

Practice essay · Everyday practice

Plan the last mile before the invitation

Sofia Mendes · 11 September 2026

Fictional author and institute · Editorial demonstration, not peer reviewed

ABSTRACT

An event's location and timetable shape who can attend and whether lower-impact travel is genuinely usable. This practice essay evaluates complete arrival and return chains rather than proximity to a station alone. It draws on event-planning guidance to connect access features, programme timing, communication support, and travel budgets. A hypothetical late finish shows why an earlier schedule, different venue, funded transport, or another participation format may matter more than a journey-planning link. Specific access information must identify both confirmed features and limitations, with arrangements for updates and private support requests. The discussion rejects guarantees about changing transport infrastructure and public judgements of attendees' travel modes. Its practical conclusion is to build access into venue selection, staffing, and funding before invitations fix the choices.

Keywords: event planning · accessible travel · last-mile access · public transport · participation

Adapted from the Still North field journal. Original article. A source-based editorial text, not a report of original Still North research. Examples and imagery are illustrative.

The invitation says the venue is close to a station. It does not say whether the station exit has steps, whether the final crossing has a dropped kerb, or whether the last accessible bus leaves before the discussion ends. For an event organiser, those missing details are not someone else's travel planning. They are part of deciding who can attend.

Lower-impact travel becomes more credible when the event makes it usable. A request to arrive by public transport cannot repair a broken lift, fund an overnight stay, or make a late connection possible. Plan the journey alongside the programme, before the venue deposit and start time become difficult to change.

Compare arrival chains, not map pins

For each shortlisted venue, examine a small set of realistic arrivals at the proposed time. Include the trip from the station or stop to the actual entrance, not just the post-code. Check the return journey too. A central location can still be awkward if the accessible entrance is on another street or if evening services become infrequent.

A route may need step-free access, seating, toilets, clear wayfinding, sufficient crossing time, or room for a mobility aid. Needs differ, so avoid declaring a venue "fully accessible" on the strength of a single ramp. Publish specific features and known limitations, and provide a named contact who can discuss arrangements without asking someone to explain their needs repeatedly.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission's event planning guide brings timing, public transport, drop-off, parking, directions, and communication support into the same process. It is useful planning guidance, not a substitute for current local access standards, legal duties, or advice from the people who will use the event.

Use the timetable to shape the programme

Suppose a proposed evening meeting finishes after the most practical return service. The meaningful options include an earlier start, a firm earlier finish, a nearer venue, funded transport, or another participation format. Sending attendees a journey-planning link after fixing the schedule does not solve the mismatch.

A published finish time is a commitment. Protect it by leaving room for interpretation, questions, breaks, and moving between rooms. Do not save the only opportunity to contribute until an optional discussion after the formal close. People who must leave for transport, care, medication, or personal assistance should not lose their place in the decision.

Remote attendance can widen options if it is properly staffed. Give online participants the documents, captions or other support they need, and a reliable route to ask questions. A silent camera at the back of a room is not equivalent participation. Where hybrid provision would be poor, a separate well-supported session or written response route may be more useful.

Publish information people can act on

- Name the relevant station or stop and the entrance attendees should use.
- Provide text directions as well as a map, including known steps, steep sections, or difficult surfaces.
- Link to current operator information for lifts, assistance, disruptions, and accessible vehicles.
- Explain drop-off, accessible parking, toilets, seating, and any distance between them.
- Give a contact for advance questions and another for problems on the day.

Date information that may change, and distinguish what the organiser has confirmed from what an operator reports. Do not make a personal guarantee that a lift will

work. Decide how updates will reach attendees if an important route becomes unavailable. Information should be readable without logging into a ticket account or opening an image-only attachment.

Put access in the budget, not the exception form

Travel support can fail if it is reimbursement-only and someone cannot pay in advance. Ask what the organisation can book directly, which costs it covers, and how a person can request support privately. Include necessary personal assistance or companion travel where appropriate. Restrict access to personal information to those arranging the support.

Some attendees will need a car or taxi. Others will choose one because the available alternatives do not work. Offer accurate information and practical options without demanding a public justification for someone's mode of arrival. A climate event should not turn its registration desk into a test of personal virtue.

Our journey guide discusses individual travel choices. The organiser's additional responsibility is to change the choices surrounding everyone's trip. Use [Take action](#) to ask a venue, employer, or event team for a specific improvement. If a better finish time lets more people travel and contribute with confidence, the programme has improved before the first speaker arrives.

References

1. Equality and Human Rights Commission's event planning guide (equalityhumanrights.com)