

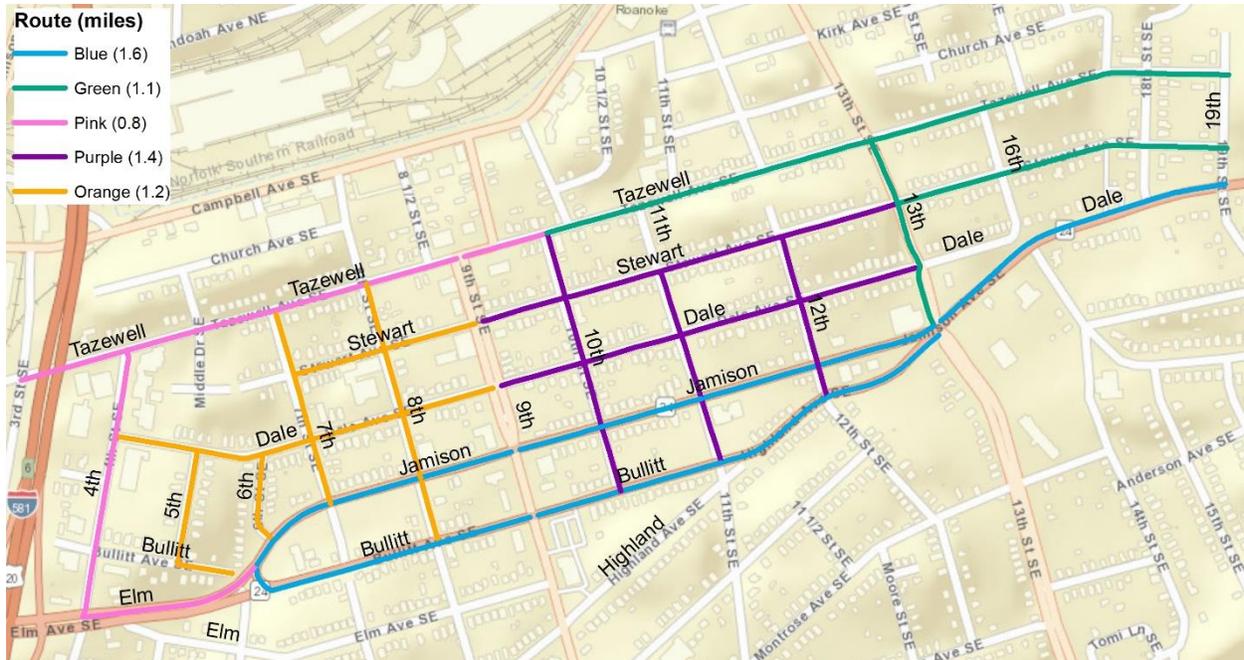
Belmont-Fallon Review of Pedestrian Accommodations

Date: 20 July 2021

Time: 5:30 – 7:30 pm

Lighting: Sunny

Weather: Hot, humid



Walk leaders	Affiliation	Route
Andrea Garland	City of Roanoke - Transportation	Blue
Hong Liu	City of Roanoke - Transportation	Green
Katharine Gray	City of Roanoke - Planning	Pink
Ian Coffey	City of Roanoke - Transportation	Purple
Wayne Leftwich	City of Roanoke - Planning	Orange
Rachel Ruhlen	Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission	
Participants	Affiliation	Route
Sunni Purviance	Southeast Action Forum	Blue
Anne Lloyd	Southeast Action Forum	Blue
Spence Robertson	Southeast Action Forum	Green
Nathan Hilbert	Bike/Ped Committee	Green
Monet Mayek	Southeast Action Forum	Pink
Diane Smith	Southeast Action Forum	Pink
Robert Robillard	Bike/Ped Committee	Pink
Josh Johnson	City of Roanoke – Neighborhood	Pink
Joan Petrus	Southeast Action Forum	Purple
Grace Carscadden	Southeast Action Forum	Purple

Walk leaders	Affiliation	Route
Brendan Hall	Bike/Ped Committee	Purple
Cameron Chase	Southeast Action Forum	Orange
Sam Purviance	Southeast Action Forum	Orange
Sandy Beyers	Bike/Ped Committee	Orange
Liz Ackley	Bike/Ped Committee	Orange

Context

Every five years, the City of Roanoke concentrates community development funding into a single neighborhood to increase its impact; currently that neighborhood is the Belmont-Fallon Target Area. The City is interested in improving access to parks and places and is following the 10-Minute Walk movement that everyone who lives within a ten-minute walk to a park or neighborhood center area can comfortably walk there. The entire Belmont-Fallon Target Area is within the ten-minute walk buffer of either Fallon Park, the 9th Street neighborhood center area, or Elmwood Park. The goal of the July 20 walk was to experience pedestrian conditions on every street in the Belmont-Fallon Target Area from a resident perspective.

Route

Participants were divided into five color-coded routes. City staff led each route and documented observations.

Observations

The Belmont-Fallon Target Area has an underlying structure that favors walking and should be vigilantly protected. Transportation projects and opportunities from development should prioritize pedestrian safety and comfort first and vehicle movement last.

Strengths

Typical of early twentieth century streetcar suburbs, the Belmont-Fallon Target Area has an intact grid pattern, long, narrow lots, and generally intact sidewalks buffered from the street. This underlying structure is foundational for good walking



environment. Areas with trees and well-maintained homes and buildings are pleasant to walk.

Many people were observed walking or being outside, giving the area a neighborly feel. Murals provide visual interest and City trash bins help keep trash contained. The Southeast Plawkers, many of whom participated in the walk, provide a huge service to the area by picking up visible litter.



Weaknesses

The loss of street trees, sidewalk deterioration, overgrowth of vegetation, and trash create an unpleasant environment that obstructs the sidewalk and feels unsafe and unwelcoming. While most streets are low traffic, speeding is a concern on many streets. Traffic calming chicanes and bump outs

have effectively slowed traffic on Jamison Avenue and Bullitt Avenue which have higher traffic volumes, but the vegetation in these structures is not well maintained.

On-street parking: good or bad?

On-street parking both improves and detracts from the pedestrian environment. Vehicles parked on the street slow traffic and buffer pedestrians from traffic. Vehicles pulling into or out of on-street parking do not threaten pedestrians while a common pedestrian crash situation is a vehicle backing or pulling out of a drive that crosses a sidewalk. Vehicles parked on the street can obstruct the sidewalk and hide pedestrians about to cross the street, particularly children. Inoperable or abandoned cars create a sense of danger and unwelcomeness.

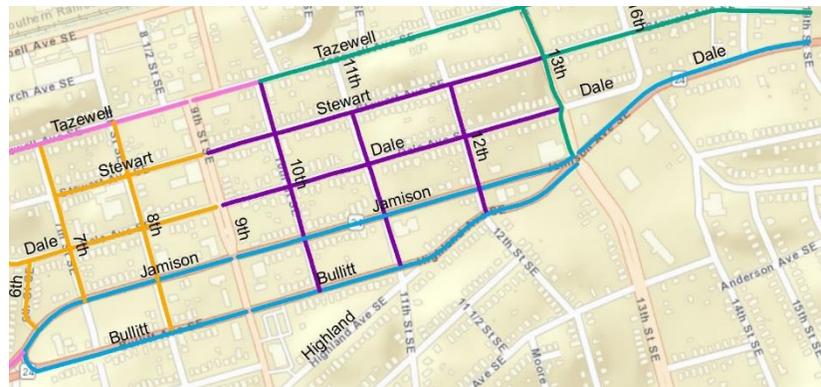
Photos from the event are mapped at

https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/1/edit?mid=1CzXNSTXvhMlv_up-Bgnzc6_6PECL-pxq&usp=sharing.

Blue

On Jamison Avenue and Bullitt Avenue between 6th Street and 13th Street, problems noted included trash, vagrants, and poorly maintained public and private spaces. Sidewalks are generally in good condition with appropriate curb ramps and are comfortably buffered from traffic.

The chicanes and traffic calming berms are not fulfilling their potential because they are not maintained, with weeds, dead trees, and trash. These are missed opportunities that could significantly beautify the corridor.



Jamison Avenue between 6th Street and 9th Street

Weeds along the sidewalk and private fence lines and overflowing trash cans create an unpleasant walking environment. The traffic calming berms have trash and dirt trapped between the berm the curb and overgrown weeds. Redundant driveways near Papa Johns create unnecessary potential conflict points between pedestrians and motor vehicles. Utility pole guy wires are trip hazards.



Opportunities for improvements at Jamison and 9th Street Intersection should prioritize pedestrians and people on bikes. The turning radius at Jamison Avenue and 9th Street is too tight for tractor trailers.

Jamison Avenue between 9th Street and 13th Street

The separation between pedestrians and the traffic lane provided by the landscape buffer and chicanes creates a comfortable and pleasant walking environment. Old reflective stakes were left in curb bump outs when unattractive new stakes were installed.

There is little shade. Overhanging trees from private property block the sidewalk.

Landscaping is not being maintained on public and private land. The landscaping on the chicanes is not uniform and the chicanes have dead trees and stink weeds. The D&G Mart corner and surrounding properties have poor landscape maintenance.



Trash on the street between 12th Street and 13th Street creates an unattractive environment. The trash dumpster at D&G Mart and trash cans at 13th Street are overflowing.

The 9th Street intersection will soon have audible pedestrian signals and curb ramps. Additional features that will make it safer for pedestrians include reducing the number of lanes on 9th Street, expanding the sidewalk, and building up landscape medians.

13th Street has pedestrian countdown signals, but it also has long crossing distances for pedestrians. Signal timing changes may improve the pedestrian experience. During a ten-minute observation, pedestrians coming from the south side of 13th street crossed Bullitt Avenue to access the D&G Mart and crossed both Bullitt Avenue and Jamison Avenue to access the Dollar store. A group ride of over twenty cyclists used 13th Street.

Bullitt Avenue between 13th Street and 9th Street

There are people loitering on the Bullitt Avenue side of D&G Mart and people sleeping on sidewalks. Streetlights near 13th Street are 100 watts (others are 200 watts). There are not trees, but there is space for trees. The well maintained and landscaped homes make the walk more pleasant and the blooming crepe myrtles are beautiful.



Bullitt Avenue between 9th Street and 6th Street

People sleep outside the laundromat at Bullitt Avenue and 9th Street and engage in inappropriate and illegal public behavior. Trees and landscaping would make the walk more pleasant. There is trash in the gutters. The marked crosswalk at 7th Street is the only marked crosswalk from 9th Street to the I-581 ramp.

Green

Except where noted, sidewalks are mostly intact and in generally reasonable condition with curb ramps. Trees or houses that are higher than the street because of the terrain provide some shade and most sidewalks are buffered from the street. The traffic volume is low. There was a lot of trash throughout.



Tazewell Avenue between 9th Street and 13th Street

Both sides of the street lack shade. Removing parking from the north side would provide space for street trees and wider sidewalks. The north side had a lot of trash.

Parked vehicles on the north side of the Big Lick convenience store lot encroach on the sidewalk because there are no wheel stops.

The trash can at the Big Lick convenience store ameliorates litter.

A chain link on the north side between 10th Street and 11th Street has barbed wire at the top that is too low and could scratch a tall pedestrian.

Overgrown vegetation and falling retaining walls block the sidewalk on the south side in the 1000-1100 blocks.

Tazewell Avenue between 13th Street and 19th Street

There is a lot of trash on this section. On the north side, overgrown vegetation covers the sidewalk.

The lack of a curb on the south side in the 1500-1600 blocks is dangerous for pedestrians and allows vehicles to park on the sidewalk.

At 1524 Tazewell Ave the sidewalk on the north side is broken.

People crossing 19th Street at Tazewell to access Fallon Park Elementary School do not have a marked crosswalk. There is a marked crosswalk at the school entrance a few feet to the north, however, it does not connect to a sidewalk on the west side of 19th Street.

Stewart Ave between 13th Street and 19th Street

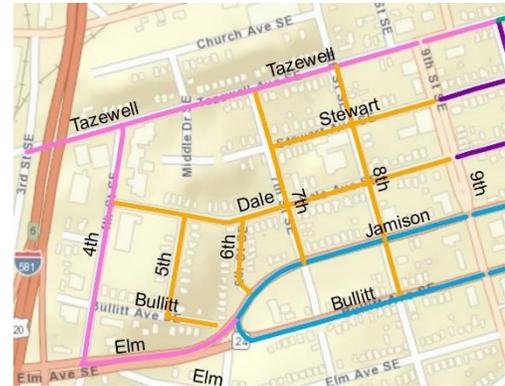
At Stewart Avenue and 19th Street, there is a marked crosswalk on the south side and a curb ramp on the north side. There is not a curb ramp on the south side with the marked crosswalk.

The lack of a curb on the either side in the 1600-1800 blocks is dangerous for pedestrians and allows vehicles to park on the sidewalk, especially on the south side where there is no space between the sidewalk and the road pavement.

There is no sidewalk on the west side of 13th Street.

Pink

This area has ample opportunity for street trees. Sidewalks are obstructed by vegetative overgrowth, trash, trash cans, and deterioration. Accessibility for people with disabilities is compromised by obstructions and inadequate or absent curb ramps. Some streets do not have sidewalks.



Dale Avenue between 8th Street and 6th Street

There is vegetative overgrowth in the planting strip. There is no sidewalk on 7th Street between Dale Avenue and Stewart Avenue.

6th Street between Dale Avenue and Jamison Avenue

The sidewalk is obstructed by vegetative overgrowth and trash cans. The steep slope of front yards means residents either leave trash cans on the sidewalk or carry cans up and down steps.



Elm Avenue between 4th Street and 6th Street

There are steps but no ramp access to Elm Ave from 6th Street. The sidewalk is obstructed by vegetative overgrowth. Sidewalk deterioration is a trip hazard and obstructs accessibility. A homeless encampment and trash on properties next to the P&N Citgo create an unpleasant walking environment. Few pedestrians were found in this area.

4th Street between Elm Avenue and Tazewell Avenue

There is no sidewalk between Elm Avenue and Bullitt Avenue. The crossing distance at Elm Avenue is very long (80 feet compared to 50 feet one block north). A retaining wall on private property adjoining the sidewalk is failing. Private properties have a lot of trash.

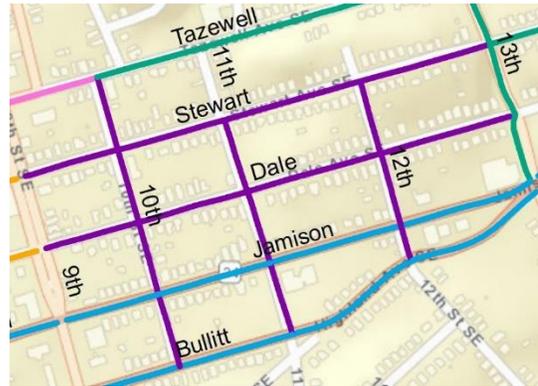
Tazewell Avenue between the I-581 bridge and 10th Street

Under the bridge is dark. The sidewalk is obstructed by vegetative overgrowth and yard waste piled on the sidewalk. Sidewalk deterioration is a trip hazard and obstructs accessibility, particularly at corners. Retaining walls on private property adjoining the sidewalk are failing. There is vegetative overgrowth in the planting strip. Vacant properties and particularly deteriorated residential properties along this section make the area feel less safe. Few pedestrians were found in this area.



Purple

Uneven and broken sidewalks are a trip hazard. Sidewalks made of brick are attractive but as the bricks settle they can create an uneven surface if not properly maintained. Some streets lack sidewalks entirely. The pavement condition on some streets is poor, posing a trip hazard for pedestrians if there are no sidewalks. Drivers focused on potholes may not see pedestrians or may swerve unexpectedly into a pedestrian, and the potholes are unsightly. However, poor pavement condition can also have a traffic calming effect as drivers slow to avoid bumps.



Trash, overgrown vegetation, crumbling retaining walls, and abandoned or inoperable vehicles create an unpleasant environment and block the sidewalk. Abandoned homes and buildings and loud music and engines create an unpleasant environment.



Some intersections do not have curb ramps or have inadequate curb ramps. Drainage issues create puddles, leave mud and debris blocking curb ramps, and accelerate wear. In cold weather, ice accumulation is a hazard for pedestrians. Broken asphalt at intersections is a trip hazard.

Street lighting uses 100-watt bulbs. There are few utility poles to mount lighting and lights are too far apart. Bright lighting at intersections can improve pedestrian safety.

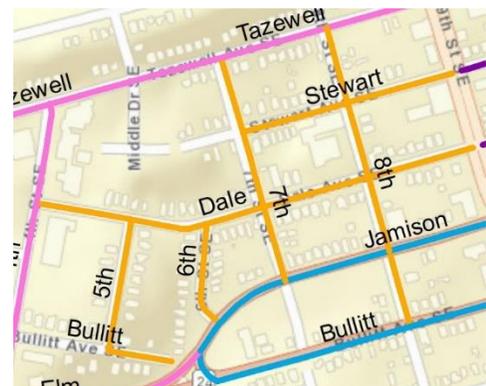
On-street parking and narrow streets with yield conditions reduce traffic speed, but some drivers aggressively accelerate from stop signs.

Orange

This area has nice trees and friendly neighbors. However, many factors detract from the walking environment. Vacant lots, "No trespassing signs", and litter create a sense of danger from crime while speeding traffic creates a sense of danger from traffic.

Dale Avenue between 7th Street and 9th Street

There was a lot of trash, particularly on the south. The brick sidewalk on the south side was completely overgrown in places.



At the intersection with 8th Street, there are no curb cuts.

Nice trees and friendly neighbors contribute to the walking environment. In one mile, walkers observed twenty pedestrians, four bicycles, a dog, and a riding lawn mower.

Many scattered vacant properties decrease the “eyes on the street” (the number of people who may see what happens on a street) and make the area feel less safe. Speeding traffic on 8th Street, 9th Street, and Jamison Avenue makes the area feel dangerous. Around 5:30 pm, walkers observed increased traffic and speeding on 8th Street.

9th Street between Dale Avenue and Stewart Avenue

Transit riders need a comfortable sheltered place to wait for the bus. Marked crosswalks would improve the safety of pedestrians crossing 9th Street.

The litter, including needles, loud sounds, and big industrial buildings detract from the walking environment. The many old churches in the area, with large buildings and declining membership, could be an opportunity to improve the walking environment or could detract if left vacant.

Stewart Avenue between 7th Street and 9th Street

The many “No Trespassing” signs suggest crime and create an unwelcome walking environment and walkers commented that petty theft is rampant. Fences and businesses that appear closed off from the sidewalk may adversely affect the sense of safety for people walking. Trash cans obstruct the sidewalk. The low traffic volume improves the walking environment. There are many e-scooters and mopeds which makes the street more multimodal and less car-centric.

The west side of 8th Street north of Stewart Avenue and the east side of 7th Street south of Stewart Avenue do not have sidewalks.