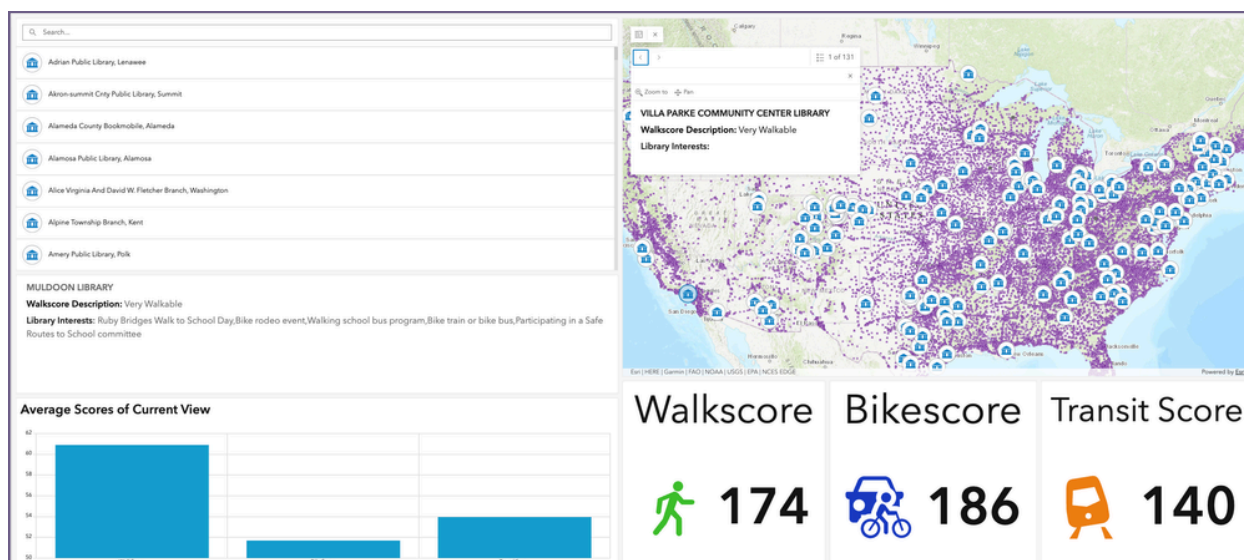


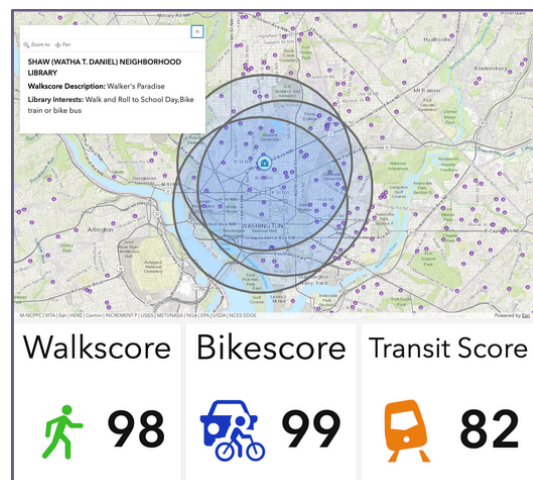
TIP SHEET: Jumpstart Your Safe Routes to Libraries Planning With ULC's GIS Mapping Tool

The Urban Libraries Council's [Safe Routes to Libraries GIS Tool](#) helps public libraries and local governments better understand the existing infrastructure supporting pedestrian, bike, scooter, and transit access to libraries, while also setting a baseline for opportunities for improved access. By overlaying library locations with publicly available transportation and school proximity data, the tool provides a starting point for local conversations about improving access to libraries by walking, biking, rolling, and public transit.



Steps for Libraries:

- 1 Understand how your community reaches the library.** Use the GIS tool to explore walkability, bikeability, transit access, and nearby schools, all of which may affect how people access library services. Look for patterns that may indicate barriers to safe access, such as low walk, bike, or transit scores.
- 2 Strengthen partnerships with local government.** Share the map with planning, transportation, public works, parks, and school district staff to start conversations about improving access to your library. Incorporate GIS data into grant applications, presentations, and discussions with elected officials to illustrate local transportation needs and potential community benefits. TIP: Screenshotting your library's results in the tool is a simple way to drop the information into a presentation!



- ③ **Explore funding opportunities.** There are a number of pathways that libraries could pursue to get projects funded, but one of the most promising is getting involved in [Safe Routes to School](#) programs in your community. The map's bubble indicates how many schools are within a two-mile radius of a library branch – critical information because close proximity to K-12 schools means your library and its patrons could benefit from the library's partnership with Safe Routes to School. [Learn more about funding opportunities for Safe Routes to Libraries.](#)
- ④ **Outline next steps based on the data.** Use the GIS findings as a starting point for building out a larger Safe Routes to Libraries plan. Activities like walk audits, Walk or Bike to School Days, and more are all best informed by the local circumstances.



Steps for Planning Departments & Local Government Leaders:

- ① **Recognize libraries as key community destinations.** Include libraries alongside schools, parks, and commercial centers when evaluating pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and accessibility improvements. Also, consider library access when developing comprehensive plans, active transportation plans, Safe Routes initiatives, capital improvement programs, and grant applications.
Example: Check out how [Acushnet \(MA\) Complete Streets Prioritization Plan](#) features the library as a key community destination.
- ② **Use the GIS tool to identify transportation and access gaps.** Review transportation conditions around libraries to identify opportunities for safer sidewalks, crossings, bicycle facilities, transit access, and ADA improvements.
- ③ **Coordinate across departments.** Use the map to bring together planning, transportation, public works, parks, schools, and library staff around shared community mobility goals.



- ④ **Give libraries a seat at the table.** Libraries are often left out of conversations about community planning. Consider inviting your local library CEO/director or deputy director to conversations about community plans and access. Also, consider connecting your library with existing Safe Routes to Schools coordinators in your community.
- ⑤ **Pair data with local knowledge.** Use the GIS tool as an initial planning resource, then validate findings through site visits, walk audits, traffic analyses, and community engagement to inform project priorities. Again, invite the library to the table as much as possible.

Methodology

The Safe Routes to Libraries GIS Tool combines responses from ULC's 2025 Safe Routes to Libraries survey with publicly available transportation and school proximity data ([Point locations of 2024-2025 public elementary and secondary schools](#) created by the [National Center for Education Statistics' \(NCES\) Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates \(EDGE\) program](#)). [Walk Score, Bike Score, and Transit Score](#) values estimate the relative walkability, bicycle friendliness, and transit accessibility of an area based on factors such as street connectivity, nearby destinations, and transit service.

Proximity of libraries to public schools was calculated using a 2-mile radius. This buffer was used to identify libraries with public schools in close proximity.

These measures estimate the relative walkability, bicycle friendliness, and transit accessibility of an area based on factors such as street connectivity, nearby destinations, and transit service. The libraries featured in this tool are ULC and Association of Rural & Small Libraries (ARSL) members who responded to a 2025 survey.

Data was provided by Walkscore® and was used to evaluate the walkability, bikability and transit score of sampled library neighborhoods and locations. See Walkscore® [methodology here](#).

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