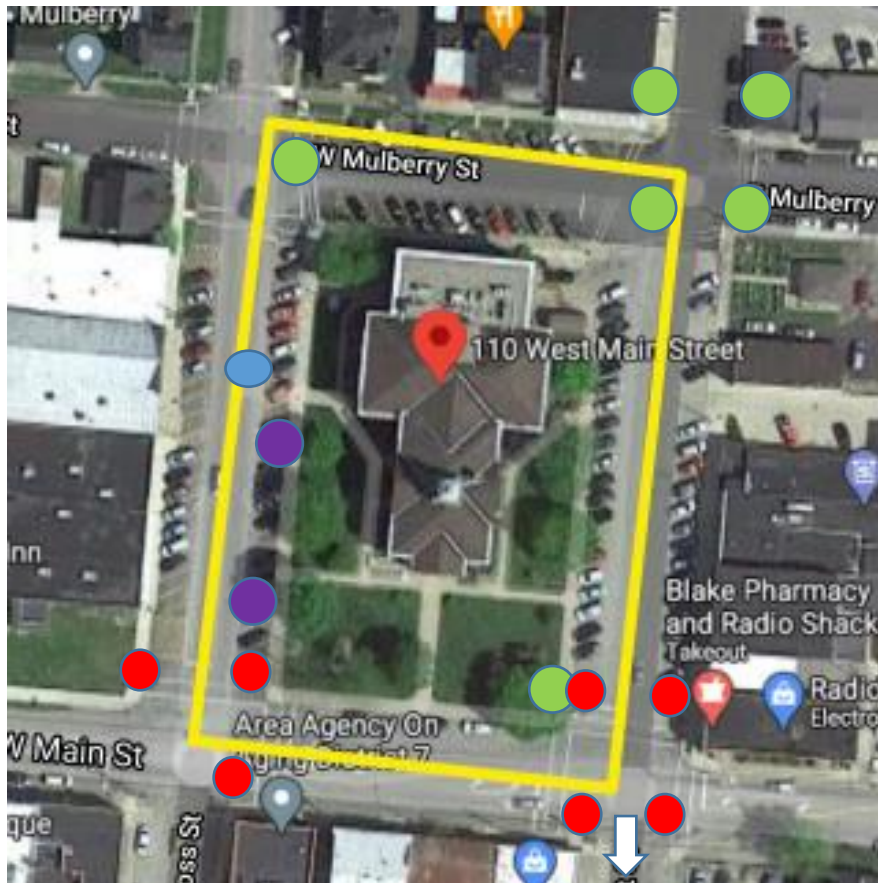
- No audible crossing signals for the visually impaired.
- Water/drainage on sidewalks on Main Street and along the interior block of Market.
- Shrubbery/potted plants impeding access.
- Improve crossing visibility/signage at mid-block, Cross Street, or remove crossing.

After review of these concerns, another area of concern was presented. The sidewalk on the east side of Market Street, between Main Street and Walnut Street, was identified as virtually impossible for any person with a disability to access. It was determined that a second Pedestrian Infrastructure intervention was needed, by replacing this sidewalk, which is in great disrepair and currently has two sets of steps built into the sidewalk. This is located on Market Street, between Main Street and Walnut Street. This location intersects with the original walk audit location. After working with the West Union Village Engineer, it was determined that, due to the uphill grade of the sidewalk, and to remove the two sets of steps, the intervention will require a significant amount of funds to complete.

While on the audit, a person with disabilities approached us in a wheelchair, who was being assisted by two caregivers. When asked for input after being told that we were conducting a walk audit and were interested in hearing any feedback from their perspectives, they were quite vocal about how bad the sidewalks were (their descriptive was more graphic), in terms of this wheelchair-bound person, and that they had literally just nearly tipped him out of the wheelchair, head first, due to the front wheel falling into a whole/large crack in the sidewalk, prior to running upon our group.



Recommendations



1. Redesign handicapped parking so that they don't go into oncoming traffic (behind their parked car) to access the handicapped ramp at the corner on Cross Street and replace handicapped parking signs.
2. Replace/install truncated domes and ramps properly at the NW corner of Market/Main, the SE corner of Cross/Mulberry and all corners of Market/Mulberry.
3. Install audible crossing signals at Main/Cross and Main/Market Streets.
4. Paint/repaint existing crosswalks, particularly the mid-block crossing on Cross Street, and add flashing, solar pedestrian crossing signs.
5. Overall sidewalk replacement, particularly on the inner block, and in several locations on the outer block (indicated by the solid yellow line around this square).
6. New/replacement sidewalk on Market Street, from Main Street to Walnut Street, remove two sets of steps and with appropriately placed truncated domes. (This intervention would actually result in a second Pedestrian Infrastructure completion for the 2020 Adams County Creating Healthy Communities Program work plan for objective #3.)

Photo Documentation
Pedestrian Infrastructure #1:



Pedestrian Infrastructure #2:

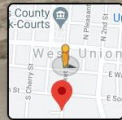
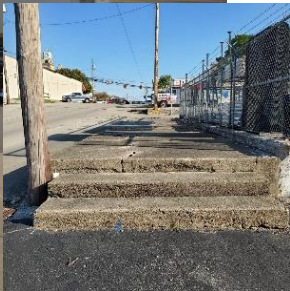
NORTH END MARKET STREET PI #2



MIDBLOCK MARKET STREET PE #1



SOUTH END MARKET STREET PI #2



Google

Follow-up

1. Implementation

- a. All recommendations are the result of an August 28, 2020, walk audit performed by members/partners of the Adams County Creating Communities Program Coalition (aka Adams County Health & Wellness Coalition) and are given to the Village of West Union as a working document for pedestrian infrastructure upgrades.
- b. These recommendations have been submitted to Kent Bryan, P.E., Senior Project Manager, CT Consultants, Inc., Engineer for the Village of West Union, and Holly Johnson, Adams County Economic & Community Development Director.
- c. This report will be presented to the West Union Village Council.

2. Funding Strategies

The Adams County Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) Program has limited funding to assist with the six identified priorities. Funding, such as what would be needed for recommendations # 3, 5 & 6 to install all new sidewalks around the interior and exterior of the identified block, and the audible crossing signals, which should be coordinated into one plan/intervention, will need to be obtained through other sources.

CHC funding will pay for recommendations #1, 2, & 4, new truncated domes and corner repair where existing domes are positioned incorrectly; flashing, solar pedestrian crossing signs at mid-block crossing on Cross Street; paint for crosswalks; ramp repair at NW corner of Market and Mulberry.

For recommendation #6, funding for this sidewalk replacement will come from leveraged funds received through the Adams County Economic & Community Development Office from Community Development Block Grant funds. CHC will provide two needed truncated domes for this sidewalk, as the existing domes on the north side of this sidewalk can be reused. This intervention will be completed by year end 2020.

3. Maintenance Strategies

The Village of West Union is and will be responsible for all maintenance of these pedestrian infrastructure improvements, as with all other sidewalks and infrastructure within the Village.

4. Performance Measures

Periodic key informant interviews, direct observation and photographs of the interventions before and after improvement will be recorded. Marketing of the improved pedestrian infrastructure will include press releases and social media campaigns, per ACHWC usual protocol.

Conclusion

On Friday, August 28, 2020, 13 (thirteen) members and guests of the Adams County Health & Wellness Coalition completed a virtual advanced walk audit training that was facilitated by Julie Walcoff, Senior Planner, with Toole Design Group, LLC, a Columbus, Ohio-based firm that sets the standard for safe street designs and transportation networks. They use their expertise to help communities plan, build, and improve their transportation systems and infrastructure to make them safer and more enjoyable for everyone.

Following the training, a walk audit was conducted in West Union, along the sidewalks surrounding the “Courthouse Square”, both the inner block and outer block. Recommendations, listed on page 5, will be prioritized with the Village of West Union and interventions that can be completed through funding from the Adams County Creating Healthy Communities Program funding (#s 1, 2 & 4) will be completed by year end 2020. Interventions requiring additional funding will be triaged and completed as funding is acquired.

This walk audit was completed to identify a way to increase and encourage physical activity by improving pedestrian infrastructure in West Union. As a result of the walk audit, a second Pedestrian Infrastructure intervention was identified, and funding secured. This intervention is also expected to be completed by year end 2020.

It has been a pleasure working with and assisting the Village of West Union in making infrastructure improvements that will build a community that supports physical activity and provide a safe and accessible route of travel for people of all abilities.