CITY OF Grand Junction COLORADO
URBAN TRAILS COMMITTEE

Grand Junction Urban Trails Committee
Special Workshop

Meeting Date: October 23, 2024
Prepared By: Henry Brown, Mobility Planner

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Urban Trails Committee members were joined by City Staff and guests from City Council and Planning Commission for a "walk audit" of the Northwest GJ area as a Special Workshop on the evening of October 23, 2024. This report summarizes the observations of the Committee and guests and describes committee recommendations, including broad support for a planned crossing enhancement of 24 ½ Road at Flat Top Lane.

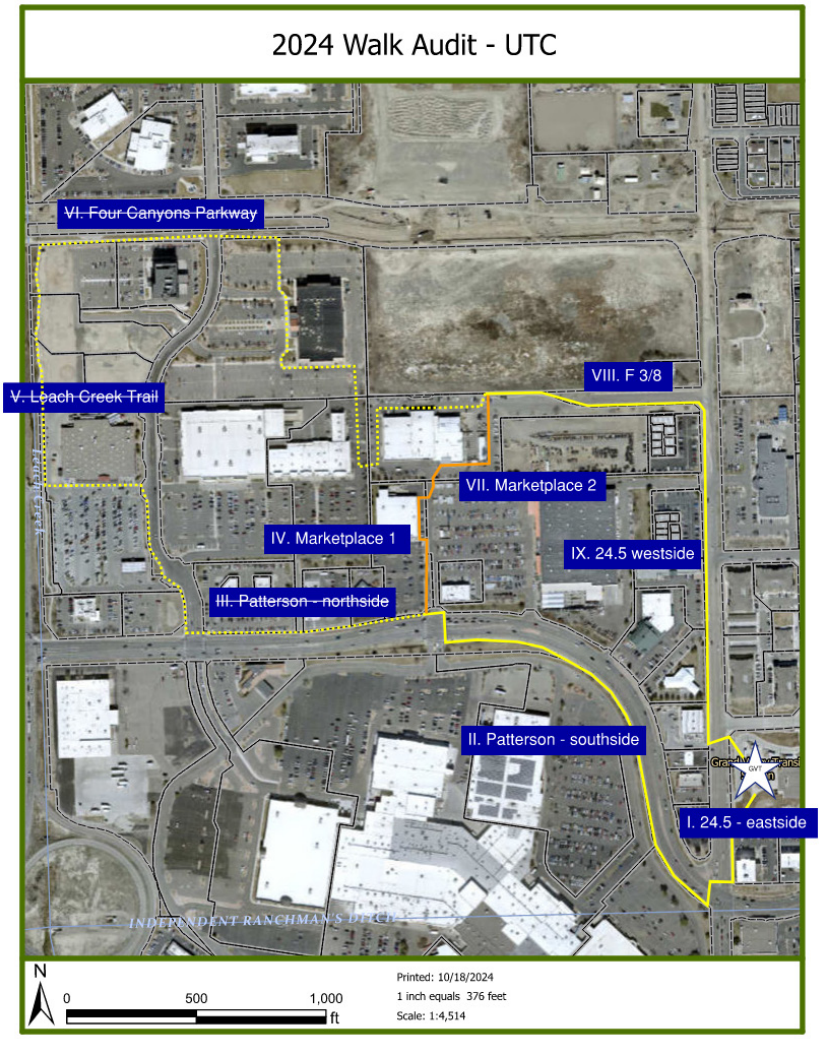
INTRODUCTION

Walk audits are a popular and simple tool to help communities assess walkability of their streets and sidewalk network; collect important qualitative data such as user perception of existing barriers and strengths of pedestrian infrastructure and other street furniture; document existing conditions for areas with upcoming street improvements; or highlight disparities that may exist between different neighborhoods or parts of town along various routes. Additionally, walk audits can help reveal where pedestrian facilities are inaccessible for people with disabilities, individuals who use mobility aids, or caregivers who use strollers.

On October 23, 2024, 17 Committee members, staff, and guests joined a 50-minute walk audit, starting and ending at the Grand Valley Transit (GVT) West Transfer Station and looping around Home Depot, along Patterson Road and F 3/8 Road. The route comprised of six segments upon which participants quantified their perceived pedestrian level of traffic stress (PLOTS). A map of the walk audit route is provided below (including the proposed route which had to be shortened due to time constraints). Approximately two-thirds of the participants used the GVT bus to travel from City Hall to the West Transfer Station, including three who were using mobility aids and two pairs of stroller users. For some, it was their first time riding GVT. Bus passes were provided free-of-charge by GVT.

Each participant was provided a Walk Audit Tool Kit adapted from a much longer version from the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). The Tool Kit allowed participants to catalogue other sidewalk users, identify a key opportunity in each segment, record their perceived PLOTS, and a section for brief notes section for documenting additional observations. A sample of the Walk Audit Tool Kit is attached.

Fig. 1 (left). The Northwest GJ Walk Audit route consisted of six segments and focused on the survey area between GVT West and Home Depot and other commercial parcels. The dashed yellow line represents the proposed route, while the orange line shows the bypass that was taken instead due to a lack of time.



II. Patterson Road – south side

Who's walking/rolling/biking?

	Youth	Adults	Seniors
Many:	☐	☐	☐
Some:	☐	☐	☐
Few:	☐	☐	☐

What is your overall stress level while traveling on this corridor (circle one)?

1 – No stress
2 – Low stress
3 – Mod. stress
4 – High stress

Key Opportunity:
☐ Crossing infra.
☐ Lighting
☐ Sidewalk
☐ Other: _____

Note: _____

Fig. 2 (right). A sample of the Tool Kit, which allowed participants to catalogue their observations and perceptions on each segment.

Participants evaluated the following street segments:

I. 24 ½ Road – east side
II. Patterson Road – south side
III. (skipped)
IV. "Marketplace 1" – Patterson Road to Pet Smart
V. (skipped)
VI. (skipped)
VII. "Marketplace 2" – Pet Smart to F ⅜ Road
VIII. F ⅜ Road
IX. 24 ½ Road – west side

DATA & OBSERVATIONS

Staff collected 15 packets from participants at the end of the walk audit and used the checklist to tabulate an average perceived PLOTS for each path segment, as shown at the bottom of this section. As a reminder, the Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan and Transportation Engineering Design Standards established a standard for 2 or lower to be an acceptable Level of Traffic Stress. Additionally, qualitative observations are summarized below.

Fig. 3. 2024 Walk Audit participants pose for a photo at the GVT station

Early in the audit, participants observed that pedestrian signal call buttons are typically not paired with audible signals, putting them out of compliance with the Pedestrian Right of Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG) R307.6 and R308.2, nor were countdown timers observed. This creates challenges when pedestrian phases are short; the group was prone to get caught in a crosswalk if nobody noticed the signal change and start crossing within just a few seconds. For example, crossing Patterson Road from the Mesa Mall Access Road towards Home Depot, the pedestrian signal changed to red while the group was only approximately two-thirds of the way across the ~100' crossing. However, participants observed that the following phase did not have a conflict with the north half of the intersection. To overcome the short signal timings, one participant who was travelling in a wheelchair attempted a hasty approach down a pedestrian ramp, only to get caught in a quick grade change where the ramp met the gutter, causing the participant to fall out of the chair.

Beyond tight signal timings, other crosswalk challenges observed included steep grades before and after ramps (i.e., on the sidewalk approach and in the aforementioned gutter), the lack of a marked crossing of 24 ½ Road anywhere north of Patterson Road (in particular, none within 500' of Flat Top Lane to provide access to GVT); a comprehensive lack of refuge islands despite very large crossing distances; and the lack of a crosswalk to get to the west side of the Mesa Mall Access Road on the south side of Patterson Road. Participants also observed frequent vehicular encroachment into marked crosswalks.

Outside of crossing challenges, participants noted how much more comfortable the walking experience is on wide detached walks (e.g., south side of Patterson Road) versus narrow curb-tight walks, even on lower volume streets (e.g., west side of 24 ½ Road), as

reflected in the quantitative results, below. Some maintenance issues were observed, including broken sidewalk panels (east side of 24 ½ Road), overhanging trees (south side of Patterson Road), and gravel on the walk (F 3/8 Road). Also on the east side of 24 ½ Road, participants identified the opportunity for increased shade cover. Participants were additionally surprised by the quantity of refuse along the sidewalks, and no garbage nor recycling bins were observed outside of GVT.

In the Marketplace areas, connectivity through parking areas was a key opportunity area, along with more ramps. For example, a pathway alongside PetSmart had a paved run, but terminated with no ramp, necessitating some participants to backtrack as much as about 200' to then continue north on the asphalt up to the next ramp. Another portion of the walk had an estimated one and one-half- to two-foot drop-off. Some portions were observed to be in disrepair. Approaching F 3/8 Road, multiple vehicles were staged over the pathway, creating an additional difficulty and necessitating more backtracking. Also in this area, the sidewalk was fringed by large gravel stones, which had migrated to cause interference for pedestrians, especially those with strollers or mobility devices. Some curb ramps with tactile pads did not seem to direct pedestrians anywhere in particular.

Segment	Configuration	Average perceived PLOTS
I. 24 ½ Road east side	5-lane section, signed 35 MPH. Minimally detached 5' walk, transitioning to a signalized, marked crossing, 60+', to a "porkchop island" before completing the crossing to Segment II, 65'. Limited pedestrian-scale lighting.	3.3
II. Patterson Road south side	5-lane section, signed 35 MPH. 6' walk buffered by up to 12' with variable landscaping, transitioning to a 100+' crossing, before completing the crossing to Segment III, 60+'. No pedestrian-scale lighting	2.8
IV. "Marketplace 1"	4-to-2-lane section, unsigned speed limit. Curb-tight 6' walk sandwiched by parking and with steep drop-off. Marked crossings (32' and 30') with low contrast and sidewalks in variable state of repair. No pedestrian-scale lighting.	2.5
VII. "Marketplace 2"	2-lane section, unsigned speed limit. Variable connectivity of 6' walks necessitated considerable travel (~450') in the traveled way for those with mobility aids. No pedestrian scale lighting.	2.6
VIII. F ⅜ Road	2-lane section, unsigned speed limit. 6' walk impassable due to commercial trailer parking necessitated considerable travel (>300') in the traveled way for those with mobility aids. No pedestrian-scale lighting	2.3
IX. 24 ½ Road west side	3-lane section, signed 35 MPH. Curb-tight 5' sidewalks with significant access conflicts with high-speed ingress/egress radii and diagonal curb ramps (50', 50', 65+') and no marked crossing back to GVT ("everyone for themselves"), up to 80'. Consistent pedestrian-scale lighting.	3.4

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Investments in signal hardware to include countdown timers and audible signals would help Grand Junction approach PROWAG compliance and provide peace of mind for all crosswalk users. In addition to investment in hardware upgrades, the committee recommends identifying opportunities to incorporate refuge islands and more pedestrian-accommodating phasing updates can safely provide more time for crosswalk users without proportionate increases to phasing. Where applied appropriately, automated enforcement (e.g., via cameras) and ticketing could disincentivize bad driver behaviors (e.g., by ticketing for crosswalk encroachment). The committee recommends pursuit of improved driver education and continued monitoring of state legislation regarding automated enforcement for intersection and crosswalk behavior of drivers.

Staff has followed up with code enforcement to relieve some of the difficulties observed in the Marketplace and F 3/8 areas. The committee recommends continued emphasis on requiring pedestrian connectivity through and amongst parcels during development and investigation of opportunities to incentivize improved connectivity on existing parcels.

Diagonal pedestrian ramps can save money, but direct sidewalk users towards traffic, as opposed to directly across a conflict area. Excessively wide driveways with generous curves promote speeding for vehicles entering or exiting private parcels. The committee recommends explicitly requiring the use of directional pedestrian ramps at private driveway conflicts and establishing a maximum driveway crossing distance, for example, 25', over which a refuge island would be required.

Staff have already submitted maintenance requests where relevant, but the committee recommends the creation of overlays of transit- and even commercial/employment-adjacent areas to enhance tree cover, maintenance and refuse collection (preferably with increased availability of trash and recycling receptacles), pedestrian-scale and dark skies-friendly lighting, and promoting retrofits of high-stress pedestrian facilities.

Creating safe and low-stress opportunities for pedestrian flow in and around transit stations is a high priority for the Urban Trails Committee. The committee strongly supports the plan to create an enhanced crossing of 24 ½ Road at Flat Top Lane, with directional crossings and widened paths, and commends staff for repurposing an underutilized two-way turn lane into a refuge island to make that crossing as safe as possible. The committee recommends a comprehensive review of two-way turn lanes to evaluate where underutilized space can be repurposed to enhance safety, such as via lane tapers, creation of refuge islands, or designing improved cycle facilities.

Walk Audits continue to be a useful tool to reveal existing conditions and key opportunities to appointed and elected officials. The committee recommends establishing a semiannual cadence for continued use of Walk Audits and recommends streamlining the observation reporting methodology to use technology, such as ArcGIS/Survey123 to support higher resolution data with less effort from participants.