

Charlestown Walkable Community Workshop

October 12, 2022



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For more information on Walkable Community Workshops, visit:
<http://www.wilmapco.org/walkable/>

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Introduction

Who is WILMAPCO?

The Wilmington Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Cecil County, Maryland and New Castle County, Delaware. We are charged with planning and coordinating transportation investments for the Wilmington region.

The Wilmington region is home to more than 660,000 residents, most of whom (84%) live in New Castle County. Wilmington, a financial hub supporting a population just over 70,000, serves as the principal city. Urbanized development stretches outside of Wilmington along the I-95 corridor, from the Town of Elkton to the Pennsylvania border. Natural and rural landscapes, sprawling suburbs, and small towns blanket the rest of the region.



WILMAPCO's mission is to create the best transportation plan for the region, one that meets all the requirements mandated by the Federal Clean Air Act and its Amendments (CAAA) and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA).

About the Workshop Series

WILMAPCO's *2050 Regional Transportation Plan* calls for improving quality of life, efficiently transporting people, and supporting sustainable economic development and goods movement. Making our communities more walkable achieves all of these goals.

WILMAPCO was selected for the Walkable Community Workshops (WCW) program – part of the *National Center for Bicycling & Walking* – to work directly with communities. Walkability considers how well an area facilitates safe foot traffic. The WCW program seeks to ensure that people of all ages and abilities can walk, as well as bike, easily, safely, and regularly.



Why Walkable Communities are Important

We are all pedestrians. Whether we think so or not, we are all pedestrians. We may walk to work, walk for exercise, walk to do errands, or simply walk from the car to the store. We all need safe facilities for walking.

Walking is crucial to give those who don't drive a travel choice. Many in our region are too young to drive, have a permanent or temporary disability which prevents them from driving, have no access to a car, or choose not to drive. In Charlestown, 28% of the population is under age 18, 17% are 65 or older, and 14% of the population has a disability (2020 American Community Survey). Many people in these population groups need to walk in order to lead active and independent lives.

Walkable communities are healthier communities. North Americans' waistlines are getting wider, triggering a rise in related illnesses including heart disease and diabetes. In Delaware, 34% of adults are obese; 75% of adolescents do not engage in the recommended amount of physical activity for any given week; only 49% of adults get the recommended amount of physical activity; and 27% of adults engage in no leisure-time physical activity at all (according to the Centers for Disease Control, 2019). Pedestrian-friendly communities make it easier for people to integrate physical activity into their daily lives.

Everyone benefits from walkable communities. Even if you don't enjoy walking, you still benefit from living in a walkable community. More people walking and bicycling reduces overall levels of vehicular congestion, which benefits drivers too. Less driving also reduces air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. There are also economic benefits with walkable communities, including higher property values and greater sales in commercial areas.



Walkable Community Workshops

A WCW is typically a three-hour session that includes an educational presentation on what makes a community walkable, a walking audit of a specific area, and a mapping session, where participants engage in brainstorming solutions. Focusing on a particular area's walkability, participants study sidewalks, pathways, inviting streetscape, crosswalks, destinations, etc. The process gives everyone the tools for making a community walkable and provides realistic next steps that can be used to achieve their goals.

There are **three main parts of a workshop:**



Part 1 – The presentation reviews topics such as sidewalk design, crosswalks, traffic calming, community design, and other tools that communities need to create a walkable environment.



Part 2 – The walking audit gives participants a chance to survey the area, identify issues, and think about how to apply what they learned from the presentation. Getting out and walking is key to illustrating the challenges that people face when pedestrian facilities are not available.



Part 3 – In the mapping exercise, people share ideas for improving walkability. Participants end the session by committing to specific next steps to continue the process started at the workshop.

Background

Charlestown is situated along the North East River in Cecil County, Maryland and is located on the Route 40 corridor and Northeast Corridor railroad between Perryville and North East. As of the 2020 Census, it is home to 1,496 people. The town offers many waterfront amenities, including a public boat ramp, marina, pier, waterfront parks, beaches, and a campground. The cultural center of town is at the intersection of Market and Bladen Streets, which features the town hall, post office, fire department, and a church. The town is also home to historic buildings, restaurants, and the Charlestown Athletic Complex.

The Charlestown Walkable Community Workshop was held on October 12, 2022 at the Charlestown Fire Company. There were about 14 participants in addition to WILMAPCO staff. During the walking audit, the group first took a closer look at the intersection of Market and Bladen Streets, then walked a counter-clockwise loop along Market Street, Cecil Street, Baltimore Street, Foot Log Park, across the pedestrian bridge over Peddler's Run, and back on Bladen Street. After returning to the firehouse, the group discussed ideas to improve walkability throughout Charlestown and shared their ideas on large table maps.



Pedestrian bridge over Peddler's Run



The walking audit route

Walkability Ideas

During the mapping exercise, the group discussed challenges to walking around Charlestown and shared ideas to improve walkability on table maps. The group suggested intersection improvements, sidewalk additions, pedestrian-scale lighting, trail connections, and other ideas to improve walking in Charlestown. The map below summarizes the mappable ideas that were shared during the workshop, and the following pages provide more detail on all feedback that was received.



Intersection Improvements

During the walking audit, the group passed two intersections that are designed with a wide, sweeping turning radius to keep motorized traffic moving: Market and Cecil Streets, and Cecil and Baltimore Streets. These intersections do not require drivers to stop or slow down, except to yield to pedestrians using the crosswalk at Cecil and Baltimore. The Market and Cecil intersection has a guardrail between the roadway and the single sidewalk on the interior side of the curve, which may protect pedestrians in the case of a crash but encourages higher driving speeds. The guardrail discourages crossing the intersection, but people may do so anyway to access the Charlestown Athletic Complex, which has no formal pedestrian connection from the intersection. Despite being a park entrance, there is nothing to indicate to drivers that people may cross the street.

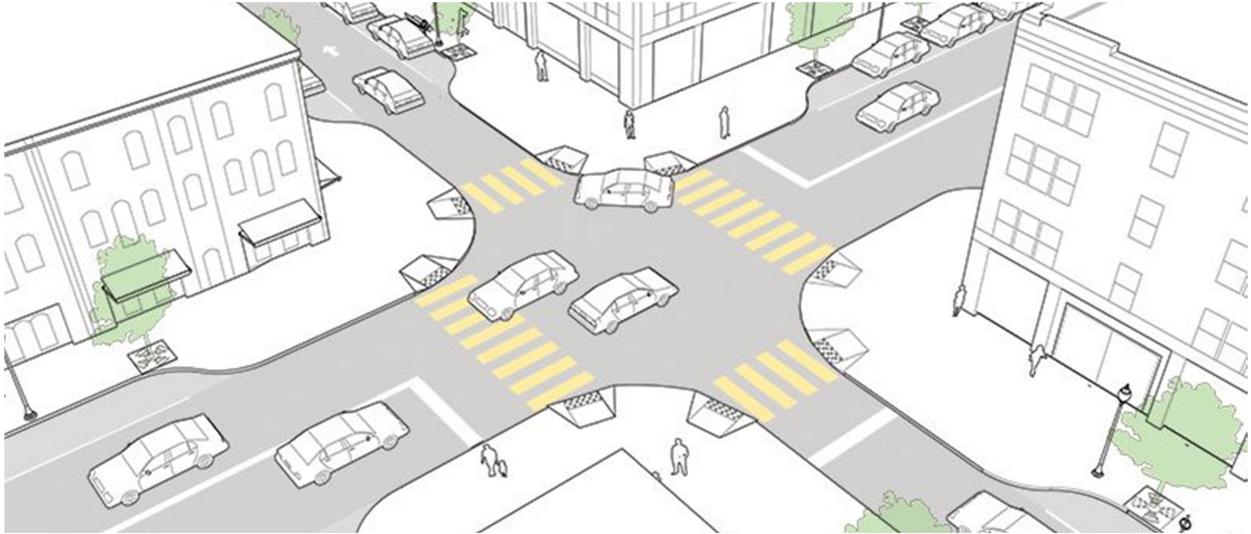


Market and Cecil Streets



Cecil and Baltimore Streets

The group suggested reconfiguring both intersections so that the streets meet at a right angle. At Market and Cecil, the group suggested adding stop signs in both directions and crosswalks, removing the guardrail, and adding a direct connection to the paths in the park. At Cecil and Baltimore, the group suggested crosswalks with rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFBs) instead of stop signs. RRFBs would be activated by people waiting to cross and turn on flashing lights to warn drivers to stop. This would be especially beneficial for children walking to Charlestown Elementary School.



While this graphic shows a more urban area, this intersection design is appropriate for both intersections in Charlestown (Source: NACTO)



A crosswalk with rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFBs) (Source: City of Lincoln, Nebraska)

The intersection of Market and Bladen Streets has a similar sweep to the two aforementioned intersections. Despite being located at the cultural center of town, the intersection lacks crosswalks and even has a slip lane for drivers heading west on Market and turning north on Bladen. This configuration encourages higher driving speeds, discourages crossing on foot, and can be confusing for drivers crossing directly south on Bladen to the parking lot shared by Town Hall and the firehouse.



Market and Bladen Streets, looking south

The group suggested reconfiguring this intersection at a right angle with a mini-roundabout in the center and crosswalks on all four legs. The mini-roundabout would calm traffic, requiring drivers to slow down and drive counter-clockwise around the center island to make turns. The center island could be an opportunity for beautification or placemaking, by placing plants, a fountain, or a sign welcoming visitors to Charlestown in the center.



A mini-roundabout (Source: Alta Planning)

Also at the intersection of Market and Bladen Streets, the group noted that there was an abundance of signs that may be confusing to pedestrians and drivers. Some of these signs could be consolidated onto one pole with a wayfinding sign, to help visitors find their way around Charlestown.



Signs at Market and Bladen Streets



Wayfinding sign (Source: Town of Falmouth, Maine)

At the intersection of Bladen and Frederick Streets, participants recommended placing “yield to pedestrians” signs in the center of crosswalks. In that location, they are more visible to drivers and help calm traffic by serving as a physical obstacle. These may be beneficial in many locations in town, especially busier crossings.

Participants also suggested that all crosswalks should be high-visibility, “piano key” style crosswalks, which are much more effective than two parallel lines to alert drivers where people may cross.



In-street pedestrian crossing sign in a “piano key” style crosswalk (Source: Visi-Flash Rentals)

Sidewalk Improvements

The group suggested widening the sidewalks along Market Street (from Bladen to Cecil Street) and on Bladen Street (from Market to Frederick Street) to at least six feet wide. As observed during the walking audit, these sidewalks are not wide enough for two people to walk side-by-side comfortably. They also suggested widening and filling sidewalk gaps on Cecil Street, Baltimore Street, and Old Philadelphia Road.

Most streets in Charlestown's core lack sidewalks, but they are narrow, limiting traffic speeds and volumes and making it comfortable to walk alongside traffic.

However, the group suggested adding sidewalks on Market Street, Frederick Street, Bladen Street, and Water Street, as well as Louisa Lane from Water Street to the parking lot. They also suggested pedestrian-scale lighting along these streets, which is more effective at lighting up sidewalks than overhead street lights.



A narrow sidewalk on just one side of Cecil Street



A narrow sidewalk on Bladen Street



A sufficiently wide sidewalk with pedestrian-scale lighting (Source: Alta Planning)



Water Street



Market and Calvert Streets

If sidewalks are not feasible or too cost prohibitive on these downtown streets, advisory shoulders could be an effective alternative. Advisory shoulders are designed with a narrow center area for motorists and marked shoulders for walking and biking. With advisory shoulders, motorists only enter the shoulder when no pedestrians or bicyclists are present to allow oncoming traffic to pass. Widely used in Europe, this design is still new and would require the Town of Charlestown (for town streets) or MDOT (for state routes) to submit a Request to Experiment to the Federal Highway Administration. These shoulders would function as trails and promote walking and biking in Charlestown.



Advisory shoulders (Source: Rural Design Guide)

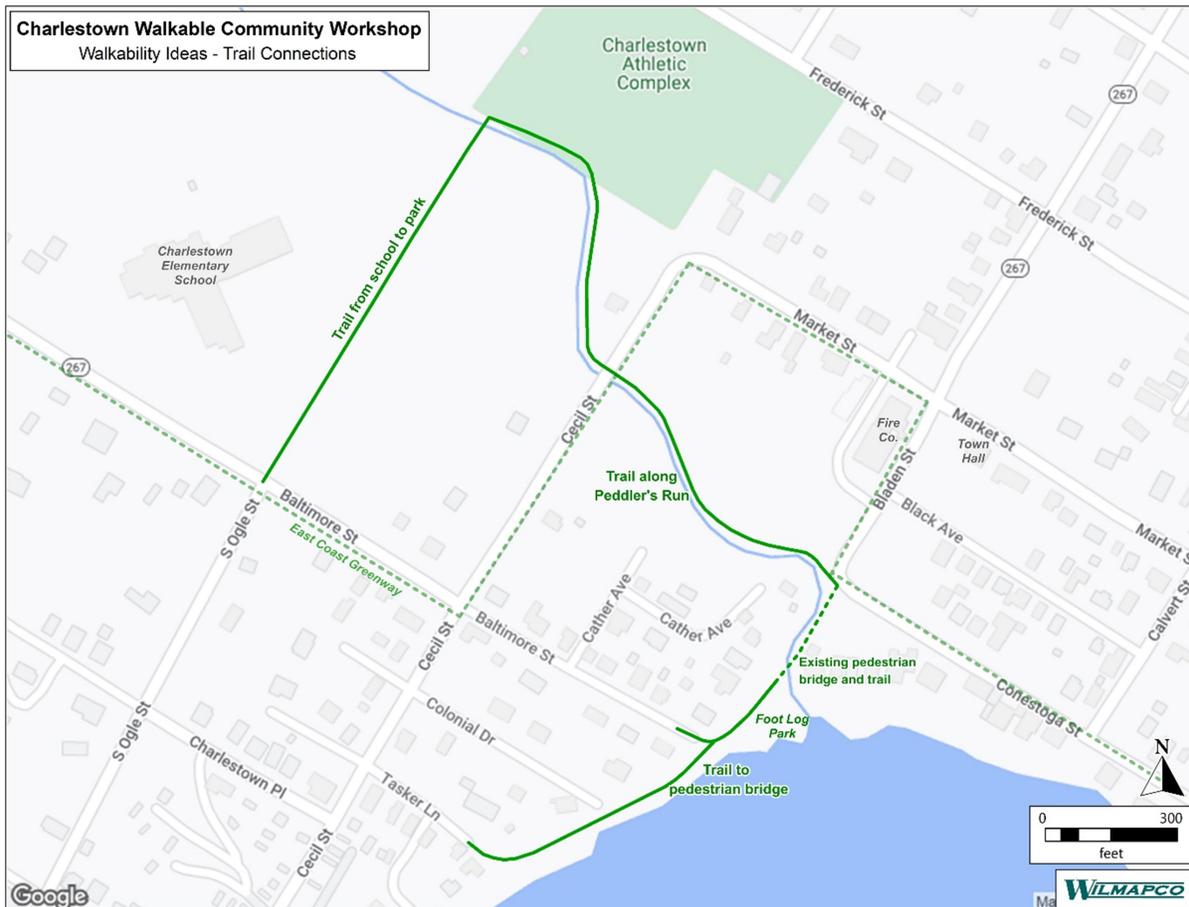
Resources on advisory shoulders:

- FHWA Experimentation Process - <https://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/condexper.htm>
- Advisory Bike Lanes in North America: Lessons Learned - <https://altago.com/resources/advisory-bike-lanes-north-america/>
- Dashed Bicycle Lanes - https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/guidance/mutcd/dashed_bike_lanes.cfm

Trail Connections

Building trail connections is a great way to reduce walking distances between destinations, improve safety for walking and biking, and enhance recreational opportunities and public health. The group suggested three trail connections, each of which roughly follows the existing street grid on public right-of-way.

A trail connecting Charlestown Elementary School to the Athletic Complex could follow the Ogle Street right-of-way and connect directly to the school via the existing sidewalk on Baltimore Street. This could connect to a trail along Peddler’s Run and provide a shortcut between Foot Log Park and the Athletic Complex. Foot Log Park itself lacks a trail, except for the existing pedestrian bridge over Peddler’s Run. During the walking audit, the group walked through the grass near the beach, and this route could be formalized into a trail. The line between private properties and Foot Log Park is unclear, so a trail would clarify that users are walking through a public park.



Other Feedback

Participants expressed additional ideas and concerns during the workshop, including:

- Ensure that all curb ramps are ADA compliant.
- Install bike racks in front of Town Hall, the public boat ramp, and Avalon Park.
- Widen the paths in Charlestown Athletic Complex so they can accommodate golf carts, with consideration of being able to share the paths safely with people walking and biking.
- The public boat ramp is located at the end of Market Street on Water Street. However, public parking for the boat ramp is located on Louisa Lane, about 4 blocks away. As a result, boat ramp users unload their boat, drive to the parking lot, and then walk back to the boat ramp. Participants suggested creating a new boat ramp or municipal dock in Avalon Park, close to the parking lot. This could reduce vehicular traffic on Water Street, which would make walking on Water Street more comfortable.
- At the intersection of Baltimore and Cecil Streets, a tree blocks visibility of pedestrians, especially small children, waiting to cross Cecil Street towards Charlestown Elementary School. If this intersection is redesigned as described on page 10, this tree may have to be removed as part of construction, or it could be preserved with a new design that improves sightlines.
- Improve safety on Town roads to encourage golf cart use alongside other motor vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles.
- Reduce speeding and running stop signs on Town roads.



A tree blocks visibility of pedestrians waiting to cross Cecil Street at Baltimore Street.

Pedestrian and Bicycle-Friendly Development

Pedestrian and Bicycle-Friendly Development is a form of efficient land use, i.e., Complete Communities or Smart Growth. It refers to policies that result in development that encourages trips by walking, biking, and transit.

This type of land use can help provide easier access within places, improve transportation choices, create more livable communities, and reduce public service costs. These Land Use patterns go by many different names — Complete Communities, Traditional Neighborhood Development, Transit Oriented Development, Walkable Communities, etc. — but all use a similar toolbox of policies. Strategies include:

- Mix land uses.
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.
- Build connected, walkable (and bike-friendly) neighborhoods.
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.
- Support the rural landscape by preserving open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas by promoting clustered and compact building design.
- Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective.
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.



Davidson's Rural Area Plan (Source: www.cnu.org)

Next Steps

Charlestown can pursue funding for the recommended improvements through the Maryland and Federal funding programs detailed in this section. Federal programs include the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS), and the Recreational Trails Program. State funds include the Sidewalk Reconstruction for Pedestrian Access Program, New Sidewalk Construction for Pedestrian Access Program, Bicycle Retrofit Program, and Kim Lamphier Bikeways Network Program.

Pedestrian and bicycle funding programs are geared toward smaller projects, generally costing less than one million dollars. Funding for more extensive projects may be sought through the Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP), Maryland's six-year capital budget for transportation projects. Annually, each jurisdiction should submit a letter of CTP transportation priorities to MDOT by April 1st (<https://www.mdot.maryland.gov/tso/pages/Index.aspx?PagelId=84>).

Community members are encouraged to think about which of the recommendations are most important and to work with Cecil County, MDOT SHA, WILMAPCO, and local elected officials to begin addressing some of the issues discussed during the workshop.

Funding and Implementation Resources

FUNDING PROGRAMS AND CONTACTS

Town of Charlestown

Town of Charlestown is a good starting point for most recommendations from the Walkable Community Workshop. The Town Administrator can be contacted at (410) 287-6173.

Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and State Highway Administration (SHA)

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) / Safe Routes to Schools

MDOT SHA administers the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). TAP offer funding opportunities to help expand transportation choices and enhance the transportation experience, formerly known as the Transportation Enhancements (TE) Program. TAP Activities must relate to surface transportation. Eligible projects most related to Walkable Communities include:

- Construction, planning, and design of on-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other nonmotorized forms of transportation

- Construction, planning, and design of infrastructure-related projects and systems that will provide safe routes for non-drivers, including children, older adults, and individuals with disabilities to access daily needs
- WILMAPCO, in coordination with MDOT SHA, administers the Safe Routes to School program in this region. This program can provide limited funding for walkability improvements near schools, including working with staff, faculty, and students to determine the best improvements to meet each school's needs (<http://www.wilmapco.org/saferoutes/>).

In Maryland, TAP projects require a twenty percent funding match and the maximum funding amount is \$1 million.

Maryland Transportation Alternatives Program Coordinator

Christy Bernal, TAP Manager

MDOT State Highway Administration, 707 N Calvert St MS C-502, Baltimore, MD 21201

Tel: 410-545-5659

Email: cbernal@mdot.maryland.gov

<https://roads.maryland.gov/mdotsha/pages/Index.aspx?PagelId=144>

Recreational Trails Program

A federally-funded program supporting the development, rehabilitation and maintenance of trails and related facilities. In Maryland, a 20 percent match as cash or in-kind services is required. Funding typically does not exceed \$80,000 for new construction. Program is administered by SHA.

Maryland Recreational Trails Coordinator

Cheryl Ladota

MDOT State Highway Administration, 707 N Calvert St MS C-502, Baltimore, MD 21201

Tel: 410-545-8552

Email: CLadota@mdot.maryland.gov

<https://www.roads.maryland.gov/mdotsha/pages/Index.aspx?PagelId=98>

Sidewalk Reconstruction for Pedestrian Access (Fund 33)

Program funds ADA upgrades to existing pedestrian facilities along state roads. No local match is required. Program is administered by SHA.

Contact: Sean Campion, MDOT SHA Innovative Contracting, 410-545-8863,

scampion@mdot.maryland.gov

<https://www.roads.maryland.gov/mdotsha/pages/Index.aspx?PagelId=707>

New Sidewalk Construction for Pedestrian Access (Fund 79)

Program funds the construction of new sidewalk along state roads. Program is administered by SHA.

Contact: Sean Campion, MDOT SHA Innovative Contracting, 410-545-8863,
scampion@mdot.maryland.gov
<https://www.roads.maryland.gov/mdotsha/pages/Index.aspx?PageId=707>

Bicycle Retrofit (Fund 88)

Program funds provision of bicycle facilities along state roads to promote connectivity or address safety concerns. Eligible projects include marked bicycle lanes, shared use lanes, or off-road facilities. Program is administered by SHA.

Contact: Sean Campion, MDOT SHA Innovative Contracting, 410-545-8863,
scampion@mdot.maryland.gov
<https://www.roads.maryland.gov/mdotsha/pages/Index.aspx?PageId=707>

Kim Lamphier Bikeways Network Program

Program funds projects that provide bicycle access and fill missing links in the bicycle route network, focusing on connecting shared-use paths and roads and enhancing last-mile connections to destinations. Grantees must provide a 20 percent matching fund contribution in the form of cash, an in-kind, or a 3rd party contribution. Program is administered by MDOT.

Contact: Virginia Burke, MDOT Office of Planning and Capital Programming, 410-865-1304, VBurke@mdot.state.md.us,
<https://www.mdot.maryland.gov/tso/pages/Index.aspx?PageId=28>

Pop-Up Demonstration Projects and Quick Build Pilot Projects

Temporary projects to test potential designs are effective at soliciting community feedback and avoiding costly design mistakes. Projects may last anywhere from less than an hour to many months. Some suggested approaches include:

- Local governments should establish a process for collaboration between agency staff and the public, which encourages community pop-up requests and establishes parameters for acceptable designs, permitting, and organizational partners.
- Communities should proactively pursue demonstration projects and direct them to locations with the greatest needs. Equitable distribution of projects should engage a variety of communities and financially support these diverse projects to level the playing field.
- Engaging the community will bring fun, energy, and creativity to the planning process. Residents, local organizations, and businesses are also effective partners at getting the word out about the demonstration.
- Evaluate the tested design, collecting information like speeds and volumes of bicycles, pedestrians, and vehicles. Also, seek out community feedback.
- Use information gained to adjust the project's design and pursue more permanent implementation.

Useful resources on pop-up and pilot projects:

- Tactical Urbanist's Guide - <http://tacticalurbanismguide.com/>
- Better Block - <https://www.betterblock.org/>
- Pop-Up Safe Routes to School Projects - https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/pdf/where_the_duct_tape_meets_the_road.pdf
- Burlington, VT Quick-Build Program - <https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/DPW/Quick-Build>
- Alta and CalBike Quick-Build Guide - <https://altago.com/wp-content/uploads/Quick-Build-Guide-White-Paper-2020-1.pdf>



Curb extension demonstration project (Source: Seattle Department of Transportation)

Other Useful Links

- Small Town and Rural Multimodal Networks - www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/publications/small_towns
- Designing for All Ages & Abilities - nacto.org/publication/urban-bikeway-design-guide/designing-ages-abilities-new
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center - www.pedbikeinfo.org
- League of American Bicyclists - www.bikeleague.org
- National Center for Bicycling and Walking - www.bikewalk.org
- Federal Highway Administration - www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/index.cfm
- Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) - mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov
- NACTO Urban Street Design Guide - nacto.org/usdg
- WILMAPCO - www.wilmapco.org/walkable