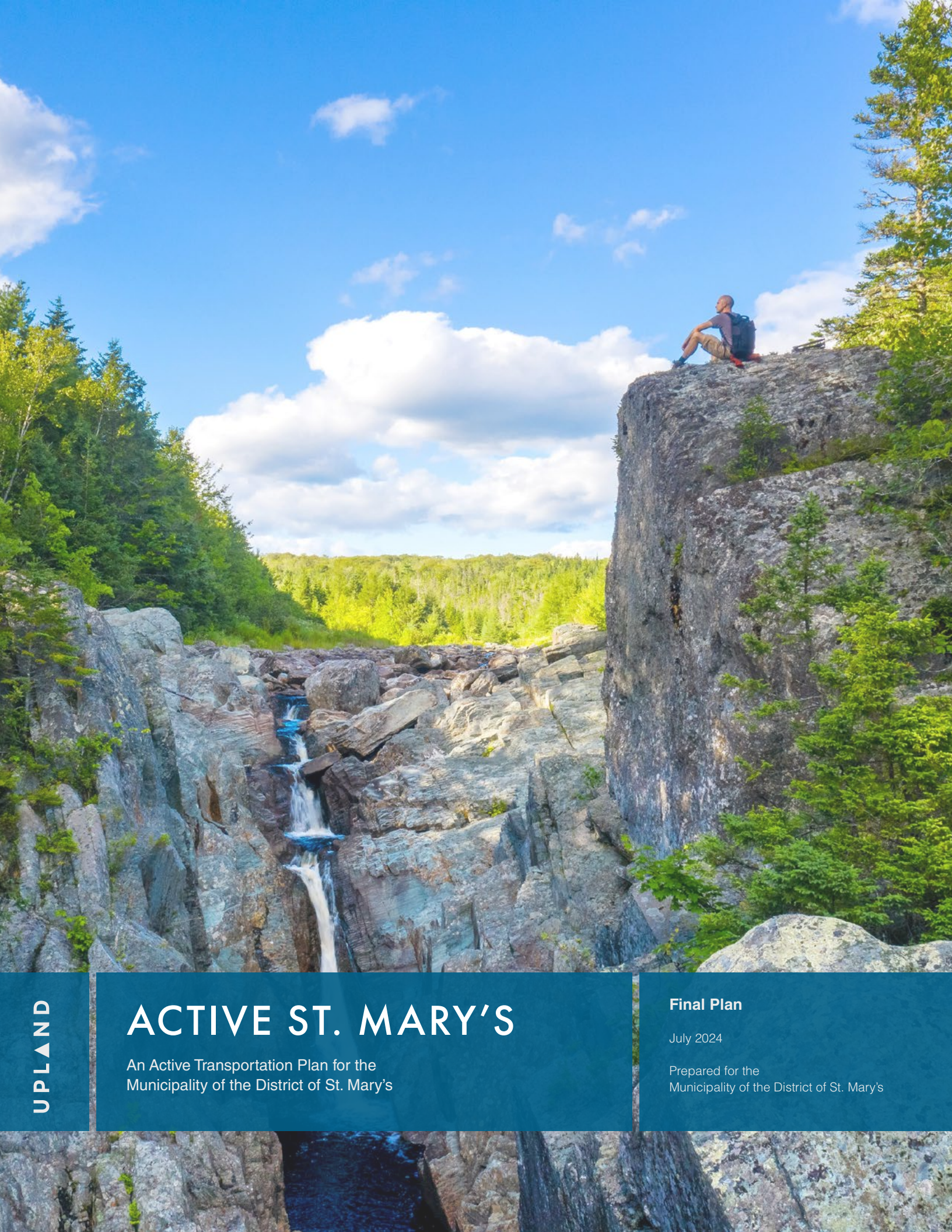

UPLAND

ACTIVE ST. MARY'S

An Active Transportation Plan for the
Municipality of the District of St. Mary's

Final Plan

July 2024

Prepared for the
Municipality of the District of St. Mary's

Active St. Mary's Final Plan

July 2024

This Final Active Transportation Plan was prepared by
UPLAND Planning + Design Inc., for the
Municipality of the District of St. Mary's.

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Municipality of the District of
St. Mary's

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INTRODUCTION

PHOTO: ST. MARY'S RIVER ASSOCIATION

1.1 ABOUT THE PROJECT

This document encompasses the official Plan for ***Active St. Mary's*** — a project designed to develop an Active Transportation Plan for the Municipality of St. Mary's. The goal of this project is to enhance the movement of both residents and visitors throughout the area, fostering a healthier and more sustainable community, where transportation is not only safe and practical but also an enjoyable experience for all users.

This Plan includes a comprehensive network plan, recommendations related to programs and amenities, and a sequence based implementation plan based on factors such as population density, development, traffic intensity, safety issues, accessibility considerations, and more.

The data contained within the Plan serves as a valuable resource for budget forecasting and future project planning, and will provide staff and Council with clear direction regarding where active transportation development should take place and why, facilitating informed decision-making for the future.

This initiative aims not only to enhance physical connectivity but also to foster social cohesion among the diverse communities within the region. By prioritizing well-being and quality of life for residents and visitors alike, the plan seeks to promote healthier and more sustainable modes of transportation, while also aiming to:

- Identify specific areas requiring upgrades to facilitate increased active transportation.
- Explore new opportunities for developing active transportation infrastructure.
- Educate community members on the safe and efficient use of active transportation while highlighting its benefits.
- Expand active transportation options around schools, community spaces, and business hubs
- Establish connections with the Provincial Blue Route cycling initiative.
- Develop an implementation strategy outlining priorities, behavioral change best practices, and decision-making processes.

WHAT IS ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION?

Active transportation (AT) is a broad term that refers to all modes of human-powered transportation, including walking and wheeling (referring to the use of assistive devices), cycling, rollerblading and skateboarding, seasonal activities such as kayaking, canoeing, skiing and snowshoeing, and some motorized forms of transportation like e-bikes and electric wheelchairs.

Some people depend on active transportation to get where they need to go due to lack of alternative transportation, while others deliberately use active transportation as a preferred form of commute, exercise, recreation, or leisure.

Active transportation is typically used for two purposes:

- Utilitarian active transportation includes trips where active transportation is used to get to a destination, such as work, school, the store, or appointments.
- Recreational active transportation includes leisure, recreational pursuits, and fitness, and often takes place in off-road locations.

In some cases, both utilitarian and recreational active transportation can occur at the same time. Understanding the multifaceted nature of active transportation is essential for developing comprehensive plans and infrastructure that accommodate the diverse motivations and needs of individuals utilizing these modes.

Active transportation infrastructure refers to the physical elements and environments designed to support various human-powered modes of transportation. This includes cycling lanes, enhanced sidewalks, and multi-use trails, among others.

Effective active transportation infrastructure is characterized by a well-integrated network that allows users to navigate their communities safely and seamlessly. This network should connect main streets, key destinations, and residential neighborhoods, creating a comprehensive framework for active movement within the community.

WHY ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION?

A successful active transportation plan can...

...Bolster Tourism + Economic Development

Located in the heart of Nova Scotia's Eastern Shore, St. Mary's diverse landscape and rich heritage make it a great place to both live and visit. The Municipality has many unique tourism attractions, such as the Goldenville Goldmine Interpretive Centre, the Port Bickerton Lighthouse Interpretive Centre, and Sherbrooke Village.

St. Mary's is also a desirable destination for outdoor recreation, with the St. Mary's River being a main attraction and popular location for fishing, paddling, hiking, birding, and swimming. There is also an extensive network of parks and trails, including the Liscomb River Trail, Lochiel Lake Provincial Park, Marie Joseph Provincial Park, Mayflower Trail, Sherbrooke Provincial Picnic Park, Stonewall Park, Pioneer Park, and a variety of off-highway vehicle (OHV) Trails. These attractions contribute to the economy both directly and indirectly when visitors eat at local restaurants, shop, or stay overnight in local accommodations. Providing safe and comfortable routes between tourism destinations offers visitors an opportunity to make active transportation part of their experience.

Active transportation is also a tourism opportunity in its own right. For example, many people are incorporating bicycle tourism, paddling routes, or hiking trails into their vacation plans. In fact, a recent study found that approximately 2.5 million Canadians have gone on a cycling vacation in the past two years, and approximately 11% of Canadians are planning a cycling-focused vacation in the next two years (Abacus Data, 2024). The Trans Canada Trail extends for 23 kilometers across the municipality, creating a strong backbone for active transportation in its adjoining communities, and the Blue Route's 40-kilometer Sherbrooke Loop presents a formalized opportunity to expand active transportation tourism in St. Mary's.

Trans Canada Trail users spend a total of approximately **$13 billion annually** on various services, accommodations, meals and other local goods, supporting over **221,000 jobs** (Trans Canada Trail, 2023).

...Reduce Pollution and Environmental Impact

Active transportation options have a low environmental impact, and reduces greenhouse gas emissions, particularly when compared to driving a vehicle. In Canada, transportation accounts for about 25% of total greenhouse gas emissions, and active transportation options such as walking and cycling produce zero emissions (Government of Canada, 2021). In fact, in Nova Scotia, each car generates 1,500 kg to 8,000 kg of greenhouse gas emissions annually (Atlantic Active Alliance, 2020). Automobile use also emits other pollutants such as nitrous oxide, volatile organic compounds, and fine particulate matter.

Additionally, parks and trails play a vital role in preserving and safeguarding natural areas. A 2023 study conducted by Trans Canada Trail highlighted the significant contributions of trails to climate and nature conservation. These benefits include flood mitigation, carbon sequestration, and protection against extreme weather events, collectively valued at $82 million annually.

...Improve Physical and Mental Health

Encouraging greater participation in active transportation can play an integral role in increasing physical activity among residents, resulting in improved overall health and life satisfaction. Increased reliance on motorized vehicles for everyday transport has contributed to a reduction in Canadians' physical activity levels, which has led to corresponding health impacts. According to the new Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines, only 49.2% of Canadian adults and 43.9% of Canadian children and youth are meeting the 2020 recommended physical activity target.

The Municipality of the District of St. Mary's falls under the Eastern Zone of the Nova Scotia Health Authority. 2021 Statistics Canada Health Indicators for the Eastern Region show that, when asked about overall health, 60% felt that theirs was excellent or very good. Respondents reported a greater sense of belonging to their local community and greater life satisfaction when compared with rates across Nova Scotia and Canada. The Eastern Region exhibits slightly lower rates of self-reported physical activity, with 54% being moderately or regularly active compared to 56% in Nova Scotia and 57% in Canada. Health Indicators show that The Eastern Region and Nova Scotians as a whole have a higher rate of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease at a rate of 7% compared to 4% in Canada.

The Eastern Region exhibits higher rates of diabetes (9.4% compared to 7.5%), high blood pressure (26.8% compared to 17.3%), and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease than the average Canadian. Survey respondents from the Eastern Region also reported higher rates of mood disorders (12.9% compared to 9%) and higher rates of heavy drinking (26.4% compared to 17.5%) than the average Canadian; however, self-reported mental health rates were about the same (67% compared to 66%). Regular physical activity has been linked to a reduced risk of chronic diseases such as obesity, heart disease (Government of Canada, 2021), and can even boost the user's immune system (Harvard Health, 2018).

Staying active not only positively impacts one's physical health but also nurtures their cognitive well-being. Additionally, physical activity has been demonstrated to yield mental health benefits, such as reductions in anxiety, substance abuse, and mild to moderate depression (CMHA, 2015). Studies further suggest that it can serve as a protective measure against the onset of dementia, which affects approximately 1.4 million adults living in Canada (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2018).

The good news is that active transportation is a great way to incorporate physical activity into our daily lives. The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology recommends that adults aged 18-64 get an average of 20 minutes of moderate- to high-intensity activity a day. A brisk walk to the store, a bicycle ride to work, or a jog in the woods could be enough to meet this threshold.

...Be Fun and Build Community

Active transportation emerges as an effective solution to address loneliness and cultivate more socially connected communities. Research findings highlight this important role of active transportation, revealing that one in five Canadian adults grapples with feelings of isolation (Statistics Canada, 2019). Active transportation not only enhances mobility options but also facilitates spontaneous encounters and community bonding as residents traverse their communities. Parks, recognized as vital communal spaces, play a pivotal role in bolstering social well-being, especially for those living alone. The significance of parks in fostering connections is evident, with 47% of individuals living alone emphasizing their importance in enhancing their sense of social connection (Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, 2017).

Furthermore, initiatives like multi-generational and intergenerational recreation programs, as highlighted in the St. Mary's Recreation Master Plan, indicate a strong desire among residents for inclusive activities that promote interaction among diverse age groups. Active transportation emerges as a conduit for realizing these aspirations, offering individuals of all ages an opportunity to engage with nature, spend quality time with loved ones, and forge new social connections. Whether it's a chance encounter with an old friend or a run-in with a stranger, active transportation lays the groundwork for vibrant, socially cohesive communities.

... Improve Mobility Options

Whether it's school, work, appointments, errands, or visiting friends, we all have places to go. However, not everyone has the ability to drive a car. According to statistics Canada, In St. Mary's, 10.6% of the population is under the age of 15 and, therefore, not eligible for a driver's license (Census data age groups are from 10-14 years and 15-19 years).

St. Mary's is also home to an aging population, with 33% of the population being 65 years and over. Many seniors continue to drive with great success. Others choose—or are required—to stop driving if health issues related to vision, motor control, or memory occur. Other residents may not drive due to cost, disability, or personal preference. Active transportation can provide mobility and independence to people who might not otherwise have it. Additionally, the affordability of active transportation plays a pivotal role in breaking down barriers for individuals unable to drive due to physical, financial, or personal circumstances—constituting approximately 20-40% of the population (Victoria Transport Policy Institute, 2022).

BARRIERS TO RURAL ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Improving active transportation options is not always easy, and in rural areas such as St. Mary's, there are often other unique challenges. However, with dedicated consideration these challenges can be addressed.

A successful active transportation plan will consider...

... Limited Resources

The Municipality of St. Mary's, in comparison to other rural municipalities within the province, faces the challenge of a smaller population and a limited tax base. With fewer financial resources available, it is essential that active transportation infrastructure is relatively easy to implement and affordable to build and maintain.

... Lower Density

In August 2022, a survey conducted to inform the St. Mary's Recreation Plan exhibited that the top barrier to participation in recreation referenced by survey participants was distance. When it comes to active transportation, closer is generally better. How far people will go depends on their physical ability as well as the safety, comfort and interest provided by their route. Yet, even the most committed active transportation user will look for other methods of transportation if the distance between their origin and destination is simply too far.

Furthermore, according to the 2021 Statistics Canada census, 92% of residents in St. Mary's commute to work using a personal vehicle, while only 7.5% utilize active transportation or other methods of transport. Of the respondents, 59% indicated that their commute is less than 30 minutes, allowing for some to incorporate active transportation partially or entirely, but still presenting a challenge for many. Given the considerable distances many commuters must travel within the Municipality, expecting a significant adoption of utilitarian active transportation is unreasonable. Exceptions to this trend are likely within Sherbrooke and Port Bickerton, where concentrations of businesses and homes are higher. The use of e-bikes could potentially help overcome the barrier of distance.

... Climate

Climate directly affects the feasibility, safety, and comfort of active transportation options. The Municipality of the District of St. Mary's has a temperate climate that is influenced by its proximity to the cold waters of the Atlantic Ocean. Typically, the Municipality experiences short, cool summers and relatively mild, wet winters with temperatures ranging from -5°C in January to 19°C in July. These temperatures generally provide favourable conditions for active transportation, assuming the humidity levels remain comfortable.

Annual precipitation is 1400-1500 mm, the bulk of which falls as rain. On average, December usually sees the highest precipitation, while August tends to be the driest month. Wet conditions can make forms of active transportation uncomfortable and hazardous, leading people to opt for alternative modes of transportation. Moreover, snow and ice can impact the condition of pathways, bike lanes, and roads. Proper maintenance becomes imperative to guarantee accessible routes for active transportation during varying weather conditions.

Being a coastal region, the Municipality can experience fog, salt spray, and high winds. These factors can hold particular significance during severe weather occurrences. The majority of North Atlantic storms take shape from early June to late November. These weather systems track along the eastern coastline, frequently making landfall on Nova Scotia's Atlantic coast. This activity often results in considerable damage to active transportation infrastructure.

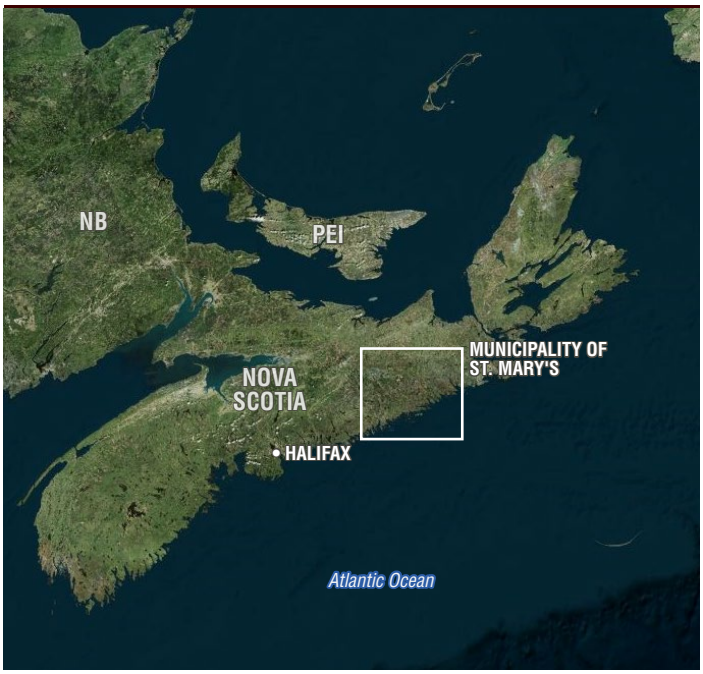
1.2 BACKGROUND

CONTEXT

The Municipality of St. Mary's is a rural area making up the western half of Guysborough County on Nova Scotia's Eastern Shore. It is bordered by the counties of Antigonish and Pictou to the north, the municipalities of Halifax and Guysborough to the east and west, and the Atlantic Ocean to the south. The Municipality is 1,900 km^2 and was home to 2,161 people in 2021. It has a lower population density, with 1.1 persons per square kilometre, compared to the provincial average of 18.4. The residents who live in St. Mary's are on average older than Canada and Nova Scotia, with 33% of the population 65 or older, compared to 19% in Canada and 22% in Nova Scotia.

Communities in St. Mary's are clustered along the St. Mary's River and within a few kilometres of the coastline. By road, St. Mary's is connected to the rest of Nova Scotia via Trunk 7, which links Halifax and Antigonish through Sherbrooke. Most civil, educational, and health services are located in Sherbrooke. Notably, the Historic Sherbrooke Village is a major draw for visitors to the area. In total, there are 1,583 privately-owned residences in the Municipality, with 34% of these homes accommodating temporary residents. Beyond the populated areas, approximately 70% of the Municipality is made up of provincial crown land. Additionally, there are several parks and protected areas within the Municipality, encompassing a combined area of 215 square kilometres.

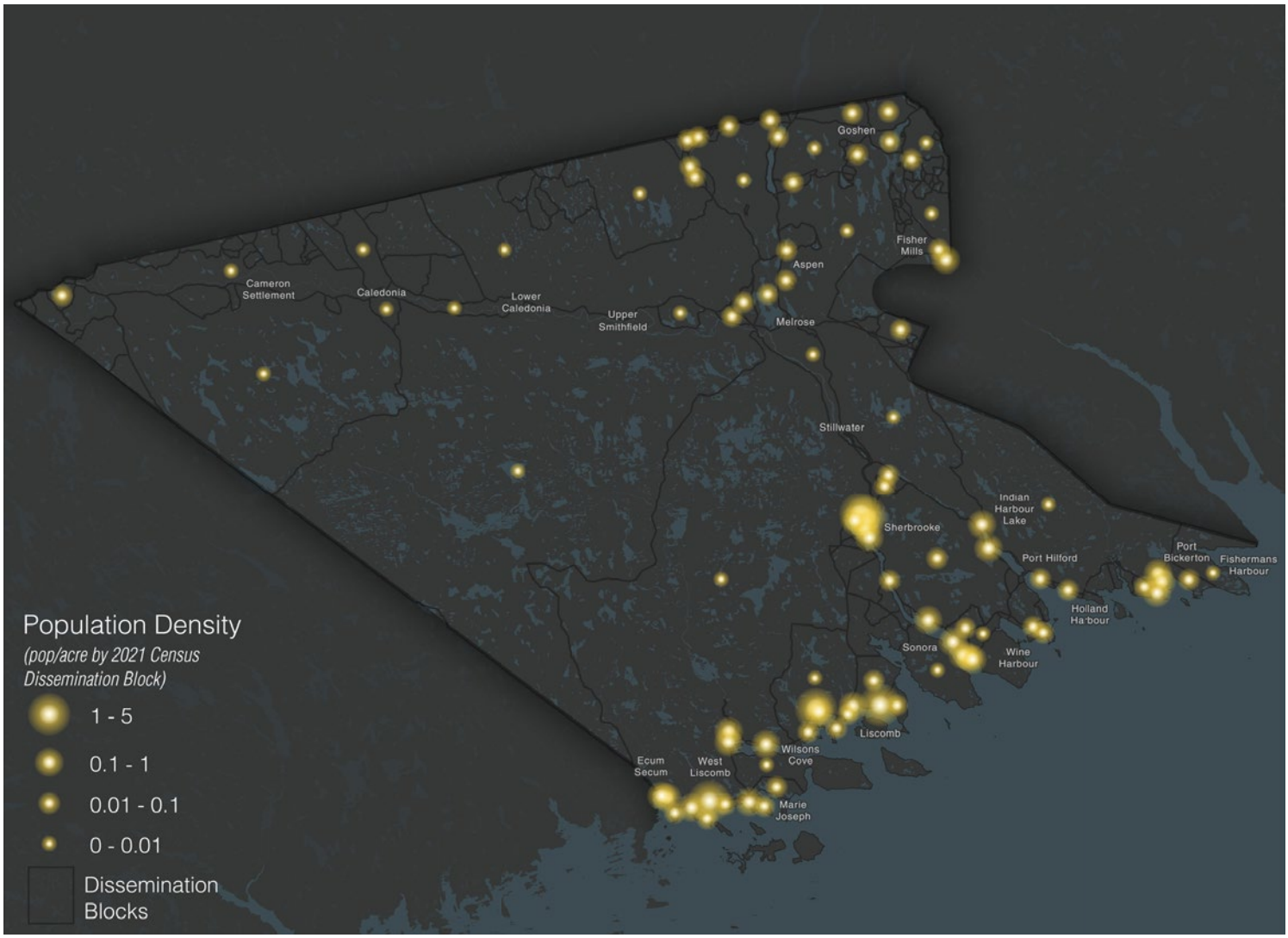
St. Mary's has strong ties to the logging and fishing industries, which have played significant roles in the area's economy and culture over the years. Though not as prominent as fishing and forestry, agriculture is also present in the Municipality. Farms produce a variety of crops including vegetables, fruits, and livestock. Additionally, St. Mary's scenic beauty, historic sites, and recreational opportunities contribute to its tourism industry especially in the warmer summer months.



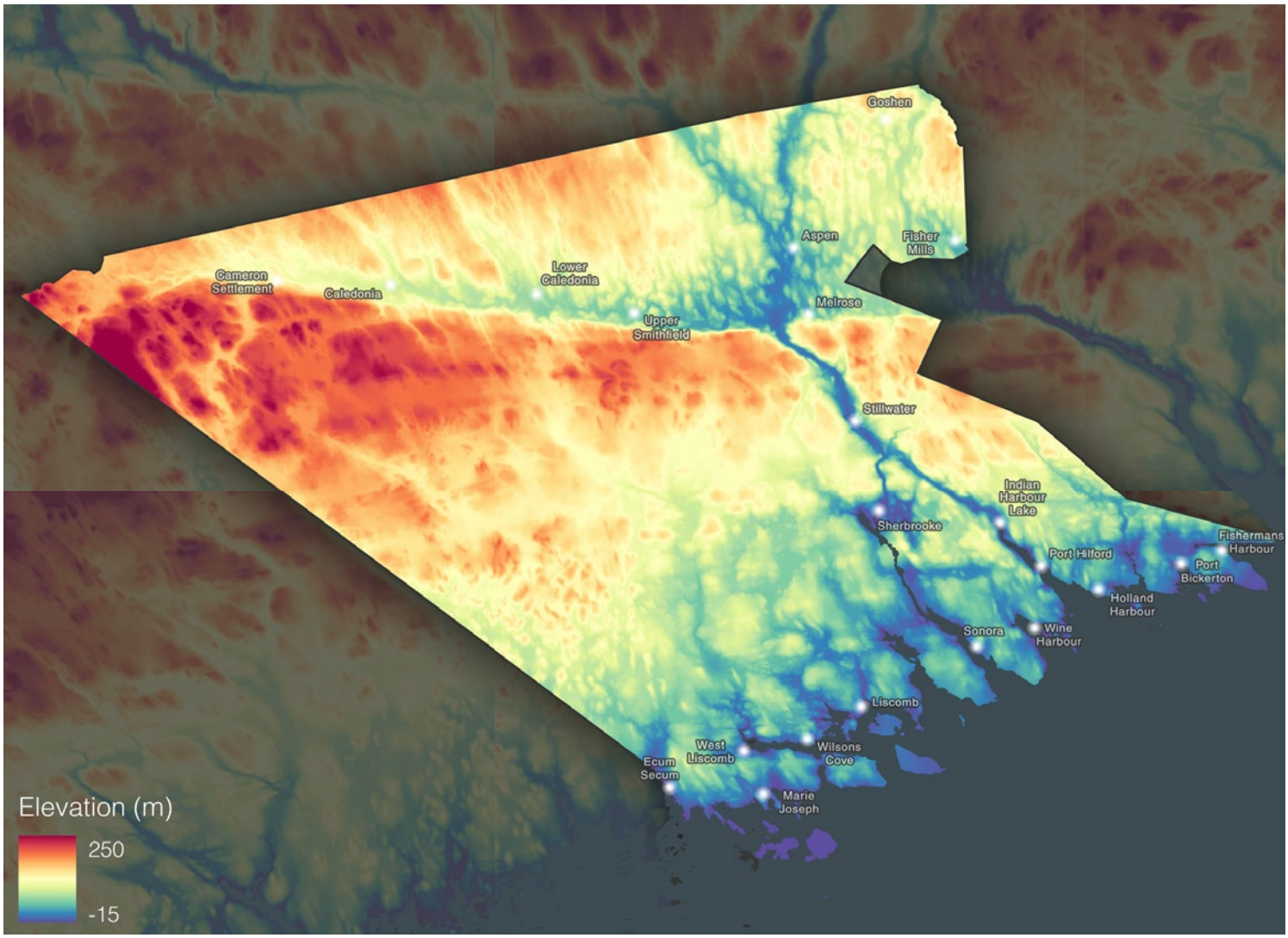
POPULATION CENTRES

The spatial distribution of residents within the Municipality of St. Mary's is based on various factors. The highest population density is concentrated around Sherbrooke, attributed to its positioning along a key transportation route and its proximity to essential amenities including healthcare facilities, schools, and businesses.

In alignment with settlement across the rest of the province, the Municipality experiences higher population densities along the coast in communities such as Ecum Secum, Liscomb, and Port Bickerton. Within the Municipality, a variety of housing options can be found along the coast, ranging from single-family homes to cottages and vacation residences. Coastal areas are appealing for residential settlement due to their scenic views, recreational opportunities, and economic prospects.



Areas experiencing the lowest population density are found inland, particularly in the western areas of the Municipality. These areas are characterized by limited services and challenging topography, making development difficult. Consequently, greater distances separate households and communities within these areas.



GEOGRAPHY

The Municipality boasts a diverse range of natural features attributed to its coastal positioning that can enhance the experience of active transportation. The Municipality encompasses 350 kilometers of jagged coastline characterized by harbours and projecting headlands bordered by islands. The underlying geology in the coastal areas is predominantly quartzite and slate. The forests found along the eastern shore consist mainly of coniferous varieties, with the canopy dominated by black spruce and balsam fir trees.

Transitioning inland from the coast, there are areas of undulating hills and granite uplands blanketed by shade-tolerant species such as red spruce, white pine, red maple, and yellow birch. These physical features can affect active transportation where steep terrain can make certain modes less appealing and impractical. The inland regions of higher elevation exhibit sharp descents toward the East, West, North, and Main branches of the St. Mary's River. The St. Mary's River is the longest in the province at 250 kilometers in length and cuts through the Municipality to drain into the ocean.

In addition to the St. Mary's River, there are numerous water features including chains of lakes, streams, and stillwaters which provide headwaters for rivers that have shaped the topography of the area. These waterways can range from calm, meandering streams to fast-flowing, rocky rivers. Oftentimes, water features can be seen as natural barriers that impede direct routes for active transportation. However, there is an opportunity to incorporate these features into the active transportation system for the Municipality through uses such as canoeing and kayaking.

ROAD NETWORK

The road network in the Municipality of St. Mary's consists of a combination of paved and gravel roads, reflecting the rural nature of the area. The primary routes connecting the Municipality to other parts of the province are paved arterial and collector roads. These provide important transportation links for both residents and visitors to essential services, residential areas, and local attractions. Trunk 7 and Route 211 follow the coast and are narrow and winding. There are a significant number of gravel roads in the Municipality which provide access to more remote areas and vary in condition.

The road network does present challenges for active transportation by increasing travel times between communities. From a bicycle tourism point-of-view, out-and-back roads are not ideal for cyclists who would ultimately prefer to ride along looped roads (to avoid riding along the same road twice).

Within the Municipality, road ownership is divided between the Province, Municipality, and private entities. The Department of Public Works is responsible for maintaining approximately 440 kilometers of provincially owned roads. These include the Trunk 7, collector roads, local roads, and seasonal roads.

7 Trunk 7

Description:
Trunk 7 enters the western boundary of the Municipality at Ecum Secum and continues to run along the shore until it crosses the St. Mary's River. Here, it changes direction northward, moving away from the ocean. The route passes through Sherbrooke, Melrose, Aspen. In Lochaber, Trunk 7 exits the Municipality and crosses into Antigonish County.

Traffic Volume:
Average annual daily traffic volume on Trunk 7 varies:

- Between South Lochaber and Sherbrooke, it is ~900.
- Between Sherbrooke to Ecum Secum, it is ~450.

Condition:

- Between the Antigonish County Line southerly to West Side Lochiel Lake Road, Trunk 7 is in poor condition and is scheduled to be re-paved over the next two years.
- Other segments are in moderate to good conditions, however, there are no paved shoulders on any segment of Trunk 7 in this area.

Length:

- 72 kilometres (within municipality)

211 Route 211

Description:
Route 211 is a 29 kilometre collector road that connects Stillwater on Trunk 7 to Port Bickerton.

Traffic Volume:
- Between Stillwater and Port Bickerton, it is approximately 395.
- Between Fisherman's Harbour to the boundary of St. Mary's, it is ~ 60.

Condition:
- Generally good.
- No paved shoulder.

Length:
29 km

374 Route 374

Description:
Route 374 is a collector road that connects New Glasgow at Exit 24 of Highway 104 with Sheet Harbour at Trunk 7. Only a small section of the road runs through the northwest corner of the Municipality.

Traffic Volume:
- Average annual daily traffic volume is approximately 170.

Condition:
- Generally good.
- No paved shoulder.

Length:
13 km

347 Route 347

Description:
Route 347 is a collector road that connects New Glasgow at Trunk 4 with Aspen at Trunk 7.

Traffic Volume:
- Between Aspen and Denver, it is ~ 390.
- Between Denver to the boundary of St. Mary's, it is ~ 240.

Condition:
- Generally good.
- No paved shoulder.

Length:
12 km

276 Route 276

Description:
Route 276 is a short collector road that connects South Lochaber at Trunk 7 with Goshen at Route 316.

Traffic Volume:
- Average annual daily traffic volume is approximately 630.

Condition:
- Moderate to good condition.
- No paved shoulder.

Length:
5 km

316 Route 316

Description:
Route 316 is a collector road that is located in the counties of Antigonish and Guysborough. It is 132 km in total, but only 16 km of the road is within the Municipality spanning from Goshen to Fisher Mills.

Traffic Volume:
- Average annual daily traffic is between 380 – 450.

Condition:
- Poor to moderate condition.
- No paved shoulder.

Length:
16 km

EXISTING ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES

The Municipality offers a variety of active transportation opportunities. In Sherbrooke, there are sidewalks that ensure pedestrians can walk along Main Street safely. While the coastal roads offer scenic routes for cyclists, it is important to note that they lack paved shoulders. Off the main roads, there is a network of hiking trails and OHV trails that span across the Municipality. Lastly, the area is a paddling destination for canoers and kayakers with numerous launch sites along rivers, lakes, and the coastline.

Hiking

The **Liscomb River Trail** is a moderately challenging 9.7 kilometer mixed surface trail with a few key features including a fish ladder for the salmon run, a suspension bridge, and a large waterfall. At the mouth of the Liscomb River, there is a 2.5 km natural coastal trail called the **Mayflower Point Trail**. Moving east along to the **Port Bickerton Lighthouse**, there is a coastal trail system made up of several different routes that total 3.5 km in distance. The system encompasses natural paths, boardwalks, and beaches. The **Stonewall Park Loop** is located in Sherbrooke and is used by pedestrians, mountain bikers, and snowshoers. The loop is 1.8 km in length and has sections that overlook the St. Mary's River.

Canoeing and Kayaking

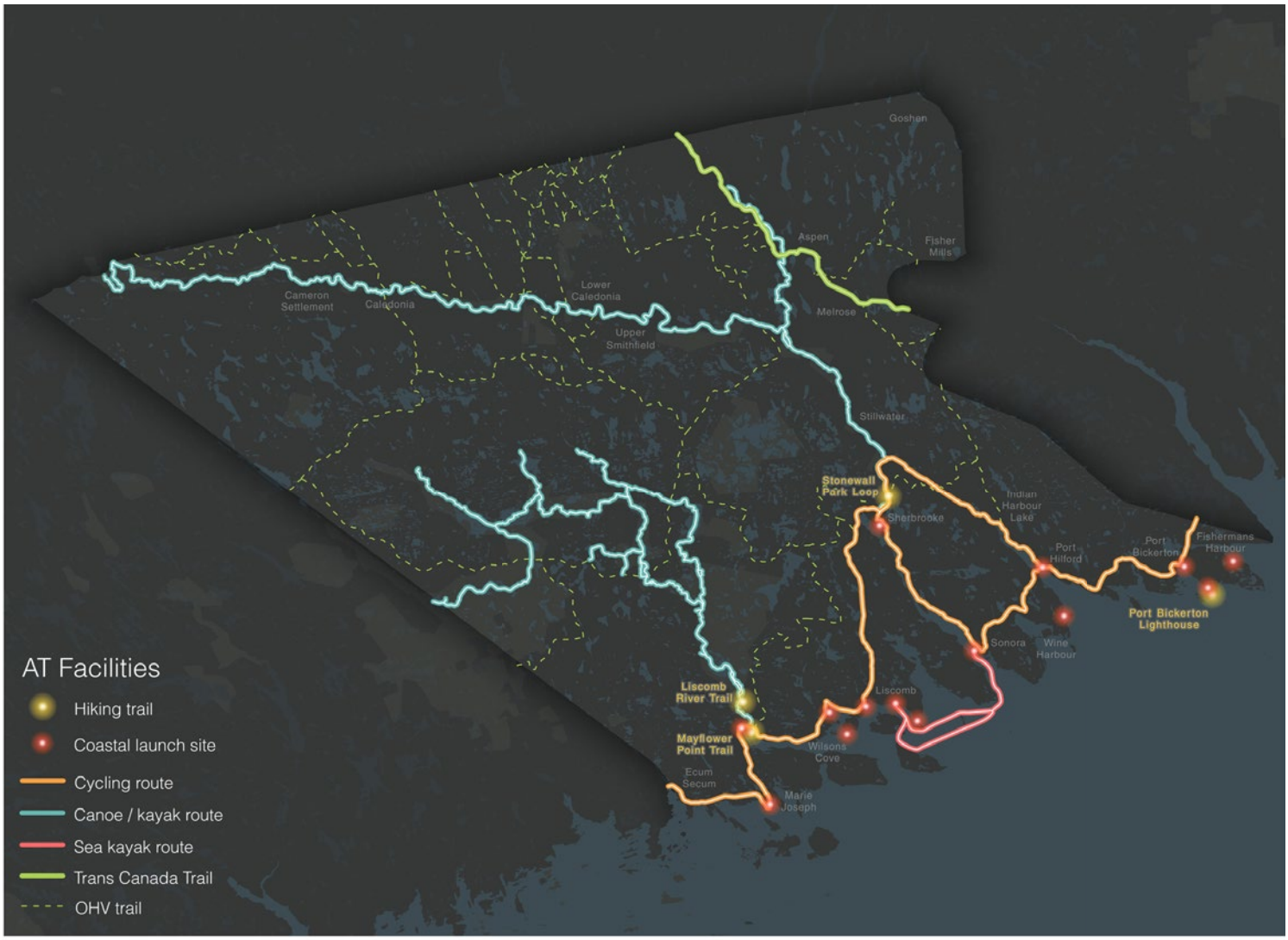
The **St. Mary's River** is a paddling destination in Nova Scotia for both day trips or longer overnight trips. It features three converging branches including the main branch (14km), the west branch (36 km), and the east branch (17km). For more experienced paddlers, the **Liscomb River System** offers high quality wilderness recreation opportunities for canoers, kayakers, and anglers. The system is characterized by flat stillwaters, easy rips, and turbulent rapids. There is one sea kayaking route with public launch sites located in the Municipality. This route begins at the **Little Liscomb Government Wharf** and over a distance of 15 km features a large light tower, the remains of a ship wreck, and sandy beaches.

Cycling

The **Sherbrooke Loop** was one of many routes created by Bicycle Nova Scotia to highlight Nova Scotia's diverse landscapes and promote riding in lesser-known regions of the province. The route starts in the historic Sherbrooke Village and travels along the St. Mary's River to Sonora. It then crosses a section of gravel road to Port Hilford Beach where it loops back to the starting point totaling 40 km in distance. This loop is part of a larger system called the **Blue Route**. The Blue Route is a network of designated cycling routes that offer safe and scenic options for cyclists. In the Municipality, the planned Blue Route follows Trunk 7 to Sherbrooke and continues along Route 211. This route is ideal for long distance rides and is characterized by rolling hills, low traffic volume, and long paved stretches in between communities.

Trans Canada Trail & OHV Trails

There is an extensive network of OHV trails located in the Municipality totaling 528 km. The trails are maintained by four different clubs including the St Mary's ATV Club, Broadhorns ATV Club, Pictou County ATV Club, and Sheet Harbour ATV Club. Additionally, there is a 23 km unfinished section of the TCT within the Municipality that is currently used as an active OHV route and multi-use trail. The St. Mary's Trail Association has formed to steward and complete this TCT segment which extends through Newton, Denver, Aspen, Melrose, and Country Harbour Lake.


Goshen
Aspen
Fisher Mills
Cameron Settlement
Caledonia
Lower Caledonia
Upper Smithfield
Melrose
Stillwater
Stonewall Park Loop
Sherbrooke
Indian Harbour Lake
Port Hilford
Port Bickerton
Fishermans Harbour
Port Bickerton Lighthouse
Sonora
Wine Harbour
Liscomb River Trail
Liscomb
Mayflower Point Trail
Wilsons Cove
Ecum Secum
Marie Joseph
AT Facilities
Hiking trail
Coastal launch site
Cycling route
Canoe / kayak route
Sea kayak route
Trans Canada Trail
OHV trail

KEY DESTINATIONS

Key destinations overlap with population density, and together they illustrate where active transportation connections are most important. Popular destinations that generate the most trips, typically include grocery stores, post offices, medical centres, daycares, schools, community centres, recreation facilities, parks, playgrounds and tourist destinations. The following lists contains community amenities, landmarks, and parks that are important destinations in the Municipality and should be linked together by the active transportation network.

Community Amenities

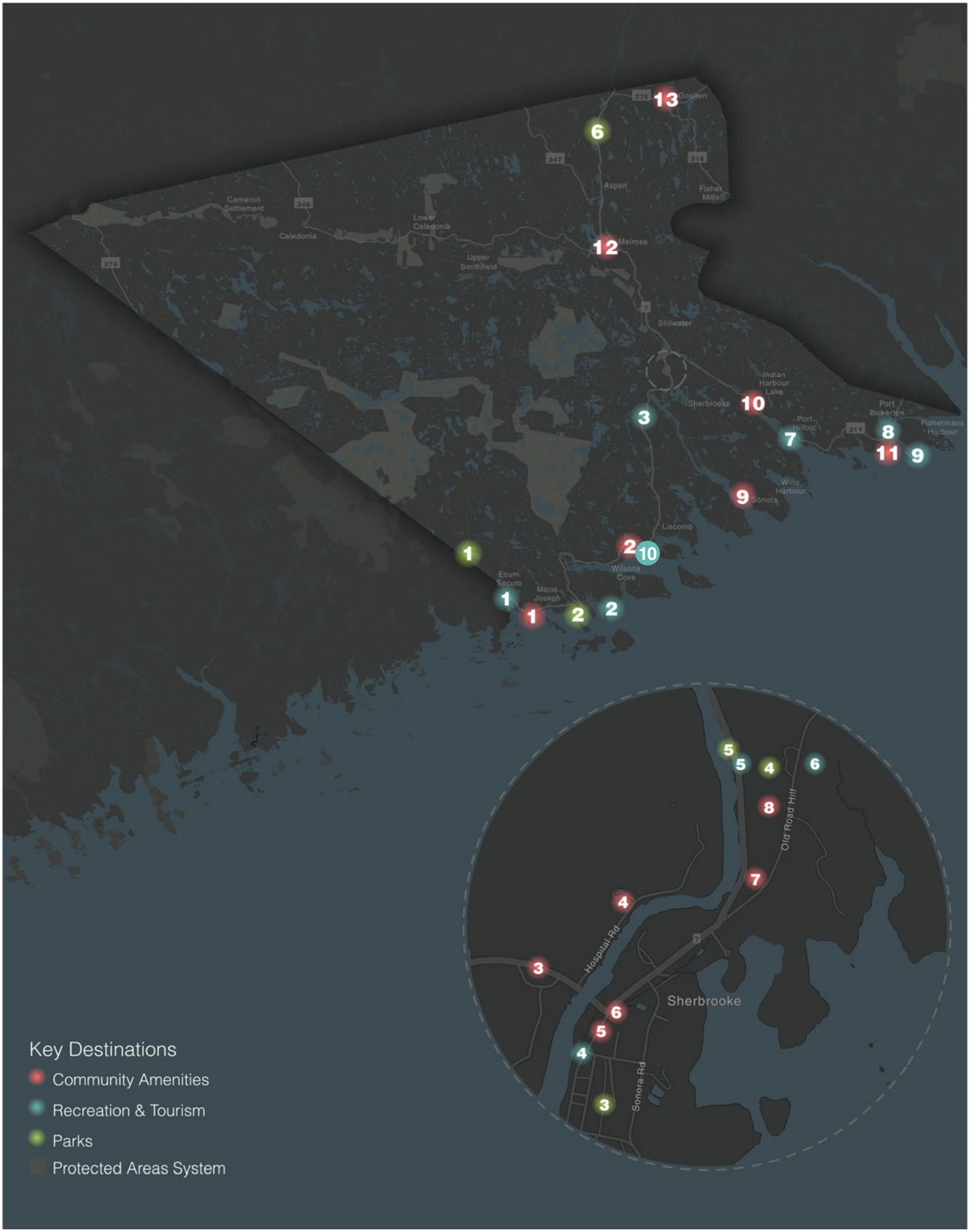
1. Ecum Secum Fire Hall
2. Liscomb Legion Hall
3. St. Mary's District Lions Club
4. St. Mary's Memorial Hospital
5. Sherbrooke Public Library
6. Sherbrooke Cloverfarm
7. St. Mary's Municipal Office
8. St. Mary's Education Centre/Academy
9. Sonora / St. Mary's River Community Centre
10. Indian Harbour Lake-Jordanville Community Centre
11. Port Bickerton Community Centre
12. Greensfield Oldsters Club
13. Goshen Community & Recreation Centre

Recreation & Tourism

1. Ecum Secum Community Park
2. Fancy's Beach
3. Goldenville Goldmine Interpretive Centre
4. Sherbrooke Village
5. St. Mary's River Association Interpretive Centre
6. St. Mary's Recplex
7. Port Hilford Beach
8. Port Bickerton Community Playground
9. Port Bickerton Lighthouse Interpretive Centre and Beach
10. Veterans Memorial Ball Field, Playground & Picnic Area.

Parks

1. Judds Pool Provincial Park
2. Marie Joseph Provincial Park
3. Pioneer Park
4. Stonewall Park
5. Sherbrooke Provincial Park
6. Lochiel Lake Provincial Park


Goshen
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Upper Smithfield
Stillwater
Indian Harbour Lake
Sherbrooke
Port Bickerton
Port Hilford
Fishermans Harbour
Wine Harbour
Sonora
Liscomb
Wilsons Cove
Ecum Secum
Marie Joseph
Old Road Hill
Hospital Rd
Sherbrooke
Sonora Rd
Key Destinations
Community Amenities
Recreation & Tourism
Parks
Protected Areas System

1.3 COMMUNITY VISION

Input from the community was critical in order to understand the current state of active transportation in St. Mary's and to ascertain the key issues and opportunities. Recognizing this, following the discovery phase, the project implemented an extensive initial engagement process in order to lay the foundation for the development of the Plan.

WHAT WE DID

Between September and December 2023, the project team hosted a series of in-person and online public engagement activities. To ensure that the findings accurately represented the diverse population of St. Mary's, multiple methods of engagement were used.

Project Website

To kick off engagement, the Active St. Mary's website was established to serve as a centralized hub for project information and updates. The website provided the public with information about the project, while encouraging participation in engagement activities.

The website also offered an option for those interested to subscribe to a mailing list to receive updates on project events and milestones. Alternatively, participants were invited to contact the project team using the submission form on the project website. In total, the project website had 175 visitors and 90 unique users.

Stakeholder Engagement

Upon the project launch, approximately 30 stakeholders were identified to participate in various engagement activities. Each stakeholder was sent an email providing them with an overview of the project, a list of public engagement opportunities, and an invitation to participate in a stakeholder interview. Stakeholder interviews were completed virtually throughout the months of October and November. These sessions enabled stakeholders to gain an understanding of the scope of the project, to provide feedback and to ask questions. In total, 10 stakeholders participated in one of these sessions.

Council Engagement

As elected representatives, the Municipal Council has a unique perspective on the challenges and opportunities in their community. As councilors are also residents, they provide a vital knowledge link between the administrative management of the Municipality and the real-world effects. Therefore, the project team believes that it is important to provide updates to the St. Mary's Council throughout the project. Providing updates during council presentations is also another way to reach the community, as the meetings are made publicly available.

Take Home Activity Kits

Take Home Activity Kits were designed as an offline participation option. Each kit included an overview of the project, followed by a short questionnaire that could be completed anywhere. Paper versions were available for pick up from the Municipal Office and the Sherbrooke Public Library, and could be dropped off to either location. Electronic versions were available on the project website, and a copy of the questionnaire was also available on the social pinpoint page for those who wanted to complete both at the same time. In total, the project team received 16 completed questionnaires.

Walk and Roll Tours

From late October to early November, the project team hosted 4 Walk and Roll tours. These sessions provided participants with the opportunity to learn more about the project and share their feedback while exploring a trail or section of the Municipality. Although this engagement activity had the lowest participation of all methods, with only 4 participants in total, the information received from these sessions was invaluable and participation was greatly appreciated.

Online Mapping Activity

The online Social Pinpoint map invited residents and stakeholders to place location specific comments on a map of St. Mary's and to view comments left by other participants. The map showed any existing active transportation facilities and key destinations, and prompted discussion about existing conditions, places people liked or disliked, and ideas for the future. This engagement platform was open for participation from late September 2023 to mid-November 2023 and in total the map had 199 unique users, with 64 direct comments, upvotes or downvotes.

Youth Workshop

To ensure that the youth of the community were involved in developing objectives for the Plan, the project team hosted a youth focused workshop at the St. Mary's Education Centre/Academy in early October. The purpose of this workshop was to seek ideas and opinions from younger residents, while enhancing their awareness about active transportation. In total, 32 youth participated in this session all providing invaluable feedback to the project team.

WHAT WE HEARD

The activities undertaken in the Engagement phase generated a well rounded collection of thematic and location based feedback. This section explores that feedback, grouped into themes. A full summary of the engagement phase can be found on the project website.

Accessibility

Inaccessible spaces make active transportation less comfortable and can make navigation not only difficult but impossible for some users. Addressing issues related to accessibility was a clear priority for most engagement participants, and some even made specific recommendations including:

- Widen infrastructure to allow for strollers, wagons and assisted devices
- Consider the needs of all users participating in all forms of active transportation
- Ensure there is a plan for the maintenance of routes in the winter months
- Improve infrastructure and opportunities near more isolated communities
- Implement programs and initiatives that aim to reduce barriers

Safety

Safety was also a top priority and commonly discussed across engagement activities. Recurring themes that emerged related to motorists, wildlife, and extreme weather conditions. Specific recommendations made by participants include:

- Provide opportunities for individuals who feel unsafe participating in active transportation on their own to engage in a groups setting (e.g. walking clubs)
- Offer workshops on topics related to safe active transportation use
- Address vehicles speeding in residential zones and focus on traffic calming
- Implement signage to remind motorists about sharing the road, especially in areas where the road narrows or bends
- Improve routes to St. Mary's Education Centre/Academy and other key destinations for youth
- Increase shoulders or physically separate motor vehicles from active transportation users

Amenities

Amenities are an essential piece of the active transportation network and help to create routes and spaces that are safe and enjoyable. Some participants remarked that they would be more likely to try new modes of active transportation if amenities were added or improved. Recommendations made by participants related to amenities include:

- Increase bicycle parking options at community gathering areas and other key destinations
- Improve wayfinding on trails and provide user friendly maps at trail heads
- Offer and promote "you made it!" destination points to encourage use of trails (e.g. benches at viewpoints, geocaches, or signage)
- Improve lighting across the active transportation network and increase visibility at crosswalks
- Provide garbage cans on trails and at key destinations within the network

Education, Programming, and Promotions

Education and programming can help disseminate new knowledge about active transportation, address barriers to adopting active transportation, and build capacity among local agencies and individuals to support active transportation. Several participants indicated that they did not know where to find out about local routes and opportunities, and identified opportunities to better promote future active transportation options. Other recommendations made by participants include:

- Provide general information and tips about active transportation in St. Mary's online and in community spaces
- Support the development of group walking/cycling programs and other social activities
- Improve access to facilities and equipment that support active transportation
- Offer workshops on topics including bicycle repair, wildlife safety, and defensive cycling
- Provide information on responsible trail use and trail etiquette
- Indicate the time that it might take to complete a certain activity
- Provide and promote user-friendly maps that can be found online, at trail heads, and in community spaces
- Implement information kiosks in each community to highlight what the community has to offer

St. Mary's River

The St. Mary's River was one of the top mentioned locations throughout the engagement phase. Many participants referred to the St. Mary's River as the "heart" of the Municipality, and some remarked that it is one of the most desirable destinations for both residents and visitors. Common threads that emerged during engagement activities were related to equipment rentals, promotion, access points, partnerships, and programming.

- Make equipment more accessible for those looking to paddle on the river
- Strengthen relationships to support existing and future St. Mary's River Association (SMRA) programming
- Develop a loop trail along the river
- Improve overall communications and promotion for the river
- Increase parking options and access points along river

Barriers

Improving active transportation options is not always easy, and in rural areas such as St. Mary's, there are often other unique challenges. However, with dedicated consideration these challenges can be addressed. The following list highlights the barriers identified frequently by participants when asked what is stopping them from participating in active transportation more often.

- Drivers not providing enough space and high traffic speeds
- Distance between destinations and time constraints
- Lack of connectivity between communities and key destinations
- Unsure of where to go or what is available
- Physical limitations and accessibility concerns
- Harsh weather conditions and lack of appropriate seasonal equipment
- Low interest from family members or no one to go with
- Lack of resources or equipment

CHAPTER 2

NETWORK DESIGN

2.1 OVERVIEW

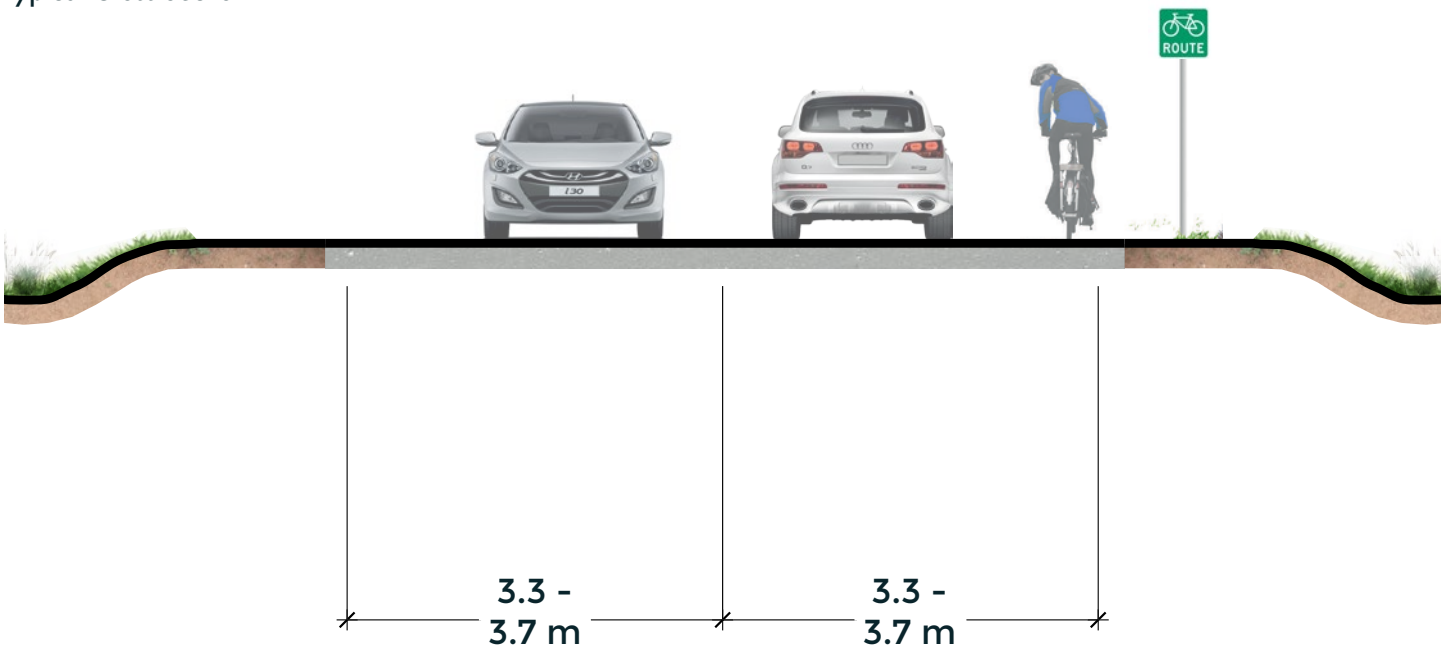
The most obvious way to encourage active transportation in St. Mary's is by simply providing safe and convenient routes. Active transportation routes should be safe, comfortable and directly connect communities, employment centres, schools, parks and beaches, tourist destinations, hospitals, and other amenities. An effective network that makes these links will help to establish active transportation as a more convenient and desirable choice for residents, and attract visitors who want to experience St. Mary's via active transportation.

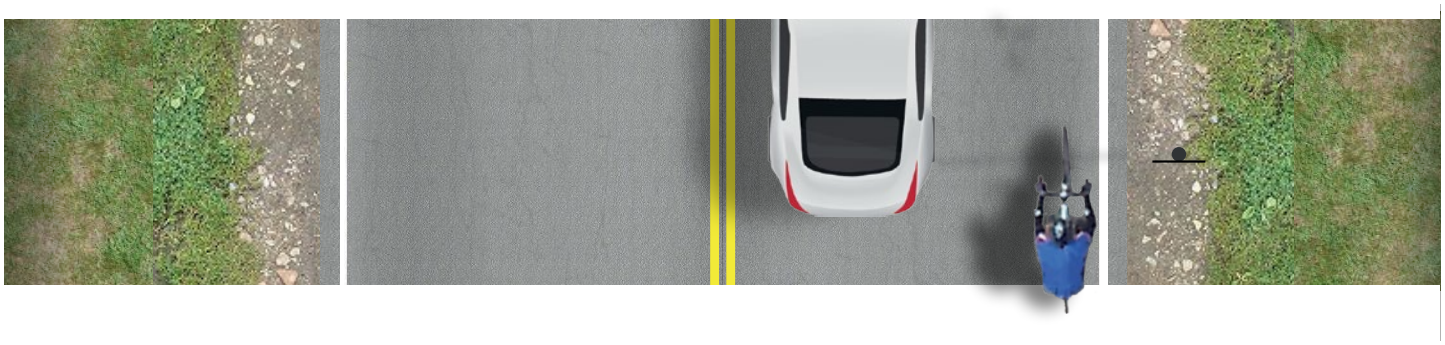
The proposed St. Mary's Active Transportation Network is made up of many existing and proposed route types - each with different roles and characteristics. The location and design of these active transportation facilities, as well as their links to other forms of transportation, will determine the success of the network. This section describes the proposed route types and network recommendations that make up the Active Transportation Network Plan in St. Mary's. The Municipality may add to or modify this network plan over time.

2.2 ROUTE TYPES

SIGNED BIKE ROUTE

Typical Cross Section





Typical Cost	Modes	Level of Comfort
$500 per linear kilometre		

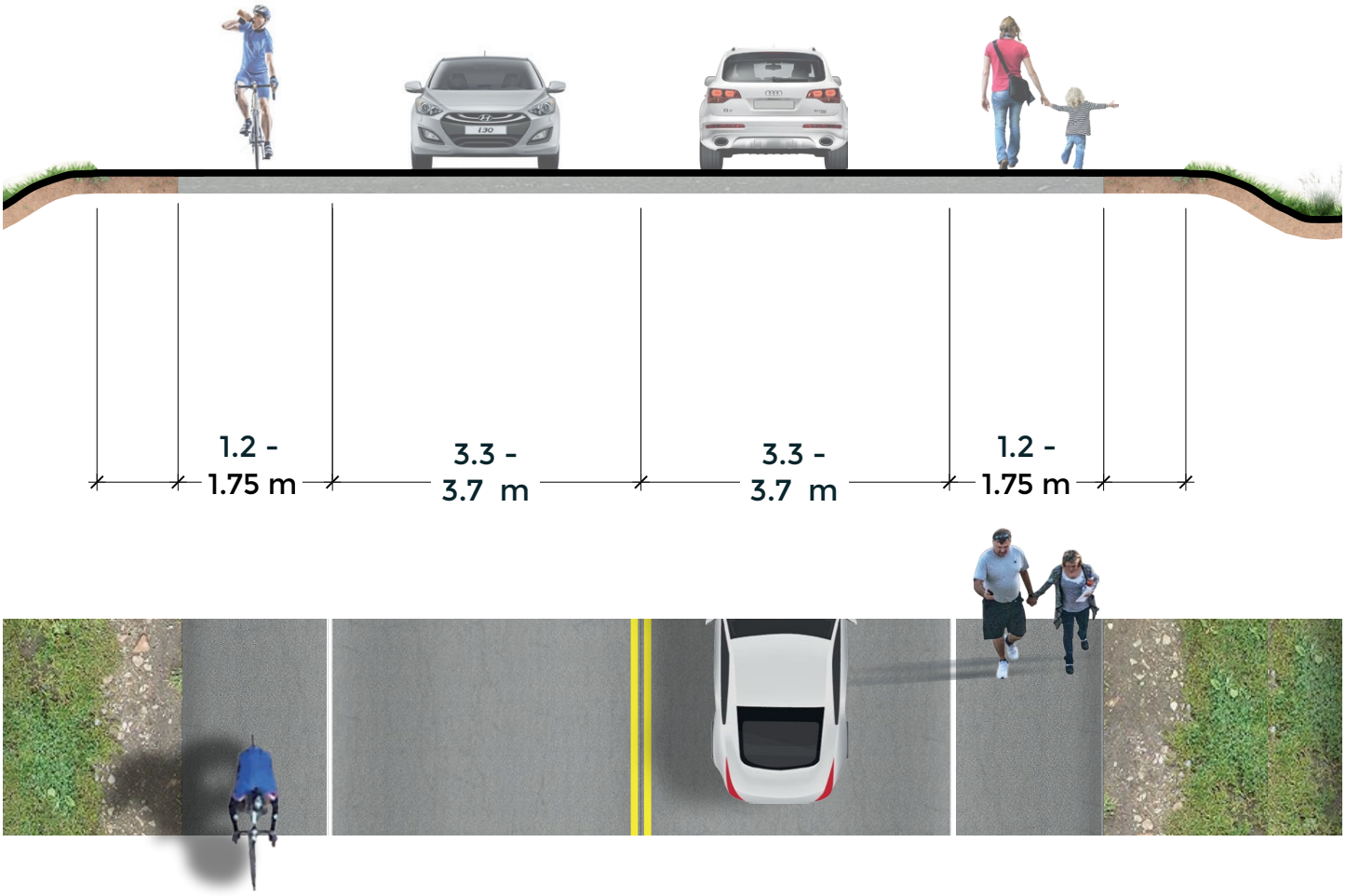
Description

Signed bike routes are designated on-road 'shared use lanes', and use signage that indicates that the road is to be shared by motorists and cyclists. Signed bike routes are suitable on lower volume / lower speed roads or in locations where it is important to maintain continuity of a bicycle facility though an area where it is too narrow to fit other active transportation route types.

These types of routes should feature "Bike Route" signage, or directional signage that acknowledges that the road is a bike route. For longer distance routes, "Share the Road" signs can also be placed to alert the driver and cyclist of a change in the roadway, ie a narrowing, or dropping of a shoulder.. Signed bike routes improve the level of comfort for cyclists, but still require a reasonable level of experience and confidence. Novice or beginner riders will likely not be comfortable riding in a shared use lane.

PAVED SHOULDER

Typical Cross Section



Typical Cost
~$300 per linear metre

Modes

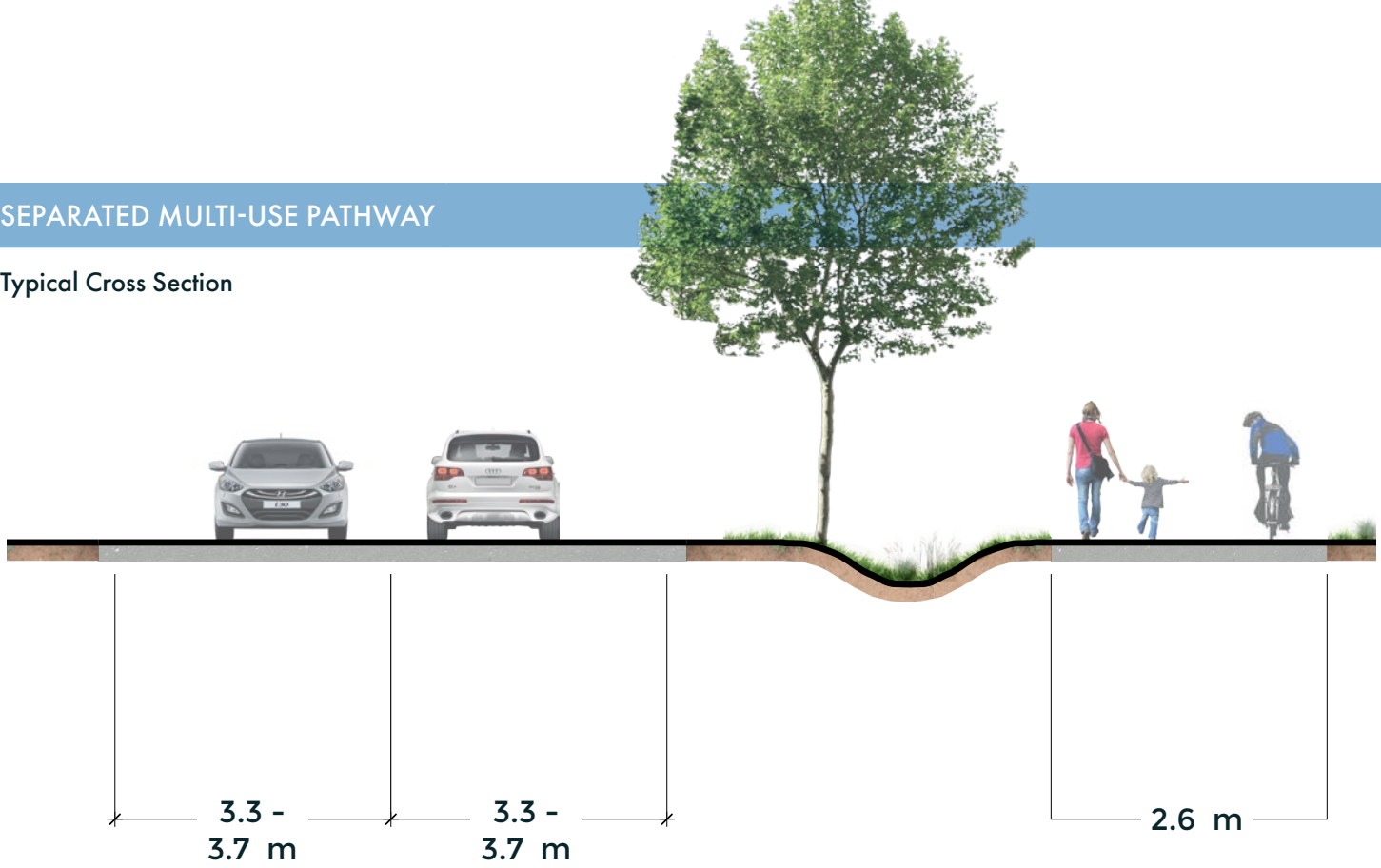
Level of Comfort

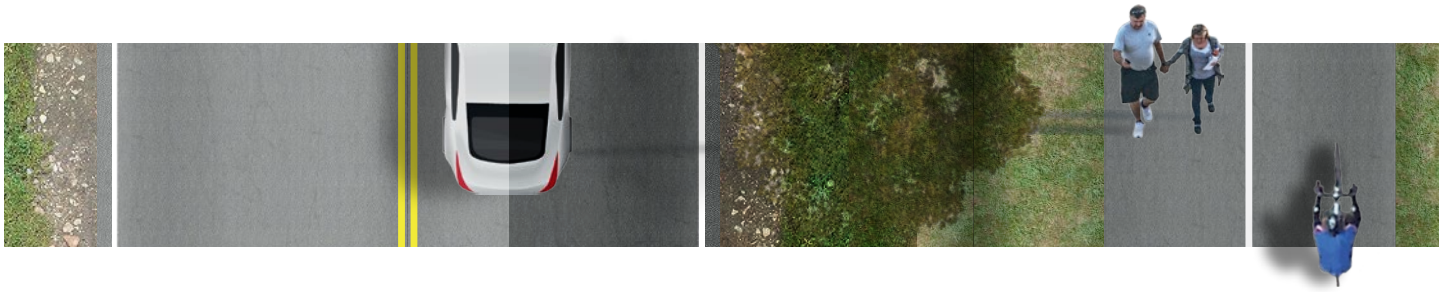
Description

There are a handful of on-road active transportation routes within the network that feature higher traffic volumes or are key regional corridors. These routes should feature paved shoulders to allow for cyclists to use both sides of the road in a safer, more comfortable manner. Paved shoulders can also improve pedestrian activity, but this type of infrastructure is targeted more for cyclists. It is important that these paved shoulders stay obstacle-free and are kept clean of litter and debris. Paved shoulders range between 1.0 and 1.75 metres wide, depending on traffic volume and traffic speeds. The costs of paved shoulder projects can vary greatly depending on the amount of space available and grades. When paved shoulders meet the Department of Public Works' policy criteria, the costs of installing paved shoulders may be covered by the province, when approved.

SEPARATED MULTI-USE PATHWAY

Typical Cross Section





Typical Cost
$400 per linear metre (crusher dust)
$500 per linear metre (asphalt)
$200 per linear metre (crusher dust, off-road)

Modes

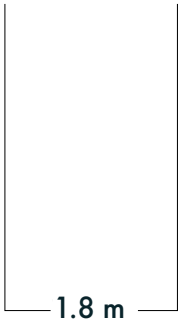
Level of Comfort

Description
Separated multi-use trails are located along a road right-of-way and are offered in lieu of a sidewalk or paved shoulder. They can accommodate a variety of active transportation users. Cyclists and pedestrians can usually share these trails without conflict, however, if the number of users grow, the trail width could be increased and pedestrian and bike paths should be separated by a line. These pathways can be paved with asphalt or they can be a crusher dust surface.

A multi-use pathway can also be provided off-road as its own trail type. These types of pathways would not be built within a right-of-way and often less expensive to build.

RECREATIONAL TRAIL

Typical Cross Section



Typical Cost	Modes	Level of Comfort
$100 per linear metre		

Description

Recreational trails are basic trails that are narrower than multi-use trails and accommodate a lower traffic volume. They can be used by pedestrians, cross country skiers, or snowshoers. Trail treads must be a minimum of 1.8m (6 ft) wide, and both sides of the trail should be kept clear of branches and brush for a minimum of 0.6 m (2 ft). Depending on the grades, these trails (or at least section of these trails) can be wheelchair accessible.

2.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

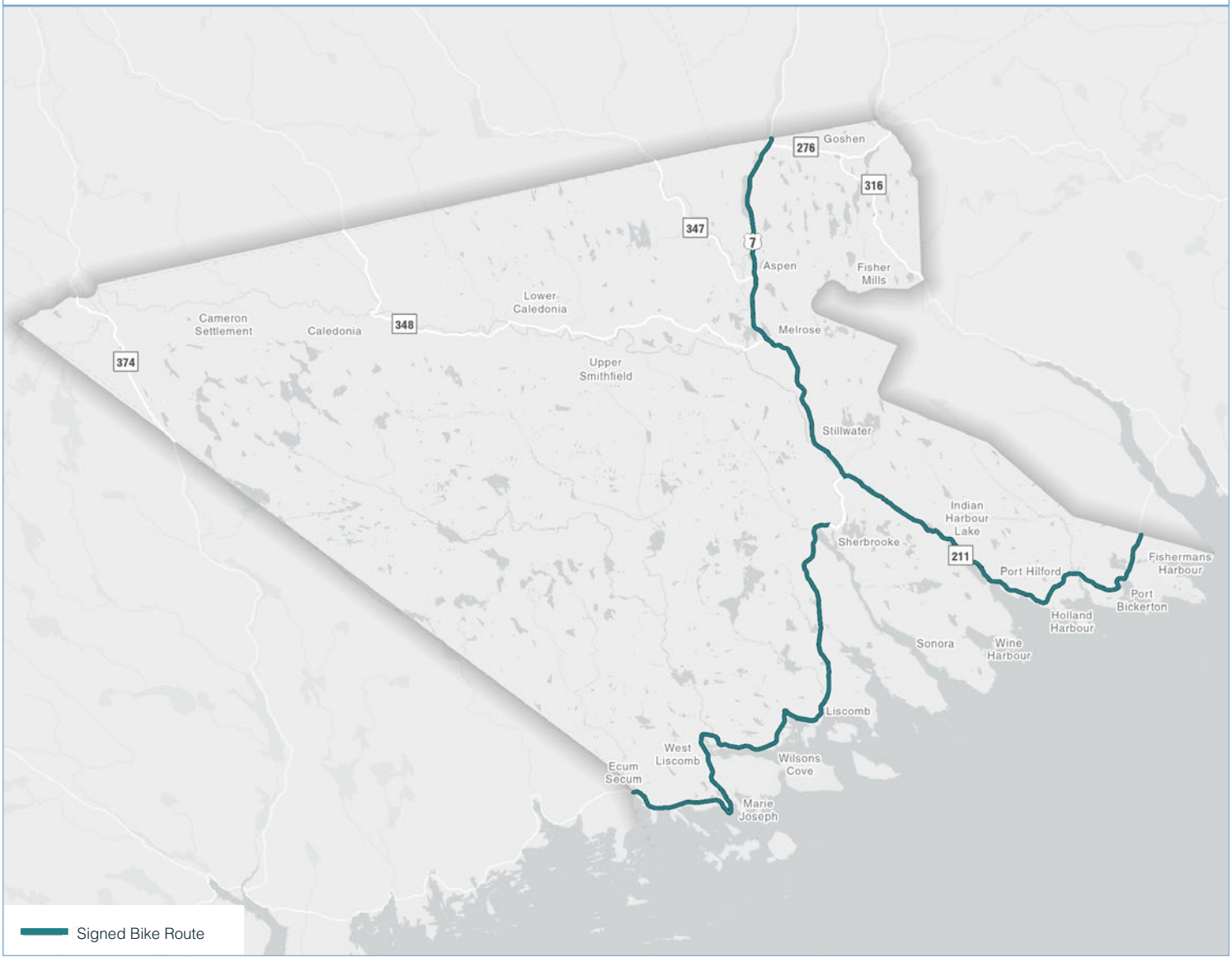
PROVIDE SIGNED BIKE ROUTE ON TRUNK 7 AND HIGHWAY 211

Priority	Est. Costs	Length
High	$59,000	118 kilometres

Description

The Blue Route is a provincial cycling network currently under development in Nova Scotia. It is a collaborative project between Bicycle Nova Scotia, the Province, and other partners. The project aims to connect communities around the province with safe, clear cycling routes.

In the Municipality of St. Mary's, the Blue Route is planned to run along Trunk 7 from Ecum Secum to Sherbrooke and along Route 211 to Port Bickerton and the Country Harbour ferry, where it connects into Guysborough County. Throughout the majority of this route, traffic volumes are very low (well below 1,000 vehicles per day) and, as such, do not require infrastructure upgrades such as paved shoulders. Along these sections a signed bike route is proposed to indicate that these roads should be shared amongst motorists and cyclists.



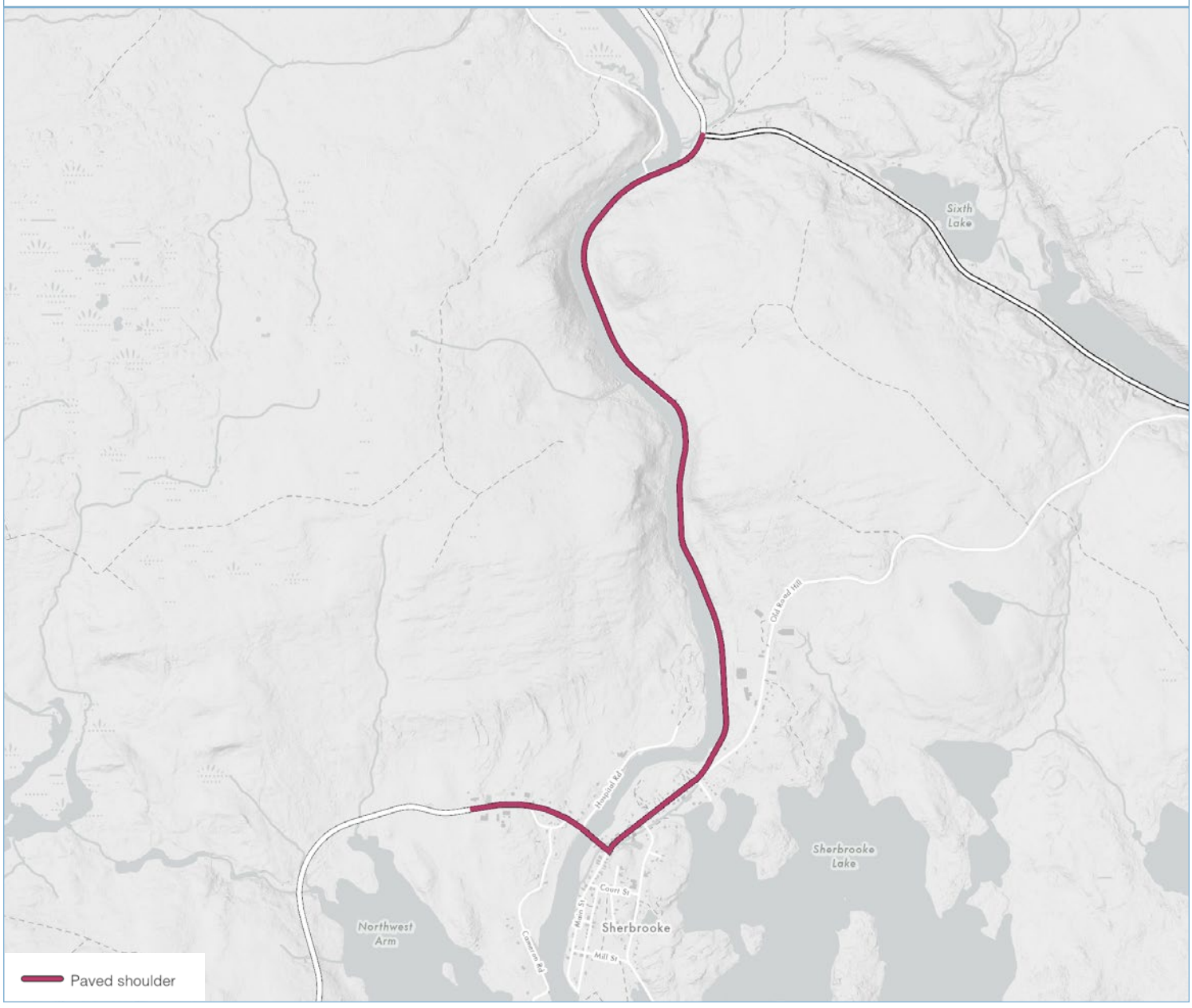
PROVIDE PAVED SHOULDERS ON THE BLUE ROUTE SECTION OF TRUNK 7 BETWEEN SHERBROOKE INN AND ROUTE 211 JUNCTION

Priority	Est. Costs	Length
Opportunity	$1,882,500	6,275 metres

Description

Some sections of the Blue Route may require paved shoulders - such as areas where traffic volume is high (greater than 1,000 vehicles per day) and posted speed zones are 80 km/h or less. When these criteria are met, the province may consider providing paved shoulders as part of new road construction, or when the road is included in capital paving and repaving projects.

One section of Trunk 7, between Sherbrooke and the junction of Highway 211, features traffic volumes that typically exceed 1,000 vehicles per day. A five kilometre portion of this route (from Sherbrooke Village to the intersection of Route 211) is also designated as a Blue Route. Given its high traffic volume and regional importance, paved shoulders are recommended along Trunk 7 from the Sherbrooke Village Inn to the intersection of Route 211. The Department of Public Works will add paved shoulders when future roadwork occurs.

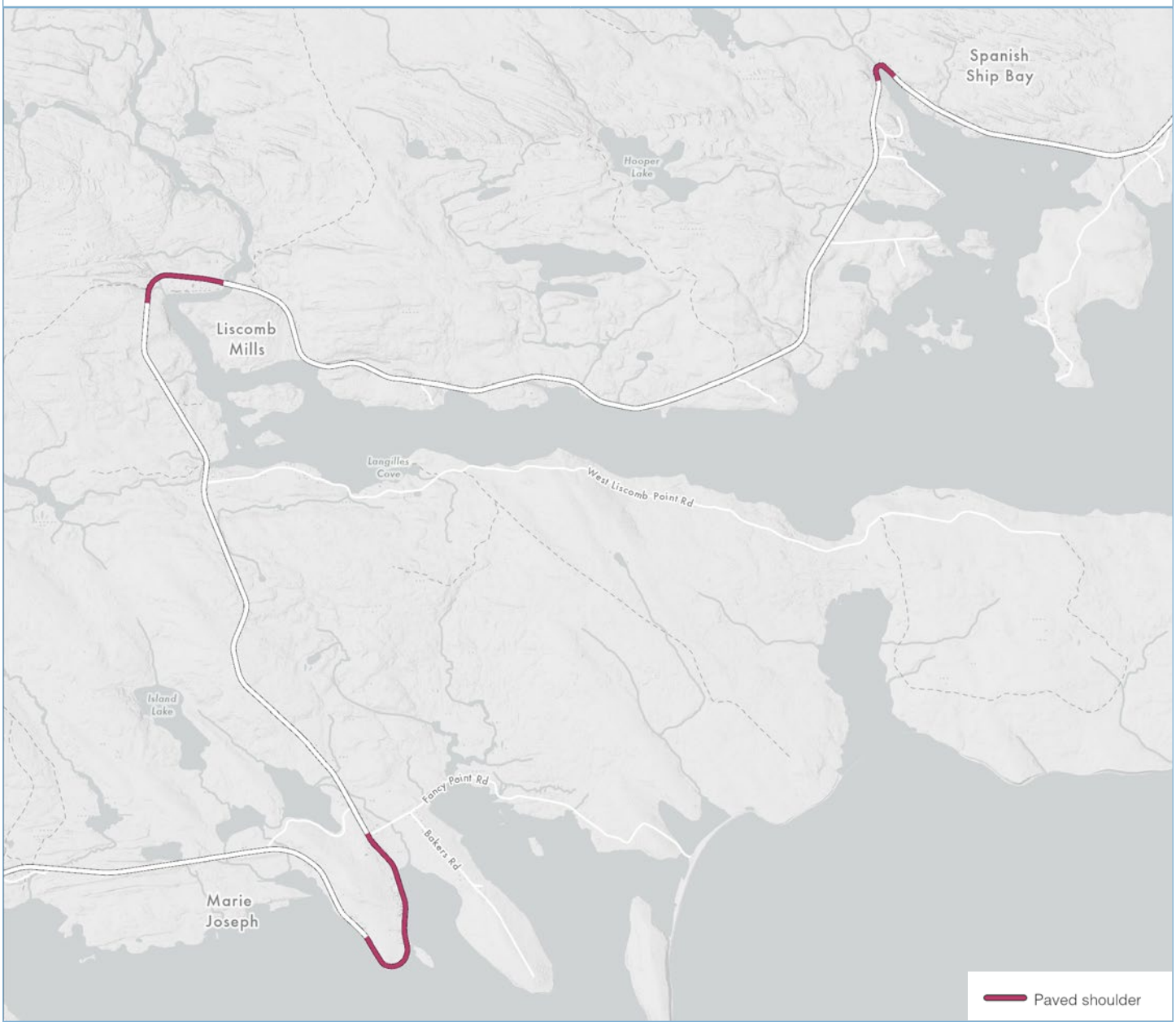


SELECTIVE PAVED SHOULDERS ON THE BLUE ROUTE SECTIONS OF TRUNK 7

Priority	Est. Costs	Length
Opportunity	$1,269,000	2,680 metres (Marie Joseph), 765 metres (Liscomb) and 785 metres (Spanish Ship Bay)

Description

As mentioned, the majority of on-road sections of the Blue Route feature traffic volumes that are low enough where paved shoulders are not needed. In most situations, the roads are long, flat and straight, allowing active transportation users to travel comfortably alongside the road in a safe manner. However, in certain situations, the roads may present horizontal and vertical alignment issues (such as blind crests, steep uphill climbs, or tight corners) that could put active transportation users at risk, even if traffic volume is low. In order to ensure maximum safety, extra shoulder width is proposed in these specific problem areas. A handful of these "problem areas" have been identified, such as the tight corners along Trunk 7 in Marie Joseph, Liscomb Mills and Spanish Ship Bay. Blind crests and/or steep uphill climbs would need to be identified on a case-by-case basis during future road projects. The Muncipality should work with the Department of Public Works to explore the potential of including this project when future roadwork occurs.



OLD ROAD HILL MULTI-USE PATHWAY

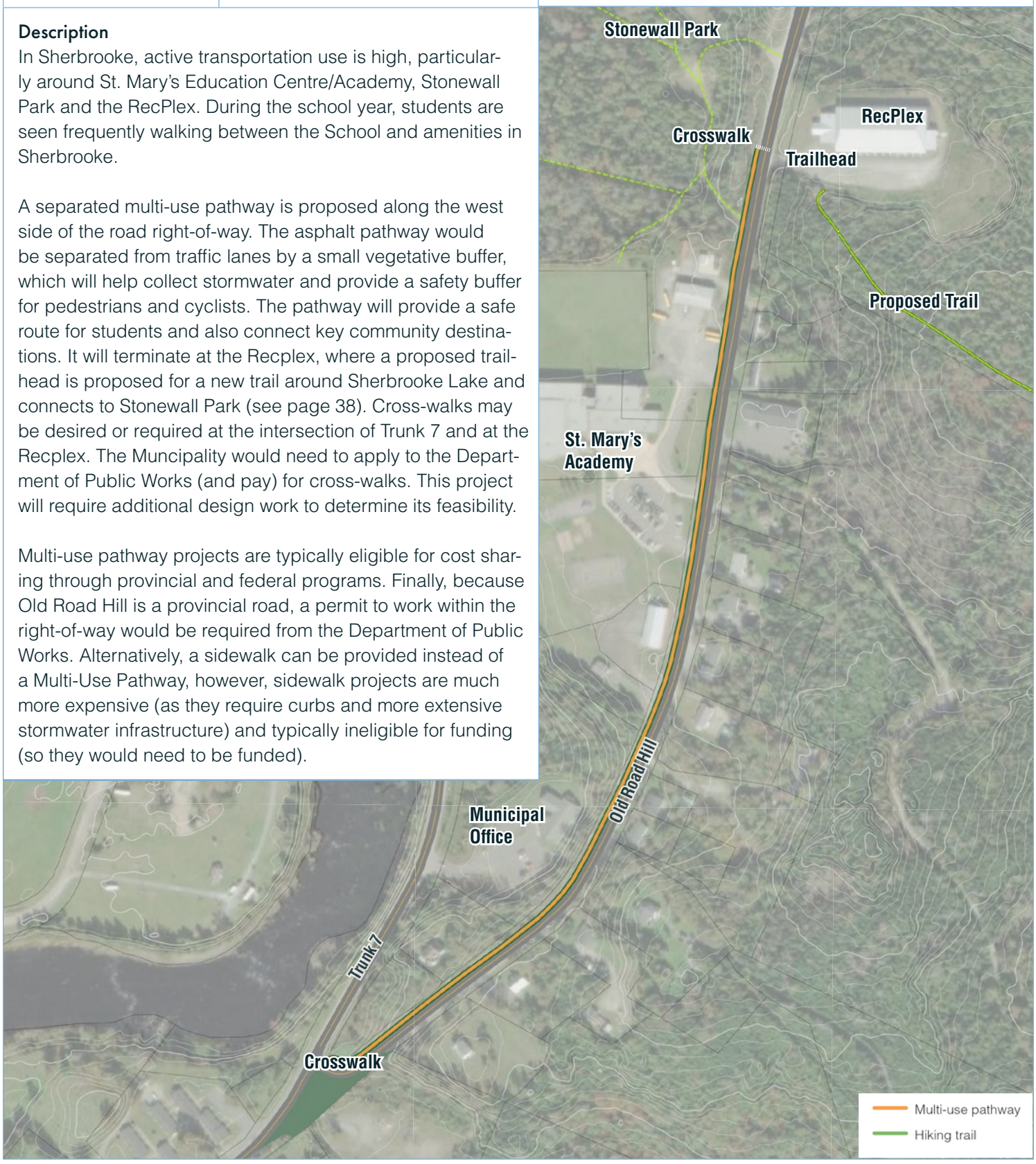
Priority	Est. Costs	Length
High	$30,000 (design) $470,000 (construction)	940 metres

Description

In Sherbrooke, active transportation use is high, particularly around St. Mary's Education Centre/Academy, Stonewall Park and the RecPlex. During the school year, students are seen frequently walking between the School and amenities in Sherbrooke.

A separated multi-use pathway is proposed along the west side of the road right-of-way. The asphalt pathway would be separated from traffic lanes by a small vegetative buffer, which will help collect stormwater and provide a safety buffer for pedestrians and cyclists. The pathway will provide a safe route for students and also connect key community destinations. It will terminate at the Recplex, where a proposed trailhead is proposed for a new trail around Sherbrooke Lake and connects to Stonewall Park (see page 38). Cross-walks may be desired or required at the intersection of Trunk 7 and at the Recplex. The Muncipality would need to apply to the Department of Public Works (and pay) for cross-walks. This project will require additional design work to determine its feasibility.

Multi-use pathway projects are typically eligible for cost sharing through provincial and federal programs. Finally, because Old Road Hill is a provincial road, a permit to work within the right-of-way would be required from the Department of Public Works. Alternatively, a sidewalk can be provided instead of a Multi-Use Pathway, however, sidewalk projects are much more expensive (as they require curbs and more extensive stormwater infrastructure) and typically ineligible for funding (so they would need to be funded).



PORT BICKERTON MULTI-USE PATHWAY

Priority	Est. Costs	Length
Low	$60,000 (design, total) $122,000 (construction, off-road section) $812,500 (construction, on-road section)	610 metres (off-road) 1625 metres (on-road)

Description

A short ~600 metre section of off-road multi-use pathway is proposed to connect the new ball field and playground at the Seashore Volunteer Fire Department to Port Bickerton Village Road (near the intersection of Oceanview Drive). This new trail would provide a convenient off-road active transportation route between the village and these popular community destinations. This land is administered by the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables, and would require the Municipality or a community organization to apply for a letter of authority to build and maintain such a trail.

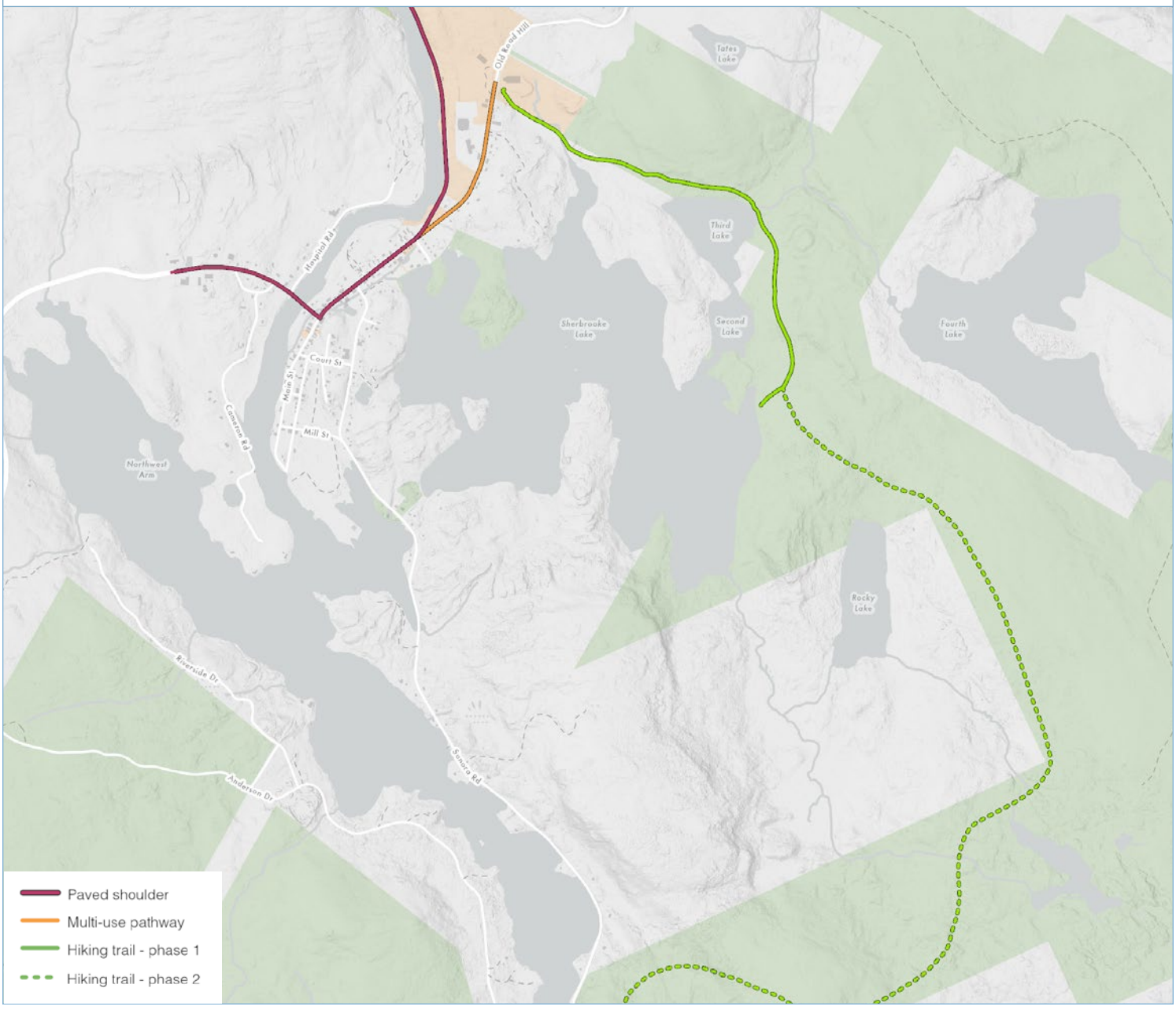
An on-road separated multi-use pathway can also be built along the eastern side of the highway along the backside of the ditch, providing a loop around the community. This project would require support from the Department of Public Works, and would not be eligible for cost sharing (ie, costs must be covered by the Municipality). Further design work and study will be required to determine the feasibility of this recommendation. Drainage infrastructure may be required for any infrastructure constructed in the right-of-way.

SHERBROOKE LAKE HIKING TRAIL

Priority	Est. Costs	Length
Phase I - Medium Phase II - Low	$20,000 (design, total) $243,000 (construction, Phase I) $506,500 (construction, Phase II)	2,430 m - Phase I 5,065 m - Phase II

Description

A recreational trail is proposed within the crown land behind the St. Mary's Recplex. This trail could tie into the St. Mary's Education Centre/Academy, Stonewall Park and the Sherbrooke Provincial Park, linking these destinations to the Sherbrooke Lake system. This trail could be used for recreational purposes, providing an extended trail system that provides formal access to Sherbrooke Lake (which doesn't currently exist). It could also be used by the school for educational purposes through outdoor excursions or outdoor classrooms could be provided. This trail could be built in phases, starting with an out-and-back trail between the Recplex and Sherbrooke Lake. If this initial trail is successful, future phases could continue into crown land and eventually continue all the way to Sonora Road. Additional design work will be required to determine the feasibility and construction details of this trail.



DEVELOP AND PROMOTE THE ST. MARY'S WATER TRAIL

Priority	Est. Costs
Medium	N/A

Description

In alignment with the Sherbrooke Active Transportation Plan, boat launches are proposed to be implemented and maintained in key locations across the Sherbrooke area. These locations include Sherbrooke Provincial Park, Pioneer Park, the sawmill, and an additional site in Stillwater. Acquisition or easements are necessary for the Stillwater site, and together with existing facilities, they will establish a cohesive 5 km river stretch with launches catering to paddlers of all skill levels, achievable through municipal efforts or partnerships with local non-profits (such as adaptive Paddling Solutions), or through a combination of the two.

Develop portage trail for paddlers to bypass Big Falls outside of Sherbrooke

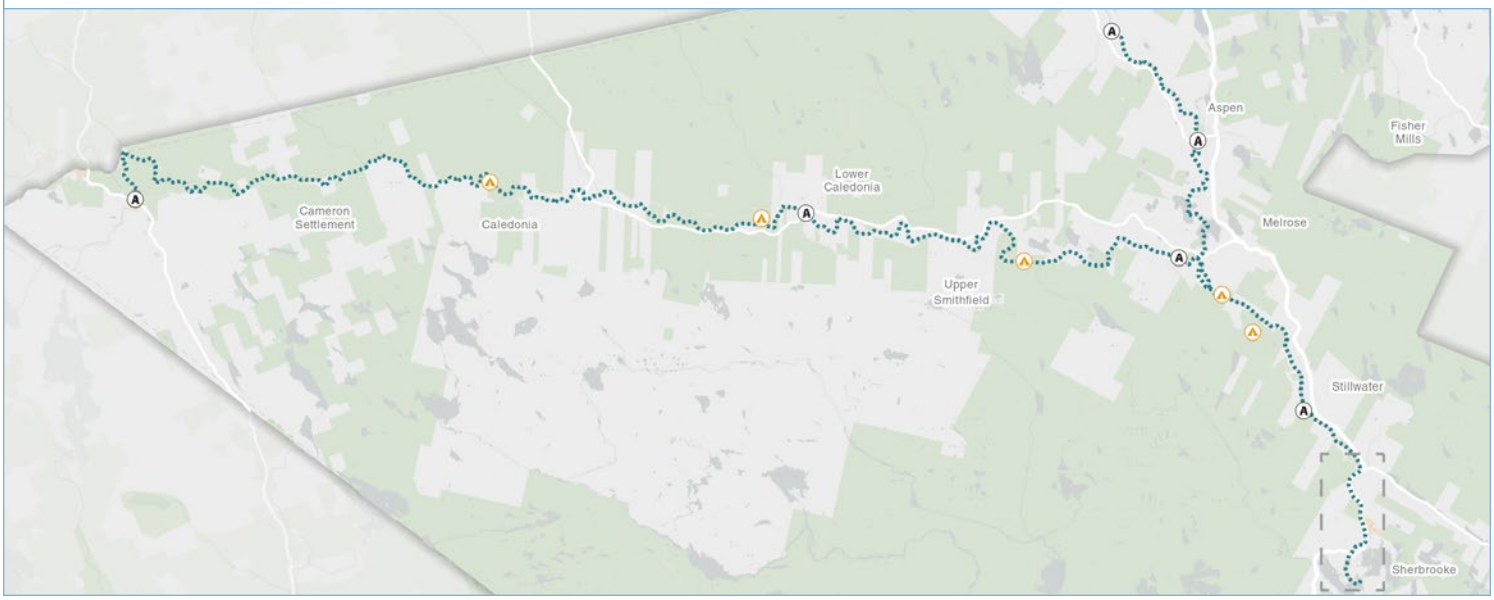
The St. Mary's River features challenging white water in its final four kilometers from Stillwater to Sherbrooke, marking a transition from intermediate to advanced difficulty. To ensure safety, a short (465 metres) portage trail around Big Falls is proposed, necessitating a trail management agreement with the Nova Scotia Nature Trust, the current landowner. Partnering with Canoe Kayak Nova Scotia, which maintains portage routes and campsites province-wide, is recommended for the Municipality to facilitate this project effectively.

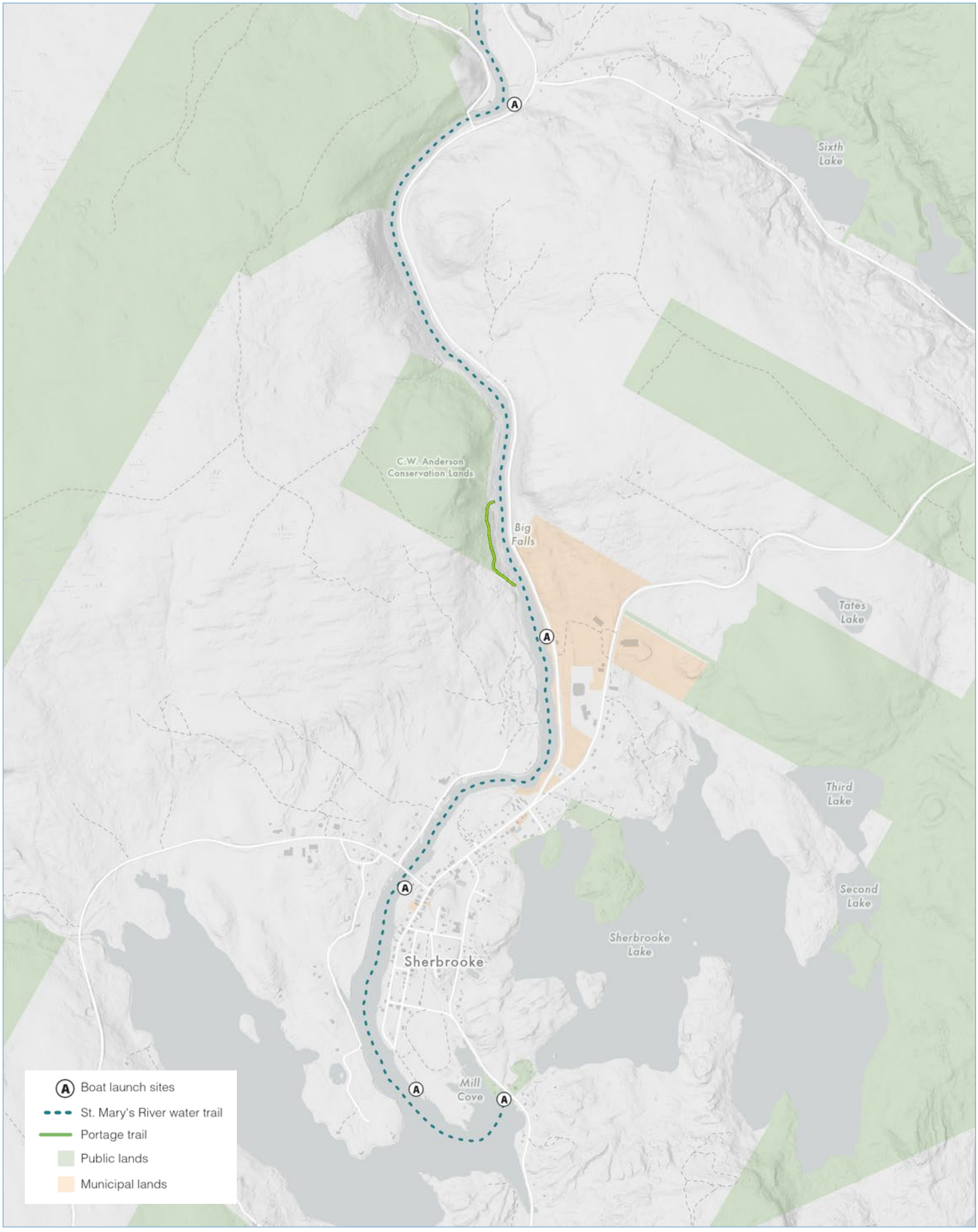
Acquire suitable lands for the establishment of strategically located boat launch sites along the upper sections of the St. Mary's River

Land acquisition could enhance accessibility for paddlers in St. Mary's, particularly for longer trips, as many existing boat launches are on private land or narrow strips next to bridges. Ideal launch sites should be adjacent to river sections with calm water for safe entry and exit, easily accessible by road with clear signage, and equipped with designated parking for vehicles with trailers, ensuring convenience for paddlers. Successful acquisition would facilitate safe and controlled access to the river, improving the overall experience for users.

Incorporate primitive campsites along the east, west and main branches of the St. Mary's River

Establishing primitive campsites along the St. Mary's River is crucial for supporting multi-day trips, but current sites on private land are hard to find. Acquiring land for designated campsites strategically positioned every 15 to 20 km would offer convenient entry and exit points while ensuring safety and accessibility. These campsites, featuring space for 2-4 tents and basic amenities, should adhere to low-impact design principles for a primitive camping experience, with clear signage to aid paddlers in locating them along the route.




Sixth Lake
C.W. Anderson Conservation Lands
Big Falls
Tates Lake
Third Lake
Second Lake
Sherbrooke Lake
Sherbrooke
Mill Cove
Boat launch sites
St. Mary's River water trail
Portage trail
Public lands
Municipal lands

CHAPTER 3

AMENITIES

3.1 OVERVIEW

A well-connected network of active transportation routes is crucial for achieving the objectives outlined in this Active Transportation Plan. However, to enhance safety, accessibility, and overall enjoyment, it's imperative to complement these routes with public amenities. These amenities not only improve the infrastructure but also contribute to creating comfortable and inviting public spaces throughout the Municipality. They can be strategically placed along trails and streets, as well as in parks, schools, community centers, and other key destinations.

This section presents a range of recommended amenities that could be provided either by the Municipality or in collaboration with partners such as businesses, trail groups, or other community organizations. It's essential that these amenities cater to the diverse needs of all users, while also adhering to Universal and Inclusive Design principles, thus addressing various social and cultural requirements. Moreover, all projects should adhere to the most recent CSA/ASC B651 accessibility guidelines, as well as comply with the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act (see appenix for hyperlinks).

3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Rest Areas

Description
Rest areas serve as vital clusters of amenities along the trail, offering shelter and a place for trail users to pause, recharge, and enhance their overall experience. It's essential to strategically distribute these amenities throughout St. Mary's, ensuring accessibility and comfort for users. These areas should offer seating for relaxation, opportunities for socializing, and in some cases even access to water sources and restrooms. Typical features of rest areas include benches, picnic tables, water fountains, restrooms, bike parking, and repair stations. Additionally, rest areas along routes frequented by long-distance commuters or travelers should be equipped with extra facilities such as water fountains, gender affirming and clearly marked public restrooms, and expanded picnic areas. To maximize accessibility, trail surfaces should be constructed using pavement or crusher dust, and parking facilities and safe crossings should be provided. Seating options should vary, and sheltered picnic areas should be available, with a particular emphasis on ensuring wheelchair accessibility for all picnic tables.

Seating

Description
Seating enhances accessibility and comfort for all individuals, offering designated areas for relaxation and rest. Additionally, public seating serves to diminish the negative connotations often attached to "loitering," especially affecting marginalized communities, and promotes the inclusive utilization of public spaces. Seating is advised to be placed strategically across the active transportation network, particularly in areas with significant slopes, extended segments between intersections, at key destinations like parks or viewpoints, and along routes designed to be fully accessible.

Placement and Design Guidance
Along pedestrian trails and at key viewpoints, seating should be spaced approximately every 500 meters to ensure accessibility and encourage breaks for users. In more densely populated areas, benches should be positioned closer together, approximately every 250 to 400 meters, to accommodate higher foot traffic. It's crucial that benches do not obstruct the pathway, allowing for unimpeded movement. The orientation of benches should face towards human activity to foster a sense of security and community engagement.

Est. Costs
$1,500 - 3,500 per bench

Water Stations

Description
Water and hydration is a necessary component of any physical activity, and active transportation is no exception. Water fountains and bottle filling stations to active transportation users are the equivalent to gas stations for cars. This is especially true along long distance active transportation routes, and popular destinations like Stonewall Park. Some options offer a pet station, while others offer two heights of water fountain. Water stations require municipal water and a sanitary drain or dry well hookup.

Placement and Design Guidance
Along longer routes and high traffic gathering areas.

Est. Costs
$3,000 - 4,000 each

Waste Stations and Pet Waste Station

Description
Waste stations and dog waste bags serve as essential tools in curbing littering along active transportation routes, ultimately enhancing the overall user experience. Not only do they promote cleanliness and tidiness, but they also play a vital role in environmental conservation and wildlife protection.

Placement
Waste stations and dog waste bags should be placed at regular intervals along the routes, particularly in high-traffic areas and at key access points such as trailheads. Additionally, ensure visibility and accessibility by placing them in well-lit and easily accessible locations.

Est. Costs
$1,000 - $5,000 (waste and recycling station)
$50 - $500 (pet waste bag stations)

Lighting

Description

Lighting along active transportation routes not only extends operational hours but also significantly enhances the feeling of safety and comfort for users, especially during evening hours. Moreover, it plays a crucial role in creating a more accessible environment, particularly benefiting vulnerable users such as individuals walking alone or individuals with a disability.

It's crucial to maintain consistent and uniform lighting throughout the designated area, aiming to minimize the presence of shadows for optimal visibility. Adequate lighting levels, ideally no less than 50 lux at ground level, are essential for safety and clarity. Opting for dark sky compliant lighting options can help reduce light pollution while efficiently illuminating the space. Specific areas such as stairs, ramps, rest zones, and signage should receive adequate illumination to ensure ease of navigation and enhance overall visibility.

Placement

Installations of lighting should be strategically prioritized in public spaces, along high-traffic on-road routes, and pedestrian trails to maximize their effectiveness in enhancing safety and accessibility for users.

Est. Costs

$7,000 - $8,000 per pole (including electrical transmission lines

Bike Repair Stations

Description
Bicycle repair stations, quipped with tools for basic bike repair and maintenance, serve as valuable amenities contributing to the accessibility and safety for those who choose to cycle through St. Mary's. Strategically placed repair stations not only reduce the financial burden of bike maintenance but also enhance safety and overall enjoyment for the user by ensuring they can address repairs and tune-ups anywhere within the Municipality. Tools should be attached to the stand with stainless steel cables and tamper-proof fasteners. Stations should include hex keys, screwdrivers, wrenches, tire levers, and an air pump compatible with both Schrader and Presta valve types

Placement
These stations can be conveniently installed along trails and key destinations or based on community requests.

Est. Costs
$ 2,000-5,000 each (for pump and repair station)

Elephant's Feet Crossing

Description
Elephant's Feet crosswalks indicate a designated crossing for both pedestrians and cyclists. The standard crosswalk marking are flanked by two lines of white squares that are supposed to resemble the footprints on an elephant. Where crosswalks feature Elephant's Feet, people on bicycles do not need to dismount as they would be required to do at a regular crosswalk.

Elephant's Feet crossings are intended to improve cyclist safety they are part of a system that aims to make riding more accessible in the city. Drivers approaching a crosswalk with Elephant's Feet should be prepared to stop for cyclists as well as pedestrians. Cyclists should always yield to pedestrians within a shared crossing, slow down when approaching the crossing, and only cross when it's safe.

Placement and Design Guidance
Elephant's feet crossings should always be visible from the street and strategically located at various points such as secondary and post-secondary schools, community centers, outside businesses and professional offices, shopping centers and commercial areas, as well as parks and beaches. Placing them in these key areas ensures pedestrian safety and accessibility across different environments. Two of these cross-walks are included as part of the Old Road Hill Multi-Use Pathway.

Wayfinding & Signage

Description

Wayfinding signage systems are valuable tools that assist active transportation users in navigating the active transportation network seamlessly. Signage along trails and other active transportation routes should be clear, accessible, and offer guidance on safety, etiquette, navigation, and amenities. Signage should be presented in high contrast at accessible heights, with raised lettering and braille for key information.

- Trail Confirmation Signage provides information about upcoming destinations and also helps assure trail users that they are on the right route to their intended destination. Confirmation signs are located after important decision-making points along the trail. They should include distance markers in both minutes and kilometers, along with destinations marked on decision signs. Additionally, they should indicate available amenities ahead, such as washrooms, lighting, and rest stops, as well as provide information on nearby trails, facilities, accommodations, and other destinations when appropriate.
- Decision signs provide directions to destinations ahead of intersections to give cyclists the time to make appropriate wayfinding decisions. Decision signs should be located at a safe stopping distance before a decision point.
- Bike Route signs should be placed along designated bike routes throughout the Network. In some cases, directional bike route signs may be required to keep cyclists on the proper route.
- A standard Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) approved share the road sign is used to warn motorists that they are to provide safe space on the road for cyclists and other vehicles. This sign also warns motorists and cyclists to exercise additional caution on the upcoming section of road. By law, motorists are required to give cyclists a minimum distance of one meter when passing them.

Secure Bicycle Parking Facilities

Description
Secure bike parking facilities like racks and lockers offer cyclists a safe place to store their bikes for everyday activities, including commutes, errands, and leisure activities. The provision of bike parking not only facilitates easier access to common destinations but also encourages the adoption of cycling as a mode of transportation.

Placement
Locations where bike parking could be installed or improved include entrances to parks, community spaces (e.g., the Sherbrooke Library), St. Mary's Education Centre/Academy and local businesses or public service buildings

Est. Costs
$250-$350 for single or double rack
$750 for 5-bike racks

CHAPTER 4

PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

PHOTO: TOURISM NOVA SCOTIA

4.1 OVERVIEW

Programs and initiatives play a vital role in advancing the value of active transportation within our communities. They serve as vehicles for disseminating new knowledge about active transportation, breaking down barriers to its adoption, and fostering capacity among local agencies and individuals to champion active transportation initiatives.

To maximize their impact, these programs and initiatives should aim to educate the public about the benefits of active transportation, provide practical resources and support to overcome challenges, and empower individuals and organizations to actively participate in promoting and sustaining active transportation efforts.

This section outlines a range of recommended programs and initiatives that can be implemented by local governments, community organizations, businesses, and other stakeholders. These initiatives should be designed to cater to the diverse needs and interests of the community while fostering collaboration and partnership among various sectors. Additionally, they should strive to incorporate best practices and evidence-based approaches to ensure their effectiveness and long-term sustainability.

4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

"Share the Road" Bumper Stickers and Magnets

A simple yet effective way to remind motorists about sharing the road, is through "Share the Road" bumper stickers and magnets. These serve as a visual cue, reminding vehicles on the road of the requirement under Bill-93 (see Appendix for hyperlink) to maintain at least one metre of space when passing a cyclist. Magnets and stickers can be designed and branded for Active St. Mary's, or could be procured from external sources. Pricing varies depending on the branding and sourcing options. The Ecology Action Centre provides organizations with up to 30 free (excluding shipping) magnets upon request (see Appendix for hyperlink).

Expand and Enhance Equipment Loan Opportunities

Equipment loan programs are an effective way to improve access to various forms of active transportation. By enhancing and expanding existing offerings, a diverse range of equipment can be made available for all seasons (e.g., canoes in the summer and cross country skis in the winter). The implementation of an adapted equipment loan program should also be explored. This would include items such as hippocampes and adaptive bicycles. Various equipment loan resources provided by Recreation Nova Scotia (see Appendix for hyperlink).

Workshops, Events and Programming

Implementing workshops, events, and programming aimed at introducing residents to various forms of active transportation, equipping them with the tools needed to feel comfortable when participating is crucial. Making these initiatives fun is key! The goal is to empower individuals with the knowledge and skills to explore diverse activities that contribute to a lifestyle prioritizing active transportation. Programs can be standalone sessions or workshops that build on one another. They could include:

- Bike rodeos and fun walks/runs
- Bike maintenance workshops, potentially held at a public bike repair station
- Walk, bike, and wheel to work days promoted by the Municipality in partnership with local employers
- Cycling or walking and wheeling clubs to foster a community of active transportation users
- Trail and sidewalk activities like scavenger hunts to enhance the active transportation experience, providing a sense of exploration and adventure while promoting physical activity.

Collaboration with community partners could expand workshop opportunities, ensuring a rich and varied experience for participants.

Social Media Campaigns and Dissemination of Information

Expand and enhance the dissemination of active transportation opportunities and resources. This could include information on active transportation programs, infographics, and campaigns. It is recommended that the Municipality establish a dependable online platform (e.g., a webpage) as well as an offline platform (e.g., community bulletins) to keep the public informed about active transportation in St. Mary's. It is important that other methods (e.g., newsletters, social media campaigns, pop-up events, etc.) are also maintained to allow for engagement with a broader audience.

Leverage the reach of social media to communicate the benefits of physical activity and to highlight opportunities for individual participation in self-directed and spontaneous activities. Provide guidance on safe hiking routes and other opportunities for independent exploration, fostering a community culture that encourages safe, self-directed participation in active transportation. Utilizing social media can also provide a great opportunity for community members to engage in learning conversations online.

All marketing and promotional activities should be guided by Action 8.2.2.3 in the 2022 St. Mary's Recreation Master Plan.

Action 8.2.2.3 *- Develop a marketing and promotion strategy for recreation services run by the municipality and community organizations. This strategy must include off-line tactics as not all residents have satisfactory internet service. This strategy should also include opportunities outside the Municipality that are either more advanced than current offerings or simply unavailable within the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's.*

Local Business Partnerships and Marketing

Encourage local businesses to support active transportation by installing amenities like bike racks, lockers, covered outdoor areas, and accessibility ramps, or by offering public restroom access and on site bike repair kits. The Municipality can boost participation by subsidizing infrastructure, distributing printed materials such as active transportation guides, facilitating marketing and promotional opportunities, and incorporating businesses into town-led cycling tours.

Highlighting the Active Transportation Network alongside municipal amenities can attract both tourists and residents to St. Mary's. Brochures or pocket maps showcasing the network and amenities, along with listings of active transportation-friendly businesses, could effectively publicize and promote the use of these resources.

Implement Active Routes to School and Walk Part Way Initiatives

Implement “Active Routes to School” and other “Walk Part Way” initiatives to encourage individuals to integrate active transportation into their daily commutes, even if it’s just for a portion. Support these initiatives through social media campaigns, contests, or signs encouraging people to “park and move”.

In addition to “Active Routes to School,” it is recommended to collaborate with St. Mary’s Education Centre and Academy to develop additional programming designed to encourage students to use active transportation to get to and from school. This can include walk, bike, and wheel to school days, extracurricular activities related to active transportation, and incorporating outdoor education into regular classes.

Art Installations and Interpretive Signs

Collaborate with local artists and organizations to install temporary or permanent installations, such as art displays, educational signage, and storytelling elements, along trails and sidewalks to enrich the overall active transportation experience. This initiative also has the potential to boost tourism by creating unique and engaging attractions. Furthermore, art displays or signs can be installed as a “destination point” on a trail, providing an incentive in a similar way that a “look-off” might.

Evaluation of User Experience

Establish a systematic process to assess resident and stakeholder satisfaction with the ongoing implementation of the Active Transportation Plan. This process should be aligned with Action 8.2.1 in the St. Mary’s Recreation Master Plan.

Action 8.2.1 entails building a yearly survey process to measure resident satisfaction with recreation programs and services. By adapting this approach to the Active Transportation Plan, the Municipality can gather valuable feedback on the effectiveness of active transportation initiatives, identify areas for improvement, and ensure that community needs are being met. This feedback loop will foster continuous improvement and help maintain alignment with the evolving preferences and priorities of residents and stakeholders.

CHAPTER 5

APPENDIX

Bill-93 (https://novascotia.ca/tran/roadsafety/onemetreq&a.asp#:~:text=Bill%2093%20requires%20drivers%20to,is%20not%20safe%20to%20pass.)
Nova Scotia Accessibility Act (https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/62nd_3rd/3rd_read/b059.htm)
CSA/ASC B651 Accessibility Guidelines (https://www.csagroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2430328.pdf)
Recreation Nova Scotia Equipment Loan Resources (https://www.recreationns.ns.ca/equipment-loan.html)
Ecology Action Centre 'One Metre Rule Bumper Sticker' Initiative (https://ecologyaction.ca/our-work/transportation/one-metre-law-bumper-magnets)


UPLAND