



# Elkridge Virtual Walk Audit 2020

## Background

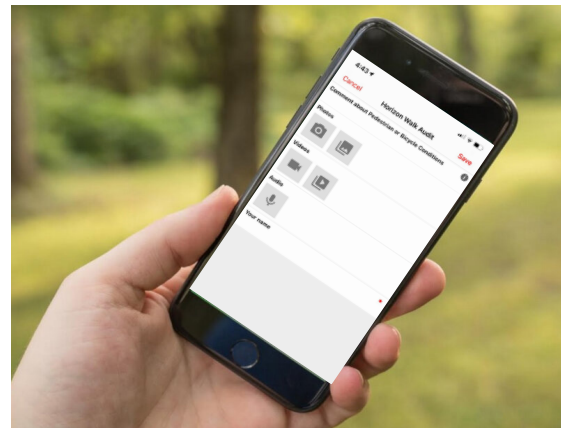
The Streets for All Coalition advocates for more walkable, bikeable, and accessible streets throughout Howard County. Walk audits are one tool the Coalition uses to engage the public and affect change. A walk audit is a process that identifies street conditions that are a hazard to active travel and recommends changes that make walking, biking, and access to transit safe and more enjoyable.

In October 2020, the Coalition hosted a virtual walk audit of Montgomery Road between Rowanberry Drive and the Lawyer Hill Apartments in Elkridge. There are several key destinations along this route including Elkridge Volunteer Fire Station, Elkridge Elementary and Elkridge Landing Middle Schools, and Elkridge Corners shopping center. Recommendations along the route from the WalkHoward Pedestrian Plan are currently in the design phase as part of [Howard County Capital Project K5035](#).

## Preparing for the Virtual Audit

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, no group walk audit activities could be conducted in person. This led to a hybrid approach that leveraged multiple technologies including a smartphone app for data collection, an interactive online map, and a video conferencing platform.

- » **Site visits** were conducted by Coalition members, consultants, and walk audit leaders, with photos and comments submitted via smartphone app;
- » Data from the site visits was displayed on an **interactive online map** that allowed participants to complete a walk audit on their own from a web browser at home; and
- » Data from the site visits was also used to create a presentation that simulated the walk audit process for a large group of people during a **virtual event**.



*Comments and photos of sidewalk, street, and bus stop conditions were recorded with a smartphone app.*

### 18 Walk Audit Leaders

7 adults, 1 person from Elkridge

11 students from Howard County High Schools

## Walk Audit Leaders

Eighteen community members were recruited as walk audit leaders to assist the Streets for All Coalition. Walk audit leaders were provided a variety of resources and participated in two trainings to prepare them for their role. The first training focused on how to collect data during their site visit and included a tutorial video to collect data via smartphone app. The second training taught walk audit leaders how to serve as discussion facilitators during the virtual event. The walk audit leaders' dedication was key to the success of the virtual walk audit.



## Virtual Event

More than 60 residents, advocates, and local government staff participated in the virtual walk audit event on October 21, 2020 via Zoom. For the event, a traditional walk audit was adapted to fit the virtual setting by “walking” through the Montgomery Road corridor with a slideshow of images and videos. Small group discussions were led by pairs of Walk Audit Leaders, a dedicated group of nearly 20 people that visited the corridor in person before the event. Groups discussed questions like, “how does it feel as a pedestrian on this corridor?” and, “what does this corridor need to be pedestrian friendly?”

After the virtual walk audit event, participants and the general public were invited to contribute to the interactive online map if they had additional comments about the corridor.

## What We Heard


We heard a lot from Howard County residents at the virtual walk audit event and through the survey and interactive map. The map, hosted on [the Streets for All website](#), received 488 unique page views from September 1, 2020 – February 1, 2021.

The Walk Audit Leaders provided nearly 100 comments from their in-person visits to the corridor. Comments were distributed evenly throughout the corridor and recognized a variety of issues related to safety and access. Walk audit leaders were particularly concerned about the most vulnerable road users: ten comments mentioned people with mobility issues or compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and eight comments mentioned child mobility or access to the middle and elementary schools. Overall, most participants felt the corridor was unsafe and unwelcoming.

A summary of walk audit participant comments is on the next page.



*Streets for All Coalition members, walk audit leaders, and consultants were prepared for the virtual event in their yellow reflective vests.*



**Elkridge School Area Virtual Walk Audit – Online Map**

Tell us what you think about walking and bicycling on these streets and paths.

Use the button below to drop a comment on the map. Tell us where you like to visit and how you get there.

**Leave us a comment!**

Is there anything you would like to share with us about a specific location? Add a point on the map to tell us where you like visiting and why.

See what others have shared.

**What's on the map?**

**Walk Audit Points**

- Walk Audit Stops
- Walk Audit Comments

*Visit the Streets for All website to add your comments on Montgomery Road to the interactive map.*



## Montgomery Road ...

... **has disconnected sidewalks.** Residents felt unsafe and frustrated with the lack of connectivity. One participant with a disability mentioned that gaps in the sidewalk made them feel cut off from society.

... **is narrow in several places, often forcing pedestrians to walk in the roadway.** Lack of a wide shoulder forces bicyclists to ride in the travel lane, and several participants who are frequent cyclists note that drivers often behave aggressively to bicyclists sharing the lane with cars.

... **has a lot of traffic traveling at high speeds.** This is particularly a hazard for pedestrians and bicyclists traveling adjacent to or in the roadway.

... **has an unkempt appearance.** Overgrown plants and litter give the corridor an unwelcoming feel. Walk audit participants felt drivers have poor visibility of pedestrians at intersections, often exacerbated by overgrown bushes or tree branches.

... **limits access to community resources.** Disconnected sidewalks, lack of frequent crossings, and inaccessible infrastructure prevents residents from accessing the schools, bus stops for Route 409, the shopping center, places of worship, and recreation opportunities.

## Walk audit participants want to see ...

... **continuous sidewalks.** The majority of public comments were on the lack of connected sidewalks. Sidewalks on both sides of Montgomery Road would make walking safer, more intuitive, and accessible for people of all ages and abilities.

... **a lower speed limit.** Participants were interested in traffic calming measures to reduce vehicle speeds as well as a speed campaign for school-related traffic.

... **more opportunities to cross the street especially near the school campuses, bus stops, and ElkrIDGE Corners Shopping Center.** Participants advocated for new painted crosswalks and pedestrian signals that are accessible to people with vision or mobility impairments.

... **improved lighting at bus stops and intersections.**

... **bike lanes or other bike facilities.**

## Next Steps

You can help Streets for All continue the momentum! Here are a couple ways to show your support for safe and accessible Howard County streets, sidewalks, bus stops, and crossings.

- » Visit [hcestreetsforall.org](http://hcestreetsforall.org) to contribute to the webmap and learn other ways to take action.
- » [Sign up](#) for Streets for All updates and be an advocate.
- » Share feedback and data with Howard County Office of Transportation
- » [Advocate](#) for biking and walking funding for Howard County FY22 Capital Budget