

HALIFAX

Rural Active Transportation Framework

Active Transportation Advisory
Committee
January 21, 2021

Agenda

- Background and Baseline
- Framework for a Rural Active Transportation Program
- Next Steps
- Questions/Feedback

Background: Origins (1)

IMP

- **Action 71:** *Update the criteria for selecting new active transportation projects to better respond to equity considerations, demand, future development, coverage and other factors.*
- **Action 81:** *Continue to work with other orders of government to implement the rural active transportation network, including along provincial roads.*
- **Action 82:** *Establish a rural pedestrian program, including: a financing mechanism which recognizes that rural pedestrian safety is affected by regional traffic; criteria to prioritize development in village centres, hamlets, or other rural areas of concentrated pedestrian activity; and opportunities for cost sharing with other orders of government.*

ATPP

- **Recommendation #5:** *Halifax needs to develop a comprehensive approach to the delivery of rural active transportation facilities, including criteria for determining the most appropriate AT facility type, and consideration of the financial implications (capital and operating) of doing so;*

Background: Origins (2)

Item 15.1 Rural Pedestrian Realm Program - December 12, 2019

Transportation Standing Committee request a staff report regarding potential to establish **a program to improve pedestrian safety in HRM's rural communities**. This report shall discuss how actions A71, A81 and A82 within the Integrated Mobility Plan, related to active transportation are being implemented.

Specifically, the report should **focus on areas of concentrated pedestrian activity**, including consideration of services in historically underserved areas, and address how immediate responses to resident concerns can be addressed through tactics including but not limited to paved shoulders, sidewalks, crosswalks, pedestrian islands of refuge, and greenways.

The report should also include **recommendations on opportunities to present a submission to the Provincial and Federal governments** for appropriate funding programs.

Background: Current Situation

No formal program or funding source for rural active transportation.

HRM's rural active transportation "process" is ad hoc. (e.g. East Preston, Mineville Road paved shoulders, Aerotech connector multi-use pathway)

Province is key (Transportation & Infrastructure Renewal, Communities, Culture & Heritage, Lands & Forestry, Energy & Mines)

Existing Rural AT Facilities:

- Multi-use pathways (e.g. community operated, rails to trails)
- Ad hoc sidewalks (e.g. Upper Tantallon, Sheet Harbour, Local Improvement Charge sidewalks)
- Some provincial and HRM paved shoulders (e.g. Hammonds Plains Road, Sambro)

Background: Program Development

WSP hired in late 2019 to support this initiative and has completed the following work:

Baseline Report for Rural Active Transportation in HRM

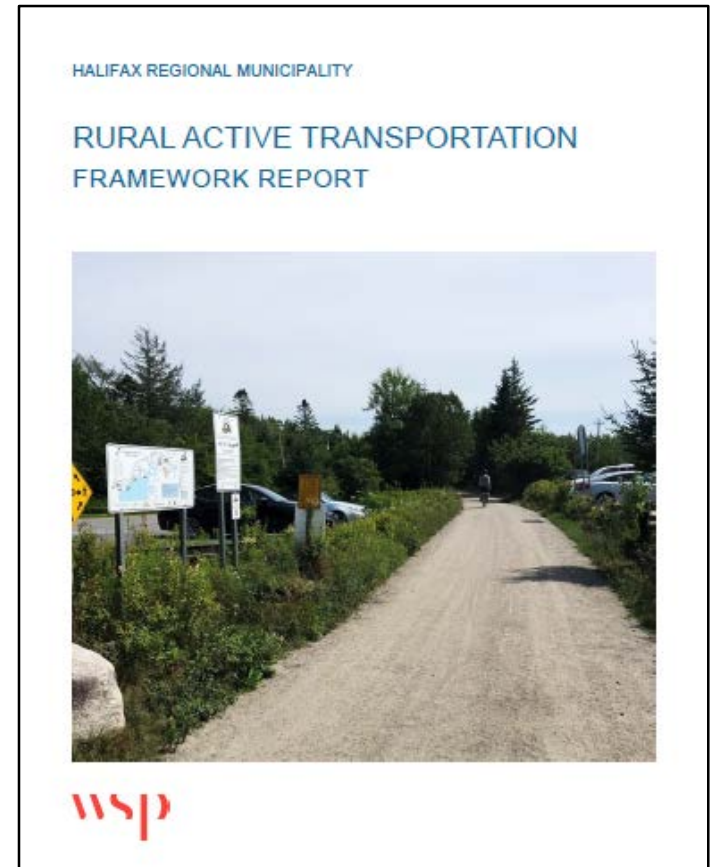
- Best Practice research: Types of networks (e.g. Cluster and Spine), types of facilities, decision-making frameworks, implementation
- Review of HRM policy and current processes (e.g. IMP, ATPP, implementation process for existing rural AT facilities in HRM, known rural active transportation requests)
- Internal and external stakeholder engagement

Framework and Tools

- Developed a framework and scoring tool for project prioritization based on key findings from the above
- Facilitated internal workshops for review of toolkit and implementation plan

Final Report

- Includes proposed recommendations for Program implementation



Baseline: Stakeholder Engagement (1)

Internal HRM Staff (Phone Interviews and 2 Online Workshops)

- Rural areas need to be treated differently than urban areas (frustrating for residents). Need to evaluate for AT based on rural-specific criteria or those communities will never be able to compete
- NSTIR manages almost everything outside urban core, does not maintain sidewalks, has maintenance agreements between HRM and NSTIR across region
- Lack of funding mechanism for rural AT identified by Finance
- Linking rural AT prioritization into provincial paving program would be beneficial for project integration
- Connection to Park and Rides, rec centres, libraries important for wider spread connectivity
- Socio-equity policy in place and should be considered in program development
- Consider effects on current trail creation and maintenance process (trails associations)

Elected Officials (Phone Interviews)

- Generally very supportive – top requests from rural constituents include 1. traffic calming, 2. sidewalks
- Distinction between rural AT and recreation will be important
- Offered specific opportunities for connections, intersection improvements in their districts
- National AT Strategy currently “coasting” due to COVID disruption

Baseline: Stakeholder Engagement (2)

Province Departments and Interests (Phone Interviews)

- Requests for rural road speed limit reductions and paved shoulders very common
- NSTIR open to working with municipalities on traffic calming, AT implementation, pilot projects
- Multiple cost sharing opportunities identified for rural AT
- Rural school should be considered as destinations in framework, the catchment areas disqualifying students from bus service is 2.4km or more
- Need to consider the “story” behind each community evaluated – evaluation tool should be subjective

Community Groups and Trails Associations (Request for Briefs)

- Hwy 7 listed as problematic by many groups
- Safety is biggest concern for majority of groups
- Identified many opportunities for short trips within clusters that could be made on foot or bike if infrastructure existed

Baseline: Need and Potential Program Scope

Criteria used to identify rural “Clusters” which may be good investments for AT implementation included:

Land Use Planning – RMPS Growth Centres, zoning

Destinations – schools, parks, open space, trails, commercial/employment/services, community/rec/libraries

Existing Infrastructure – Transit, AT

Equity – situational vulnerability, economic dependency, ethno-cultural composition

Population Density – by StatsCan dissemination area

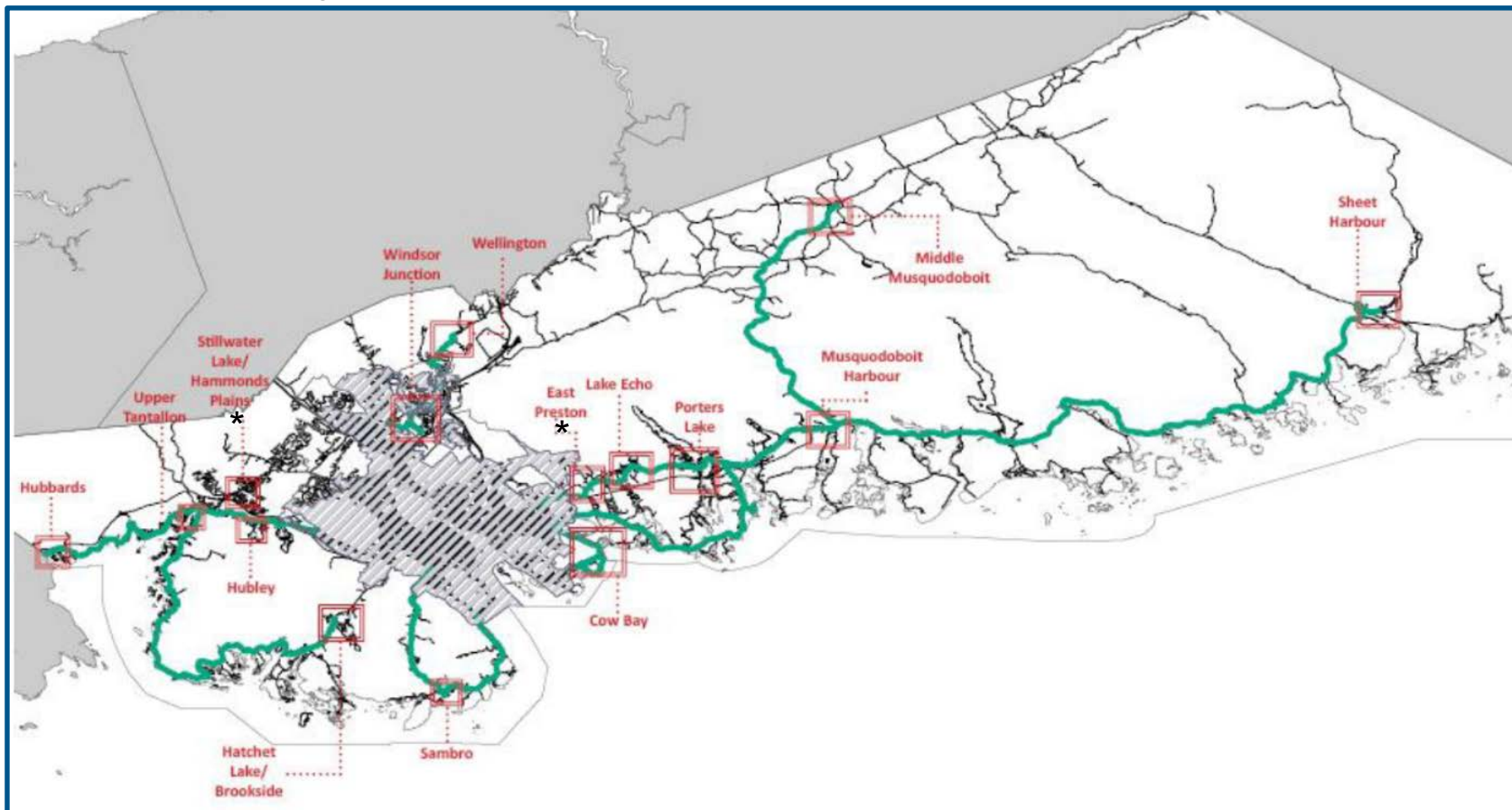
Traffic Data – speed, street classifications/volumes, collision-related serious injury rates, truck-related collisions on Truck Routes

Community Input Data – known AT requests, active community groups or community planning initiatives

Usership Data – Vehicle ownership per capita, user perception of AT

Baseline: Potential Rural AT Program Scope

Application of the criteria identified a list of communities that represent the types of rural clusters suitable for future consideration of AT investment in HRM to help staff understand the scope of a potential rural AT program.

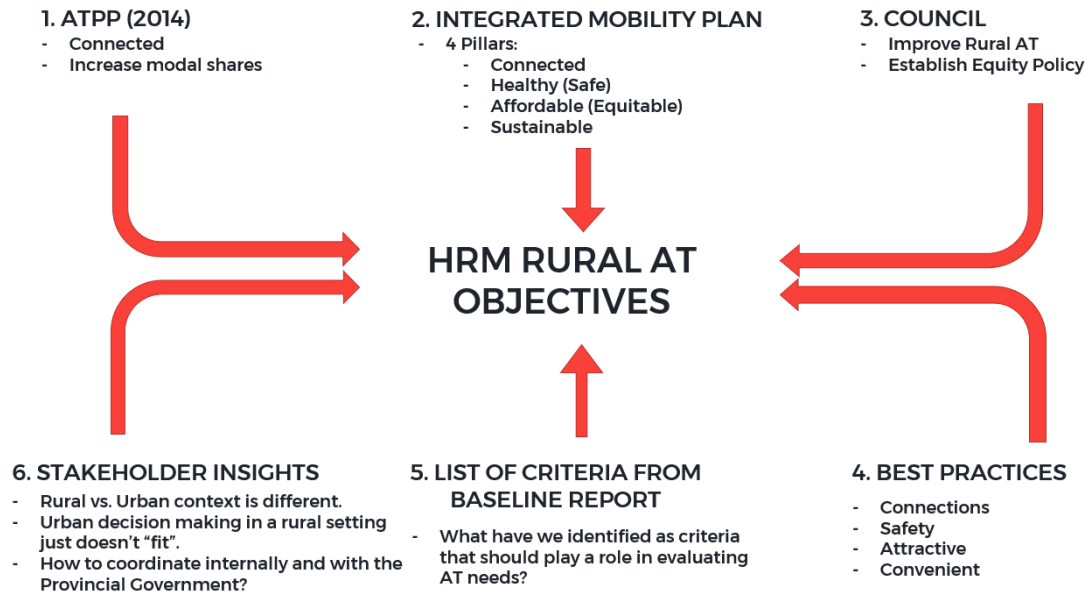


* denotes African Nova Scotian Community

Framework to Implement a Rural AT Program

Objectives for Rural AT in HRM

Key Objectives	Secondary Objectives
1. Create Connections	1. Cost Effective
2. Improve Safety	2. Provide Economic Opportunity
3. Foster Equity	3. Community Momentum
-	4. Shifting Mode Share



Proposed Project Prioritization Framework

Framework aims to *provide a decision-making and prioritization **process** that is clear, fair, consistent, and implementable.*

- Can be used to consider community as a whole or specific projects;
- Allows staff to prioritize communities or specific AT requests based on a consistent set of criteria (based on objectives in previous slide);
- Includes a scoring toolkit based on Rural AT objectives to aid HRM Staff in evaluation; and,
- Includes a “path to implementation” for staff to consider if the Framework ultimately recommends a community or project for investment, which considers:
 - Multiple funding mechanisms, cost sharing
 - Project integration
 - Potential of pilot project
 - Promotion and education

Implementation: Funding Approach

Existing Funding Approaches for AT Implementation:

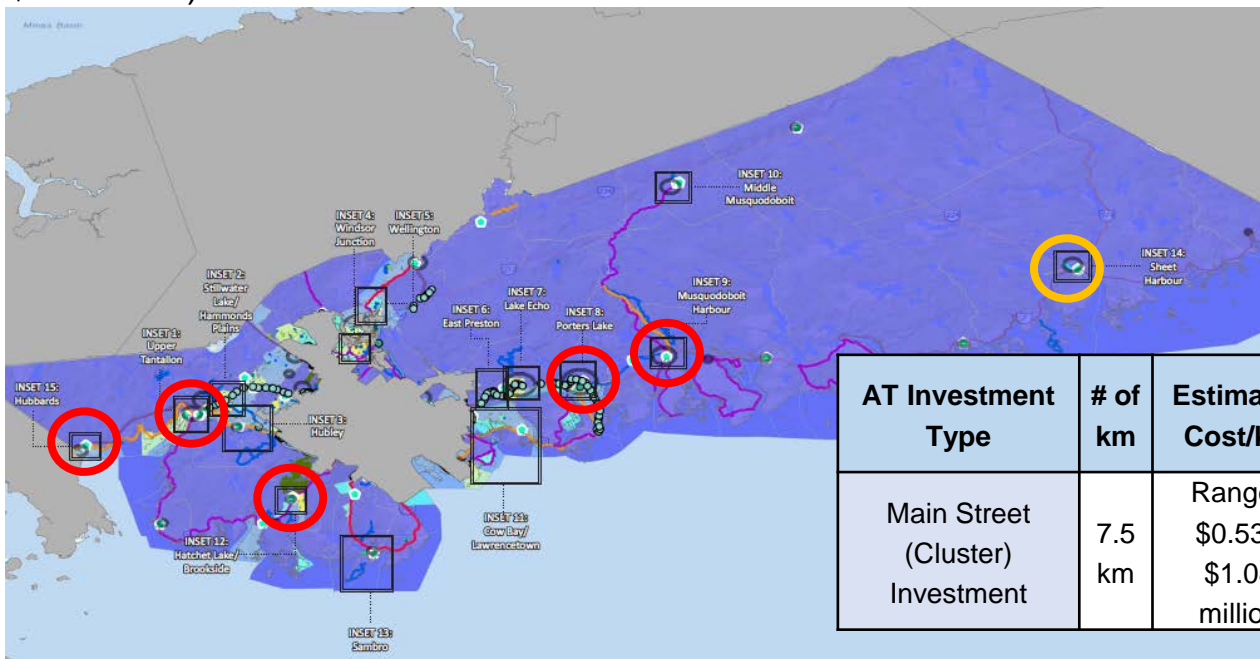
	Pros	Cons
Local Improvement Charges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can field and potentially fund numerous requests from communities; • Requires less upfront commitment from Council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cumbersome process to get LICs in place; • Procedurally is the 'old' process (pre-amalgamation); • Does not allow for planning processes that may be required to determine capital projects; • Places preference on communities who can afford to pay LIC on their tax bill.
General Tax Rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent, systematic approach; • Aligns with 'Regional Service' direction Council/HRM is trying to achieve; • Most 'fair' approach (i.e. highest scoring communities based on rural AT objectives get the infrastructure); • Allows for proactive planning processes to determine appropriate capital projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires financial commitment from Council with potential tax rate implications; • Potentially limits the number of projects/communities that will receive AT facilities.

Preliminary Cost Estimates: Clusters

“Main Street” areas were identified as a cluster of services, amenities, and/or destinations that are within a reasonable walking distance of one another – approximately 1.5km.

About six rural centres in HRM with existing Main Street areas. Total to install sidewalks in these communities would be ~\$8million.

Other rural centres without Main Streets may also be considered (e.g. East Preston, which is about \$1.5million).

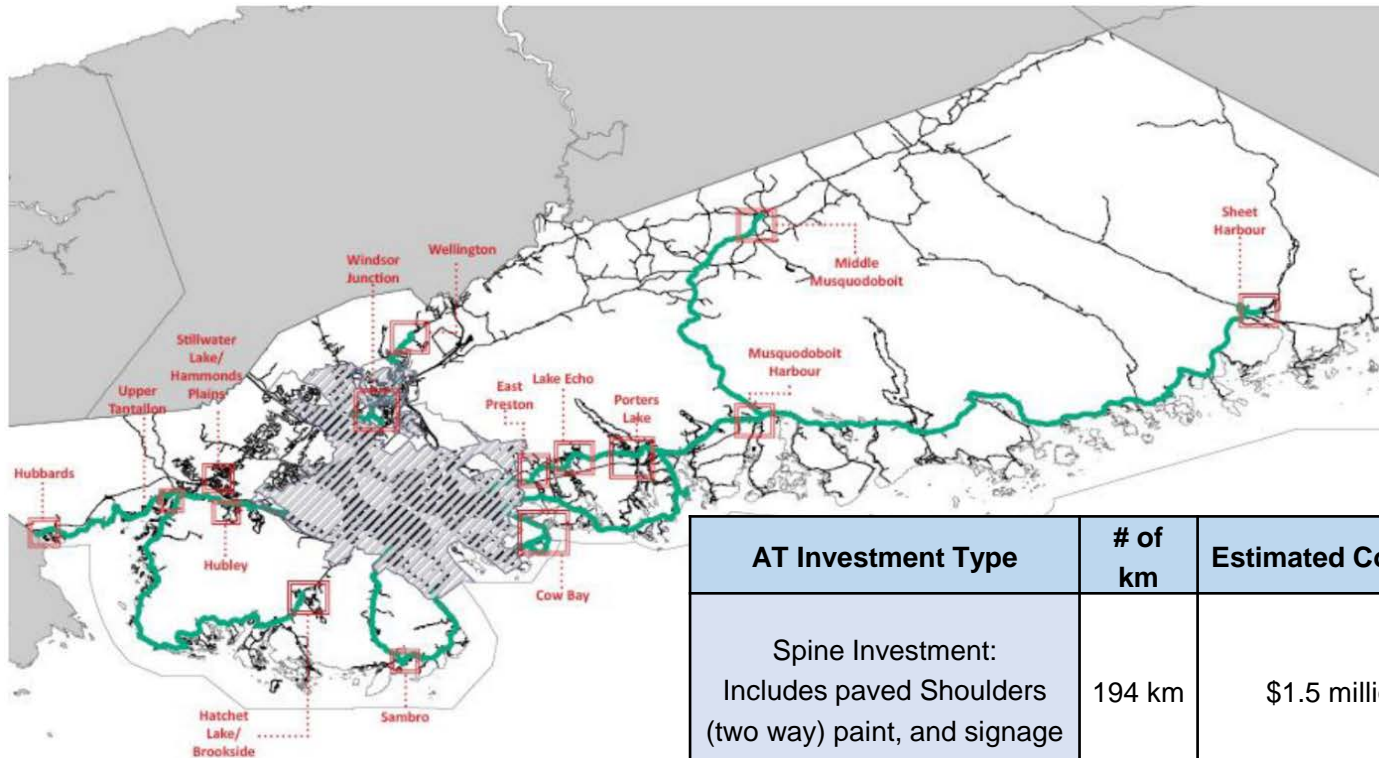


AT Investment Type	# of km	Estimated Cost/km	Estimated Cost Total (low)	Estimated Cost (high)
Main Street (Cluster) Investment	7.5 km	Ranges \$0.53 - \$1.08 million	\$4.0 million	\$8.1 million

Preliminary Cost Estimates: Spines

“Spines” were identified as the linear and longer distance routes that connect clusters and/or a larger regional AT network.

About 194km of potential spine connections between rural clusters were identified in HRM. Total to implement paved shoulders to make these regional connection would be ~\$209million.



AT Investment Type	# of km	Estimated Cost/km	Estimated Cost Total
Spine Investment: Includes paved Shoulders (two way) paint, and signage marking AT use	194 km	\$1.5 million	\$208.2 million

Other Costs/Components of Rural AT

- Ongoing intergovernmental co-ordination;
- Internal capacity for planning, design and construction; and,
- Maintenance and operations.

Next Steps

Jan 21, 2021: Presentation of findings to ATAC

Jan 2021: Complete Recommendation Report

April 2021: Present Recommendation Report to TSC

April 2021: Present Recommendation Report to the Regional Council

April 2021 and ongoing: Implementation of the new Rural AT Program