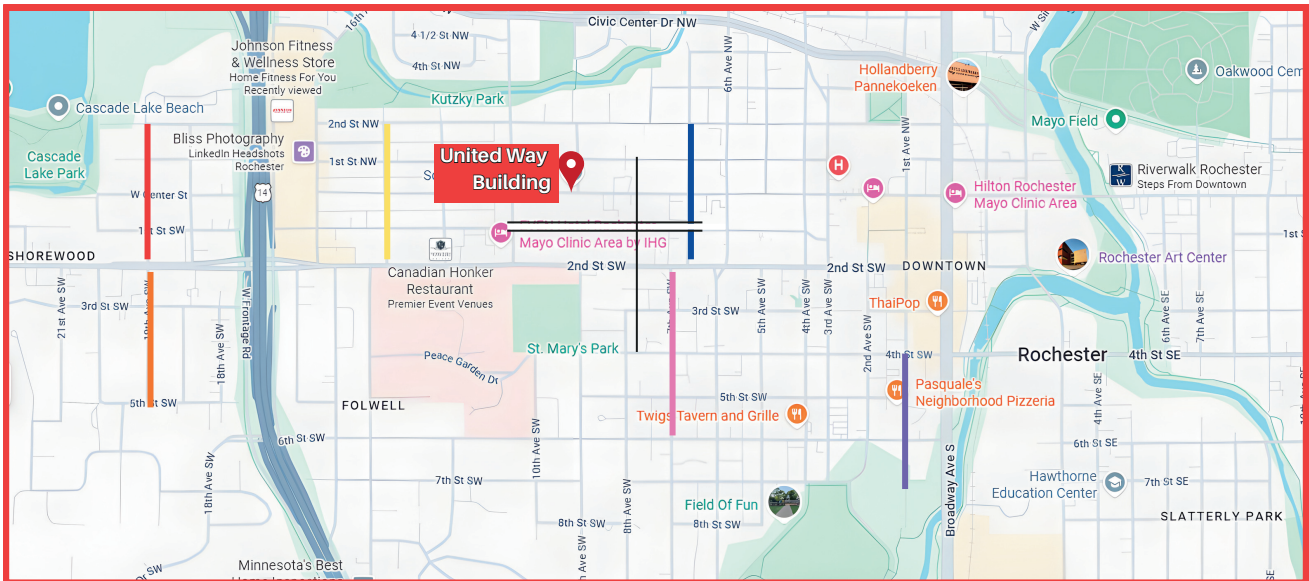


LINK BRT Walk and Roll Audit

Report to the City of Rochester
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Introduction

This report summarizes the findings of a community walk and roll audit conducted to assess conditions within selected transit stop walk sheds in Rochester. Walk audits are a widely used public engagement method in transportation and community planning. They bring residents, stakeholders, and staff into the field together to observe real-world conditions and document how streets, sidewalks, crossings, and surrounding environments function for people of all ages and abilities.

The methodology is straightforward but effective. Participants follow pre-identified routes, guided by a structured observation tool that prompts them to assess safety, accessibility, comfort, and connectivity, particularly as these relate to accessing transit. Observations are recorded in real time, combining simple ratings with open-ended comments about barriers, assets, and opportunities for improvement. This approach does not require technical expertise from participants; rather, it relies on lived experience and direct observation.

While walk audits do not produce statistically representative or engineering-grade data, they generate valuable qualitative insights that are often difficult to capture through traditional planning methods. Participants consistently identify issues such as unclear crossings, gaps in sidewalk networks, challenges for mobility device users, and aspects of the walking environment that affect comfort and perceived safety. Just as importantly, they highlight what is working well.

For planners and city staff, this type of input provides grounded, place-based context that can complement technical analyses. It helps surface user experience, validate or challenge assumptions, and identify priority areas for further study or near-term improvement. As such, walk audits are a practical and credible tool for informing transportation and land use decisions, particularly when the goal is to support safe, accessible, and connected routes to transit.

Audit Process

The Walk and Roll Audit was conducted as a structured, participant-centered review of walking and rolling conditions along designated routes within walking distance of planned LINK BRT stops (*see Appendix for map*). The purpose was to document how safe, accessible, comfortable, and understandable those routes felt to people of different ages and abilities, with particular attention to older adults, people with mobility challenges, and future transit users. The process was designed to gather lay observations and lived experience rather than technical engineering judgments.

Participants were organized into small groups, each assigned to a designated route and supported by a route leader. Before beginning the walk, route leaders briefly reviewed the scoring system and emphasized that there were no wrong answers. Participants were asked to evaluate the route based on what they actually experienced while walking or rolling, not on assumptions about how the route might work under different conditions.

During the walk, groups moved at a comfortable pace for the slowest participant and stopped frequently to observe, discuss, and record conditions. Route leaders encouraged participants to explain their scores, note places where they felt unsafe or uncertain, and, where possible, take photographs of key issues. Particular attention was given to transitions along the route, including sidewalk conditions, street crossings, and the approach to the transit stop.

Each participant used an observation sheet to score the route. The sheet recorded the route, date, weather or traffic conditions, and type of mobility used. Participants rated specific features on a 0-3 scale, where 3 meant good, 2 meant some difficulty, 1 meant poor, and 0 meant not present. The scoring categories included access and continuity, surface condition, crossings, safety, walking experience, and accessibility.

In addition to numerical scores, participants were asked to provide written comments. The observation sheet asked them to identify the biggest issue, name one improvement they would want made, select a top priority, and answer whether they would walk the route by choice. After completing the route, each group participated in a brief discussion to identify the most important safety concerns, accessibility barriers, and opportunities for improvement.

Participant Demographics

The checked-in participants were a mixed-age group of 25 people, including children, working-age adults, and older adults. Five checked-in participants were marked as route leaders.

Category	Count
Total checked in	25

Age

Age group	Count
0-5	1
6-11	3
35-44	6
45-54	9
55-64	2
65-74	2
75+	2

The checked-in group included both children and older adults, with the largest concentration in the 45-54 age range.

Gender

Gender	Count
Male	15
Female	10

Race / ethnicity as recorded

Race / ethnicity	Count
White	22
White, with Hispanic/Latino noted	1
Black / African American	1
Asian / Pacific Islander	1

Disability, vision, and mobility aid responses

Response area	Yes	No
Disability reported	4	21
Visual disability reported	1	24
Mobility or assistive aid used	3	22
Aid type	Count	
None / N/A	22	
Wheelchair	2	
Cane	1	

How to Read the Route Sections

The remainder of this report organizes all route-related information in one place for each route. Each section combines the map-based route description, general route character, spreadsheet score summary, handwritten comments, responses to "Biggest issue" and "One improvement," and route-specific recommendations. Where handwriting was unclear, the observation is summarized cautiously rather than treated as a firm transcription.

Route-by-Route Findings

Blue Route

Primary streets / avenues: Primarily 2nd St SW, near Civic Center Dr NW/SW, 6th Ave SW, 3rd Ave SW, and toward the downtown core.

Route character: Main downtown/east-west BRT walk shed corridor. The route functions as a downtown commercial and institutional access corridor, with strong destination access and likely heavy pedestrian activity.

Variation: The western segment near Civic Center Dr has more civic/recreation edge conditions, while the central segment is a denser urban core with heavier traffic and more pedestrian conflict.

Score summary: Total score: 37.00. Overall route condition was marked as usable, but crossings received a score of 0, making crossings the clearest concern on this route. Surface condition scored relatively well, and accessibility and access/continuity were more functional than the crossing experience. Walking experience was lower than most routes, especially for pleasant environment and acceptable noise.

Recorded comments and notes

- Construction strongly affected the route. Notes said construction makes the sidewalk "stop/go," identified construction as an obstruction, and observed that construction barricades go right up to the sidewalk.
- Sidewalk condition concerns included cracked or uneven sidewalk, "pretty cracked sidewalks" on the east side, cracking near the corner of 7th and 1st, a gutter drain very close to the sidewalk, and narrow sidewalk conditions near construction barriers.
- Crossing comments included no painted crosswalks, especially at a four-way stop; a closed east-west crossing at 7th and Center; and a note that a four-way stop felt much easier and safer than the previous two-way condition.
- Participants noted constrained access, including that the east sidewalk did not have full pedestrian access and that the route was not accessible to bikes through construction.
- Other comments mentioned hedges or landscaping encroaching into the sidewalk or sight line, "special dips" in grass near the sidewalk, heavy use with "100s" walking this way, and that the area from 7th to 2nd NW was very busy.

Biggest issue: No specific "Biggest issue" field was present or completed on the Blue Route sheets provided. Based on the notes, the most frequent issues were construction-related sidewalk disruption, cracked or uneven sidewalks, missing or unclear crossings, and constrained pedestrian access.

One improvement wanted: No specific "One improvement" field was present or completed. The notes suggest interest in wider sidewalks, better pedestrian access through construction areas, improved crossings, and attention to cracks, encroachments, and narrow pinch points.

Priority identified: Safer crossings were identified as the route's top priority in the score summary.

Route-specific recommendations

- Improve crossing visibility and consistency, including marked crosswalks where appropriate.
- Review construction-zone pedestrian access so sidewalk closures, barricades, and detours remain understandable and usable.
- Repair cracked or uneven sidewalk segments and address narrow pinch points, drainage conflicts, and landscaping encroachments.
- Review signal timing and pedestrian comfort near major downtown crossings.
- Maintain clear curb ramps and confirm seating, shelter, and rest opportunities near stops.

White Route

Primary streets / avenues: North-south connector near 3rd Ave SW / 4th Ave SW, crossing 2nd St SW and extending south toward the St. Marys Park area.

Route character: Downtown-to-neighborhood connector. The route links major east-west corridors and appears to transition from a denser downtown setting to a quieter, more neighborhood-oriented area.

Variation: The north portion is more urban and downtown-oriented; the south portion appears quieter and more residential.

Score summary: Total score: 49.25, the highest score among the reviewed routes. The route was rated comfortable and enjoyable. It scored especially well in access and continuity, safety, walking experience, and accessibility. The walking experience score was at the maximum, suggesting participants found the route direct, easy to navigate, pleasant, and acceptable in terms of noise. Crossings scored lower than other categories, at 4.25.

Recorded comments and notes

- The White Route materials were primarily scored front-page forms and contained little or no additional handwritten commentary.
- Access and continuity were generally scored relatively high. Surface and condition were also generally moderate to high.
- Crossing scores varied more widely than other categories, suggesting that some locations along the route may have felt easier or safer to cross than others.
- Safety scores were generally moderate to high.

Biggest issue: No "Biggest issue" field was present or completed on the White Route sheets provided.

One improvement wanted: No "One improvement" field was present or completed on the White Route sheets provided.

Priority identified: Both safer crossings and better sidewalks were identified as priorities in the score summary.

Route-specific recommendations

- Improve crossing safety and consistency at intersections, even though the route scored well overall.
- Inspect sidewalk continuity as the route transitions out of the downtown core.
- Confirm curb ramps, detectable warnings, and smooth transitions at intersections.
- Improve or confirm wayfinding between major corridors and planned stop areas.

Pink Route

Primary streets / avenues: South of 2nd St, around the 3rd Ave / 4th Ave corridor, toward 5th-6th St SW and the St. Marys Park area. The observation sheets specifically reference 4th St SW and 9th Ave SW.

Route character: Neighborhood access route serving parks and local destinations. The route appears to have a more residential feel than the downtown core while still depending on comfortable crossings of busier streets.

Variation: The route shifts from higher-activity areas toward more residential blocks, with comfort and sidewalk quality varying by segment.

Score summary: Total score: 49.00, nearly tied with the White Route. The route was marked overall as usable, and one back-page response rated it comfortable. Participants scored it strongly across most categories, especially walking experience, surface condition, and access and continuity. The lowest category was crossings, although crossings scored better than most other routes. The top priority was safer crossings.

Recorded comments and notes

- Participants repeatedly noted traffic speed and volume on 4th Street. Comments included "4th Street heavy traffic + fast" and "4th St traffic is too fast."
- Crossing-related comments included missing marked crosswalks, a desire for louder crosswalk sounds, and a note that it was not possible to cross at 4th Street and 7th.
- Sidewalk-related comments included cambering or sloping sidewalks on both sides, puddling during rain on the sidewalk, and a landscaping wall or privacy feature near a ramp at 5th Street that was "not useful."
- Participants also noted seating at 5th and 7th. One handwritten note near the top of a sheet was difficult to read but appeared to reference the east side and possibly a slope, bench, or Mayo parking-related feature.

Biggest issue: "Difficulty crossing 4th St SW, speed of traffic."

One improvement wanted: "Lower speed limit on 4th St SW (25 mph) and add RRFB @ 9th Ave SW — if physically able."

Priority identified: Safer crossings were selected as the top priority.

Route-specific recommendations

- Review crossing safety on 4th St SW, including visibility, crossing aids, and pedestrian comfort.
- Consider traffic-calming or speed-management options where feasible.
- Evaluate the feasibility of an RRFB at 9th Ave SW or another appropriate crossing treatment.
- Address sidewalk slope, puddling, and other comfort issues that affect people walking or rolling.
- Maintain seating and rest opportunities where they support access to transit.

Purple Route

Primary streets / avenues: East/southeast route near Broadway Ave S and the 4th St SE / 5th St SE corridor, toward the Education Center / Slattery Park area, with possible river/trail adjacency.

Route character: Institutional, park-edge, and river-adjacent corridor. The route appears to offer connections to parks, institutional uses, and possible trail or river crossings.

Variation: The western portion is more urban or institutional; the eastern portion appears more park-edge, recreational, and lower-density.

Score summary: Total score: 44.83, placing the route in the upper-middle range. Participants marked the route as usable and enjoyable. The strongest category was walking experience, followed closely by safety. Accessibility and access/continuity were lower than the strongest categories. Top priorities were safer crossings and accessibility.

Recorded comments and notes

- The Purple Route included three sheets, but only one contained substantial written comments.
- The route was described as curving "back & forth quite a bit" because of different developments.

- Participants noted some curb ramps that were pointed or angled into the center of the street.
- One comment said there was only one major section where the concrete was in bad shape.
- Between 4th and 5th Street, a specific concern noted a large drop-off from the sidewalk into rocks and a parking lot.
- Another note stated that there was only one curb extension, but most crossings were "not too wide."

Biggest issue: No specific "Biggest issue" field was present or completed. Based on the comments, the main concerns were path alignment, curb ramp direction, one poor concrete section, and a drop-off next to the sidewalk.

One improvement wanted: No specific "One improvement" field was present or completed. The notes suggest interest in improving curb ramp alignment, addressing the sidewalk drop-off, and repairing the poor concrete section.

Priority identified: Safer crossings and accessibility were identified as priorities.

Route-specific recommendations

- Address accessibility barriers, especially curb ramps that direct users into the street rather than toward the intended crossing path.
- Review the sidewalk drop-off between 4th and 5th Street and consider edge protection or other corrective action.
- Repair the noted poor concrete section.
- Improve crossings at Broadway or other major streets where needed.
- Strengthen trail-to-stop and park-edge connections where feasible.

Yellow Route

Primary streets / avenues: Short north-south connector near the 2nd Ave SW / 3rd Ave SW area, between 2nd St SW and 6th St SW, near the United Way Building area.

Route character: Short connector route linking the downtown core to southern neighborhood blocks. It appears to be an important link rather than a full corridor.

Variation: Minimal. This route is best understood as a connector segment where directness is a strength, but intersection quality strongly affects usability.

Score summary: Total score: 42.00, placing the route in the middle range. Participants marked it as difficult, usable, comfortable, and enjoyable, suggesting mixed but generally more positive experience than the Red/Orange Route. Walking experience received the maximum score of 12.00. Access, surface condition, and accessibility were rated fairly well. Crossings were the weakest area, with a score of 3.00. The top priority was safer crossings.

Recorded comments and notes

- The Yellow Route included one front-page sheet. The participant marked mobility used as walking, cane, and scooter.
- A handwritten "N/A" appeared near the crossings section, with notes stating "no timed crossings" and "no medians."
- Access and continuity were scored moderately well overall, although usable curb ramps scored lower than continuous path and adequate width.
- Surface and condition were scored moderately well. Safety was lower, with lighting marked low and traffic/buffer conditions rated higher.

Biggest issue: No "Biggest issue" field was present or completed. The written comments identify the absence of timed crossings and medians as the clearest crossing-related concern.

One improvement wanted: No "One improvement" field was present or completed. Based on the notes, improvements related to timed crossings, refuge or median features, and lighting may reflect participant concerns.

Priority identified: Safer crossings were identified as the top priority.

Route-specific recommendations

- Focus on crossing features, including timed crossings where appropriate and feasible.
- Review whether refuge or median treatments are warranted at relevant crossings.
- Improve lighting where the route felt less safe or less visible.
- Maintain curb ramps, surface quality, and clear connection to the main BRT stop area.
- Signage for cars to yield to potential pedestrians as they exit alleyways.

Red/Orange Combined Route

Primary streets / avenues: Western/southern corridor around Broadway Ave S / US 52 area, 6th St SW/SE, 3rd Ave SW, 4th Ave SW, and toward commercial or auto-oriented areas. The sheets also reference 2nd Street and 9th Avenue W.

Route character: Major arterial and commercial corridor. The route is critical for transit access but appears to be the highest-stress walking and rolling environment due to higher speeds, larger intersections, and auto-oriented design.

Variation: The northern section near downtown is more urban and signalized; the southern or more commercial section is more auto-dominated, with wider crossings and retail-strip conditions.

Score summary: Total score: 31.34, the lowest total score of the routes reviewed. Participants marked it as very difficult, difficult, and usable, indicating varied experiences that leaned toward concern. The lowest-rated area was access and continuity, particularly continuous walking path and adequate sidewalk width. Surface condition, safety, and accessibility also scored relatively low. The top priority identified was better sidewalks.

Recorded comments and notes

- Participants noted that Saturday morning conditions may differ from weekday conditions: "Saturday am — different traffic than work week."
- Missing or incomplete sidewalks were a repeated concern. Notes stated that north of 2nd Street there were blocks without sidewalk on either side, south of 2nd there was often only one sidewalk, and in some locations there was "no sidewalk."
- Sidewalk narrowing and obstruction were noted where fences, signs, vegetation, parked cars, or business/parking conflicts affected the walking space.
- Surface and drainage comments included mostly acceptable smooth surfaces in some areas, cars parking over part of the sidewalk just south of 2nd Street, houses draining onto flat sidewalk, sidewalk acting as a valley in places, and water draining onto sidewalks.
- Curb ramps were noted positively in one place as "good, recently added," but another note appeared to reference an incorrect or less accessible curb ramp near 3rd Street SW.
- Crossing concerns were repeated. Notes said crosswalks were only at 2nd and absent elsewhere, participants had to wait a long time to cross 2nd, and some locations lacked visible crosswalks or refuge/median features.

- Safety comments focused on fast traffic on 2nd Street, vehicles turning too fast into the ski shop parking area at a dangerous angle, limited lighting, and concern that some people may feel vulnerable walking in the dark.

Biggest issue: No specific "Biggest issue" field was present or completed. Based on the notes, the most frequent issues were missing sidewalks, incomplete sidewalk coverage on both sides of the street, fast traffic on 2nd Street, difficult crossings, and sidewalk narrowing or obstruction.

One improvement wanted: No specific "One improvement" field was present or completed. The comments suggest desired improvements would include filling sidewalk gaps, improving crossings away from 2nd Street, reducing or managing traffic conflicts, improving sidewalk clearance, and addressing drainage onto sidewalks.

Priority identified: Better sidewalks were identified as the top priority in the score summary.

Route-specific recommendations

- Prioritize sidewalk continuity, width, and basic pedestrian access on this route.
- Fill sidewalk gaps and address places where sidewalk exists on only one side or is interrupted.
- Improve crossing safety at 2nd Street and at other locations where marked crossings are absent or uncomfortable.
- Review traffic conflicts, including turning movements into parking or business access points.
- Address drainage that directs water onto sidewalks and creates puddling, ice risk, or uneven walking conditions.
- Improve lighting, pedestrian separation from traffic, and rest/shelter opportunities where feasible.

Overall Route Typologies

Typology	Routes	General observation
Downtown grid	Blue, White, Yellow	Dense and generally walkable, but complex. Crossings, signal timing, curb ramps, and wayfinding are key issues.
Transition corridors	Pink	Shift from commercial or institutional areas toward residential blocks. Conditions vary, and traffic speed/crossing comfort can strongly shape the experience.
Edge / park / river corridors	Purple	Lower traffic in some places, with opportunities for stronger park, trail, and stop connections, but with important accessibility details to address.
Arterial / commercial corridors	Red/Orange	Highest-stress walking and rolling environment. Wider crossings, higher speeds, sidewalk gaps, and weaker pedestrian separation make this a priority for improvement.

Overall Summary Across All Routes

Across all routes, the average total score was approximately 42.24. The highest-scoring routes were White and Pink, while the lowest-scoring route was Red/Orange. Most routes were rated at least usable, and several were also marked as comfortable or enjoyable. However, usability did not mean the routes were free of concerns.

The strongest overall category was walking experience, with an average score of about 10.89. This suggests that many participants found the routes generally direct, understandable, and reasonably pleasant to use. In other words, the basic idea of walking these routes to access the future BRT corridor appears workable from a lay-user perspective.

The weakest overall category was crossings, with an average score of about 4.15. This was the clearest pattern across the spreadsheet. Safer crossings were identified as a top priority on five of the six routes. Even routes

that scored well overall, such as White and Pink, still identified crossings as an area needing attention. The Blue Route was especially notable, with crossings receiving a score of 0.

A second recurring concern was sidewalk quality and continuity. Better sidewalks were identified as a priority on the Red/Orange and White routes. Red/Orange, in particular, had low scores for access and continuity, surface condition, safety, and accessibility, suggesting that this route may need more basic pedestrian improvements than some of the others.

Overall, the participant scoring suggests that the routes are generally usable but uneven. The clearest lay recommendation to city staff is to focus first on safer crossings, especially where participants noted difficulty with crossing visibility, crossing time, or refuge space. A second priority is to improve sidewalk continuity, width, surface condition, and accessibility, especially on the lower-scoring routes. These improvements would help make the walking routes to future BRT stops feel safer, more comfortable, and more usable for a wider range of residents.

Key Takeaway

Taken together, these routes tell a clear story about what it is like to walk and roll to future LINK BRT stops in Rochester. Participants generally found that the system is connected and usable, especially in and near downtown, but that the experience becomes less comfortable and less consistent as people move into surrounding neighborhoods and busier arterial areas.

Small, practical improvements could make a meaningful difference. Better crossings, clearer and more continuous sidewalks, improved lighting, and more places to rest were among the most common suggestions. While this feedback is based on general observations from community members rather than technical analysis, it reflects real experiences of people using these routes. That perspective can help shape a system that works well for everyone who depends on it.

