Towards Fine-Grained Sidewalk Accessibility Assessment with Deep Learning: Initial Benchmarks and an Open Dataset

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Figure 1: We examine whether deep learning models can classify sidewalk accessibility conditions from pre-cropped 640x640 streetscape images—e.g., whether a curb ramp is too steep, too narrow, or missing a tactile indicator or if a sidewalk panel is uneven, bumpy, or composed of brick/cobblestone. The grid above showcases all 33 conditions we attempt to infer.

Abstract

We examine the feasibility of using deep learning to infer 33 classes of sidewalk accessibility conditions in pre-cropped streetscape images, including bumpy, brick/cobblestone, cracks, height difference

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(uplifts), narrow, uneven/slanted, pole, and sign. We present two experiments: frst, a comparison between two state-of-the-art computer vision models, Meta's DINOv2 and OpenAI's CLIP-ViT, on a cleaned dataset of ∼24k images; second, an examination of a larger but noisier crowdsourced dataset (∼87k images) on the best performing model from Experiment 1. Though preliminary, Experiment 1 shows that certain sidewalk conditions can be identifed with high precision and recall, such as missing tactile warnings on curb ramps and grass grown on sidewalks, while Experiment 2 demonstrates that larger but noisier training data can have a detrimental efect on performance. We contribute an open dataset and classifcation benchmarks to advance this important area.

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CCS Concepts

• Human-centered computing \rightarrow Accessibility technologies;

• Computing methodologies \rightarrow Computer vision.

Keywords

Sidewalk accessibility, computer vision, human mobility, obstacle detection, DINOv2, ViT-CLIP

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1 Introduction

Ensuring that sidewalks are safe and accessible to all is a key US priority [\[19\]](#page-4-0) and a goal of the UN's New Urban Agenda [\[25\]](#page-5-0). A looming challenge, however, is the lack of scalable data collection techniques to assess and map the condition of pedestrian environments throughout the world [\[9\]](#page-4-1). Emerging work in urban studies and accessibility have trained state-of-the-art computer vision models to fnd and identify pedestrian-related features using streetscape imagery, such as crosswalks, curb ramps, and obstacles [\[1,](#page-4-2) [8,](#page-4-3) [10,](#page-4-4) [12,](#page-4-5) [15,](#page-4-6) [26\]](#page-5-1). While promising and scalable, these models only detect features, they do not assess condition—for example, they detect curb ramps but not whether the ramp has a tactile warning strip or whether there is sufficient landing space for a wheelchair. Some recent work has examined sidewalk condition assessment; however, it has taken a narrower scope, such as classifying the sidewalk material (e.g., asphalt, cobblestone) [\[13\]](#page-4-7).

In this paper, we explore the feasibility of classifying pre-cropped streetscape images into 33 sidewalk conditions (or tags) using stateof-the-art deep learning models. For training and testing, we use data derived from Project Sidewalk, an open-source sidewalk accessibility labeling tool currently deployed in 21 cities across eight countries [\[22\]](#page-4-8). We present two experiments: frst, a comparison between two state-of-the-art computer vision models, Meta's DINOv2 and OpenAI's CLIP-ViT, on a cleaned dataset of ∼24k images; second, an examination of a larger but noisier crowd-sourced dataset (∼87k images) on the best performing model from Experiment 1. Though preliminary, Experiment 1 shows that certain sidewalk conditions can be identifed with high precision and recall, such as missing tactile warning on curb ramps and grass grown on sidewalks, while Experiment 2 demonstrates that larger but noisier training data can have a detrimental effect on performance. Both our datasets and analysis code are released as open source on GitHub¹.

Our overarching goal is twofold: frst, to advance the feld of automated streetscape analysis and establish performance benchmarks for sidewalk condition assessment; second, inspired by the VizWiz Challenge [\[6,](#page-4-9) [11,](#page-4-10) [18\]](#page-4-11), to provide two open datasets to spur future research and enable performance comparisons.

2 Dataset

Our datasets derive from the open source crowdsourcing tool, Project Sidewalk [\(https://projectsidewalk.org\)](https://projectsidewalk.org) [\[22\]](#page-4-8). In Project Sidewalk (PS), online users are given interactive missions to locate, label, and tag sidewalk and crosswalk accessibility features and problems in interactive Google Street View (GSV) images. Currently, Project Sidewalk is deployed in 21 cities across eight countries with over 1 million image-based sidewalk accessibility labels and 693k validations across 11k street miles. For validations, users are shown labels by other users and vote on their correctness by selecting agree, disagree, or unsure.

Project Sidewalk uses a hierarchical labeling approach. Users frst apply one of seven high-level label types: curb ramp, pedestrian signal, crosswalk, missing curb ramp, obstacle, surface problem, and missing sidewalk. Each label has an associated set of 5-11 tags, which can optionally be applied. For example, surface problem tags include grass, cracks, uneven/slanted, sand/gravel, etc.—see Tables [2-](#page-6-0)[5](#page-8-0) in the Appendix. In this paper, we attempt to automatically infer these tags given a label type and a pre-cropped 640×640 image around the center position of that label. We aim to create new Human-AI interfaces in Project Sidewalk that recommend tags to the user, help automatically validate previously applied tags, or back-fll missing tags for labels already in the Project Sidewalk database.

For our experiments, we attempt to classify 33 tags across four label categories: curb ramp, crosswalk, obstacle, and surface problem. We created two datasets drawn from 10 and 12 cities, respectively: (1) a cleaned dataset (Dataset 1) of 24,009 labels and 29,311 tags and (2) a raw dataset (Dataset 2) of 87,495 labels and 66,875 tags—see Table [1.](#page-2-0) For Dataset 1, four research assistants iteratively cleaned and verifed each label and tag. In total, 16,424 tags were changed (7,988 tags added), suggesting an originally noisy dataset (Table [1\)](#page-2-0). For Dataset 2, we subsampled raw labels directly from Project Sidewalk with a positive crowdsourced validation score (i.e., $#$ agree votes > # disagree votes) across the 12 cities.

In summary, each data point in our training and test set contains: (1) a 640×640 streetscape image center-cropped around the user's label belonging to one of the four PS categories (curb ramp, crosswalk, surface problem, or obstacle); and (2) PS category-specific tags (Figure [1](#page-0-0) and Tables [2-](#page-6-0)[5\)](#page-8-0). Download the dataset on our [GitHub.](https://github.com/ProjectSidewalk/sidewalk-tagger-ai)

3 Experiment 1

In Experiment 1, we examine the feasibility of using custom-trained, state-of-the-art deep learning models to classify sidewalk accessibility conditions given a 640×640 image crop of one of four categories (curb ramp, crosswalk, surface problem, or obstacle). We selected three open source models for our early experiments: (1) Ultralytics' YOLOv8^{[2](#page-1-1)} [\[14\]](#page-4-12) designed for fast, real-time applications, (2) Meta's DINOv2 [3](#page-1-2) [\[20\]](#page-4-13), a recent advancement in Vision Transformer-based models (ViT) specifcally designed for self-supervised learning; and (3) OpenAI's CLIP ViT (pretrained on LAION-2B, ImageNet-12k, fine-tuned on ImageNet-1k) 4 [\[5,](#page-4-14) [7,](#page-4-15) [23\]](#page-4-16), which combines a *Con*trastive Language-Image Pre-training with ViT for image encoding. In our initial experiments we noticed that even the largest YOLOv8

[¹https://github.com/ProjectSidewalk/sidewalk-tagger-ai](https://github.com/ProjectSidewalk/sidewalk-tagger-ai)

 2 https://github.com/ultralytics/ultralytics
 3 https://github.com/facebookresearch/dinov2

[⁴https://huggingface.co/timm/vit_base_patch16_clip_224.laion2b_ft_in12k_in1k](https://huggingface.co/timm/vit_base_patch16_clip_224.laion2b_ft_in12k_in1k)

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Table 1: An overview of the two datasets. The cleaned dataset (Dataset 1) consists of 24,009 labels and 29,311 tags; The raw crowdsourced dataset (Dataset 2) consists of 87,495 labels and 66,875 tags. Both Experiment 1 and 2 used the same test dataset to enable comparison. Lbl cat changed stands for "Label categories changed" and indicates the number of instances where the RAs did not agree with the label category and removed it from the dataset.

model did not perform as well as the other two models, hence, we chose to use DINOv2 and CLIP ViT for our subsequent analysis.

Implementation. We adopted a multi-label classifcation approach, as each image crop could possess zero, one, or multiple tags. Because each PS label type has its own unique set of tags, we trained separate models for each label type and split the data into 80% training and 20% test sets. To train the DINOv2 model, we used the B/14 Distilled backbone and pre-trained weights, Adam optimizer with a learning rate of 1e-6, binary cross entropy as the loss function, and a batch size of four. The 640 \times 640 crops were resized to 256 \times 256 for optimizing computation and each model was trained for 100 epochs. For the CLIP-ViT model, we used the ViT-B/16 pre-trained weights and followed the same training protocol as DINOv2. Since CLIP was pre-trained on 224×224 pixel images, we also resized the 640×640 crops accordingly to ensure compatibility. For both DINOv2 and CLIP-ViT, we saved the best model at each epoch with the highest accuracy, prioritizing lower loss in cases of ties. All training was done using Pytorch framework on an Alienware m18 R2 with NVIDIA® GeForce RTX™ 4080, 12 GB GPU.

Results. We present Experiment 1 results using standard metrics including precision, recall, mean average precision (mAP), and F1 scores. To compute the optimal confdence level with balanced precision and recall, we identifed the confdence threshold that maximized the F1 score, with a minimum threshold of 0.3. Tags with fewer than 10 instances in the test set were excluded. To account for the imbalance in our tags, we computed macro, micro and weighted averaged F1 scores [\[17,](#page-4-17) [24\]](#page-5-2). See Appendix [A.1](#page-5-3) for derivation details.

As shown in Figure [2,](#page-3-0) DINOv2 slightly outperformed CLIP-ViT across all key metrics. For example, Obstacle tags achieved a mAP of 0.71 with DINO vs. 0.68 with CLIP as well as a weighted-F1 of 0.73 vs. 0.70. The most signifcant performance was observed in the crosswalk category, with the sharpest diference in the macro-F1 score (0.60 vs. 0.48). Within category, the macro is generally lower than the micro and weighted F1 scores since it treats all tags equally, regardless of frequency. This diference highlights the impact of tag imbalance, where minority classes underperform. However, the obstacles model shows more consistent performance, as indicated by the close macro and micro F1 scores in both DINOv2 (0.68 vs. 0.64) and CLIP-ViT (0.64 vs. 0.62).

Diving into DINOv2, the best performing model overall, 13 of the 33 tags (40%) had weighted F1 scores above 0.7. The highest

performing tag for each label type included: missing tactile warning (F1=0.94) for curb ramps, brick/cobblestone (0.91) for surface problems, parked car (0.93) for obstacles, and paint fading (0.8) for crosswalks. The tags with the lowest scores were steep (F1=0) for curb ramps; utility panel (0) for surface problems; narrow (0.3) for obstacles; and bumpy (0.45) for crosswalks. See detailed Experiment 1 result tables in the Appendix (Tables [7](#page-9-0)[-10\)](#page-9-1).

To more deeply understand DINOv2's performance, we qualitatively analyzed classifcation errors. We selected the top two most frequently occurring tags for each label type in our test set—e.g., pole (N=114) and trash/recycling cans (N=92) for obstacles—and analyzed the top 30 false positive (FP) and false negative (FN) classifcations (as sorted by classifcation confdence). Similar to related work [\[8,](#page-4-3) [12,](#page-4-5) [26\]](#page-5-1), we found image-related issues such as shadows, overexposure, low contrast, and faint/distant features as well as interclass similarity (e.g., tree appears like a pole), viewpoint occlusion, and atypical forms/textures. More work is needed to address these limitations.

4 Experiment 2

While Experiment 1 helps establish a performance baseline using a manually-cleaned dataset, Experiment 2 explores the impact of a larger but noisier crowdsourced dataset. Because DINOv2 outperformed CLIP-ViT above, we focus solely on the former here. Data quality is, of course, essential for training robust models [\[3,](#page-4-18) [4,](#page-4-19) [21\]](#page-4-20) but collecting high-quality data is expensive and laborious—e.g., to create Dataset 1, four research assistants spent over 100 hours.

Implementation. In Experiment 2, we trained an additional DINOv2 model following the same protocol as Experiment 1 but using the larger, uncleaned Dataset 2 for training (Table [1\)](#page-2-0). To enable comparison across the two experiments, the test dataset was the same as Experiment 1.

Results. Overall, with the larger but noisier dataset, performance dropped across all four key metrics—for example, the weighted F1 score dropped from 0.62 to 0.3 for curb ramp tags and 0.68 to 0.36 for crosswalk tags. Interestingly, surface problem and obstacle tags experienced a smaller decline: 0.71 to 0.66 and 0.73 to 0.66, respectively. With the cleaned training dataset (Dataset 1), 13 tags achieved weighted F1 scores \geq 0.7. In Experiment 2, this drops to 8. While some tags were largely unafected (e.g., grass dropped from 0.9 to 0.88, trash from 0.88 to 0.84) or even improved (e.g., tree

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Figure 2: (A) Overall classifcation results for Experiment 1 (Dataset 1) and Experiment 2 (Dataset 2). F1 scores computed at a 0.3 confdence threshold. (B) The Experiment 1 precision-recall curves across the four label type categories and 33 tags. The legend shows tags sorted by frequency in the test set (the parenthetical shows the occurrence count of the tag in the test set).

Figure 3: To better understand DINOv2 performance, we visually analyzed Experiment 1 errors. We selected the top two most frequently occurring tags for each label type in our test set and analyzed the top 30 FPs and FNs (as sorted by classifcation confidence). One exception: for curb ramps, we selected missing tactile strip $(N=872)$ and the third most common tag surface problem (N=297) because the second most common points into traffic (N=297) had a low F1 score (0.25).

from 0.75 to 0.79, vegetation from 0.84 to 0.89), others decreased signifcantly (e.g., brick/cobblestone went from 0.91 to 0.51, paint fading dropped from 0.8 to 0.58). These results suggest that more training data alone is not better.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

In this paper, we investigate the feasibility of assessing sidewalk and crosswalk conditions using state-of-the-art CV models. Our primary contribution is in establishing an open image dataset and

initial performance benchmarks to enable future research in sidewalk condition classifcation. Below, we contextualize our fndings, enumerate limitations, and outline directions for future work.

Similar to prior work [\[2,](#page-4-21) [21\]](#page-4-20), our fndings suggest that investing in obtaining high-quality training data is important. Our results show that a smaller (∼24k) but cleaner dataset outperforms a much larger but noisier (∼87k) training dataset. Still, even with the best performing model (DINOv2) and the clean training dataset (Dataset 1), only 13 of 33 tags achieved weighted F1 scores of 0.7 or better. So,

while we have seen remarkable CV improvements in applications related to autonomous driving, face/pose classifcation, and other high interest areas, the same is not yet so for pedestrian-related infrastructure and disability. Our hope is that our paper provides a positive step in drawing attention to this area and establishing benchmarks to spur future research. Future work should also conduct more in-depth analyses of trade-ofs between the dataset size and quality to optimize curation strategies.

In both Experiment 1 and 2, we trained individual multi-label binary classifcation models for each label category (curb ramp, crosswalk, obstacle, and surface problem). Future research should develop a unifed multi-class and multi-label model capable of simultaneously classifying multiple accessibility issues given a precropped image. In addition, PS includes other metadata such as severity; the ideal classifcation model would infer not just condition but also severity—which would help cities better triage and prioritize problems to fx and enable more personalized routing algorithms in mapping tools.

Our dataset exhibits a long-tail tag distribution. Future work should focus on techniques to handle such imbalanced data efectively to improve robustness and generalizability. While we believe our open dataset and initial custom-trained CV models are an important contribution to the urban studies and accessibility felds, a longer-term aim is to incorporate these models back into Project Sidewalk itself. Like the recent LabelAId system [\[16\]](#page-4-22), our CV models could provide crowdworkers with real-time labeling and validation suggestions—e.g., by recommending a tag as they are labeling.

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A Appendix

A.1 Metric Defnitions

Our datasets exhibit long-tail label distribution, as shown in Tables 2-5. Hence, the cross-label performance metrics can difer significantly. To account for such cases, we report macro, micro and weighted averaged F1 scores. While macro-averaged F1 score is an unweighted average that treats all labels the same, micro-averaged F1 score is a label agnostic measure that is more impacted by the performance of the majority label and weighted-average F1 uses true instance frequency as weights.

In multi-label binary classifcation, each instance can be assigned multiple labels. The F1 score can be calculated in diferent ways depending on how the individual label results are aggregated. Below, we define the Micro F1, Weighted F1, and Macro F1 scores. Let L be the number of labels and i denote a specific label. Note that, for our case, a label here is a tag.

Macro F1 Score

The Macro F1 score calculates the F1 score for each label and then takes the average (unweighted) of these scores.

$$
\text{Macro F1} = \frac{1}{L} \sum_{i=1}^{L} \text{F1}_{i}
$$

Micro F1 Score

The Micro F1 score aggregates the contributions of all labels to compute the average F1 score. It is calculated using the total True Positives (TP), False Positives (FP), and False Negatives (FN) across all labels, following Sokolova and Lapalme [\[24\]](#page-5-2) alternative defnition.

Micro Precision =
$$
\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{L} \text{TP}_i}{\sum_{i=1}^{L} (\text{TP}_i + \text{FP}_i)}
$$

Micro Recall =
$$
\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{L} \text{TP}_i}{\sum_{i=1}^{L} (\text{TP}_i + \text{FN}_i)}
$$

Micro P1 =
$$
\frac{2 \cdot \text{Micro Precision} \cdot \text{Micro Recall}}{\text{Micro Precision} + \text{Micro Recall}}
$$

Weighted F1 Score

The Weighted F1 score calculates the F1 score for each label and takes a weighted average based on the number of true instances (support) for each label.

Weighted F1 =
$$
\sum_{i=1}^{L} w_i \times F1 \text{ Score}_i
$$

Where,

$$
w_i = \frac{\text{No. true instances for label } i}{\text{Total number of samples}}
$$

A.2 Validation UI

For Dataset 1, we designed and implemented a custom validation user interface to clean Project Sidewalk label and tag data. We show two example screenshots of this interface in Figure [4.](#page-6-1) Four research assistants used this UI to iteratively clean and verify 24,009 labels and 29,311 tags. In total, 16,424 tags were changed (7,988 tags added)—see Table [1.](#page-2-0)

Figure 4: Our custom built validation UI to clean Project Sidewalk label and tag data. (left) The user validating an obstacle label and tags: there is a recycling can blocking the sidewalk, which is tagged with trash-recycling-can and narrow. (right) The user validating a crosswalk label and tags: there is a painted crosswalk but it has a broken surface and paint fading.

A.3 Tags Frequency by Category

Below, we present the frequency of all tags in the training and test sets for each PS category. Tags listed below the gray horizontal rule were present in the training set but were excluded from the test results because their frequency count was < 10. Download the dataset here: [https://github.com/ProjectSidewalk/sidewalk-tagger-ai.](https://github.com/ProjectSidewalk/sidewalk-tagger-ai)

Table 2: The curb ramp dataset for both Experiments 1 and 2. The table is sorted in descending order by the tag count in the test set. Labels with No Tags are last. The gray line indicates tags with counts < 10, which were excluded from the experiments

Table 3: The surface problem dataset for both Experiments 1 and 2. The table is sorted in descending order by the tag count in the test set. Labels with No Tags are last. The gray line indicates tags with counts < 10, which were excluded from the experiments

Table 4: The obstacle dataset for both Experiments 1 and 2. The table is sorted in descending order by the tag count in the test set. Labels with No Tags are last. The gray line indicates tags with counts < 10, which were excluded from the experiments. Parked-motor is the "parked-scooter-motorcycle" tag where people park their scooters/motorcycles on the sidewalk, which become accessibility barriers.

Table 5: The crosswalk dataset for both Experiments 1 and 2. The table is sorted in descending order by the tag count in the test set. Labels with No Tags are last. The gray line indicates tags with counts < 10, which were excluded from the experiments.

A.4 Datasets by City

Experiment 1 (clean data only) used Project Sidewalk data from 10 cities across three countries (US, Mexico, Netherlands) while Experiment 2 (crowdsourced data only) added two additional cities (St. Louis, MO; Teaneck, NJ).

Table 6: The distribution of our two datasets by city sorted by the num of tags in our test set. Dataset 1 is composed of 10 cities across three countries while Dataset 2 adds two additional cities (St. Louis and Teaneck). SPGG stands for San Pedro Garza García in Mexico; CDMX is Mexico City, Mexico.

A.5 Experiment 1: DINOv2 Results

Details of frequency of tag in the test set, the selected confdence (maximizing the F1 score with a minimum threshold of 0.3), and precision, recall, and F1 score of that threshold for each tag of the label category. Tags with less than 10 instances in the test set are excluded.

Table 8: DINOv2 Experiment 1 surface problem tag classifcation results. Results are sorted by F1 score.

Table 9: DINOv2 Experiment 1 obstacle tag classifcation results. Results are sorted by F1 score.

Table 10: DINOv2 Experiment 1 crosswalk tag classifcation results. Results are sorted by F1 score.

A.6 Experiment 1: CLIP-ViT Results

Details of frequency of tag in the test set, the selected confdence (maximizing the F1 score with a minimum threshold of 0.3), and precision, recall, and F1 score of that threshold for each tag of the label category. Tags with less than 10 instances in the test set are excluded.

Table 11: CLIP-ViT Experiment 1 curb ramp tag classification results. Results are sorted by F1 score.

Table 12: CLIP-ViT Experiment 1 surface problem tag classifcation results. Results are sorted by F1 score.

Table 13: CLIP-ViT Experiment 1 obstacle tag classifcation results. Results are sorted by F1 score.

Table 14: CLIP-ViT Experiment 1 crosswalk tag classifcation results. Results are sorted by F1 score.

A.7 Experiment 2: DINOv2 Results

Details of frequency of tag in the test set, the selected confdence (maximizing the F1 score with a minimum threshold of 0.3), and precision, recall, and F1 score of that threshold for each tag of the label category. Tags with less than 10 instances in the test set are excluded.

Table 15: DINOv2 Experiment 2 curb ramp tag classifcation results. Results are sorted by F1 score.

Table 16: DINOv2 Experiment 2 surface problem tag classifcation results. Results are sorted by F1 score.

Table 17: DINOv2 Experiment 2 obstacle tag classifcation results. Results are sorted by F1 score.

Table 18: Experiment 2 Test Results of DINOv2 on Crosswalk Data

