

Report: Bus Connectivity Project Evaluation

For Living Streets Scotland



HILLIAM RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

& Ansons Consulting



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Executive Summary

Hilliam Research and Analysis and Ansons Consulting were commissioned by Living Streets to undertake an evaluation of their Bus Connectivity Audit project. The project was commissioned by the Scottish Government and sought to identify potential environmental changes in relation to streets and public places that – if implemented – will encourage an increase in bus patronage. In particular, the audit project focused on identifying environmental changes that will improve the accessibility of and to selected bus stops for both pedestrians and cyclists.

In delivering this project, Living Streets developed a methodology for a bus stop walkability audit and applied this to a number of locations. Areas were selected based on direct contact with Local Authority transport officers who suggested locations where the audit process may yield useful insights. The aim was to deliver an audit toolkit, an approach to public consultation and a set of recommendations for action (in the form of a report) to be developed for each area and issued to the relevant Local Authority officer responsible for public transport. The final reports also identified potential sources of funding to enable the recommendations to be implemented.

This evaluation process was commissioned to focus on three key questions:

- Are partners/stakeholders likely to adopt or replicate the process?
- What do local residents feel about the process and their involvement?
- Did the audit process conform with good practice?

This was achieved through direct consultation (via interviews) with bus operators and local authority transport officers; via focus groups with local residents in three of the target areas, and; through a desk review of best practice.

The evaluation identified that the audit is viewed as a positive contribution by stakeholders and the public consulted. Transport professionals described the audit as something that has value and can inform planning and improvement. The inclusive and locally focused approach was supported by all involved in the evaluation and resulted in outputs that were felt to be relevant and meaningful to the public. The involvement of Living Streets in conducting audits and authoring the reports was also felt to be a positive as the findings were seen to be provided by a respected and independent source.

However, it is clear that the audit and its areas of focus can only highlight some of the elements that contribute towards increased bus patronage and that for the public, bus operators and local authority officers who may act on this type of information, these elements may be relatively low priority issues compared to those felt to be the main drivers of bus patronage (i.e. service provision, frequency, cost reliability etc). In addition, the audits cover issues that may not be the direct responsibility of public transport stakeholders and, as a result, identifying ownership for actions and the budgets for such improvements may be challenging. That said, the audits are a valuable tool in that they highlight factors that are not always considered by key stakeholders involved in increasing bus patronage. As such the audits may have particular value in some instances (e.g. in an area where high quality and low-cost bus provision is in place, but further increases in patronage are sought, or in instances where there is a focus on physical accessibility to bus transport). As such they are an effective and important part of a holistic approach to improving access to bus transport.

The Bus Connectivity Project Audit is specifically designed to assess and improve the public realm that people use when accessing a bus stop and/ or a transport interchange. Such a focus reflects how the public realm has some influence over whether people feel willing, able and comfortable walking to a bus stop and then using bus services. A key strength of this audit process is its emphasis

on listening to and learning from the subjective experiences and perspectives of local people to understand community need and then identify appropriate solutions. This evaluation identifies a number of areas for improvement or consideration in rolling out or developing the audit tool.

1. Background and Introduction

Streets and public spaces are where much of the everyday life in our communities happen. The quality of these spaces and who gets to access them have far-reaching consequences on the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of individuals, their communities, and the spaces themselves. Understanding what is working well (and not so well) when it comes to streets and public spaces is crucial for defining community need and how best to ensure planning and capital investment can be used to meet this need.

Hilliam Research and Analysis and Ansons Consulting were commissioned by Living Streets to undertake an evaluation of their Bus Connectivity project. The project was commissioned by the Scottish Government and sought to identify potential environmental changes in relation to streets and public places that – if implemented – will encourage an increase in bus patronage. In particular, the project focuses on identifying environmental changes that will improve the accessibility of and to selected bus stops for both pedestrians and cyclists.

In delivering this project, Living Streets developed a methodology for a bus stop walkability audit and applied this to a number of locations. Areas were selected based on direct contact with Local Authority transport officers who suggested locations where the audit process may yield useful insights. Findings from the audits were supplemented by primary research in the form of resident and bus user surveys carried out with local residents and groups (these are not covered in this report).

The outputs of the research and audit processes aimed to deliver an audit toolkit, an approach to public consultation and a set of recommendations for action (in the form of a report) for each area that were to be issued to the relevant Local Authority officer responsible for public transport. The final report also identified potential sources of funding to enable the recommendations to be implemented.

The evaluation process described in this report was commissioned to focus on three key questions in relation to the audits:

- Are partners or stakeholders likely to adopt or replicate the process?
- What do local residents feel about the process and their involvement?
- Did the audit process conform with good practice?

1.1 Methods

The resources available for this evaluation were limited and as a result a full review of the outputs from each of the target areas was not undertaken. A targeted approach was developed in partnership with Living Streets to address these questions.

The evaluation was undertaken in three key stages, addressing each of the key research questions.

1. Interviews with key stakeholders

Four telephone interviews were conducted with key stakeholders relevant to the process and outcomes of the audits. A list of stakeholders (comprising local authority transport staff and bus operators from the audit areas) was provided to the research team and four contacts recruited. Two interviews were undertaken before the audits (one bus operator and one local authority staff member) and two after the audits had been completed (two local authority staff members) to gain an impression both on hopes and expectations for the project and responses to the audit reports. The key topics explored in the interviews were as follows:

- Are partners/stakeholders likely to adopt or replicate the process?
- Is the process useful and relevant for their work?
- What are their perceptions of the audit approach and the outputs?

2. Focus Groups with residents in audit areas

Focus groups were held with residents in three audit areas (Raploch, Stirling; Seafar, Cumbernauld and; Currie, Edinburgh) to gather opinions on the Bus Connectivity Audit process and the resulting recommendations for the area. Residents were recruited by an independent market research agency. Each group ran for 1.5 hours and involved two sections. The first was a presentation and discussion led by Living Streets outlining the toolkit process, key findings and recommendations. This included photographic evidence showing the locations and issues identified through the audit. The second section comprised a group discussion facilitated by the evaluation team to explore opinions on the Bus Connectivity project process and recommendations in their area. Any individuals or groups who engaged with the toolkit audit process were invited to the meeting (although none attended). A topic guide for the group discussions is attached as an appendix.

3. Peer Review

A review was undertaken to assess whether the audit process used during the Bus Connectivity Project conformed with good practice. This explored how the approach used compared with other UK examples of good practice; identified any apparent gaps in the audit findings and recommendations, and; explored how the audit process could be improved in any practical way. This was a desk-based exercise.

The findings from each stage of the evaluation are presented in the remainder of this document.

2. Views on the Audit from Partners and Stakeholders

2.1 Overview

A number of key themes arose in the four discussions with stakeholders (three local authority staff and one bus operator representative). These themes are discussed in turn in this section. Please note that due to the relatively small number of participants, and that only half of these had reviewed an audit, the findings in this section should be taken as indicative. That said, there was a significant overlap in many of the comments provided and they offer a useful insight into the benefits and possible impacts of the audit approach.

2.2 Adding value to current practice

All stakeholders were broadly supportive of the approach. It was clear that reviewing the factors relating to the environment beyond the immediate bus-stop area was not part of normal practice for all of those contacted, particularly in relation to exploring these factors to increase bus patronage. Considering factors such as lighting, vegetation, graffiti, path maintenance and so on on key routes to bus stops was described as being rarely (if at all) considered by the interviewees. Comments included *“we don’t really think about the route to the bus stop”* and *“this is something that we have thought little about in the past”*.

The focus of these stakeholders was (typically) exclusively on the bus stop itself and its immediate vicinity. As such this audit approach provided insights that complemented and added to current practices, through highlighting issues that might not have been identified through other routine means. Examples of new insights raised by the audits in discussions with those that had reviewed the reports included: identification of areas that are subject to flooding; identification of inactive rotating cones at pedestrian crossings, and; specific issues around maintenance of paths.

2.3 Approaches currently used to address needs

As described above, respondents did not typically focus on the route to the bus stop as a way to increase patronage. As a result one respondent considered the content of the audit not to be a *“pressing issue”* for them. Key factors in relation to increasing patronage were typically reported as related to issues of ticket cost, cleanliness of buses and driver interactions.

Respondents indicated that the most common routes to identifying issues around bus use were through customer or resident complaints or driver feedback in depot meetings. These were described as ad hoc or reactive and (typically) did not cover all of the issues within the audit: customer complaints were described as *“only very rarely”* covering issues in relation to the route to the bus stop. However, two respondents mentioned projects such as active travel plans for businesses and schools as covering some similar topics in the past.

The current lack of focus on these topics also appeared to some extent to be related to the job responsibilities of the respondents; issues in relation to, for example, lighting, path maintenance or graffiti and vandalism of areas surrounding bus stops were reported as not falling under the remit of a local authority transport team or transport operator. One respondent commented that *“a public transport team are unlikely to be thinking about street lighting issues”*. As such these issues (if raised) could not be addressed by a transport stakeholder working in isolation. The interviews highlighted the various opportunities (and enthusiasm) for joint working across these stakeholders and across teams (within local authorities), but respondents raised issues in relation to limited resources in terms of staffing and finance as key barriers to such activity, particularly for two local authority public transport officers. The third local authority staff member interviewed worked within a sustainable transport team (rather than a public transport team) and as a result had a

broader remit to explore, for example, walking and cycling infrastructure in their locality. As a result, the issues raised in the audit appeared to be of greater relevance (or greater likelihood to be taken on) to them, when compared to those received by a public transport officer (with a narrower remit). The bus operator representative indicated that they had limited scope to act on the type of issues raised in the audit but highlighted that these types of issues could be discussed in meetings with local authorities and transport partnerships.

2.4 Perceptions of the Audit Process

The audit process was typically felt to be well designed by respondents. Those that were interviewed in advance of the audits taking place did express some uncertainty about exactly how the audits would be undertaken and how participants would be recruited to them. One expressed surprise that they were expected to play a part in recruiting the participants (as they had assumed that Living Streets were taking a lead on this). However, all were supportive of the approach of involving a diverse range of residents and stakeholders in the audit process.

Although only one respondent actually took part in an audit, all commented positively on the approach of walking around a locality to assess possible improvements that could be made, and those that reviewed a report felt that it was a positive process that covered the right content. The role of Living Streets as a respected agency, separate from the local authority, producing a report was felt to be important, as it enabled the findings to be seen as authoritative and from an independent perspective. One respondent commented that an internal report would be likely to have less impact as a result.

2.5 Outputs and Impact

In general, the two respondents that reviewed the audits felt that the outputs were clear, to the point and covered relevant issues. The reports were described as being written with *“language that was easy to understand, with no ambiguity”*, as a *“good piece of work [that] identifies issues”*, and the one respondent who attended an audit commented that the report has *“nothing missing...the day went well and the report reflected the discussions held”*. This respondent also highlighted that the audit report *“provided a helpful checklist of things for us to work on or consider”* and that the process of directly engaging with the public and stakeholders through this route provided a helpful addition to their work to enable them to more effectively access the public: *“We rarely get positive feedback and struggle to engage with users; we are not good at it.”*

There were mixed views between these two respondents as to whether some report recommendations required further development or study. Although some recommendations were simple and straightforward (e.g. repair particular pavements or replace damaged bus stop screens), others related to more complicated changes (such as recommending changes to road / path infrastructure to widen pavements, or possible additional uses of existing bus stop infrastructure) that had not been fully evaluated or required further analysis to explore if these changes were feasible. In these cases, one respondent felt that these types of recommendations may have been improved through further work to place them in context, whereas the other felt that identifying such issues within the audits was appropriate, based on the understanding that officers in the local authority would explore these further. This perhaps suggests some simple framing in the audit reports to highlight that some findings may require further exploration and/ or technical investigation may help to overcome such concerns.

There were a small number of specific comments on elements of the report. These are summarised as follows:

- The long list of possible funding sources was very positively received by one respondent, who indicated that he would share these with wider members of their team. That said, the other respondent who had received the report raised concerns about the substantial (and potentially prohibitive) resource required to review and access such funds.
- Although the colour coding in the report (to provide an assessment of ‘audit grading of the environment’ from poor to high based on a range of criteria) was felt to be helpful, the fact that the colour coding often covered more than one site, walking route or bus stop meant that it was hard for readers to assess if all elements of these sites were ‘scoring’ to the same level, or if some (e.g. particular paths or bus stops) were better than others.
- The inclusion of estimates of costs for changes was felt to be helpful and, although there was a lack of prioritisation of actions, this was not a major concern for those interviewed.

The interviews highlighted two key barriers to progressing the actions identified: a lack of financial and staff resources, and; the challenges of the requirement to work across teams to realise some of these actions. Respondents highlighted, in particular, the recent and on-going reductions in budgets for local authorities to tackle such actions. Indeed, for one respondent, the lack of available funding meant that for them, there was little expectation that this type of audit could have much impact without the introduction of new funding streams.

2.6 Replicating the process

There was general support of replicating the process, although the merits of doing so were limited by the lack of funding available to realise actions. One respondent felt that this was appropriate only in areas where other funding could be secured (e.g. from a retail outlet, or land developer) and not in a residential setting. However, for another respondent this was not the case.

As highlighted above, Living Streets (or some other agency) acting as an impartial body was the preferred approach to the audit. There were mixed views of whether other groups such as Community Councils or other community groups could lead on this, with one respondent suggesting that this might be too in depth or complex for some.

Summary

The interview feedback with stakeholders suggests that partners and stakeholders could be likely to adopt or replicate the process in the future, with some limitations. The topics that are covered in the audit are unlikely to be of high importance to public transport officers and bus companies in terms of increasing patronage. As a result, this type of audit may not be a high priority for this group. That said, the findings of the audits were viewed positively and clearly complement other information sources, the process itself was felt to be inclusive, effective and the reports clear in providing a useful checklist of actions.

The role of Living Streets as an independent agency delivering the audits and reports was identified as a strength due to their trusted independent nature and it was felt that undertaking these internally (i.e. within a local authority) may mean that they have less impact.

The outputs and recommendations highlighted are likely to be the responsibility of multiple stakeholders or teams within local authorities, so co-ordination of delivering recommendations is likely to be a challenge. The interviews also highlighted the limited resources available in local authorities to address these issues, adding another barrier to delivery.

3. Focus Groups with Residents

3.1 Overview

The purpose of the focus groups was to gather opinion, from residents of three different areas, on the Bus Connectivity project process and the nature of the recommendations arising for their area.

The initial presentation by Living Streets to focus group attendees described 'highlights' from the audit in their area and provided details about the project process and the results it generated. This was undertaken to ensure that those who were not aware of the audit in advance of the session could gain insights into how the audit was undertaken, its aims and the recommendations made. The focus group discussions explored the following points

- What do local residents feel about the process and audit findings?
- Is the process useful and relevant?

3.2 Feedback on audit recommendations

Across all the groups, participants gave positive feedback on the issues raised in the presentation. The recommendations were typically viewed as capturing the key issues that were present in their area and, for the most part, captured the types of issue that those in the groups would have suggested. For some, the audit findings highlighted issues in relation to the local environment that perhaps would not have been initially thought of by participants and other highlighted that it identified long-standing issues or problems that, if addressed, could make a positive difference:

"It feels like the audit was done with 'fresh eyes', which is helpful." [Raploch]

"It is good to highlight the problems ... the area has been neglected for years, with some [street] lights not replaced since the 70s" [Seafar]

There was a general interest amongst the participants in the outcomes of the audit and there was satisfaction expressed that their area was being supported or reviewed in this way. Some also commented that the recommendations made some very good points or suggestions for improvement (e.g. around the use or removal of pedestrian guard rails) that those without knowledge or expertise in the development of streets and public places may not have considered. The use of pictures in the feedback session was also positively received enabling those present to engage with the findings.

Some respondents wanted a little more background detail on bus services and other factors, for example, why bus services changed in the past, or why were reductions in service provision occurring in their area. This may have been helpful as it would have placed the findings presented in a wider context.

3.3 What was important to participants?

Although, in general, the points raised in the audit were important in terms of accessing bus travel, the relative importance of the issues raised in the audit, when compared to other factors, varied across groups. Each group was both asked to rank the types of issues involved in the audits in terms of importance to them and to discuss how these related to other factors.

Feedback varied across and within groups in terms of the most important factors, but the issues that tended to be prioritised related to personal safety and information on bus travel, including:

- Safety of the route to the bus stop and safety at the bus stop

- This was both in terms of perceptions of personal safety and of physical risk from tripping hazards etc.
- Lighting to and at bus stops (as this related to safety)
- Access to bus information at shelter/ stop (as this helps to give confidence about when the next bus is due, or which services are offered)

Some (but by no means all) participants across groups indicated they would be more likely to use the bus if the recommended measures (as outlined in the presentation) were implemented. Indeed, one respondent (at the Seafar group) highlighted that they had, on a number of occasions, taken longer (better lit) walks from bus stops when getting off buses at late night due to feelings of fear and lack of safety. One other respondent (in the Currie group) also described the terminus bus stop as very unwelcoming and poorly lit and that they would avoid it at certain times of day.

Across all groups, participants identified a small number of issues that were not presented in the audit findings. There was not scope in the research to confirm if these were outwith the specific walking routes that formed the audit, nor if these were viewed as only minor issues that had not been highlighted in the presentation. These included issues such as:

- Raploch group: Better signage and information
- Seafar group: More or improved bus stop seats; more/ better maintained tactile paving; better bus information, including real time, and; clearer information and ticketing for multiple operators
- Currie group: Dog fouling on certain streets; one local road feeling like a commuter 'racetrack', and; regular flooding cutting off one bus stop

Several participants across all groups made the case that other factors were more important in terms of increasing bus use than those considered through the audit, and it is interesting there were some notable variations across groups. In the Raploch and Currie (and only to a lesser extent, Seafar) groups, bus service provision and pricing were key issues: One Raploch participant had bought a bike rather than pay for daily bus use and another felt giving car drivers cheaper fares would help encourage them to use bus services more often. Almost all participants in Currie were extremely concerned about recent reductions in bus service provision, service reliability, service frequency and poor bus route coverage (including night, bank holiday and weekend services and services to hospitals and local shopping centres). This was the prime concern above all other issues for the Currie group and resulted in many participants feeling that the issues presented in the audit were important at some level, but minor in comparison. This was made particularly acute for them due to perceptions that services were getting extremely busy and that there was increased demand due to housebuilding in the area (indeed concern over these issues was the reason that many had attended the group). Service provision was also a concern in Raploch, where they saw similar issues as being more important than many of the issues identified in the audit, but this was expressed to a lesser extent than in Currie.

Interestingly, in Seafar, participants prime concern was to increase the local environment and perceptions of safety walking to and from buses and bus stops – topics that were covered by the audit process. This most likely related to a perceived lack of recent maintenance and improvement of local environment that was felt by all participants in this group. Reduced fares and better-quality buses were the next most important issues (issues not covered in the audit).

Environmental issues related to using buses and providing lower emission vehicles and more accessible buses also came up across the groups, but to a lesser extent.

3.4 Overall Audit Process

Across the groups there was general support of the inclusive and open process that had been undertaken to deliver the audits. One Seafar respondent commented that this *“was the first time I have been asked my opinion on something like this – they don’t seem to bother about us here”*. It was suggested that there is a need to involve a diverse range of participants in the audit process (which occurred in some settings – although no focus group participants took part in the audits) to ensure the needs of different groups are reflected in the results. Suggestions for stakeholders that could take part from across the groups included: schools, businesses, MPs and MSPs; community councillors; disabled groups, housing associations and community groups. One Raploch participant proposed that bus companies should participate in the audits, so they could learn about external (i.e. on-street) factors that influence bus patronage.

Wider promotion of the audit activity and promotion of findings was also supported across the groups, for example through local media and social media. However, it is important to note that, as described above, for those in Currie, the audit did not tackle the key issue for their area, which was the reduction in the bus services.

There was also some limited concern over why the audits had focused on specific or limited areas (e.g. *“why just two bus stops?”*), when participants had concerns beyond the geographical remit of the audit.

3.5 Perceptions of Possible Impact of Audit

A variety of views were expressed about the likely impact of the audit process. For instance, some indicated they felt sceptical that the process would bring about any change, with those in Currie suggesting that nothing would change without significant new funds, while others suggested the community will definitely *“get something out of this”* [Raploch]. In Seafar, the audit was felt to focus on *“a key concern for residents”*, but there was uncertainty about who the report should be for and who would take a lead on implementing any changes: *“it is the responsibility of ... environmental health, gardens and landscaping, housing, lighting...it’s not public transport.”* Participants in Raploch perhaps echoed this concern over who will take it forward by saying *“It will be down to the community to make sure the findings are implemented.”* Although they also noted that the Council and/ or bus companies *should* take the lead in implementing these recommendations.

That said, across groups there was general support for this type of initiative to be used and trialled elsewhere.

Summary

The focus groups showed that the audits and recommendations were viewed as positive and that undertaking an audit in their area made participants feel that they and their area was valued. That said, similar to the stakeholder interviews, these issues, although important, were not felt to be the most important barriers to accessing buses (these were service provision, cost, frequency, convenience etc). In presenting or exploring the issues covered in the audit it will therefore be important to place these in context with other factors driving bus use.

There was some scepticism about the extent to which these types of findings would be taken forward by local authorities due to the funding required and the perception that these are the responsibility of multiple agencies or stakeholders. The need to involve a wider range of people/ stakeholders in the audit process and the delivery of the audit findings was also deemed to be important.

4. Review of Good Practice

This chapter reviews good practice tools for evaluating the walking environment of a space, providing a summary of their respective strengths and weaknesses. It then goes on to consider how the Bus Stop Walkability Audit developed by Living Streets compares to these three examples of good practice. The chapter ends with a SWOT analysis of the Bus Stop Walkability Audit that informs a series of recommendations.

4.1 Overview of other examples of good practice

Three examples of good practice for auditing the walking environment are considered. These are: Community Street Audit by Living Streets; Pedestrian Environment Review System by TRL; and, Walking Route Audit Tool by the Welsh Government. For each of these examples, attention is paid to what the audit tool aims to deliver, how it delivers it, outputs and strengths and weaknesses.

4.1.1 Community Street Audit (CSA) – Living Streets

Living Streets have pioneered the Community Street Audit (CSA) as a way to engage the local community in evaluating the quality of their streets and public spaces.¹ The CSA approach is all about listening to and learning from the local community. It evaluates streets and public spaces as a place for walking from the viewpoint of those using them, as opposed to solely relying on the expert opinions of the professionals involved in their planning and management. In doing so it provides a range of perspectives (from local residents, traders, councillors and officers) on what works well and what could be improved about a particular street or public space. Noting the *pains and gains* associated with using a particular street, helps define community need and shapes what is seen as the most appropriate solution.

Preparing for a CSA includes identifying the streets and public spaces to be audited, assessing the logistics of arranging an audit and undertaking a risk assessment. Importantly, this also involves recruiting members of the local community to take part in the audit. According to Living Streets, the aim is to *'invite a range of people to join the review as this will help give broad results reflecting multiple points of view. Inviting people with physical or mental health disabilities will ensure your review is inclusive and fully representative. Also, invite councillors and officers (transport, cleansing, maintenance, regeneration, police, public health officer etc.) along, so they can see for themselves the pains and gains of using the path network.'*²

The audit should involve a small group of people from the local community. The facilitator's role here is to lead the group along the audit route and encourage them to consider the following nine audit categories: road layout and space allocation; crossing points and desire lines; footway surfaces and obstructions (incl. parking); facilities and signage; maintenance and engagement; personal safety; aesthetics; traffic and activities. Overall, these nine categories provide a framework through which people can evaluate: what works well for those walking; what is not working well, is dangerous, unpleasant and/ or inconvenient; whether there are any quick wins; and what physical and non-physical measures would work (in the short, medium and longer-term).

The outputs from a CSA can help to prioritise investment and target the barriers faced by particular groups. In 2015, Perth and Kinross Council commissioned Living Streets to undertake a programme

¹ Information in this section comes from both: Community Street Audit Training: Summer Staff Away Day July 2016 – Living Streets; and from Streets for Everyone: Inclusive Approaches to Street Design and Management – Living Streets Scotland.

² Source: <https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/products-and-services/projects/community-street-audits> [Accessed: 29.04.2019]

of CSAs to identify barriers to disabled people using the streets and how this can inform the prioritising of available budgets.³ This focus explains why audit participants were recruited from the Centre for Inclusive Living Perth & Kinross (CILPK) and council officers. The audit was an opportunity for all to experience the pains and gains disabled people face when using different streets as well as stimulate group problem solving around potential improvements.

Strengths of the CSA approach centre on it bringing a cross-section of the local community and relevant professions together to share their experiences and knowledge about using a street. It helps to ensure different experiences, perspectives and opinions are being heard during the audit process. This is about creating a co-learning environment focused on what is, and is not, working for different groups and highlighting what the group see as the most appropriate solution.

Weaknesses in the CSA approach centres on the ability of the audit team to recruit a sufficiently broad cross section of the community to take part and how they go onto report the overlaps and differences in opinions they record. There is also the challenge of creating an environment where people feel their views are valued whilst ensuring they are willing to learn from those of others. Indeed, this comes back to managing expectations about what can change and sustaining engagement when change is seen to be too slow or insufficient.

4.1.2 Pedestrian Environment Review System (PERS) – Transport Research Lab (TRL)

Initially developed in the early-2000s by TRL, TfL and the London Borough of Bromley, the Pedestrian Environment Review System (PERS) has become a best practice standard for evaluating pedestrian provision, identifying what should be prioritised and how best to make the most appropriate, effective intervention.⁴ For TRL, the strength of PERS as an audit tool for assessing the level of service and the quality of that service provided to pedestrians across a range of pedestrian environments, is its standardised and consistent methodology. Using PERS provides a systematic way of identifying deficiencies in levels of service and provision of suitable pedestrian support; systematically assessing pedestrian need and prioritising improvements; strengthening objectivity in the decision-making process, and; producing project proposals based on clear, consistent evidence. All of which is made possible by auditors following a standardised checklist and accompanying guidance on how to score environments and note explanatory comments. This information is then uploaded onto the PERS platform to store results and more importantly, produce graphs and reports that TRL assess are well-suited for public consultation.

There are five stages to a PERS pedestrian audit.⁵ Stage 1 focuses on identifying the pedestrian environments to review – these can be links (e.g. footways), crossings, routes, public transport waiting areas, interchange spaces and/ or public spaces. Stage 2 involves breaking down the pedestrian environment into its various, constituent parts and then dividing these up amongst the audit team. Stage 3 is the on-street evaluation that uses the PERS checklist and the PERS seven-

³ Streets for Everyone: Inclusive Approaches to Street Design and Management – Living Streets Scotland, sourced: <https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/media/3736/pk-case-study-web.pdf> [Accessed: 29.04.19]

⁴ Information in this section comes from the following sources: TRL Software, streetaudit PERS (Pedestrian Environment Review Software) A systematic framework for the study of pedestrian provision. <https://trlsoftware.com/products/road-safety/street-auditing/streetaudit-pers/> [Accessed: 30.04.19]; Transport for London PERS Factsheet. <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/pedestrian-environment-review-system-factsheet.pdf> [Accessed: 30.04.19]; TRL Project Case Study – Old Street Roundabout PERS Audit <https://trlsoftware.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Case-study-Old-Street-Roundabout-PERS-audit.pdf> [Accessed: 30.04.19].

⁵ Transport for London PERS Factsheet. <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/pedestrian-environment-review-system-factsheet.pdf> [Accessed: 30.04.19]

point scoring scale from ‘-3 through to +3’ that are linked to Red/Amber/Green (RAG) colour-coding. This allows for positive and negative deviations and the flexibility to assess the perceived importance of individual elements. Stage 4 sees the scores and comments inputted into the PERS system, which in turn assigns each environment and sub-sections an overall score. Stage 5 generates reports, charts, maps and quick-win recommendation lists that can inform wider public consultation exercises and pipelines for future capital investment.

For TRL, a key selling point of the PERS approach compared to rival pedestrian environment audits is the objectivity built-into the evaluation process undertaken by professionally trained PERS auditors. Quantitative methods are used to review elements like footway width and dropped kerb gradients. Qualitative methods are used for factors such as personal safety, the quality and feel of the walking environment, all of which rely on the professional judgement of the auditor and PERS checklist criteria. TRL and TfL both assess that this enables objective comparisons of pedestrian service levels along different routes for different public spaces.

PERS has played an important role in evidencing the value created by good street design and the business case for improving average or poor design. The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment found a statistically significant correlation between an increase in PERS scores and residential house prices, noting that ‘*clear financial benefits can be calculated from investing in better quality street design*’.⁶ Explaining the value of a PERS audit, TRL point to an audit they undertook for TfL at Old Street Roundabout, London, in 2014.⁷ The aim of the audit was to assess current level of service provision for people walking (including disabled people) and identify where best to prioritise investment in improving this environment. This PERS audit identified many areas where improvements could be made that could actively promote walking and help to improve the safety, legibility and comfort of the street environment for pedestrians. Many of the recommendations made focused on the material changes to the street environment, such as tactile paving, additional crossing opportunities, removing obstacles from links and crossings along with regular street cleaning, leaving far less of an emphasis on the individual and social aspects known to influence people’s transport behaviour patterns.

Strengths of the PERS approach centre on it being a systematic approach to auditing pedestrian environments (including public transport waiting areas) and a scoring system that allows for easy comparison between sites in different locations. The scoring system and accompanying checklist ensures a level of consistency in the judgements being made by trained, professional auditors. This is furthered by the RAG framework being used by the same professional auditors to clearly identify what requires urgent improvement and how best to deliver it. Together, this helps to inform a recommendation list, that includes quick-wins, for consideration by key stakeholders.

Weakness of the PERS approach centre on it being a technocratic, top-down approach to evaluating pedestrian environments. The effectiveness of the audit is reliant on the framework and professional judgement of auditors. With the PERS approach striving for consistency and objectivity, listening to and learning from the subjective experiences of those using the walking environment is externalised to post-audit public consultation. This means that however effective the audit

⁶ Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (2007) ‘Paved with Gold: The real value of good street design’. https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/asset/document/paved-with-gold_1.pdf [Accessed 30.04.19]

⁷ TRL Project Case Study – Old Street Roundabout PERS Audit <https://trlsoftware.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Case-study-Old-Street-Roundabout-PERS-audit.pdf>

framework and the training of auditors themselves, there is a real risk of auditor bias towards certain experiences, perspectives and opinions, leading to other viewpoints being side-lined.

4.1.3 Walking Route Audit Tool (WRAT) – Welsh Government

In 2017, the Department for Transport published technical guidance for English Local Authorities when creating their very own Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP).⁸ These plans are focused on understanding need and targeting investment with the ultimate aim of increasing uptake of cycling and walking. Network planning for walking requires the auditing of existing walking infrastructure to determine where improvements are needed, and investment outlined in the LCWIP to be targeted. The technical guidance notes *'the audit process can be customised to local situations, considering the nature and scale of improvements that an authority wishes to include in the LCWIP, and the resources they have available to carry out the work.'*⁹ The audit methodology can range from detailed street audits, to surveys focused on specific aspects of the infrastructure, though for all methods, *'local knowledge is a crucial input and views should be sought from local stakeholders'*. The LCWIP technical guidance specifically mentions the Walking Route Audit Tool (WRAT) that was developed as part of the Welsh Active Travel Design Guidance¹⁰ (formed as part of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013) to assist Welsh Local Authorities with the auditing of walking routes.

The WRAT is a spreadsheet-based tool that can be used for both existing and proposed routes. The auditor scores the route against five core design outcomes for pedestrian infrastructure, with each of the core design outcomes having their own sub-categories. These are:

- *Attractiveness* – covering the following sub-categories: maintenance; fear of crime; traffic noise and pollution; and other (e.g. temporary features like rubbish bins);
- *Comfort* – covering the following sub-categories: condition; footway width; width of staggered crossings/pedestrian refuges; footway parking; gradient; and other (e.g. bus shelters restricting clearance width);
- *Directness* – covering the following sub-categories: footway provision; location of crossings in relation to desire lines; gaps in traffic; impact of controlled crossings on journey times; green man time; and other (e.g. routes to/from bus stops not accommodated);
- *Safety* – covering the following sub-categories: traffic volume; traffic speed; visibility; and
- *Coherence* – covering the following sub-category: dropped kerbs and tactile paving

Each of these 20 sub-criteria are then scored using the following scale: 0 for poor provision (red); 1 for provision which is adequate but should be improved if possible (amber); 2 for good quality provision (green) – which are colour-coded using the RAG framework. Any route which scores less than 28 (out of a potential 40 points, i.e. a score of 70%) will require further improvement before it is included in the Existing or Integrated Network Maps. It is noted in the WRAT guidance that this threshold will be kept under review in the light of practical experience.

⁸ DfT (2007) 'Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans: Technical guidance for Local Authorities'. Sourced at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/607016/cycling-walking-infrastructure-technical-guidance.pdf [Accessed: 30.04.19]

⁹ Op. cit. pp.26

¹⁰ Welsh Government (2014) 'Design Guidance Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013'. Sourced at: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2017-09/active-travel-design-guidance.pdf> [Accessed 20.04.19]

With scoring sometimes being qualitative, the tool allows the auditor to add comments explaining their score allocation – something that can aid stakeholders in deciding the most appropriate actions and what to prioritise. The actions column allows auditors to record solutions to any of the issues identified on the route, e.g. resurfacing the path, added lighting; removing obstacles or collecting street litter. In the LCWIP technical guidance document, it is suggested that when undertaking a WRAT, consideration must be given to the needs of vulnerable pedestrians (the elderly; visually impaired; mobility impaired; hearing impaired; with learning difficulties; buggy users, or children). It is recommended that it may be useful, therefore, to undertake a pilot street audit with representatives from various user groups, including disabled people, before undertaking the full WRAT audit.

Strengths of the WRAT approach centre on it being an easy to follow and intuitive process for auditing pedestrian environments. The five key themes covering a total of 20 sub-categories, incorporate the principal factors that research has shown influence the desirability and attractiveness of the pedestrian environment. Of particular importance to this project is the inclusion of directness as a key theme for consideration during the audit process. The scoring system also ensures prioritisation of community need is an integral to the audit process alongside providing the flexibility to respond to the specific circumstances presented at the audit site. Doing a WRAT audit then develops an evidence base for stakeholders to identify the most appropriate interventions and how best to prioritise capital investment. All of which is carefully considered in relation to a pedestrian environment hierarchy that reflects variations in movement and place function that ultimately impacts pedestrian comfort level.

Weakness of the WRAT approach centre on it being a technocratic, top-down approach to evaluating pedestrian environments. As with PERS, the reliability of what is understood as community need and the recommended solutions relies heavily on the professional judgement of the auditors. Though wider community engagement is now being recommended prior to the carrying out the audit, it will remain separate from the process of doing the audit and identifying the appropriate suite of measures. Listening to and learning from the subjective experiences of those using the walking environment as part of the audit process itself, is all about having the opportunity to learn from people who are not wedded to orthodoxy and might have the imagination to anticipate shocks and opportunities.

4.2 Comparing Good Practice with the Bus Connectivity Project Audit Tool

Any audit tool has its strengths and weakness, its benefits and costs. The challenge is to create an audit tool that can deliver meaningful evaluation of the topic under consideration. This section considers how the Bus Connectivity Project Audit tool compares to the good practice examples discussed in the previous section. It first considers the audit tool's strengths relative to other tools for auditing walking environments. It then goes onto consider how this tool could be improved by learning from the strengths and weaknesses of these other tools.

4.2.1 Strengths and USPs of Bus Connectivity Project Audit Tool

In line with good practice, the Living Streets' new audit tool relies on a trained auditor going out into the field to observe, experience and evaluate the walking environment. What separates this tool from both the PERS and WRAT tools, however, is the commitment to listening to and learning from a cross-section of the community who are regularly using the streets and public spaces under consideration. Engaging with the community during the audit process and then afterwards, to identify the most appropriate solutions, reflects the same value placed on community engagement that underpins the CSA process also developed by Living Streets. Expanding diversity in the audit

process, whether through including more women, the elderly, people with a disability and/or mobility impairment, is a good way of injecting fresh ideas and experiences that can help tackle problems and identify solutions from a number of different perspectives on accessibility.

Paying careful attention to the experiences, commonsensical understandings and local knowledge of those using the walking environment under audit, is a theme that this new audit tool has in common with the CSA. Asking people what they think, what they feel and what they see as the opportunities and barriers, leads to an audit tool that places the subjective and experiential at the front and centre of proceedings. The effect is an audit that is far more location specific. This is not to say the measurable and the objective are ignored, just that they are given far less significance compared to the PERS and WRAT audit tools. The result is an audit process more interested in evaluating the locations on its own merits and challenges rather than benchmarking it with other sites. The value of benchmarking then is more about comparing between the baseline and the picture to emerge after implementing a package of measures.

The audit tool differentiates itself from the CSA process by giving explicit attention to the quality of the public realm in the immediate vicinity of, and along the routes leading up to, bus stops and other transport interchanges. What could further distinguish this new audit tool from others focused on walking environments, including the CSA process, is to give direct, explicit attention to the strengths and weaknesses found in the current situation. It is clear even good practice processes for auditing the walking environment get easily drawn into focusing on addressing weaknesses and barriers (i.e. what is not working). An effective auditing tool should also consider how best to strengthen existing successes.

4.2.2 Areas for Improvement in the Bus Connectivity Project Audit Tool

Evaluating good practice points to the importance of being clear and consistent about what should be considered during an audit. This matters whether the audit involves just a trained professional or a small group of people from the local community. The WRAT process involves five key themes that underpin an expanded list of 20 audit categories. These categories are far more comprehensive and easier to understand compared to CSA, PERS and the new Bus Connectivity Project Audit tool. The WRAT tool also shows the value of taking into consideration the hierarchy of streets – based on movement and place function – as well as TfL’s work on pedestrian comfort levels. There is, however, scope to further expand on these categories by paying attention to the ISM model for behaviour change. The ISM tool provides strong guidance on what to think about when considering how to influence a particular behaviour. It encourages a thought process that considers the wide range of factors that are likely to influence people’s behaviour. There are domains relating to the individual, the social and the material, each of which contribute to a particular situation and how best that might change going forward. Thinking through these three domains helps to make the drivers for change as much as people’s biases and assumptions more explicit. Clearly, this would be an important advantage for the new tool as good practice tends to focus almost exclusively on how to change the material environment (the things you can see, like lighting or footpath width), even when it could be a range of non-material factors that actually influences why people feel comfortable or unnerved in a public space.

Proactively involving a cross-section of the local community in the Bus Connectivity Project Audit process is something to be commended. The new audit tool, like CSA and to a lesser extent WRAT, recognise the value of working with such diversity, though all suffer from a lack clarity about what constitutes a cross-section of viewpoints and how best to approach and recruit the right mix of people. Moreover, the value of obtaining a diversity of views should not downplay the potential

issue of unequal power relations between auditors, vulnerable groups and other local stakeholders (including local authority officers and elected members). For the audit process to be effective, auditors will be required to facilitate discussion in ways that create an environment where all feel they are being listened to, their views are valued, and all can make a meaningful contribution to the outputs. Doing so, will also help to overcome the risk of groupthink. Further work is also required around providing clarity over how best to analyse the data and prioritise some responses over others. For example, should greater value be attributed to the majority viewpoint or a viewpoint held by a small number of people who come from a protected group? These are value judgements that require careful consideration given they influence what is defined as community need and how best to meet this need by changing the walking environment.

In direct contrast to PERS and WRAT, the new Bus Connectivity Project Audit tool, with its emphasis on local knowledge, is not designed to benchmark the audit site with other sites. Both PERS and WRAT give the walking environment a numerical score that is based on the professional judgement of an expert working against a criteria and checklist. Even with its emphasis on learning from local people, the new Bus Connectivity Project Audit tool needs to have some way of consistently benchmarking what is defined as a substandard, average or excellent walking environment. One way of delivering this could be through illustrative examples of a substandard, average or excellent street that the auditor uses to talk through the criteria and scoring system with participants prior to the audit walk. This will help with the consistency of scoring as well as prioritising where investment should be made. Moreover, there is value in exploring the minimum score within the WRAT process that is a threshold below which an existing street or new development is considered substandard thus require substantial changes.

4.3 SWOT Analysis

The following table summarises the core Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) identified in the previous sections of this chapter. This SWOT Analysis has been defined in terms of whether the Bus Connectivity Project Audit Tool can deliver on being an effective tool for evaluating the walking environment around bus stops and key transport interchanges.

STRENGTHS	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Going out and experiencing the public realm during audit. • Listening to and learning from cross-section of community during and after the audit process. • Using the subjective experiences and perspectives of local people to understand community need and then identify appropriate solutions. • Focus on strengths (what works well) and weaknesses (what does not work well) of current walking environment. • Compare baseline audit with the situation observed after targeted interventions have been implemented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage local community and key stakeholders (bus operators and Council’s transport, school transport and communities team) in identifying the audit route before audit day. • Enable the audit route to have some flexibility, able to respond to the concerns and silences of group. • Incorporate the hierarchy of streets framework (place and movement) to give structure to what an excellent walking environment should be in a given context. • Look to incorporate behaviour change and problem-solving tools into audit process, to expand focus beyond solely the material aspects of the walking environment.
WEAKNESSES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited guidance on recruiting participants as well as what constitutes a cross-section of views. • Absence of guidance and support for auditors in facilitating an environment where people feel their views are valued and listened by others. • Narrow focus on local knowledge comes at the expense of more objective measurements on cost and convenience (in terms of time and distance). • Limited sense of what constitutes a substandard, average or excellent walking environment when it comes to scoring; crucial for consistency of evaluation and benchmarking • Auditor needs to think about the silences; what are the audit group not saying, not considering, overlooking. • Over reliance on the material influences on people’s travel behaviour at the expense of the social influences. • Lack of consideration to the wider macro, strategic context influencing the walking environment – this includes policy, funding priorities and travel patterns in the neighbourhood, wider region and then nationally. • Absence of clear vision of what the audit seeks to achieve – important for ensuring it is designed and used to deliver on these aims. • Impactful programmes need long-term engagement beyond the lifetime of the audit itself – extending the audit to engage and involve community in outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem ownership when it comes to low levels of bus patronage, whose problem is it and how much do they want to solve it; access on foot only one part of problem space. • Bus patronage is a multifaceted problem with various drivers (e.g. cost, safety and convenience) that are more influential than factors considered in this audit; meaning the audit needs to be part of wider process of problem solving. • Lack of willingness amongst the local community and key stakeholders to engage in audit process – including cynicism. • Power relations amongst audit group, especially when they include vulnerable groups and professionals there as experts. • Prioritising actions requires giving primacy to some and not others; should this reflect the number of people expressing one viewpoint, or who is expressing it, e.g. disabled user?

5. Summary and Recommendations

The Bus Connectivity Project Audit has been specifically designed to assess and improve the public realm that people use when accessing a bus stop or transport interchange. Such a focus reflects how the public realm has some influence over whether people feel willing, able and comfortable walking to a bus stop and then using bus services. A key strength of this audit process is its emphasis on listening to and learning from the subjective experiences and perspectives of local people to understand community need and then identify appropriate solutions.

It is important to note that actual impact of the audits can only be fully evaluated if and when improvements are delivered (e.g. via a before / after review of bus users experiences). However, this evaluation has identified that the audit has been viewed, both by the stakeholders and the public consulted, as a positive contribution to improving access to bus services, as something that has value and as a useful tool that can inform planning and improvement. The inclusive and locally focused approach was supported by all involved in the evaluation and resulted in outputs that were viewed as relevant and meaningful to the public.

However, in terms of increasing patronage, it is clear that the audit and its areas of focus can only highlight some of the elements that contribute towards increased bus patronage, and that for the public, bus operators and local authority officers who may act on this type of information, these elements may be relatively low priority issues compared to other drivers such as service provision, frequency, cost, reliability and so on. In addition, many recommendations may not be the direct responsibility of public transport stakeholders and, as a result, identifying ownership for actions (and the budgets for such improvements) may be challenging.

Despite these limitations, the audit is a valuable tool in that it highlights factors that are not always considered by key stakeholders as being relevant to increasing bus patronage. As such, the audit should be viewed as an effective and important part of a holistic approach to improving access to bus transport and the audit can therefore play an important role in a 'package' of measures to raise bus patronage in an area. Given the limited resources available to those with responsibility for increasing bus patronage, it would be difficult to recommend that the Bus Connectivity Project Audit approach is used in all settings. For example, in areas where bus provision is very poor, it may be better for stakeholders to initially focus on increasing bus frequency or updating the fleet, rather than improving the public realm around bus stops. However, the audits may have particular value in cases where there is a focus on improving access for particular groups (e.g. people with disabilities) in key locations, on routes where there is an investment in accessible buses or in cases where the other high priority factors (such bus service provision, cost etc) have already been addressed.

The following recommendations seek to build upon what is working well with the Bus Connectivity Project Audit and identify ways to improve what is not working so well. To ensure the Bus Connectivity Project Audit delivers value for Living Streets and its partners, further consideration should be given to:

- Clarifying or contextualising what the Bus Connectivity Project Audit can achieve. Increasing bus patronage is a multifaceted problem influenced by various factors, some of which (e.g. cost, service frequency etc) are likely to be more influential than changes to the public realm. As such any clarifications should highlight that the audit should be used as part of a package of approaches and only used where appropriate.
 - As part of this, it could be made explicit that the audit tool focuses only on a limited number of the 'material' factors in the public realm around bus stops that drive bus

patronage. The Scottish Government's ISM tool for behaviour change highlights that there may be other 'individual' and 'social' factors that may influence bus patronage in any given area.

- Exploring how the Bus Connectivity Project Audit can inform a wider process of problem solving around bus patronage, including how the recommendations outlined in the audit consider problem ownership, identifying whose problem is it and how much do they want to solve it as well as opportunities for partnership amongst stakeholders
- Ensuring the audit process gives more explicit consideration to what is currently working well (the strengths and desirable driving forces) as well as what currently requires improvement (the weaknesses and undesirable restraining forces). There is value in incorporating problem solving tools (e.g. force-field analysis) into the audit process as a way to frame discussions with participants and importantly, to substantiate the case for why investment in a particular action is needed and should be prioritised.
- Providing a clearer illustration of what contributes towards a substandard, average and excellent public realm and how this differs in line with the hierarchy of streets that reflects variations in the place and movement functions of a street. Doing so would enable greater consistency in the audit scoring process, which allows for rigorous benchmarking against other audit sites to underpin the prioritising of investment as well as helping to measure any quantitative and qualitative improvement before and after a specific intervention.
- Considering how, in comparison to other audit tools for the walking environment, the Bus Connectivity Project Audit tool is limited in terms of its technical justification for addressing the problems being identified. This is not to say emphasising the subjective views and experiences of people using a street is not important, but that there should be either greater consideration within the audit process, and especially the case for investment, to the technical and engineering perspectives on problem space and potential solutions, or it should be made explicit that certain recommendations require a more formal technical assessment.
 - Doing so would enable greater consistency and rigor in the audit scoring process that enables both by measuring any quantitative and qualitative improvement that enables benchmarking between different audits across multiple sites. Together this would build an evidence base for key stakeholders to prioritise investment.
- Managing the expectations of participants and aligning recommendations for action with the wider strategic context influencing the walking environment, including policies, funding priorities and travel patterns in the neighbourhood, wider region and also nationally.
- Considering how best to evidence and justify any causal effect between improving the public realm in the ways identified through the audit process and the levels of bus patronage; such post-implementation evaluation should consider 'why' a particular action was initially deemed worthy of investment, whether it has delivered in the ways originally expected and how best to proceed going forward.
- Providing more specific guidance on who to recruit from a community. This should consider if a 'cross-section' of views is always necessary (including who not to include), what constitutes a cross-section of views, how best to recruit participants and how auditors ought to negotiate the unequal power relations between participants (e.g. local resident compared to Local Authority Highways officer).
- Training auditors to facilitate open discussion between all participants along with paying specific attention to the silences during these discussions. Facilitating active listening and participant engagement in this way should aim to create a legacy beyond the audit process

itself by fostering ownership amongst participants to review progress on the recommended actions on a quarterly and/ or annualised basis; all of which will help to understand and evaluate impact.

Appendix: Topic Guides for Interviews and Focus Groups

Living Streets Bus Connectivity Project: Topic Guide for Interviews

Introduce project and aims

- Overall, the project seeks to identify potential environmental changes that will improve the accessibility of selected bus stops for both pedestrians and cyclists.
- Achieved through development of an audit toolkit, public consultation, development of recommendations in selected locations
- Final outcome will be a toolkit for use in any area

Introduce Evaluation

This element seeks to explore the use of the toolkit and process, specifically:

- Are partners/stakeholders likely to adopt or replicate the process?
- Is the process useful and relevant for their work?

Interview should take 20-30minutes

Warm up

- Respondent to introduce themselves and their role; level/nature of involvement in Living Streets bus connectivity project.

Bus Route Improvements

- What are the key factors for you that influence patronage in your target areas?
 - Examples
 - How have you sought to influence these?
- How do you select / identify routes and / or locations for improvement?
 - Techniques?
 - Stakeholder influences (public, LA, operators, other)?
 - Public feedback / complaints / requests/ consultation?
- What does success look like in terms of improvement?
- How often is walking and cycling to bus stops considered in your / others' work?
 - Why / when
 - Examples?
- How important is walking and cycling to bus stops relative to other factors?
- What are the factors that you feel are of particular importance?
 - In relation to increasing patronage in general?
 - In relation to increasing walking / cycling access to bus stops?

Probe on I, S, M factors (if not brought up spontaneously):

- Personal safety fears relating to walk bus / waiting for bus
- Benefits/ costs from:
 - Exercise
 - Being environmental
 - Travel costs
 - Social contact on walk/ at stop
 - Journey time
- Knowledge of bus stops and routes to access them
- People being seen waiting at bus stops/ using walking routes to stops
- Geographical factors:

- Distance (perceived time taken) to bus stop
- Hills
- Directness of route
- Streetscape (crossings etc.) that enables / supports access to bus stops to / from key destinations
- Walking route features:
 - Lighting
 - General maintenance
 - Visual impression
 - Signage (for bus stops)
- Bus stop
 - General maintenance
 - Protection from weather
 - Information

Bus Connectivity Audit

- How did you hear about the project?
- Why did you get involved in the project?
- How would you/ have you previously have gone about exploring this issue?
 - Examples, experience
 - Who was involved?
 - Why did you explore this/ what was the outcome?
 - Who has/ should have responsibility for leading on this type of work?
 - Who has responsibility for implementing these types of changes?
- What did / do you think it will achieve?
 - Which groups will it access?
 - Which interests will it support?
 - Who and how will it be used?

Use of the Toolkit

- How will it influence your (and others') decision making?
 - How will / would you (others) use the outputs of this audit?
- Who should outputs be tailored for?
 - Probe on: Councillors, public, operators etc.
- What is the most important element of the toolkit?
- How important are/ do you think the different elements of the toolkit / approach will be?
 - Community engagement
 - Focus on:
 - bus stop infrastructure
 - walking routes/ crossings
 - information / signage/ maps
 - perception of safety?
 - lighting etc en route to bus stop
 - Cycling provision
 - Templates
 - Case Studies
- How does the approach used compare with other examples of good practice or approaches that you have seen?

- Are there any apparent gaps in the audit findings and recommendations?
- Do you think you will recommend it to other colleagues/ contacts?
- Will you use it yourself?

Wrap up

- Could the audit process be improved in any practical way and if so, how?
- Any other comments?

Living Streets Bus Connectivity Project: Topic Guide for Focus Group / Workshops

Introduce Evaluation

This element seeks to explore the role of the toolkit and process, specifically:

- What do local residents feel about the process?
- Are they likely to adopt or replicate the process?
- Is the process useful and relevant?

Discussion should take approx. 60 minutes

Warm up

- Respondent to introduce name, where they live?
- Each to share:
 - one thing they like about taking (any) public transport;
 - one thing they find difficult/ challenging and why?

Views on audit findings

- What do you think about the findings presented?
- Do the recommendations reflect the concerns you have about accessing bus travel in your area?
 - Why? / why not?
- Would you have considered these things as being linked to bus use before tonight?
 - Why? / why not?
- Are these things the issues that matter? – has the audit identified the right issues?
 - Are there any apparent gaps in the audit findings and recommendations?
 - What other things help or prevent people using buses in your area?
- Are there any surprises in the list?

SLIDE SELECTION EXERCISE – ON CHANGES PRESENTED FOR THIS AREA. TABLE PRINTOUTS OF SLIDES, PARTICIPANTS TO PICK

- *Top 3 slides / points???*
- *Bottom 3 slides / points??*

MODERATOR TO PROBE ON REASONS

- What is the most important change/ improvement (that has been presented) for you?
- What is missing?
 - Why is that important?
- Who would you go to, to raise these issues?
 - Who should take a lead?
 - Who should be responsible?

Impact of audit

- *[if put in place]* do you think implementing the recommended actions is likely to influence your likelihood of using the bus?
 - If so, why and if not, why not?
- What else influences you using buses in your area?

- What are the benefits to you and others of using buses?

CARD SORT EXERCISE ON KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING BUS USE

RANK in terms of importance for *this location*

- Knowing where bus stops are and how to get to and from them
- The distance you have to walk to get to and from the bus stop
- The ease of the walk to and from the bus stop (e.g. hills, steps, having a direct route etc.)
- The attractiveness of the walk to and from the bus stop (e.g. a pleasant walking environment)
- The walk to and from the bus stop being well lit
- Safety of the route to and from the bus stop
- Safety of the bus stop itself
- Maintenance of bus stop
- Provision of bus shelter
- Access to bus information at shelter
 - MODERATOR TO EXPLORE REASONS

Overall Audit Process

- What do you think about this audit/ project process as described?
 - Overall
 - Aims
 - Worthwhile?
 - Each element (as far as you understand it)
 - Survey
 - Walk around audit
 - Reporting back (tonight)
 - Wider involvement?
- Did it allow you to:
 - feel engaged?
 - voice concerns?
 - have some ownership over the process?
- Would you have done it this way?
 - Why/ why not?
- Who would you invite to be part of the audit for your community?
 - Community Councillors?
 - Parents?
 - General public?
 - Businesses?
 - Community Groups?
- How would you feed back these findings to your community?
- Who would take a lead on this for your community?

Impact of audit

- What do you think will happen with these findings?
 - Who will act?
- Will the process be successful?

- How?
 - Why? What would success look like?
- What did / do you think it will achieve?
 - Which groups will it access?
 - Which interests will it support?
 - Who and how will it be used?
- Who should this report be for?
 - Probe on: Councillors, public, bus operators etc.
- What other information would you put into this type of report to XX?

Wrap up

- Would you recommend that other areas do this type of audit?
- Could the audit process be improved in any practical way and if so, how?
- Any other comments?