

HALIFAX

P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Item No. 13.1.5

Harbour East-Marine Drive Community Council
October 6, 2016

TO: Chair and Members of Harbour East-Marine Drive Community Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original signed by

Taso Koutroulakis, P.Eng., A/Director of Transportation and Public Works

DATE: September 16, 2016

SUBJECT: Active Transportation in Porters Lake and Adjacent Communities

ORIGIN

March 3, 2016 Harbour East Marine Drive Community Council. THAT the Harbour East-Marine Drive Community Council request a Staff Report regarding the Shore Active Transportation Association presentation from the February 4, 2016 meeting of Harbour East-Marine Drive Community Council.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

79 (1) (ah) The Council may expend money required by the Municipality for playgrounds, trails, including trails developed, operated or maintained pursuant to an agreement made under clause 73(c), bicycle paths, swimming pools, ice arenas and other recreational facilities;

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that staff continue to advance the Halifax Active Transportation Priorities Plan in the Lake Echo to Musquodoboit Harbour area in conjunction with the Province of Nova Scotia and the Shore Active Transportation Association.

BACKGROUND

At the February 4, 2016 meeting of Harbour East-Marine Drive Community Council, the volunteer community group Shore Active Transportation Association (SATA) provided a presentation outlining the initiatives taking place in their communities to make it easier for residents and visitors to walk and bicycle for both transportation purposes and for recreation. The presentation (Attachment "A") identifies the key current projects for the group. HRM's Active Transportation group within TPW is playing both a supporting and leading role in advancing AT in these communities, as described below.

The area in which the SATA group is particularly interested in developing AT facilities extends from, roughly, Lake Echo to Musquodoboit Harbour and from the Atlantic coast to the limits of settled areas to the north west of the community of Porters Lake. The community of Porters Lake is at the centre of this area and is a key commercial and service centre for this part of the Municipality. Porters Lake is a designated Rural District Growth Centre in the Regional Plan. A key component of current and future AT in the area is the provincially-owned abandoned rail corridor that runs through the area (except for a 2km segment where Highway 107 was built on top of this corridor).

Previous to the approval of Halifax's Active Transportation Priorities Plan in 2014, there were a number of initiatives that informed current activities. These include:

- In the late 1990's a community group, the West Chezzetcook Grand Desert Community Interest Group, working with funding from HRM and the Province rebuilt a 10km segment of the former rail bed called the Blueberry Run Trail from Causeway Rd to Les Collins Ave. After the letter of authority for this segment was transferred to the MarineRiders ATV club in 2006, HRM no longer played a role in maintaining the facility. The Marine Riders are not part of the Halifax Regional Trails Association and are therefore ineligible for HRM Active Transportation funding. Currently this segment is in need of recapitalization, but, in most sections, it is still passable for walking and bicycling.
- In the mid-2000's two community groups (one composed of ATV users and the other composed of walking and bicycling enthusiasts) sought the letter of authority from the province to rebuild and operate a 10km section of the former rail bed from East Chezzetcook to Musquodoboit Harbour. The province decided to defer making a decision on which group should have the letter of authority (LOA) for this segment and this currently remains as an "unimproved" corridor.
- In 2013 the Shore Active Transportation Association was formed to advocate and help facilitate the development of walking and bicycling facilities in the area.
- In 2013, HRM's regional transportation planning group commissioned the development of an active transportation plan for the area. This was commissioned because there had been a number of requests to support the paving of shoulders, to develop the abandoned rail corridor and to offer better walking and bicycling connections to the new MetroX Terminal and adjacent Porters Lake Elementary and Lakeside Recreation Centre. This was also part of the designated corridor for the Trans Canada Trail, but there had been little progress in making connections in the area. This "Porters Lake and Surrounding Communities Active Transportation Plan" was completed in March 2014 and its key recommendations were incorporated into the AT Priorities Plan.

DISCUSSION

The following are current Active Transportation planning and construction projects in the area. The text boxes on the attached map are numbered according to the list below for reference.

- 1) Active Transportation Greenway Trail from Porters Lake to East Chezzetcook.

In 2014, SATA became a member of the Halifax Regional Trails Association (HRTA) and became eligible for funding from HRM's active transportation budget. The group was provided funding from HRM to lead a planning exercise on how to develop an AT connection from Porters Lake to East Chezzetcook. A number of options were considered and an alignment adjacent to where Highway 107 has been built over the abandoned rail corridor was retained for further preliminary design. This is sometimes referred to as the Acadian Marsh Greenway. However, the preliminary design was not acceptable to the Province, primarily due to concerns about the limited distance separating the proposed greenway trail and the highway.

The existing road conditions (the provincially owned Trunk 7 and Highway 107), property ownership and geography make it a challenging context in which to develop a walking and bicycling connection through this area. However, it is a critical link for HRM's AT Plan, for the TransCanada Trail and the Provincial Blue Route Bicycling network. Municipal active transportation staff will meet with Provincial counterparts to review the current status of this project and will propose an approach to further evaluate options and develop a solution.

- 2) Improved pedestrian and bicycle access to MetroX Terminal, Porters Lake Elementary and Lakeside Recreation Centre.

In 2014, HRM initiated a process to work with the Province to reconnect the Blueberry Run Trail across Exit 20 of Highway 107 and around the new complex of public buildings next to Exit 20, including the MetroX Terminal. Construction of these public facilities and Highway 107 resulted in a 600m gap in the Blueberry Run Trail. Stage one of this project was completed in 2016 and included reconstruction and paving of the greenway between the MetroX Terminal and just south of Porters Lake Station Road. Planning is underway with the Province to complete the project by building access greenways up to the Exit 20 overpass on either side, and building a new sidewalk on the overpass in 2017.

There has been some interest in extending this paved greenway trail another 1km north from the school property into the commercial area of Porters Lake on Trunk 7, however, this segment is managed by the Marine Riders ATV club.

- 3) Planning for the future of the 10km section of abandoned rail corridor from East Chezzetcook to Musquodoboit Harbour.

SATA has funding from HRM and the provincial Department of Energy to plan how to develop the East Chezzetcook to Musquodoboit Harbour (Gaetz Brook) segment as an AT Greenway. They have an interim LOA from the Province to do this planning. At the same time, the Province is developing a process to determine how to decide on whether SATA or the Marine Riders will have the permanent LOA for this segment. The Province expects to hire a consultant who will develop and implement a community consultation and decision-making process to determine which group should have the LOA and what uses would be permitted (e.g. walking and bicycling, ATV's, and, or horses). This process is expected to happen in late summer and fall 2016.

Other considerations for AT in the area include:

- 1) Making the Blueberry Run Trail accessible for bicycles and pedestrians.

HRM currently has no involvement with the management or maintenance of the Blueberry Run Trail. The Marine Riders ATV Club has the LOA for this parcel of Provincial Crown land. However, it is considered part of the active transportation network in the municipality and is designated as part of the Trans Canada Trail. While the trail is generally passible for people on bikes or pedestrians, there is one 500m section between Les Collins Ave. and Highway 107 that is impassible for bicyclists and for anyone with mobility challenges due to the deep sandy surface.

- 2) The Province would consider widening shoulders for AT in this area as required to support Blue Route objectives. The Province has established criteria to assess when widening is necessary or recommended.
- 3) The Marine Riders ATV Club, which has the LOA for the Blueberry Run Trail from the Province, has been working with the Province on options to connect their facility across Highway 107 and to other parts of the area to improve connectivity and access.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications related to this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement was part of the development of the Porters Lake Active Transportation Plan.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The development of active transportation infrastructure can help shift trips away from single occupant vehicles which emit criteria air contaminants and greenhouse gases. While the potential for this is greater in more urban areas, the presence of the MetroX terminal and the cluster of services and shopping in Porters Lake makes travel behavior change more feasible in this rural area.

ALTERNATIVES

Community Council may recommend that Municipal active transportation staff do not get directly involved in working with the Province to develop active transportation facilities on provincial crown land and right-of-way in this area and, rather, limit efforts to supporting the work of the Shore Active Transportation Association under the HRTA community development model. This is not recommended as there are existing projects in which the Municipality and the Province are already working together (e.g. adding AT facilities at the Exit 20 overpass) and because there is a municipal interest in achieving the AT Priorities Plan objectives in this area.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Presentation from Shore Active Transportation Association (SATA) to the February 4, 2016 meeting of Harbour East-Marine Drive Community Council.

Attachment B - Map of Porters Lake and adjacent communities with AT facilities and projects highlighted.

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/index.php> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

Report Prepared by: David MacIsaac, Active Transportation Supervisor, 902.490.1665

Attachment A - Presentation from Shore Active Transportation Association (SATA) to the February 4, 2016 meeting of Harbour East-Marine Drive Community Council.

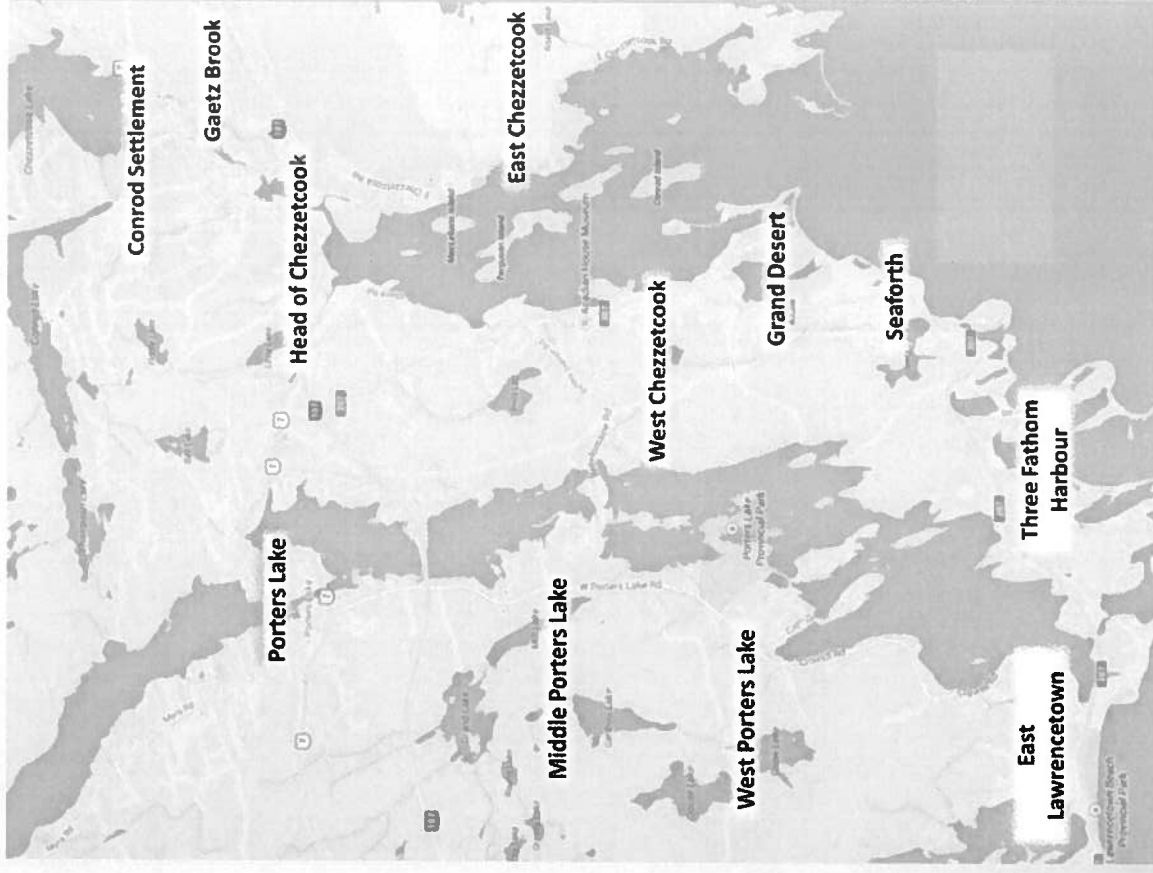


SATA

Shore Active Transportation Assoc.
1050 East Chezzetcook Road, Chezzetcook NS B0J 1N0

The Area

- Porters Lake and Surrounding Communities including:
 - Chezzetcooks,
 - Seaforth,
 - Grand Desert,
 - Three Fathom Harbour
- Middle and West Porters Lake
 - East Lawrencetown
 - Gaetz Brook and
 - Conrad's Settlement



The PLAN

Active Transportation Plan – Porters Lake & Surrounding Communities

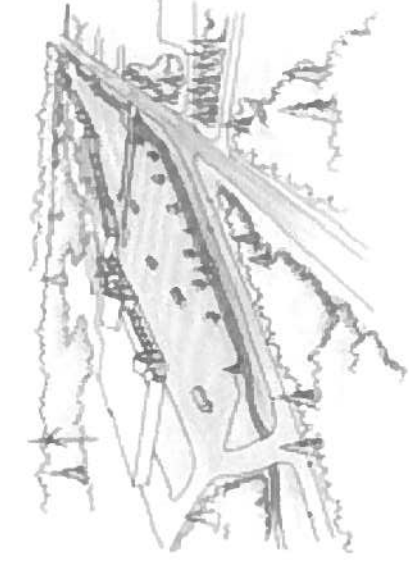
Recommendations

Develop AT Greenways & link them

Paved Shoulders to Key Routes

Develop AT Supporting Infrastructure

Increase AT Awareness in the Area



FINAL REPORT



Active Transportation Plan
Porters Lake & Surrounding Communities

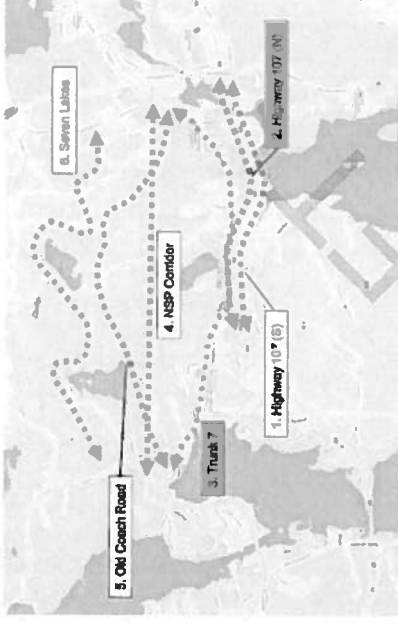
March 31, 2014

1 Spiritacle Lake Drive
Dartmouth, NS
B3B 1K7
Tel: 902-835-9955
Fax: 902-835-1645
www.wspcanada.com



Our Accomplishments

- Received funding
- Request for Proposals – Acadian Marsh Feasibility Study; Bridge Assessment & Plan Gaetz Brook Connector
- Received Interim Letter of Authority for the Gaetz Brook Connector
- Assisted with Porters Lake Greenway
- Hired student to teach cycling safety and organize events
- SATA members led cycling and walking on the Shore



DRAFT REPORT (Version 1.0)

Acadia Marsh Greenway Feasibility Study
Phase 1 Report: Evaluation of Candidate Options
June 2015

1 Spectator Lake Drive
Dartmouth, NS
B3B 1X7
Tel: 902-835-9925
Fax: 902-835-1445
www.wspinc.com

We Need Your Help

- Acadian Marsh Trail & Gaetz Brook Connector – Halifax Municipality & Province – Collaboration. Community Group can't solve this problem ourselves
- Keep recommendations in our AT Plan moving forward
- Assist Halifax Municipality, Province & Community Groups working together
- Assist with paved shoulders
- Blue Route

AT Plan Meeting 2014 – Porters

Lake



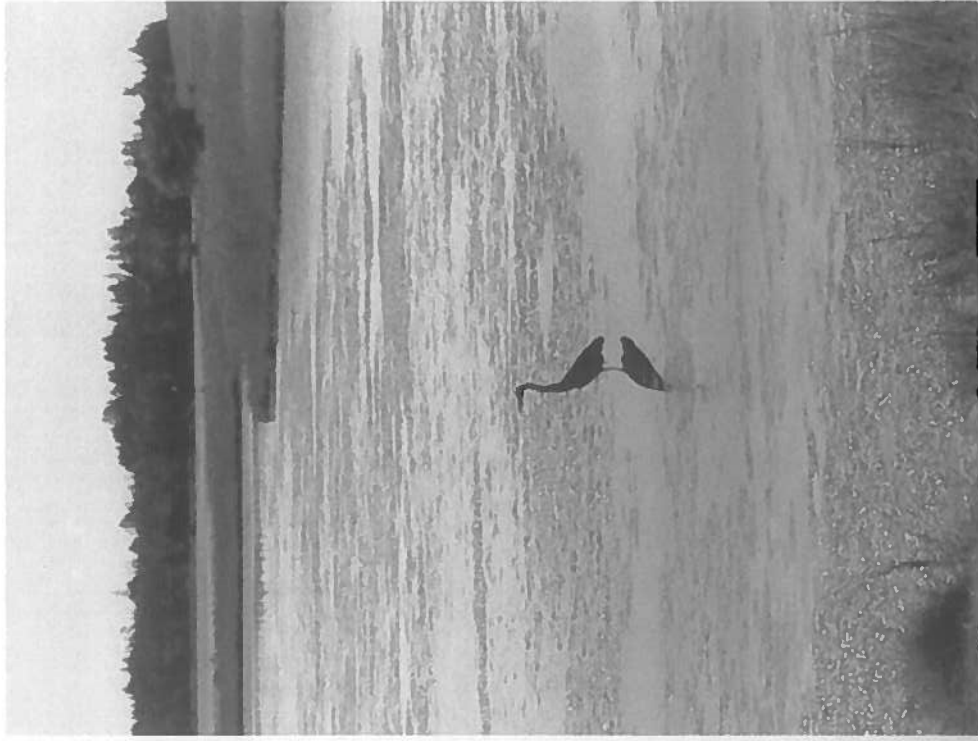
Showing off our communities



How can we Implement our AT Plan

- Porters Lake Greenway
- Acadian Marsh Greenway
- Gaetz Brook Greenway
- Paved Shoulders
- Blue Route
- Be advocates for AT Transportation in our Community

Our Hidden Treasures



WITH APPRECIATION



Attachment "B" – Map of Porters Lake and adjacent communities with AT facilities and projects highlighted (based on HRM AT Priorities Plan Map 3)

