

Walkshop Toolkit

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Walkshop Toolkit

1. Introduction

Purpose of the Walkshop

A Walkshop can be described as a mobile workshop on a pre-determined route that allows attendees to visit, learn about and reflect on local transportation projects, and whose topics range from best practices in built environment changes, equity and inclusivity in safe mobility, to benefits of multi-modal options. They typically feature compelling examples of interventions with equally engaging presenters. This can include bringing engaged youth into the conversation and giving them the opportunity to present and discuss safe mobility from their unique lens. The hands-on experience allows participants to better identify problems and explore feasible solutions through an interconnected viewpoint, examining how community, local government and advocacy groups can work together to tackle complex mobility challenges and build thriving communities.

Parachute can help your community facilitate a Vision Zero Walkshop by providing expertise, tools and organizational support. Contact us at **walkshop@parachute.ca**

How to use this toolkit

This toolkit is intended to guide those interested in planning a walkshop and to consider all elements from preparation through to debrief. At the end of this toolkit, you will find an appendix that has some sample route maps, invitee wording and a risk management checklist. Throughout this toolkit, you will also find some lessons learned from other cities that have been through the process of planning a successful walkshop. These lessons are meant to spark your thinking on how a walkshop may be improved in the future.



2. Planning and preparation

Defining goals and objectives

The goals and objectives of a Walkshop will vary depending on the theme or topic of interest. Broadly, the aim of the Walkshop is to **learn** about challenges to safe mobility, **raise awareness** of road safety and active transportation initiatives within a community, and **strengthen partnerships** among city departments, road safety partners and community groups/leaders.

Some examples of topics that may be explored are:

- Best practices in Vision Zero/Safe Systems (i.e., positive changes to the built environment)
- Equity and inclusivity in safe mobility
- Community initiatives and social wellbeing
- Benefits of active transportation and supporting infrastructure
- Addressing conflict points among road users
- Ways that community organizers collaborate
- Safe routes for children and seniors to access community facilities
- Reducing congestion while fostering healthy streets that support local businesses

Once a topic/theme has been identified, the Walkshop lead should select a neighbourhood/walking route to explore.

Selecting and mapping the route

Consider the steps below when selecting a neighbourhood and route stops for your Walkshop:

- Plan on five to eight stops with designated presenters along the walking route. The total walking route should take 30 to 40 minutes without stops: allow for 10 minutes of discussion at each stop, including Q&A. The route should start and end at an indoor facility where participants can gather before and after the walk. The total event can be anywhere from 2.5 to three hours, including introduction, walking the route with its stops, and wrap-up.

- Each stop should have a focus to point out a road safety or active transportation intervention that is improving mobility, or to point out a challenge the community

faces. You may be tempted to showcase all the improvements but it's helpful to see and understand where further changes are needed.

See sample route matrix in Appendix 1 for topic examples.

Identifying partners and presenters

A successful Walkshop brings together motivated partners and engaging presenters to set the stage for the area and topics being explored. When choosing partners to help co-ordinate the, day it is helpful to think of the following two questions:

One, what topics will you be covering in the area and what departments or external partners can help tell that story? Below is a sample of internal/external partners you could consider engaging with:

Internal	External
Communications	Accessibility committees
Crossing guards	Active Transportation groups
Emergency services	Community health
Engineering and Transportation Services	Council
Fire	Cycling advocacy groups
Parks and recreation	Immigrant Services
Operations	Local Immigration Partnerships
Planning	Neighbouring municipalities
Police	Public health
Stormwater management	Provincial or territorial ministries
Transit	Researchers
	School boards
	Seniors Associations
	Trail associations
	Youth

Second, who is the intended audience? Who are you telling the story to? (E.g., community, conference participants, councillors/government representatives)

Who to invite

A walkshop is a significant time commitment, both for participants and organizers, so people need advance notice and you will want to promote the event as happening "rain or shine." Consider using a free ticketing service to invite selected participants and

emphasize that it is an invited, rather than public, event. Send reminders before the date to those who have accepted your invitation, including details on how to get to the event venue and what is being provided (such as lunch). See sample wording for invitation in Appendix 1.

Consider inviting:

- community organizers
- community politicians
- education leaders
- law enforcement and fire department
- municipal departments not directly related to transportation (e.g., parks, sanitation, operations/maintenance)
- public health officials
- public transit leaders
- representatives from the local neighbourhood
- representatives from other neighbourhoods
- transportation experts and planners from neighbouring municipalities
- youth safe mobility advocates

Lessons Learned

Diversity is key! Picking a route with a variety to see and do gives participants a lot to discuss. Said one Walkshop organizer: "The major success was the variety of presenters that we had in the walkshop – perspectives from a landscape architect and city councillor, for example. The diversity of the projects was also highlighted and we were able to do that because we were in such a dense area of the city."

Kicking off the Walkshop

Invite people to gather within an indoor space, providing beverages and snacks to allow for pre-presentation socializing. AV equipment should be available including a laptop and projector for presentations, and wireless microphones. Have chairs for seating. Provide takeaway handouts with information on road safety and your Walkshop route map. See appendix for sample route map.

3. Roles and responsibilities

Walkshop lead(s)

One person should be identified as the Walkshop lead. This individual will be responsible for co-ordinating the day and ensuring that presenters are aware of their timeslots and locations. At the beginning of the day, kick off the Walkshop with a presentation from a municipal leader i.e. mayor or local councillor.

Other suggested kickoff presenters may include:

- A road safety leader from Parachute to talk about the national context of Vision Zero initiatives
- A leader within the municipality's transportation division to provide an overview of the local commitment to Vision Zero
- A local community representative, who can talk about challenges faced in the neighbourhood where the participants will tour.
- End the presentations with housekeeping rules: divide the participants into their walking groups, review what to expect on the walk and remind people to return to the facility for post-walk discussion.

Route presenters

These will vary depending on the route selected and what is to be discussed at each stop. Many will come from within the city's transportation division on topics such as changes to traffic signals (e.g., leading pedestrian intervals). However, consider reaching out to others within the municipality who work in areas such as transit, school zone safety, parks and recreation, active transportation, and cycling infrastructure, if any of those are a factor along the tour route.



Safety leaders

Assign two people per group to be safety leaders. These individuals should be provided with a sample of the route map and talking points for each route presenter to keep the groups moving from location to location in a timely fashion. The main role of the safety lead is to ensure that the walking group is safely positioned along the route (i.e., not walking on the road, not impeding foot traffic for other pedestrians.) These individuals should also be equipped with a high visibility vest so that Walkshop participants can

identify them during the event. One safety leader should be positioned at the front of the walking group leading the way while the other should be at the back ensuring that no one gets lost from the group.

4. Content and discussion facilitation

Balancing strengths and challenges

When planning a walkshop, keep in mind there should be a variety of topics to explore along the route. While this event is a great opportunity to showcase the positive changes a community or municipality has made to design safer streets, it's also a chance to examine challenges in the existing built environment that may hinder proper road safety implementation. Discussing challenges provides participants with opportunities to have open dialogue about similar roadblocks that they may face in their communities and how they have overcome them. In other words, don't be afraid to air your dirty laundry. The benefit of this exercise is that it also allows community members living within a particular neighbourhood to get an in-depth understanding of why certain interventions have been designed that way.

Lessons learned

Don't be afraid to speak openly about issues that may be considered politically sensitive. As one Walkshop organizer said: "We encouraged presenters to speak openly about whatever they wanted, without sidestepping any issues that might be political or otherwise sensitive. Presenters drew on their knowledge and experience to discuss how things have improved and what challenges remain unaddressed."

Using data to ground discussion

There are a variety of data sources you can tap into when helping to tell your story along a chosen walkshop route. The data you choose to share will be dependent on the topic/theme of the walkshop. Some examples of data that may be provided to participants to provide context to the built environment include:

- Speed and volume data
- Pedestrian and cyclist volumes
- Collision history
- Near-miss/conflict data
- Census/equity data from Statistics Canada
- Resident requests for safety interventions/history of the neighbourhood

Consider also providing before and after images of the neighbourhood if any significant improvements have been made.

Participant engagement

Discussions along the walking route tend to happen organically as participants share their feedback and interests. Keep in mind that timing is important. Although participant engagement is crucial to a successful walkshop, you also want to ensure that there is time to have a fulsome conversation at every stop.

Lessons learned
When Parachute asked the organizers of previous successful walkshops about their takeaways on participant engagement, one city representative wrote: "The Q&A sessions was spontaneous. People were able to discuss/ask questions at any time along the route or to the presenters themselves. One improvement that could've been made was to have some questions provided to the participants beforehand to think about along the walk. This would've made for more meaningful/deeper discussion."

5. Logistics and accessibility

Group size and Walkshop format

- Keep walking groups between 10 to 15 participants. Each group should be accompanied by two marshals, wearing safety vests, to ensure the group gathers in spots that don't impede movement for other pedestrians.

- Send groups out in five-to-10-minute intervals. If you have more than two groups, consider sending groups around the route in opposite directions so two groups can leave at the same time.

Weather contingency plans

Here are some considerations of items to bring on the walkshop if the weather is too hot or rainy:

- Plan for some shaded areas that participants can stand in to avoid the heat
- Set up a canopy tent at each stop to provide shade and shelter from rain
- Bring water bottles as necessary to stay hydrated
- Consider bringing umbrellas for sunny and rainy days

If the weather doesn't co-operate, it's important to have a backup plan. One option is to have a backup slide deck and an indoor space available to virtually "walk the route". Although this option is not the same as an on-the-ground experience, it does provide more opportunity for in-depth discussion with a larger group.

A secondary option is to print numbered signs on foam core boards. That way, participants can experience the route indoors as they move from location to location if weather does not permit walking the route.

Noise considerations

Consider bringing a portable sound system to each stop with wireless microphones. This allows participants to hear despite potential wind and ambient traffic sounds.

Accommodate accessibility requests

If any of your participants require accessibility accommodations, make sure you account for these considerations during the route planning phase. It's also important to provide participants with information prior to starting the walkshop that outlines the following:

- The length of the walking route and physical fitness requirements (such as leisurely walk, or moderate activity level)
- Any potential steep hills or inclines they may encounter

Lessons learned
Although you will do your best to plan a safe route for your participants, sometimes circumstances arise on the day that are not predictable. It's important to prioritize safety even if that means shortening or changing the route along the way. One experience from a walkshop organizer highlights the need to be flexible: "City staff escorted groups and wore safety vests. Participants were briefed on safety rules. We had a participant in a mobility device who unfortunately had to go onto the roadway at one point due to unexpected sidewalk obstructions: she was supported by city staff to help her cross safely."

6. Debrief and follow-up

Post-walk debrief

This facilitated discussion is where you will get the most value out of the Walkshop. This provides attendees with the opportunity to gather, share observations and discuss next steps.

Here are some considerations for a positive post-walk debrief:

- If the walkshop begins in the morning, consider providing a light lunch after the tours as well as seating for attendees to socialize and discuss their observations among themselves

- Appoint a facilitator who will guide the group discussion: If Parachute is able to attend your walkshop, we can provide an experienced facilitator for you.

- As people finish their lunch, begin the discussion by asking a representative from each tour group for their observations on what they saw. Draw together common themes and circle back to those topics.

- If the conversation lags, use kickstarter questions such as:

    - "What was one thing you saw that surprised you?"

    - "If you could make one change tomorrow to improve safety along these roads, what would it be?"

- Appoint one transportation staff person to be a notetaker to record the observations.

Depending on the group dynamic, the conversation could go 30 to 45 minutes but be mindful of when you promised the day's activities would end and wrap up the formal discussion at the appointed time. Consider giving the final comment to local community members who attended the event.

Feedback collection

During the walkshop, some of the feedback or comments will happen informally along the route. Ensure that the walkshop leaders, including the safety leaders on the routes, are able to take notes as appropriate so that all comments are captured. After the Walkshop is complete, summarize the group discussion and share widely with those who work in road safety in your municipality.

Post-event communications

Survey participants after the event is over. Parachute can assist with survey formulation. A sample survey can also be found in the appendix of this toolkit. Additionally, form a follow-up plan with the local community to track how the municipality is responding to their concerns (if applicable).

Lessons learned and how Parachute can help

From the Glace Bay walkshop organizers: "Co-hosting the Glace Bay Walkshop with Parachute and our amazing community partners was a great opportunity to connect participants with local initiatives focusing on community health, mobility and road safety. Not only was it a unique way for advocates, non-profits and city staff to profile their work at different walk stations, but it was also a means to engage youth and highlight their role in active transportation within the community. We were delighted that Glace Bay could be the first Walkshop that Parachute held in Atlantic Canada! Glace Bay's motto translates to "From the depth of the seas and the earth"; we felt that holding the Walkshop deepened the understanding that participants have of their local AT initiatives as well as their connection to key community programs."

7. Tools and templates

The following tools and templates are included to help guide the planning and preparation of a successful walkshop:

A. Route matrix

B. Sample agenda and route map

C. Sample presenter briefing note

D. Sample participant reflection prompt

E. Sample guided questions

F. Community invitation template

G. Risk management checklist

H. Feedback survey questions



A - Route matrix

Below is a sample route matrix in Guelph, Ontario, where topics for consideration were mapped out:

Location	Features of interest	Topics for presentation	Potential speakers
Shelldale Community Centre	Suitable as a meeting space for start/end of walking tour	Overview of VZ Characteristics of neighborhood Key equity, road safety and transportation challenges	Mayor Councillor(s) Shelldale Centre Manager
Willow Road Public School	School zones School site design	Children as vulnerable road users Active and Safe Routes to School Automated Speed Enforcement	School Principal School Board Police Road Safety Supervisor
Norm Jary Park	Key green space	Access to green space Future Park and trail upgrades Equity and gentrification	Parks and trails
Dawson Road Family Medical Clinic	Transit stops at key medical service	Access to medical care Transit services	Transit
Willow Road	Existing bike lanes Busy arterial road	Barriers to active transportation Future protected cycling facilities Complete streets	Sustainable Transportation Planning
Willow Road-Silver creek Parkway Intersection	Intersection of arterial roads Plaza with vast parking lot fronting the street	Urban design, Complete Streets. Future re-development of plaza. Access to groceries Future protected intersection	Planning Traffic
Silvercreek Parkway North, north of Speedvale	Road re-construction in 2023 - New Multi Use Path + Transit Stop upgrades	Access to employment sites Network connectivity Improving AT Facilities	Design and Construction Sustainable Transportation
Speedvale/ Dawson/ Campbell	Lack of sidewalks	Complete streets Pedestrian safety	
Residential street (tbd)	40kph speed limit	Reducing speed limits city-wide, LPIs, ASE, CSZs	Traffic team Reps from other municipalities

B - Sample agenda and route map



Time	Activity	Description
9 a.m.	Welcome and orientation	Introduction to goals, safety briefing, distribute materials
9:30 a.m.	Walkshop presentation(s)	Presentation(s) and Orientation for the day
10:15 a.m.	Walkshop begins	The amount of time allotted to each stop location will depend on the total number of stops along the route. Aim for 5 minutes of content and 2 minutes of Q&A at each location. Ideally the walking route should not take more than one hour roundtrip.
11:15 a.m.	Return and debrief	Breakout group reflections
12:15 p.m.	Lunch/closing/feedback	Thank you remarks

Put short stop descriptions on back of the map.

Stop No. 1 – Shelldale Crescent is the gateway to an important community hub offering a variety of health, social and recreational services. It is also adjacent to industrial lands and is used by trucks and other heavy vehicles. At this stop, we consider the impacts of the surrounding land uses and their transportation needs.

Stop No. 2 – Based on community requests, the city recently studied and identified an opportunity to install a pedestrian crossing on Dawson between Shelldale and Willow. This stop will discuss the crossing location and how it will be placed in alignment with future trail connections park planners are working on advocating for through new development in the area.

Stop No. 3 – The signalized intersection of Willow Road at Dawson Road has a Leading Pedestrian Interval (LPI) installed. The City of Guelph participated in a study lead by

True North Safety Group, which studied conflict analysis between drivers and pedestrians at LPI locations, including this intersection. This stop will discuss LPIs and the study results.

Stop No. 4 – Edinburgh Road North and Willow Road is a signalized arterial intersection that functions with unique design and roadway features such as: close proximity to a railway line, hydro pole alignment, right turn channelization and high pedestrian volumes. This stop will be an example of a location where although through our Vision Zero lens we strive to implement improvements wherever possible, the unique aspects of the intersection limit what can be done to improve road safety.

Stop No. 5 – This stop is an example of a transit stop that was introduced prior to best practice adoptions of mid-block crossings, which address the safety, demands and design of the area. This stop will discuss the important balance between adhering to Guelph Transit service and stop standards, while aligning with city transportation safety initiatives.

Stop No. 6 – This stop will highlight some of the city's recent to improvements to road safety in the area and across the city, including installation of Community Safety Zones, 40 km/h neighbourhood speed limits, automated speed enforcement and red-light cameras.

Stop No. 7 – At this stop, you'll see Norm Jay Park. In 2021, the city undertook public engagement, and then created a new design that reconstructed and added to an existing basketball hub. This project transformed an overcrowded basketball court and abandoned tennis court into a true community space that serves the unique needs of local residents.

C - Sample presenter briefing note

Topic	Note
Name and role	
Walkshop stop location	
Topic focus/notes	
Data or visuals required	
Key takeaways for participants	
Equipment needed	
Timing	

D - Sample participant reflection prompt

- What is one insight you gained from the Walkshop that could apply to your own city or organization?
- What question did today's discussion raise for you?

E - Sample guided questions (distribute before walk)

- How does the built environment support or hinder safe, equitable movement?
- What role can public space play in community health?
- Where do you see gaps or opportunities for change?

F - Community invitation template

Good afternoon,

The [insert name of City/Organization] and Parachute [if applicable] invite you to attend a Walkshop on [insert title/main theme of Walkshop] on [insert date] from [insert time] to [insert time], beginning and ending at the [insert location].

A walkshop can be described as a mobile workshop on a pre-determined route that allows attendees to visit, learn about, and reflect on local transportation projects and whose topics range from best practices in built environment changes, equity and inclusivity in safe mobility, to benefits of multi-modal options. Full details on the event can be found on the [insert link to event webpage].

A light lunch, along with tea and coffee will be provided after the walk. And participants will discuss the walkshop findings.

Please note, this is a rain-or-shine event, so please dress for the weather!

Space on the Walkshop is limited and therefore attendance is limited to one (1) space per invite received (unless otherwise noted). If you cannot personally attend, we'd love a rep from your organizations/ workplace, if this is possible.

Please confirm attendance by [insert date], so we can plan appropriately for catering. Attendance can be confirmed by reserving a ticket through the event webpage linked above.

Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to [insert name of Walkshop lead and contact information].

We look forward to welcoming you at this event.

Kind regards, [Insert name of Walkshop lead]

G - Risk management checklist

- ☐ Route reviewed for accessibility
- ☐ Safety vests assigned to leads
- ☐ Weather plan prepared
- ☐ Water / sunshade / rest stop scheduled
- ☐ Safe space to stand / hear presenters

H - Feedback survey questions

- What did you find most valuable from today's Walkshop?
- Were there any areas of concern you'd like to see addressed?
- How could future Walkshops be improved?
- Would you like to be involved in follow-up efforts?

