

# Livable Cities Newsletter



October 16, 2011 Issue 2

## Focusing on pedestrian environments

Welcome to the second Livable Cities newsletter. This newsletter is used to provide updates and information to the Livable Cities Network. The theme for this newsletter is pedestrian environments.

Please share this newsletter with your partner groups and anyone who might be interested!

## What is a “pedestrian environment”?

Pedestrian environments are the places and spaces where people walk. To create a good pedestrian environment, we need to address several key issues:

- **Land Use Diversity** - Land use refers to the different roles buildings and spaces play in a neighbourhood. So, there can be places for people to live, places for people to shop, places for people to work, and places for people to play. In a diverse neighbourhood, you have many or all of these spaces.
- **Footpath/Sidewalk availability** - In order for people to walk safely and comfortably there should be footpaths/sidewalks on both sides of every street.
- **Footpath/Sidewalk quality** - A quality footpath/sidewalk is one that is level, has few cracks or heaves, and is free of obstructions and debris. A quality footpath/sidewalk is also wide enough to support many people walking at the same time. Obstructions, debris and footpaths/sidewalks that are not wide enough force people on to the road, which creates an unsafe situation.
- **Safety**- Pedestrians need safe ways to cross the street, they need pedestrian scale lighting and they need drivers to respect their space.
- **Facilities for the disabled** - All people should be able to use the pedestrian environment comfortably, including people living with a disability. Footpaths/sidewalks and curbs should be designed so that people using a cane, walker or wheelchair can easily use the footpath/sidewalk.
- **Availability of pedestrian amenities** - Pedestrians need places to sit, trees for shade and attractive features such as public art. In addition, providing space for vendors gives people the opportunity to conduct their daily shopping along the street.

# Measuring the quality of the pedestrian environment

HealthBridge partner organization WBB Trust (Work for a Better Bangladesh) has recently completed a pedestrian analysis in 5 different areas of Dhaka as part of a proposed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project. It is anticipated that the BRT will carry up to 100,000 passengers daily along the 20-kilometre corridor and it is very important that pedestrians are able to walk safely and comfortably to and from the BRT.



Figure 1: Overview map that shows the BRT Corridor as well as the 5 study areas.

WBB Trust worked with local students to analyze 968 road segments to look at the key pedestrian issues. In each segment, the student volunteer completed one Observation Survey Form after walking the segment several times. Still photography was taken to document the current situation and to provide a baseline that could demonstrate what changes would be possible given the existing road conditions and space.

## Results

Some highlights of the findings include:

- Only 37% of the observed roads had footpaths on both sides of the street; 19% had footpaths on one side of the street; and 44% had no footpaths at all;



Figure 2: Map of Footpath Availability

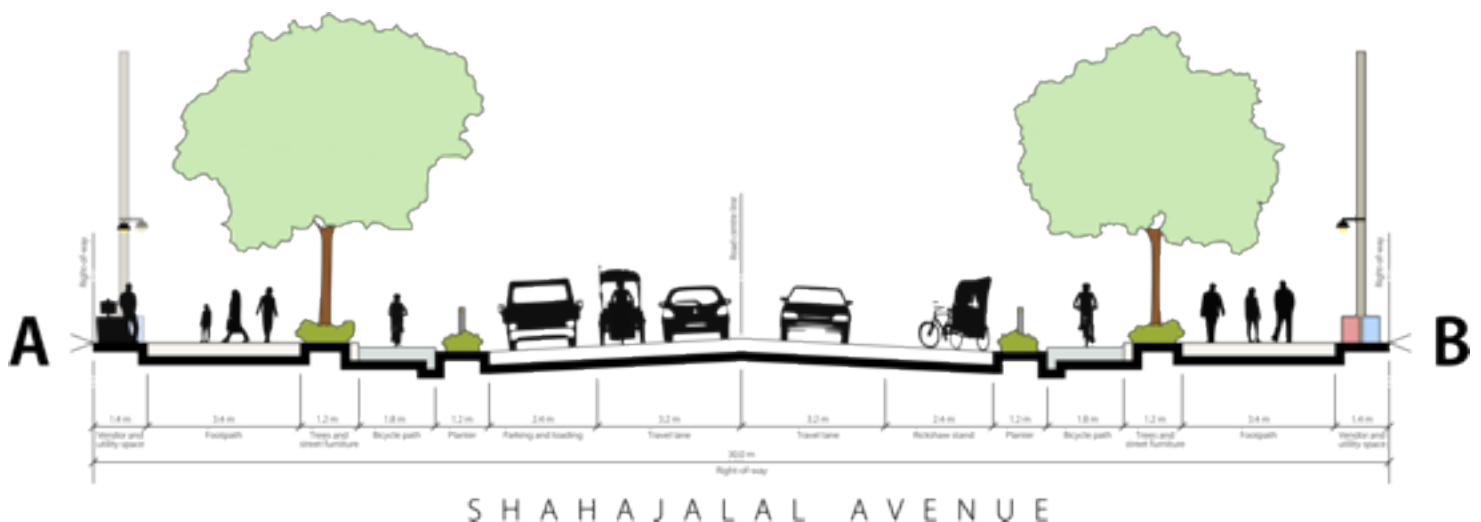
- There were virtually no crossing aids to help pedestrians cross the street safely; only 3% of roads had a crossing aid;
- Virtually all of the observed roads were hostile to people with disabilities;
- Very few service amenities exist in the pedestrian environment; the most common available service amenity was the presence of vendors, but even this service was observed in only 20% of the segments;
- There was lots of pedestrian activity, despite the poor conditions; 85% of the segments had more than 7 people on the move by foot during the time of the observation;
- Only 18% of observed footpaths were given a “good” rating; 42% received a “fair” rating; and, 40% received a “poor” rating;



Figure 3: Streets with a high degree of physical disorder (litter, garbage, etc..)

## Proposed Pilot Project

The results were used to develop a pilot project on Shahajalal Avenue. It is a road that feeds into the proposed BRT station as well as a multi-storey garment factory. This street allowed WBB to demonstrate the types of pedestrian improvements that could occur on a variety of street types; it also poses challenges that may be applicable to other road segments in the city. The redesigned street has space for pedestrians, cyclists, rickshaws and motorized traffic. It also has space for vendors, trees, seating and bicycle racks.



## Partner Profile



WBB Trust (Work for a Better Bangladesh) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization which was founded in 1998. Work for a Better Bangladesh is a slogan as well as a name, reflecting our belief that everyone can contribute to making a better Bangladesh.

The mission of WBB is to facilitate the passage and implementation of policies to create an environment that promotes health and social interactions for all members of society, and in which government provides quality education, health care and other essential services to all for free.

WBB envisions cities and communities in which workplaces, schools, shops and recreational facilities are mostly within walking distance, in which children can play outdoors and walk to school safely, and in which outdoor public spaces are attractive and easily accessible for all. WBB envisions a policy environment that treats water as an essential resource to be protected, and which seeks to reduce pollution and to prioritize health over economic growth.

To learn more about WBB and its work on livable cities, please visit the website: [www.wbbtrust.org](http://www.wbbtrust.org)

---

### Next issue...

In the next issue we will be highlighting the work that HealthBridge Vietnam has been undertaking to save their traditional markets in Hanoi.

### Interested in becoming a Livable Cities Network member?

To become part of the Livable Cities Network, e-mail Kristie Daniel, Program Manager, Livable Cities at [kdaniel@healthbridge.ca](mailto:kdaniel@healthbridge.ca).



HealthBridge's Livable Cities program works in partnership with local NGOs, academic institutions and governments in developing countries. We help local partners identify needs, develop and implement appropriate solutions, apply innovative and sustainable practices, and promote effective policies through research and action.

1 Nicholas Street, Suite 1004  
Ottawa, ON K1N 7B7 CANADA  
[www.healthbridge.ca](http://www.healthbridge.ca)  
Tel. +1.613.241.2927  
Fax. +1.613.241.7899