



Walking Audit: State of Practice Study

Province of Ontario

publicspaceworkshop
engagement + urban design



Ontario Traffic Council

Walking
Audit
State of
Practice in
Ontario

Objectives

Methods

Findings

Conclusions

Recommendations

What is an audit?

“an unbiased examination/evaluation of the walking environment to . . . identify concerns for pedestrians related to the safety, access, comfort, and convenience of the environment.”

Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center

Objectives

Determine - current awareness and application of Walking Audits in Ontario

Understand - challenges, opportunities and merits for the application of Walking Audits to support transportation network planning and design

Assess - need and interest in professional development opportunities for learning and training

Methods

Key Informant Interviews – 28 individuals, representing 20 organizations

Purposive sampling – interviewees with experience on OTC committees; and involvement with active transportation planning and design - municipal, consulting, public health and NGO's in Ontario.

Snowball sampling - participants were asked to suggest other potential contacts to be interviewed for the study

Interview Questions

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1. Familiarity
 2. Project types
 3. Tools/methods used
 4. Stakeholder and public engagement
 5. Implementation of design recommendations
 6. Interest in learning more
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1. Familiarity

Yes but.....

- Low use of formal audit methods
- Informal site visits with staff and stakeholders
- Road safety audit - in service review from a vulnerable road user perspective
- Public health and NGO's often leading use
- Community groups use for advocacy
- Student transportation – school travel planning, walking hazard assessment

2. Project types

Advocacy

- School Travel Planning
- Public Health
- Walk21 – Walkability Roadshow
- Campaigns

Road Safety

- In-service review
- Safety Assessments
- Vision Zero projects

2. Project types

Planning

- Active Transportation Plans
- Streetscape and Corridor studies
- Complete Streets studies
- Public Life Studies
- Commuter Studies
- Transit Route and Stop Planning

Regulatory

- Master Plans
- Environmental Assessments

3. Guidelines & Tools Used

- Road Safety Audit – TAC Guideline
- Sidewalk condition assessments
- APBP Guidelines
- Friendly Streets toolkit
- Region of Peel - Walking Audit Guidelines
- School Travel Planning – Green Communities
- FHA - Pedestrian and Bicyclist Road Safety Audit (RSA) Guide and Prompt Lists
- Public Life Studies
- Active Transportation Quotient
- Microscale Audit of Pedestrian Streetscapes (MAPS)
- Custom audit methods – some include cycling

Numerous Audit Tools

- Microscale Audit of Pedestrian Streetscapes (M.A.P.S.) Tool - http://sallis.ucsd.edu/measure_maps.html
- Built environment & Active Transportation Neighbourhood Assessment (B.E.A.T.) <http://www.walkinginfo.org/cps/checklist.cfm>
- Pedestrian and Bicyclist Road Safety Audit (RSA) Guide and Prompt Lists https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/tools_solve/docs/fhwas20042.pdf
- <http://canadawalks.ca/resources/>
- <https://ontarioactiveschooltravel.ca/school-travel-planning/>
- <https://ontario-traffic-council.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/2017/09/OTC-Creating-Safe-Routes-for-AST-Final-A.pdf>
- https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/walk_audit_toolkit_2018.pdf
- <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/getting-around/info-2014/aarp-walk-audit-tool-kit.html>
- <https://americawalks.org/how-to-conduct-a-walk-audit-in-your-community-quick-guide-for-assessing-your-neighborhood-walkability/>
- <http://ww4.kcmo.org/planning.nsf/plnpres/walkability?opendocument>
- http://www.transport.wa.gov.au/mediaFiles/activetransport/AT_WALK_P_Walkability_Audit_Tool.pdf
- <https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/AHVZ-walk-audit-checklist-web-english.pdf>
- <https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.dot.gov/files/walkingchecklist.pdf>
- <https://activelivingresearch.org/rural-active-living-assessment-rala-tools>

4. Public Engagement

- Evaluation of school bussing requirements
- Occasionally as part of a PIC – where circumstances permit
- Controversial projects that require stakeholder and community support
- Facilitation as or more important than 'tool' used
- Mostly staff led in a cross-discipline approach
- Vision Zero – Senior Safety Zones assessments
- Through Accessibility and Active Transportation Committees
- Experiential engagement for accessibility planning and design

5. Design Implementation

- Informs the approach and sets the course for the project
- Public feedback received used to validate design criteria
- Some projects still incomplete
- Sidewalk conversion to multi-use pathway
- Needed repairs identified
- Mid-block crossing (PxO) location identified
- Design changes identified and carried out
- School Zone Safety enhancements – traffic control signs, stop bars, parking management, crossing guards

6. Interest in learning

- General support for more information and training
- Key staff training on 'audit methods'
- When are tools such as 'walking audits' useful?
- Support for 15-20 minute community initiatives
- Consider expanding scope to 'complete streets', vulnerable road users
- Merit and value of an accepted method and practice
- Successful use with School Travel Planning – apply to other projects
- Screening tool to determine when a 'walking audit' is required
- Traffic engineering to lead Walking Audits
- How to incorporate into – RFP
- Experiential learning methods

CONCLUSION OVERVIEW

- Familiarity with the concept of Walking Audits is high
- Practice of Walking Audits (active travel user experience assessments) is low
- School Travel Planning – Walkabout cited most often
- Project site visits by staff are a common practice
- Site visits for contentious projects can include Councillors and residents
- Walking Audit as a requirement of an EA is novel
- Numerous 'off the shelf' audit tools available
- Fit for purpose - important to consider project scope when selecting tools or methods
- Knowledge sharing and training to advance UX design for active transportation



RECOMMENDATIONS

- OTC to consider offering member training – An Introduction to Active Transportation – UX Design
- All Ontario municipal transportation departments should brief themselves on UX design for AT
- OTC could investigate the merit and value in producing an accepted UX design method and practice and associated training