

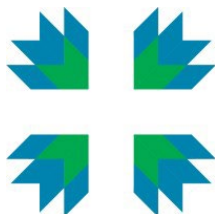


ROCKY BOY WALK AUDIT

Box Elder Road

Abstract

This report summarizes the April 2, 2025, walk audit on Box Elder Road and proposes action steps to move forward, making this route more accessible to all pedestrians. The Rocky Boy Health Center conducted this walk audit as part of activities related to the Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) cooperative agreement.



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Introduction

Purpose

The goal of this walk audit was to assess the pedestrian infrastructure, safety, accessibility, and appeal within the Box Elder to Prairie View communities. The audit specifically examined sidewalks, streets, crossings, street safety, appeal, public transit access, and conditions during winter weather.

This location was chosen because of the high concentration of people in the area. The area has a school, a store, and the post office, making it a popular place for adults and children to walk.

Participants

Eight local participants participated in the walk audit and were noted as being a very diverse crowd. This walk audit coincided with cleanup efforts in Box Elder so many were also part of the cleanup crew. One of eight participants could not finish the walk as the participant was an older adult, and there were no places to stop and take a rest. There is a transit stop on this route, but it does not have any benches.



Pictured above is an image of the walk audit participants with their clipboards getting ready to do the walk audit along Box Elder Road.

Date and Time

The walk audit was conducted on April 2nd, 2025, in the early afternoon. Extreme winter conditions pushed back the date several times. Although chilly temperatures were still present, the walk was noted as “doable”.

Walk Route and Findings

Map

The below map shows the route where the walk audit took place, starting at Box Elder Elementary School in Box Elder to Chief Cornerstone Baptist Church in Prairie View. This route was 1.5 miles and follows along Box Elder Road. Below this route is marked yellow.



Observations

Strengths

- Some participants noted that the sidewalk surface material was consistent and smooth (e.g., concrete or asphalt rather than bricks).
- Most audits found the sidewalks were in good condition, without cracks or raised sections.
- Some winter weather observations were positive, such as the walkway being cleared of snow after a storm, remaining slushy but not icy, being salted or sanded, and being accessible without being sprayed by slush or ice from passing cars.



Pictured above is an image of the walk audit participants walking along Box Elder Road.

- Several participants indicated that the location/street appears to be safe for users of all ages, abilities, races, income levels, etc.
- Some participants felt safe from crime, harassment, or similar threats.
- Street lighting was checked as present in some by some participants.
- Some public transit stops were noted as accessible and having useful amenities.



Weaknesses

- A frequent observation was the lack of sidewalks or having sidewalks on only one side of the street and some indicated a need for sidewalks.
- Obstacles such as overgrown landscaping or trash receptacles were noted as being present.
- Some indicated segments of sidewalks or pedestrian paths were missing.
- The sidewalks were not consistently wide enough (at least 5 feet) for two people to walk side by side or pass one another.
- Not all participants found tactile ground surface indicators for the visually impaired.
- There was a lack of curb ramps for use by mobility aid users, strollers, etc.
- Many noted a lack of traffic lights and/or stop signs at intersections and crossings and traffic lights and/or stop signs were not consistently clearly visible to drivers and pedestrians.
- Several indicated a lack of crosswalks or crosswalks were not well marked and clearly visible to drivers and pedestrians.
- Lack of signage alerting drivers to the presence of pedestrians was noted.
- Other items often noted as lacking include places to sit, shade trees, grass, flowers, and landscaping not well-maintained, lack of awnings or other shelter, missing drinking fountains, lack of public restrooms, and lack of informative signage.





Pictured above is an image of the walk audit participants walking along Box Elder Road.

- Pedestrian crossing signals were often missing or not working, and opportunities to cross based on traffic light changes were lacking. Audible prompts for people with vision impairment were also noted as missing.
- Many participants found the location/street did not appear safe and appealing. Some felt unsafe from moving vehicles.
- Street lighting was noted as "need lighting desperately", "need lights", and poor.
- For 'Public Transit Access', many found pedestrians could not safely access or depart from the transit stop or station, the transit stop was not in a useful location, it lacked protection from weather, suitable seating for waiting passengers, not clean or well-maintained, not well-lighted, and lacked useful amenities. Participants did not feel safe from crime and would not feel safe and comfortable waiting in this location.
- Winter weather challenges included walkaways remaining icy or slushy, and sidewalks not consistently wide enough (full width) when cleared of snow, slush, and ice. Walkways were not always well-lighted in winter.
- Streets were often noted as having visible crosswalks, though sometimes the paint was faded. Pedestrians crossing the street were not always clearly visible to



motorists. Bus or public transit stops were not always accessible, and there wasn't always shelter for waiting riders from bad weather.

- Many noted that benches and other outdoor seating areas were not cleared of snow and ice in winter. Steps, ramps, and entries to public buildings were not always cleared.
- Several notes mentioned loose dogs and one participant brought a broomstick for safety from dogs.

Analysis and Recommendations

Summary

Based on the summary ratings, the walking environment in the audited area of Box Elder Road is consistently rated as “Poor”. Ratings for individual categories are predominantly "Poor" or "Mixed" across the audits. Sidewalks, Streets, and Crossings received ratings of "Poor". or "Mixed". Street Safety and Appeal was rated "Poor" by most. Public Transit Access was rated "Poor" across all summaries. Winter Weather conditions were also rated "Poor", except for one "Acceptable" rating. Overall, the audits reveal significant deficiencies in pedestrian infrastructure, safety, and public transit accessibility.

Analysis

The poor ratings appear to stem from a fundamental lack of infrastructure, particularly sidewalks and safe crosswalks. Even where sidewalks exist, they may be narrow or lack necessary features like curb cuts and tactile indicators. The absence of adequate lighting is a major concern, impacting safety and appeal. Public transit access is severely hindered by the lack of safe paths to stops and the poor condition and lack of amenities at the stops themselves, including vandalism. Winter weather exacerbates these issues, as clearing may be inconsistent and facilities are not maintained. The presence of loose dogs is another safety concern.

Recommendations

Walk Audit Participant Recommendations

The auditors made several suggestions for improvement:

- Widen the walkways.
- Add benches along the road/walkway.
- Add garbage cans.



- Improve lighting, including streetlights and walking path lights.
- Add crosswalks and improve existing ones. Add crosswalk signs from each village.
- Address the issue of loose dogs, perhaps by encouraging owners to chain them up.
- Improve public transit stops (though specific actions weren't detailed beyond noting their poor condition and lack of features).
- Consider community involvement in improvements.

Additional Recommendations

The Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) team provided these additional suggestions which were built upon many of the participant recommendations.

Share the Results

- This report should be distributed to local leaders who can implement or advocate for the suggested changes.
- Sharing the report with local media can help raise awareness of the need for the recommended changes.
- Encourage community members to discuss the results and get involved in ongoing advocacy. As one audit mentioned "Community involvement" and another "Lets rebuild our community together", suggesting potential community-led efforts.

Demonstration Projects

Demonstration projects are a way to introduce traffic-calming measures and/or make a street more people-friendly through temporary installations. Temporary projects would allow community members and local leaders to visualize and experience the potential positive changes directly addressing the "Poor" conditions observed in the Box Elder Road walk audits and help inform decisions about permanent improvements.

Demonstrations projects could include:

- Temporary Sidewalks or Walkway Improvements: The audits frequently noted a lack of sidewalks or the need for wider walkways. A demonstration could involve using temporary materials like paint, cones, or barriers to delineate a sidewalk or widen an existing path to show how it could function and what space it would require.
- Pop-Up Seating Areas: The audits mentioned the need for benches and outdoor seating. Placing temporary benches, chairs, or picnic tables in key locations demonstrate the benefit of having places for people to rest.



- Temporary Trash Receptacles: The need for garbage cans was noted. Temporarily installing trash cans could demonstrate their utility and impact on litter.
- Demonstration Lighting: Audits highlighted the need for better lighting and streetlights. A demonstration could involve setting up temporary, lower-level lighting (pedestrian-scaled lighting) in a dark area to show how improved lighting enhances visibility and safety at night.
- Temporary Crosswalk Markings and Signage: The lack of crosswalks and signage was a repeated observation. Painting temporary crosswalks (perhaps even artistic ones to attract attention) and placing temporary signage to alert drivers to potential pedestrian crossing points could demonstrate the impact on safety and driver awareness.
- Pop-Up Bus Shelter and Seating: Given the observations about public transit access, including a destroyed public transit stop and a general lack of transit stops or shelters, a demonstration could involve setting up a temporary shelter and seating at a key transit location to show how it would protect waiting riders from the elements.
- Community Awareness for Loose Dogs: A non-physical demonstration could involve a temporary community outreach or signage campaign in specific areas to raise awareness about leash laws or responsible pet ownership to improve pedestrian safety.

Next Steps

Proposed Action Plan

Implementing recommendations

- Noted that the next audit might be in a different area. Participants suggested doing the next walk audit on the same road but in a different section near Stone Child College. This is also a popular place to walk and could be a higher safety priority because there is no walking path.

Assigning responsibilities

- Partner with the Chippewa Cree Roads/Public Works Department.

Follow-up

Follow-up on recommendations and how to monitor their effectiveness:



Continued Engagement

- Tracking of who receives the report and follow up if no response is received will be monitored to track effectiveness of report dissemination.
- Tracking of awareness efforts and potential audience reached through these efforts.

Continued Monitoring

- Tracking of demonstration project effectiveness – tracking method will depend on selected projects.
- Future walk audits in the same area after changes/demonstration projects have been implemented to assess effectiveness.
- Future walk audits in the same area during different seasons of the year to showcase additional changes that might be effective.

