



Westhampton Walk Audit Report

July 22, 2022

About this Project

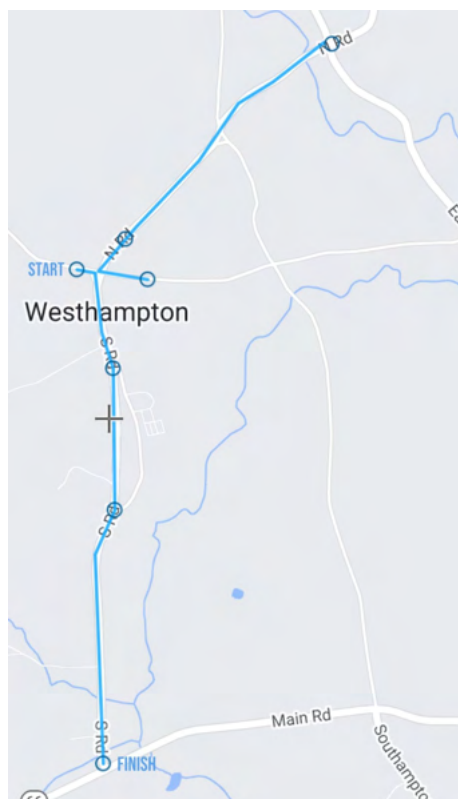
The Hilltown CDC, together with Healthy Hampshire and WalkBoston, are leading a 5-year grant project to promote Age-Friendly Walkability in the Hilltown Village Centers. In partnership with community residents and leaders, the team will be conducting a series of walk audits in partnering Hilltown villages. The goal of these walk audits is to identify infrastructure improvements and policy changes to make village-center walking safe and enjoyable for people of all ages in the Hilltowns. The Town of Westhampton is one of the partnering communities in this grant project.

Background

Westhampton's community members are avid walkers, with many taking the time throughout the day to walk from their homes or the town center, to explore and enjoy the many roads and hills that stretch through the town and its surrounding areas. This widespread love for walking has inspired the community to work to make Westhampton more walkable, with an emphasis on safety for pedestrians who walk along the roads. These safety measures will help make Westhampton a more age-friendly community and improve accessibility to important community spaces such as the Westhampton Public Library, Hampshire Regional High School, and the Westhampton Congregational Church of Christ.

The Town of Westhampton faces challenges to safe walking that are typical of many small rural towns in Massachusetts: fast-moving traffic along North and South Roads as well as MA Route 66, heavy trucking (from the gravel quarries), lack of signage around intersections such as North Rd and Easthampton/King's Highway, narrow roads, and incomplete shoulder line painting.

The largest barriers for residents are in the center of town, concentrated around the library, the church, and the school, at the intersection of N, S and Stage Roads. There are currently no marked crosswalks across any of these roads, and residents cross in several dangerous locations with compromised sight lines and fast-moving traffic. Despite the less than ideal walking conditions on these roads, many residents still make the walk to and from the library, church, and school. Exploring and implementing various pedestrian safety measures, then, becomes critical.



Walk Audit Route

Walk Audit Process

WalkBoston led an in-person walk audit on Thursday, July 7, 2021, from 1 pm to 3:00 pm under clear blue skies and temperatures in the high 70s. Three participants gathered at the library and walked the route. A list of participants for both activities can be found in *Appendix A*. Residents represented various groups including: Friends of the Library, the Music Committee, Westhampton Connects, the Town Planning Board, and the Council on Aging.

Prior to the in-person portion of the walk audit, WalkBoston led participants through a presentation of walkability concepts and the walk audit process via Zoom on Thursday, June 30th, 2021, at 6 pm.

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Key Concerns and Recommendations

1. Increase awareness of pedestrian presence through the use of white shoulder lines on main roads

Many, if not most, residents walk directly on the road when they are out in Westhampton. White striping on the shoulder currently exists on a section of South Rd after the intersection with Stage Rd, but quickly discontinues and is not present at all on North Rd. Repainting and expanding this white striping would establish a section of road on either side for pedestrians to walk. These lines would also make the lanes of the main road more narrow, slowing down cars traveling through the center of Westhampton. Funding programs available through MassDOT such as Complete Streets, Shared Streets and Spaces, and Safe Routes to School are well-suited to support a project to restripe the shoulders on North and South Road.

- Apply for and utilize various MassDOT programs to fund the repainting and expansion of the white shoulder lines on North and South Roads.



Existing shoulder lines on South Rd (left) and lack of shoulder lines on North Rd (right)

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2. Reducing traffic speeds on Westhampton's main roads through the Town Center

Participants also expressed concerns about cars speeding through Westhampton, especially along the main roads. This high speed car travel poses a large risk to walkers in the town, especially around blind curves and hills. Speed feedback signs are a low-cost and effective way to begin to slow down cars traveling through town. Particularly, signs which project positive and negative responses depending on whether the driver is below or above the speed limit have proven to have a psychological impact on drivers, causing them to slow down. The use of mobile speed feedback signs also allows the town to change location based on concentration of drivers/speeding incidents, and also allows for removal if residents have complaints about the light created by the displays. Westhampton currently has one mobile speed feedback sign that they intend to use on multiple roads to slow traffic. The addition of more of these signs would help to calm traffic in multiple areas at once.

- Utilize funding streams through MassDOT and other state agencies to purchase mobile speed feedback signs and place them strategically on the main roads in town.



Speed feedback sign heading Westbound towards the Town Center in the neighboring Town of Chesterfield

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3. Utilize signage to alert drivers to the presence of a town center and pedestrians
- A. Currently, there are no signs on Stage, North, or South roads that warn drivers of the coming intersection. This is dangerous to both drivers and pedestrians as there is a yield rather than stop sign at the top of Stage Rd (needed for buses coming out of the school). Signs warning of the coming intersection and associated pedestrian travel could aid in slowing down cars and driver awareness of both pedestrians and other drivers.
- Determine whether signs should show as a four or three way intersection.
 - Determine whether signs are needed to warn of pedestrian traffic in the area.
 - Determine whether signs are needed on all three roads.



Example of a sign warning of an upcoming intersection and calling for speed reduction (Chesterfield, MA)

- B. Second, Westhampton should consider increasing signage warning vehicle traffic of the intersection of North Rd and Easthampton/Kings Highway. There is currently a stop sign on the EastHampton/Kings Highway roads but none on North Rd. This leads to high speed traffic from those traveling through the intersection on North Rd. Signage alerting drivers of an upcoming dangerous intersection can lead to lower speeds and increased caution in the area, protecting both pedestrians and drivers at the intersection.

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Intersection of North Rd and Easthampton/Kings Highway

- C. Finally, signs calling for drivers to reduce speed due to upcoming pedestrian traffic should be considered at the corner of South Rd and Cemetery Rd. This is an area of low visibility, making pedestrian crossing difficult and increasing the need for traffic calming.



Low visibility intersection of Cemetery Rd and South Rd

4. Evaluate and explore improvements to Stage Rd for pedestrians and students and teachers traveling between the school and library.

Stage road sees many pedestrian walkers, whether out for enjoyment, exercise, or traveling between the two most heavily trafficked points of the downtown: the school and the library. Multiple strategies could be used to mitigate pedestrian safety concerns posed by the road's incline, the wide curbs at its start, and the tendency for speeding from students leaving the high school.

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- Consider establishing a pedestrian lane on one side of Stage Road. This can be done by bringing in the white lines on either side of the road, narrowing the car lane and leaving more space for pedestrians. This narrowing of the road would also reduce driving speeds. Consider the option of painting the pedestrian lane with colored paint to warn drivers of pedestrians. Various types of pedestrian lanes could be used, such as unpainted, painted, and flex post protected.
- Consider extending the curbs on either side of the Stage Rd entrance to sharpen the turn onto the road, slowing down cars who are turning onto Stage Rd from South Rd.
- Explore collaboration opportunities with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission in evaluating various options and assisting with MassDOT conversations.
- Consider partnering with the MA Safe Routes to School Initiative to secure funding for walking improvements near the school.



Example of a walking lane in Goshen, MA

5. Consider installing a crosswalk to connect pedestrians traveling from the Library to the Church and Town Offices and pedestrians walking on South Road

There are currently no crosswalks in Westhampton. Residents expressed multiple areas in which they would like to see crosswalks between town landmarks. Two spaces that were specifically mentioned were the portion of South Rd between the library and the town hall annex, and the end of South Road near the KOA campground. These crosswalks would warn drivers of foot traffic and concentrate pedestrian crossings to specific areas. Implementation of crosswalks would not require an entire sidewalk, but simply short sections of concrete with a curb cut.

- Partner with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to study the areas where crosswalks are wanted and their feasibility given traffic speeds and sightlines

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- Identify an appropriate placement for crosswalks and consider the use of Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) signage to help with visibility and alerting drivers to pedestrian traffic.



Walk audit participants navigate to the Stage Road Intersection

6. Addition of more benches throughout town

Currently, Westhampton has many benches in the center of town, including many around the library, built by a community member for an Eagle Scout project. These benches offer rest points for the town's many walkers, but they are concentrated in one area, the center of town. Westhampton can consider building and installing more benches along common walking routes to offer resting points for those in need. This will particularly benefit elderly walkers, making walking in the town much more age-friendly and accessible. Consider working with residents to install benches in front yards on a volunteer basis.

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Policy Considerations

In addition to the infrastructure improvements listed above, the Town of Westhampton can enact and review town policies to promote walkability. We recommend the following policy considerations.

- Enact and adopt a Complete Street Policy to become eligible for MassDOT state funding to implement walking and biking improvements on locally-owned roads. <https://www.mass.gov/complete-streets-funding-program>
- Consider an application to the Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program for various improvements like pedestrian crossings, reduced curb radii, and updated infrastructure for heavily trafficked walking routes, such as benches and other resting points.
- Consider joining and applying for the Safe Routes to School infrastructure and signage programs to secure funding for projects relating to travel to and from Hampshire Regional High School.

Appendix A. Ped 101 and Walk Audit Participants

Julia	Lennen	Resident / COA / CoChair of MVP Working Group
Susan	Bronstein	Resident / Planning Board / CoChair of MVP Working Group
Sue	O'Rourke	Resident
Joan	Griswold	Hilltown CDC
Zac	Churchill	WalkBoston
Miranda	Briseño	WalkBoston
Stacey	Beuttell	WalkBoston

Appendix B. Resources

WalkBoston Rural Walking Guide:

<https://walkboston.org/sites/default/files/WalkBoston%20Rural%20Walking.%20Tool%20Kit%202013.pdf>

Urban, Rural and Suburban Complete Streets Design Manual:

https://www.northamptonma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/6668/Hampshire-County-Complete-Streets-Design-Manual_1-4-2017-FINAL?bidId=

Speed Management: A Manual for Local Rural Road Owners p. 15-22

https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/local_rural/training/fhwas010413spmgt/speedmanagementguide.pdf

Appendix C: Funding Opportunities for Mobility Improvements

This provides a brief overview of funding opportunities for walking improvement infrastructure projects in Massachusetts.

Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

Complete Streets Funding Program

- About: The MassDOT Complete Streets Funding Program provides technical assistance and construction funding to eligible municipalities. Eligible municipalities must pass a Complete Streets Policy and develop a Prioritization Plan.
- Amount: Up to \$400,000 in construction funding to implement Complete Streets elements in municipal projects and up to \$50,000 in technical assistance funding in order to develop a Prioritization Plan.
- Limitations: only locally owned roads can be included in the Prioritization Plan. This is a 3 step process that requires adoption of a town-wide policy and creation of a detailed prioritization plan, though funds for consultant support are available.
- Link: <https://www.mass.gov/complete-streets-funding-program>

Safe Routes to School: Infrastructure Funding Program

- About: This component of the SRTS Program facilitates bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements to benefit students who walk, bicycle, or use a wheeled mobility device to get to school. Infrastructure projects seek to improve safety, access, and mobility for students in kindergarten through eighth grade, while also encouraging more students to walk and bicycle to school. The SRTS Program facilitates such improvements by providing funding for infrastructure projects. Applications are generally open in the fall (October) of each year and close in the winter (December).
- Amount: up to \$1,500,000
- Limitations: To be eligible for SRTS Program's infrastructure funding, schools must build a partnership with the SRTS Program's non-infrastructure program that involves education, encouragement, enforcement, and evaluation activities. Applicants must be a partner for at least six months prior to applying.
- Link: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/infrastructure-application-guidance-document/download>

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Safe Routes to School: Signs and Lines Grant Program

- **About:** The SRTS Signs and Lines Program will provide design services and construction funding to a selected municipality for a low-cost infrastructure project around a public elementary or middle school. The goal of these projects is to eliminate small barriers that students encounter when walking, bicycling, or using a wheeled mobility device to get to school. Examples of a Signs and Lines Project could include the purchase and installation of new signage or pavement markings. Applications generally open in August and close in September of each year.
- **Amount:** Up to \$6,000
- **Limitations:** Must be a SRTS partner school. This is a reimbursement-based funding program; MassDOT reimburses the municipality for eligible spending after the project is complete.
- **Link:**
<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/safe-routes-to-school-engineering#srts-infrastucture-project-funding-program->

MassDOT Shared Streets & Spaces Program Funding

- **About:** The Shared Streets and Spaces Program is administered by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT). The program provides funding to municipalities and public transit authorities to quickly implement improvements to plazas, sidewalks, curbs, streets, bus stops, parking areas, and other public spaces in support of public health, safe mobility, and strengthened commerce. Building on the success of the program first launched as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic during the summer of 2020, the program continues to be an integral funding source for communities as they address ongoing challenges and seek to improve their transportation infrastructure. While multiple project types are eligible for Shared Streets and Spaces funding, this funding round will be placing particular emphasis on a specific type of roadway project: the management of vehicular speeds through design interventions. Applications are being accepted until March 1, 2022.
- **Amount:** Depending on project category funding up to \$500,000 is available
- **Limitations:** Municipalities and transit authorities may submit only two applications per funding round and may be awarded only one grant; Projects must be implemented by June 30, 2023.
- **Link:** <https://www.mass.gov/shared-streets-and-spaces-grant-program>

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State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)

- About: The State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is a list of projects prepared yearly by The Office of Transportation Planning. This is a 5-year rolling capital plan. The list includes projects such as: sidewalks, bicycle paths, bridges, roadways, transit investments. Communities can apply for funding through the STIP through their region's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).
- Limitations: Regional MPO's may have different grant programs for communities to receive funding through the STIP, contact the MPO for your region to learn more.
- Partners: Regional Planning Agencies, MassDOT District Office
- Link: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/state-transportation-improvement-program-stip>

Capital Investment Plan (CIP)

- About: State and federal funding program to pay for long-term improvements to the transportation system. The CIP is usually a five-year plan that is updated annually. The 2022 CIP focuses on maintaining the safety and reliability of our transportation network and investments that are currently underway or are planned to start in 2022.
- Limitations: This program is not a direct grant municipalities can apply for, rather municipalities can work with their MassDOT representatives to lobby and advocate for projects to receive funding through the CIP.
- Partners: Regional Planning Agencies, MassDOT District Office
- Link: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/capital-investment-plan-cip>

Mass Gaming Commission

Community Mitigation Fund Transportation Planning and Transportation Construction Grants

- About: The Expanded Gaming Act created the Community Mitigation Fund to help entities offset impact costs related to the construction and operation of a gaming establishment. The Community Mitigation Fund may be used to compensate for impact costs related to both Category 1 full casino facilities (MGM Springfield and Encore Boston Harbor) and the state's Category 2 slots-only facility (Plainridge Park Casino). The Community Mitigation Fund supports communities and governmental entities in offsetting impact costs related to the construction and operation of gaming facilities.

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- Amount: Up to \$200,000 for Transportation Planning and up to \$1,500,000 for Transportation Construction
- Limitations: Must be an eligible municipality or government entity affected by the construction or operation of gaming facilities and demonstrate how a gaming facility has impacted the community and created the need for the project or planning effort.
- Link: <https://massgaming.com/about/community-mitigation-fund/>

Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)

MassTrails Grants

- About: MassTrails provides matching grants to communities, public entities and non-profit organizations to design, create, and maintain the diverse network of trails, trail systems, and trails experiences used and enjoyed by Massachusetts residents and visitors. Applications are accepted annually for a variety of well-planned trail projects benefiting communities across the state. Applications open in November of each year.
- Amount: Grant amounts are dependent on the project and its needs, but generally range from \$5,000 to \$100,000 with grants of up to \$300,000 awarded to projects demonstrating critical network connections of regional significance.
- Limitations: Eligible grant activities include project development, design, engineering, permitting, construction, and maintenance of recreational trails, shared use pathways, and the amenities that support trails. MassTrails grants are REIMBURSABLE, meaning grantees must first pay for expenditures themselves and then submit for reimbursement using the required documentation. MassTrails grants are MATCHING grants and require that proponents provide a minimum of 20% of the total project cost. Projects with higher match commitments will be given greater consideration.
- Link: <https://www.mass.gov/guides/masstrails-grants#-masstrails-grant-program-over-view->

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Executive Office of Housing and Community Development Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI)

- About: DHCD's Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI) offers a range of services and assistance to communities seeking help on how to revitalize their downtowns. Communities can express interest and subsequently apply for funding through the Community for One Stop for Growth portal. Expression of interest is open through March 18, 2022 and Full Applications close on June 3, 2022.
- Amount: Planning and design funding, technical assistance.
- Limitations: This is a technical assistance program, direct capital funding is not provided.
- Link: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/massachusetts-downtown-initiative-mdi>

Other State Managed Local Aid Programs

Chapter 90

- About: Reimburses cities and towns for expenditures on road-related construction projects and pedestrian facilities. Localities have the flexibility to use Chapter 90 funds for the construction and maintenance of sidewalks, curb ramps, shared use paths, street lighting, right-of-way acquisition, landscaping, and design work. Chapter 90 funds may only be used for construction on locally owned, or accepted, roadways.
- Amount: Wide variability
- Limitations: This is a reimbursement program
- Link: <https://www.mass.gov/chapter-90-program>

Community Compact

- About: The Community Compact is a voluntary, mutual agreement entered into between the Baker-Polito Administration and individual cities and towns of the Commonwealth. In a Community Compact, a community will agree to implement at least one best practice that they select from across a variety of areas. The community's chosen best practice(s) will be reviewed between the Commonwealth and the municipality to ensure that the best practice(s) chosen are unique to the municipality and reflect needed areas of improvement.
- Amount: Wide variability
- Limitations: Must select from a list of Best Practices. Age-Friendly Communities is a listed strategy, and working on walking is an eligible project goal.

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- Link: <https://www.mass.gov/best-practices-program>

Community Preservation Act Funding

- About: The Community Preservation Act (CPA) is a smart growth tool that helps communities preserve open space and historic sites, create affordable housing, and develop outdoor recreational facilities. Communities have used these funds to develop better walking conditions near senior housing, or to make recreational spaces more age-inclusive.
- Amount: Wide variability; Depending on community's Community Preservation Committee
- Limitations: Must be able to tie walking improvement projects to the goals of the CPA.
- Link: <https://www.communitypreservation.org/about> ; [CPA State Map](#)

MassDevelopment Commonwealth Places

- About: MassDevelopment's "Commonwealth Places" is a competitive opportunity to advance locally driven placemaking in downtown and neighborhood commercial districts in eligible communities throughout Massachusetts. Placemaking is a collaborative process through which people in communities work together to improve public spaces and maximize their shared value. The process facilitates creative patterns of use, and leverages the local physical, cultural, and social assets that define a place and support its ongoing evolution. Communities can express interest and subsequently apply for funding through the Community for One Stop for Growth portal. Expression of interest is open through March 18, 2022 and Full Applications close on June 3, 2022.
- Amount: \$2,500-\$50,000, depending on grant category
- Limitations: Local match requirements for some grant categories. Rural projects must show direct connection to economic development.
- Link: <https://www.massdevelopment.com/what-we-offer/real-estate-services/commonwealth-places/>

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Private Funding Opportunities

AARP Community Challenge Grant

- About: The AARP Community Challenge grant program is part of the nationwide AARP Livable Communities initiative that helps communities become great places to live for residents of all ages. The program is intended to help communities make immediate improvements and jump-start long-term progress in support of residents of all ages. 2022 Program deadline is March 22, 2022 at 5 pm EST.
- Amount: Average amount is \$11,500 and 76 percent of grants have been under \$15,000. The largest grant ever awarded under the AARP Community Challenge was \$50,000.
- Limitations: Visit grant website to for more information on eligible project types
- Link: <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/community-challenge/>

Local Funding Strategies

Municipal Budgeting Strategies

- Include new sidewalk construction in municipal budget (can come from Chapter 90 funding)
- Include sidewalk repair and replacement in municipal budget (can come from Chapter 90 funding)
- Include snow and ice removal in municipal budget
- Include crosswalk re-striping in municipal budget
- Local sponsorship programs to purchase benches through municipality or chamber of commerce
- For participating communities, utilizing TNC fees from Uber & Lyft to fund mobility improvements
- Funds received from fines for handicap parking violations can be spent on accessibility improvements (eg curb ramps, sidewalk repair, etc.): Learn more: [General Law - Part I, Title VII, Chapter 40, Section 22G](#)
- Leveraging and applying for Regional Transit Authority discretionary funds - which can be used for purchasing benches, shelters, and making improvements around bus stops (crosswalks, sidewalks, curb ramps)

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