



Greenways Nova Scotia

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Through The Lens: We see the Evangeline Greenway

Points of Interest:

- **The Evangeline Greenway—the barriers and the answers**
- **What makes a Greenway work?**

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When Laurene Rehman, PhD, surveyed 34 Nova Scotian Municipalities, (*Where it's AT: Exploring Issues to Advancing Active Transportation in Nova Scotia, Spring 2010*), she found a major barrier to the development of "Active Transportation" such as walking and cycling: the decision makers aren't seeing it. "The lack of an 'AT lens" (p.2) is the barrier that Greenways Nova Scotia was formed to address.

Without vision and intention, policy for pub-

lic good does not happen. Health, Sustainability, Environment, Home, Social Cohesion, Tourism— these are not small issues, and each



Cornwallis River Greenway

is positively impacted by Greenways. Things can and do change when politicians, staff,

and communities put on their "Greenway glasses" and see the obvious: the rail corridor network running through rural Nova Scotia, often in extreme proximity to homes and businesses. Rails to Trails Greenways can yield a sustainable, affordable AT plan for the province. Imagine a quiet green corridor connecting communities. It is essential to recover this vision for rural Nova Scotia. In this issue, we will explore the vision and how to make it happen. Read on.

Active Healthy Living is the way of the future for our children, our grandchildren, and our overburdened health care system. The primary benefit of a Greenway is a healthier community. It allows citizens of all ages and abilities to enjoy the "commons" of public trails near their homes. Daily hours of physical activity increase as the community becomes more walkable, and the protected corridor is used to walk or cycle to work or school. Cycling tourism along rail corridors provides economic benefit for adjacent towns and villages. Sustainable Greenways protect the environment, preserve the rail bed, and increase property values. They are a Public Good.

Step One: Listen to the People



This map from about 1930 of the DAR corridor showing the many communities beside the rail bed illustrates how perfectly suited this corridor is for the Evangeline Greenway, and how unsuited to Off-Highway Vehicle use. It also indicates the old ferry connections, and the opportunity for Cycling and Experiential Tourism.

Recently the provincial government agreed to reverse legislation and to allow U-Brew or U-Vint services in wine supply stores. The Minister of the Department of Justice explained, “The Public is the Final Say”. (Jan 31/13) The store owners hit a motherlode of public support, and there was little choice for the Department of Justice. The Wine Kitz owners are to be commended for their determination and their use of social networks, letters to the editor, and the media. It was well-played and ended well for them.

But the “final say” on use of abandoned rail corridors and trails in Nova Scotia keeps being unheard. Though people in rural communities, interrelated in many ways, have been reluctant to lobby publicly or “out there” about what they want– a quiet green corridor for their communities to use and enjoy– they have indeed spoken, as the following articles will show. If the government is in the mood to correct past errors, the policy of motorizing trails by default is an egregious one.

(Continued on pg. 3)

(Listen to the People continued from pg. 2)

Government-commissioned polls, task groups, and surveys conducted by blue ribbon panels and polling firms have all said the same thing: Nova Scotians, whether in cities, towns, villages, or spaces in between, want safe, non-motorized walking and cycling routes in their communities, and they want to be on those routes to connect to other communities. They do not like the way that Off-Highway Vehicles have first colonized and then successfully claimed the primary right to the rail beds that once carried trains they loved and rode on. They remain very attached to the rail beds in their communities, they want to use them, and they want them to be non-motorized:

**Gardiner Pinfold in A Survey of Hiking Trail Users, 1999, found that 75% of respondents did not wish to share trails with ATVs.

**Brian van Blarcom and John Jaanmet confirmed that this data is transferable to rail bed issues, as they found in their study that nearly 50% of non-motorized users are deterred from using the trail by the presence of Off-Highway vehicles. (Estimating the Health Benefits of A Proposed Rail Trail, 2008)

**In 2004 the most extensive citizen panel ever convened in the province, the Voluntary Task Force on Off-Highway Vehicles, Out of Control, recommended a “prohibited area” for ATVs in residential areas or rural areas near homes.

**The Provincial Action Plan of 2005 recognized this and referenced an intention for “prohibited sections” in residential areas.

**The Devco Survey in 2009 in Sydney found that 76% of homeowners near the trail did not want ATV use, nor did 72% of those whose properties were commercial or further from the rail bed. But nearly 80% wanted cycling use—walking would probably be even higher.

**The Department of Natural Resources’ Expert

Panel, Parks and Trails, 2010, recommended a review of the “shared use” motorized trails policy, and active transportation (e.g. walking and cycling) as a priority for populated areas. Motorized trails could continue in more remote areas.

**In St. Margaret’s Bay 86% of respondents wanted an ATV-free trail for walking and cycling.

**In Paradise nearly 80% of adjacent homeowners did not want a motorized trail.

Years of Annapolis County Recreation studies are pivotal: this county is both rural and heavily populated along the abandoned DAR corridor, with 40% of the civic numbers in the county within 1 km. The rail bed is a dominant factor in responses. In 2004 Can Mac Economics found that the most popular recreation was walking. ATVing was a distant 10th, and snowmobiling did not make the scale. The study indicated a large interest in the abandoned rail corridor as a place for walking and cycling, with 85% asking for restrictions on ATV and motorized use of the rail bed.

In summary: the people who actually live near the railbeds, those most likely to use them, are asking for a non-motorized Active Transportation trail. They have been for years. And still are.

In 2011 Annapolis County Recreation held consultations in all 11 districts. In each district, the motorized rail bed was an issue, with most comments on the rail corridor stating that participants did not wish to have motorized vehicles on the trail. Repeatedly, they asked for “safe” walking and cycling places, noting that road shoulders and motorized trails were neither. In District 7, which includes Paradise and Centrelea, participants so strongly asked for a non-motorized trail on the rail bed that Council has accepted Recreation’s recommendation for a non-motorized trail through Paradise.

The people who actually live near the railbeds, those most likely to use them, are asking for a non-motorized Active Transportation trail.

(continued on pg. 4)

In 2012 an Ipsos Reid poll commissioned by Annapolis County Recreation on actual activity or exercise confirmed previous results. 63% named walking, 11% running or jogging, and 6% hiking. ATVing did not appear. Cycling was only 8%, probably reflecting the lack of safe cycling places. By contrast, a Chain of Lakes Trail Use Monitoring study (Alain Boudreau, Parks Canada, 12/18/2012) shows that with a 3-metre

wide crusher dust surface [hard-packed and level] cycling use in a residential area exploded, cyclists amounting to 75% of trail users, and “a lot of local residents appeared to be using COLTA for their daily exercise.”

Rural or urban, Nova Scotians want and need Greenways in and near their communities.

Step Two: Attend to the Evidence

****Dr. Glyn Bissix**, Environmental and Sustainable Studies, School of Recreation Management and Kinesiology, Acadia University, has researched the impact of Nova Scotia’s policy of motorizing “Shared Use” trails. His paper, “Nova Scotia’s shared-use policy on abandoned rail corridors, an integrative assessment”, has been published in the prestigious Leisure/Loisir, Vol. 36, NOs. 3-4, August-November 2012. In the article, he assesses this policy in the light of Nova Scotia’s Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act. He examines the impact of the policy on population health, the environment, and the economy— all concerns of EGSPA— and finds it inconsistent with the Act. He points out that Nova Scotia has neither made the policy explicit nor used evidence-based evaluation. He addresses issues of health, tourism, and rail bed preservation. He notes trail incompatibility and risk factors because of surface damage. Environmental concerns included carcinogenic emission, with possible health risk to adjacent properties because of Aeolian dust and noise irritant. The economic drain is also examined. His evidence of adverse effects of this policy is compelling and needs to be attended to by decision makers in the province. glyn.bissix@acadiu.ca

****MASS LBP**, an independent consulting firm, investigated the motorized “Shared Use” model [motorized /non-motorizedsharing] and stated, “Despite a few positive examples, on balance most respondents felt that shared use of trails,

whether between skiers and snowmobilers or hikers and ATVers, was not working.” (October 2010)

****Trans Canada Trail** researched the effects of ATV’s on trails as it prepared its Greenway vision and policy. They decided to cease funding of new trails that allow ATV’s, and Western NS has therefore lost the TCT opportunity for its rail beds.

****The city of Oakville, Ontario**, noted that a 5% increase in community walkability could add up to 32 minutes more per day per person of physical activity, and a .23% reduction in body mass index. (Frank, L., 2006.)

The evidence in support of a Greenway on our abandoned rail corridors in Nova Scotia is overwhelming.

**** Walk & Bike for Life’s** “8-80” rule of thumb is that infrastructure for walkers/cyclists should be safe enough for an 8 or 80 year old. While Greenways would fit this bill, DNR trail inspections, 2010-2012, found many rail corridors unsuitable for walking and biking because of hazards and liabilities resulting from prolonged motorized use: coarse/loose aggregate surface, ruts, large rocks protruding, potholes and flooding risk.

****HRM’s** trail evaluation puts the cost of maintaining motorized trails as three to four times greater than that of a non-motorized AT Greenway.

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Step Three: Make It Happen!

We are greatly encouraged by the vision and intentionality of Kings County . The stars are aligning there for an excellent model for Greenways initiatives. It is a good start for the Evangeline Greenway.

Kings County

Grand Pre was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in June, 2012. The **Windsor-Hantsport Railway** will soon be available for purchase or lease as an Active Transportation corridor should the province or municipalities put on their Greenway Glasses.

Kings County 2050 is a plan for sustainable development of Kings County, which includes completion of the rail bed from Kentville to Wolfville as a Greenway-type trail: “A complete Active Transportation Trail is a safe place for beginners to ride bikes or walk without the noise or threat of car traffic or off-road vehicles. These off-street paths are often flat by nature of the former rail bed, and are commonly a direct route through, and between communities making them an ideal AT pathway”.

Greenways Nova Scotia, as well as its member, Kieran Pathways Society, has been actively involved in the project of connecting Wolfville to Kentville with a Greenway, an all-season non-motorized corridor.

Annapolis County

Annapolis Royal is the flagship for a Greenway through Annapolis County. Its beautiful trail system includes the DAR rail corridor and is a major asset for the town, attracting locals and tourists to walk and cycle. Both the **Historic Gardens** in **Annapolis Royal** and the **Upper Clements Theme Park** are right beside the rail corridor. Cyclists could have two very different but connected tourism experiences.

A non-motorized trail connecting Grand Pre/ Wolfville to Annapolis Royal, would be a major tourism magnet for cyclists on day trips or inter-provincial trips. As **Highway 1** has been iden-

tified by Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal as unacceptable for cycling, the **rail bed** is known to be the obvious answer. Pressure to “complete the trail” to preserve it should be capitalized not for further motorized use, but to support the “**Evangeline Greenway**”.

Annapolis County Council recently adopted a report recommending their support for “the rail corridor in **Paradise** as a non-motorized recreation trail”, (see pg. 4). The Paradise Active Healthy Living Society (PAHLS) is ready, willing and capable of building this trail only if and when the Department of Natural Resources would issue a ‘Letter of Authority’.

The plan for a “Garden Bridge” in **Bridgetown** would translate beautifully into a major community asset for generations to come, akin to the Trestle Trail in Liverpool. A Greenway through town would be a big boost for Bridgetown.

Digby County

Trans Canada Trail’s Greenways vision and policy and the loss of the beautiful DAR railway bridges have put an end to the plan for a motorized “Western Loop” on the DAR corridor.

With ferries connecting to the western mainland with its beautiful Bay and River vistas, a Greenway through the valley would almost certainly compel increased tourism. Digby County includes tourism-oriented communities such as Smith’s Cove, Briar Island, and Bear River, for day trips or longer stays at the many inns or Bed and Breakfasts.

Digby Pines, Western Nova Scotia’s only “Railway Hotel”, is still grand. It could be a vital link for cyclists and other tourists coming from the ferry to check out, celebrating the Rail Trail and its Evangeline heritage .

Paradise: What can we learn from their efforts?

The Paradise Active Healthy Living Society, (PAHLS) has been denied the relief it sought from Nova Scotia's courts.

PAHLS went to court after Rodney MacDonald's minority government threw out the results of a 2004 Rails to Trails consultation, during which Annapolis County Trails Society (ACTS), and the Department of Natural Resources received input from Paradise. They took care to hear from adjacent landowners, community groups, and several ATV advocates. The result : the Minister issued a directive for a non-motorized rail bed in Paradise by January 2008, with or without a bypass for OHV use. ACTS refused to build a non-motorized trail, so PAHLS incorporated and applied to do so.

The Problem with Paradise

Rail Bed consultations had become promotional Off-Highway Vehicle road shows, with motorized trails a foregone conclusion. It was problematic for government that Paradise should ask for a non-motorized trail, and that DNR staff should agree. So while Paradise felt fortunate, they had no idea what they were up against.

Extraordinary Preferences

The government's bias toward ATV and snowmobile access to rail beds was embedded in extraordinary measures, such as these:

**A provincial ATV organization, ATVANS, was birthed to funnel industry and government money for motorized trails. Its 2007 budget was \$552,205: \$306,005 for salaries and expense accounts (four full-time salaried employees and eighteen other functionaries.) Health promotion kicked in \$77,000, the industry providing the

rest for staffing, legal fees, accountants' fees, rent. SANS, the Snowmobile Association of Nova Scotia, was similarly funded by the province and industry.

** When the voluntary OHV task force (2004) made recommendations to control the traffic in communities, the resulting draft legislation was gutted to remove reference to residential areas.

** This happened after DNR created an Executive position third in line to the Minister and Deputy Minister for Strategic Planning. This senior bureaucrat did troubleshooting for the industry, and was given the Paradise file.

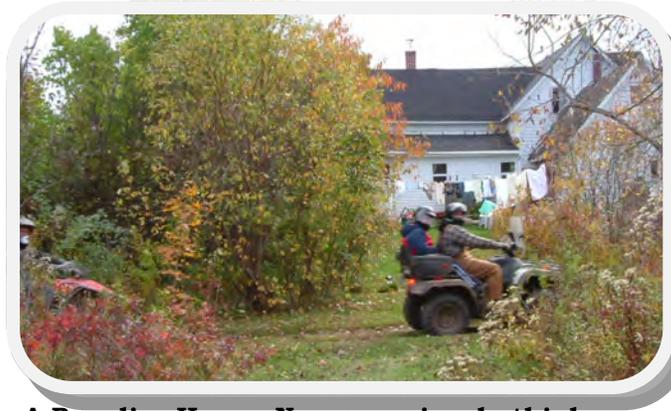
** An OHV Advisory Committee to the Ministers was quickly dominated by industry and OHV users.

** In 2007, an organization called the Annapolis Valley Trails Coalition was registered and funded by the Kentville office of Nova Scotia's Health Promotion and Protection, who provided \$30,000 for a "Trails Co-ordinator" to "assist and guide" five motorized trail groups bidding

for the Dominion Atlantic rail beds.

**The public were outraged to learn of a "Kiddie ATV" plan to buy machines with public funds to train young OHVers.

On the other side was the Rails to Trails policy, under which adjacent landowners were paramount, and trail proponents must show evidence of community consent. No one seriously thinks communities would choose OHV traffic beside their front and back doors if they were given an option. It was a good day when the Minister personally delivered non-motorized signs to Paradise. Other communities, heartened by the Paradise news, began to ask for



A Paradise Home: No one seriously thinks communities would choose OHV traffic beside their front and back doors if they were given an option.

(**Paradise**– continued from pg.6)

consideration. But there was an incoming reversal of Paradise fortunes.

The barriers had hardly gone up before people who lived beside the trail began to receive visits and phone calls from civil servants and the Annapolis Valley Trails Coalition. Their employee arrived to say that the Minister had approved a motorized trail. He could offer a berm or fence. An MLA from Kings County called to warn a landowner to “Keep it Local”, and to tell her that she would not win against the OHV lobby. Online minutes of The Mid-Valley ATV club, from whom ACTS executive was drawn, stated in April that the barriers in Paradise were coming down through a series of meetings. ATVer from the next towns kept telling Paradise, “We’re coming through.”

A perusal of the affidavits and exhibits in the PAHLS case shows the extent of the abuse of process. Under it all were the politics. The judge pointed out that the Premier of the faltering minority government e-mailed the Minister—the one who had sympathetically delivered the non-motorized signage- to order him to rethink Paradise. The Premier had given his word to the Leader of the Opposition, an OHV supporter who was “agitated about the trail in his riding”. They “agreed on the direction.”

Meanwhile, DNR dismissed PAHLS’ request for assistance in following the process for permission to build a non-motorized trail. From one staff person to the Executive Director who had been given the file (p. 6), “ Rev Barbara Bishop is beginning to ride us on why we haven’t responded so XX and I discussed that since her initial request was just what the ten-step process entails I will e-mail her the steps as I would any other member of the public but that is all I’ll say, the rest as you directed is up to

you.” Then, “So just to make sure we’re all clear on this bottom line is we’re going through Paradise as per the Coalition’s proposal, right?”

A Motorized Trail Decision-March, 2008

Though her reply was less than forthcoming , she assured him that no LOA’s would be allowed at this time and she would notify PAHLS that they would need to have “mediation” . She had in fact accepted the “proposal” from AVTC three days earlier, on behalf of the Minister and Deputy Minister. The plan? DNR would pay AVTC \$50,000 for fences/berms for two properties in extreme proximity to the rail bed. They would “remediate” the trail **“with the intent to open the trail to motorized use.”** AVTC would then hand the Paradise trail over to ACTS, who would get the Letter of Authority denied through Rails to Trails for their motorized trail.

A Pretend Consultation - September, 2008

The Executive Director enthused to local press that she had created for Paradise a “template” to use in other resistant communities. It would reduce the protection to adjacent landowners and increase OHV input. Knowing that a decision had already been made, and having seen the “template”, PAHLS knew that attending would accelerate the LOA for ACTS. They sent in one last plea to the Minister – and the signed declarations of nearly 80% of homeowners opposing a motorized trail. These were disposed of, and the trail re-opened to OHV use. The courts did not deal with the questionable “consultation” held to overturn Rails to Trails. Instead, they used a narrow focus on the ownership of crown lands.

In Nova Scotia, think Hotel California. You can check out but you can never leave. You can have a non-motorized trail through the process, but if you get it, we will overturn the process.

You can have a non-motorized trail through the process, but if you get it, we will overturn the process.

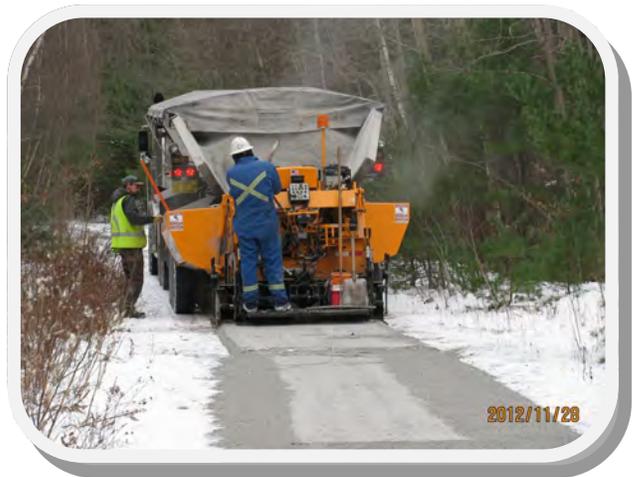
What makes a good Active Transportation Greenway?

Walkers, cyclists, tourists, and local residents, urban and rural alike, have a common wish list when surveyed.

- ◆ **Safety**– They do not want to share their trail, path, or connector with motorized vehicles. They want to walk or cycle with their children on a level grade such as a rail bed. They like the feeling of security offered by trails in populated areas.
- ◆ **Surface**– They need to be able to walk without twisting their ankles or knees on unstable surfaces, and without fear of tripping on protruding rocks and roots. They want to be able to push a stroller or walk beside a tricycle, or use a mobility aid if needed. (See 8-80, p.4) Cyclists need a hard-packed surface that will not damage tires and allow good speed. Snowshoers and cross-country-skiers would like a good winter surface without hidden hazards under the snow.
- ◆ **Connection**- They want to be able to go from one place to another, to school, to work, to the grocery store, to the other end of town, a friend’s house down the village.
- ◆ **Pleasant Experience**– They love to experience quiet and calm among pleasing vistas, to see, smell, and touch nature, or to admire human-made views.
- ◆ **Sense of neighbourhood**—They like to meet others sharing their experience, whether a family outing on bicycles, a walk with their dogs, a quiet stroll, or a vigorous run.

Greenways do all of these things, and more. They enhance population health, property values, tourism growth, and environmental stewardship. We need them in Nova Scotia.

Surface Suitability is critical for Active Transportation. The picture on the right shows a Greenway being surfaced with crusher dust, which provides a hard-packed, even surface for walking and cycling, mobility devices, or strollers. This surface is sustainable on an Active Transportation trail, lasting for many years.



Greenways Nova Scotia is always looking for partnerships to move our vision forward.

In the past few months we have joined the Annapolis Valley Chamber of Commerce, with a special interest in their Tourism Committee, and the Nova Scotia Environmental Network. Could your organization be a good fit to work with us? For this or any other reason, contact us at

trails@greenwaysnovascotia.ca

We're on the web! Join our movement:
<http://greenwaysnovascotia.ca/>



Some Greenways Directors take a break from meeting to walk the Cornwallis River Greenway . Join us!

Welcome to the newest member of our Board of Directors, Dan Thompson, representing the Chain of Lakes Trail Association!

Dan works as an Environmental Scientist specializing in hydropower at Nova Scotia Power. Dan is a member of the Halifax Cycling Coalition, Halifax Running Club, and the Atlantic Society of Fish and Wildlife Biologists. He has been a Halifax Triathlon Club member for 8 years and is a past director. Besides being an avid trail user, Dan is also an age-group triathlete who has completed many local events, several half-ironman races, and the 2011 Ironman Canada race in Penticton. Dan has joined NS Greenways to help with the building of an Active Transportation network throughout HRM and the province.



This Barred Owl enjoyed his summer beside the Cornwallis River Greenway.