



Greenways Nova Scotia

Volume 5 Issue 1

February 2014

Greenways Vision and Culture in Nova Scotia:

What's Connecting and What's Not?

Read our newsletters to find all the reasons that Greenways matter more now than ever to Nova Scotians.

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The Greenways movement is growing. Greenways are the future of trails, pathways, and active transportation routes. They are great for recreation, but they are about more than recreation. The design and creation of Greenways belongs on the desks of planners and legislative officials at the highest level, and nowhere more so than in Nova Scotia, with our epidemic of life-threatening obesity and our worrisome debt load.

Why? Because Greenways are sustainable. They save health dollars and improve population health. They bring millions in tourism dollars from cyclists and hikers. They enhance the life of those who use them and the social fabric of the communities through which they pass. They enhance property values. They protect the environment and reduce emissions. They highlight the scenic beauty of our province, and provide access to that beauty. They preserve local heritage and culture. They support and create business, and boost the economy wherever they are built. They conserve fragile rail beds. Are we finally getting the connection? There are some good signs. Read on.



Greenways are the trails and pathways of the future.



Bridgewater and Liverpool say “Yes” to Active Transportation Greenways

In separate decisions two municipalities on the South Shore have affirmed the need to keep their community trails as Greenways.

Bridgewater’ will keep the **Centennial Trail** as an Active Transportation route. As reported by Keith Corcoran in *South Shore Now*, town councilors ultimately felt that “the eight kilometre long Centennial Trail, the former rail-bed, is a town gem worthy of protection, which gives cyclists, walkers and other active users a chance to safely enjoy nature with a reduced risk of encountering an off-highway vehicle.” Council minutes show that Bridgewater residents rallied to protect their trail. Concerns cited by those who spoke at Council included trail surface, health and safety risk from pathogens in ATV emissions, respect for adjacent homeowners, and town’s vision. Said one resident, Bridgewater should continue with its vision of providing a healthy environment to walk, cycle and use other forms of active transportation.

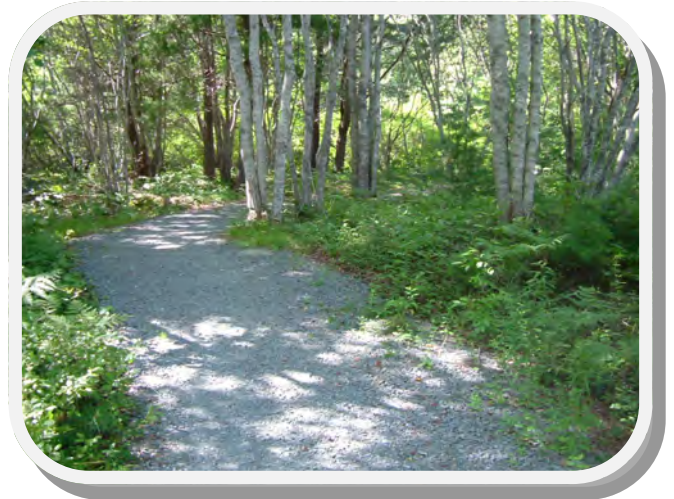
The touchstone for the decision was the town’s Active Transportation survey. People simply said that what they want to do on the trail is walk and cycle. The longterm ban of vehicles on the Centennial Trail has encouraged the town’s walking and cycling culture.

Because it is a non-motorized Greenway , it is safe enough to be used by daycares and young families. The Bridgewater story confirms what we know: that when citizens are directly asked which uses they want for trails near their

homes and in their communities, they ask for greenways- quiet green corridors with safe, pleasant spaces for walking and cycling, and connections to the next community.

(See **Greenways Newsletter, Vol. 3, Issue 1, February 2012** <http://greenwaysnovascotia.ca/news.html>)

In Liverpool, the **Trestle Trail** decision was more contentious. Liverpool is governed by the larger municipal region of Queens, so that non-residents had more influence. However, Council seemed to realize that it was a bad idea to fix something that is working so well. The Trestle Trail stands as one of the finest on the South Shore. We celebrate its preservation as a great Community trail for Active Transportation, a stunning and beautiful Greenway.



The Trestle Trail in Liverpool runs through woodlands, near homes and businesses, by the water’s edge, and across the Mersey River on the old trestle bridge, now a favourite route for walkers and cyclists, and a neighbourhood meeting place.



A Cycling Tourism group enjoys the Centennial Trail



Kings County 2050 Vision

Kings County has embarked upon a long-term plan. In their words, “King 2050 aims to guide the long-term sustainable development of Kings County so that future generations can enjoy a quality of life that is equal or better than today.”

The Kings 2050 Transportation report notes the importance of infrastructure. Education and promotion alone can not create a walking and cycling culture. As they say, in the Annapolis Valley, the critical infrastructure pieces for Active Transportation plans are the former rail corridors and, where safe travel is possible, paved shoulders of secondary roads: “A complete active transportation rail trail is a safe place for beginners to ride bikes or walk without the noise and threat of car traffic or off road vehicles. These off street paths are often flat by the nature of the former rail bed, and are commonly a direct route through, and between communities making them an ideal AT pathway.” In Kings County, “Most of the former rail bed that runs parallel to Highway 1 has been developed into an active transportation pathway and has been built to different standards in each place. The Town of Wolfville has a crushed gravel path alongside the unused train tracks. The Town of

Kentville has a combination of crushed gravel and a paved section directly over the removed tracks. Beyond Kentville to the west is a dirt/gravel path where the tracks have also been removed. This section is maintained by the Cornwallis River Pathways Society. The majority of the developed trail is for non-motorized use only. This leaves the trail open for hiking, biking, walking, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, etc. while physical barriers prevent ATVs or snow-

mobiles from using this trail. Given the rail trail’s proximity to homes and community centres, this has been a conscious choice, and one that supports active transportation by creating a safer and quieter pathway.” **(Kings 2050 Background Paper 9, p. 10)**



New Minas: paved rail corridor

Since the report was written, the New Minas rail corridor has been developed as a paved Active Transportation trail. Stakeholders are committed to acquire lease access to the Windsor-Hantsport Rail Corridor to connect New Minas and Wolfville and east to Grand Pre, world-famous UNESCO site. It is encouraging to see this progress in Kings County. We seem to be moving toward the Evangeline Greenway. Something to celebrate!

The Yarmouth Ferry is Coming. Time for the Evangeline Greenway .

Imagine a hiking and cycling trail running through the beautiful and historic communities from Grand Pre to Digby. Our tourism industry needs it, (see pg. 4) and we are almost there.



Grand Pre



Annapolis Royal



Digby



The Blue Route is Coming To Nova Scotia: Good News for Sustainable Transportation

- By Ben Buckwold

For seven years Bicycle Nova Scotia (BNS), along with many supporters and partners, has been working to bring to life a grand vision: a bicycle route network that traverses and connects the entire province. That vision, now known as the Blue Route, is suddenly getting a lot closer to reality. We had a big year in 2013 and are very excited to report on the progress achieved and to continue building awareness about this project.

The idea for the Blue Route provincial cycling network was largely inspired by the Route Verte (Green Route), Quebec's incredible 5000 kilometre bicycle network. It took Quebec over ten years to build and launch their a fully operational network, but the long-range investment has paid off in a big way. The Route Verte has helped Quebec achieve major gains in the popularity of cycling as a form of transportation, recreation, and a driver of tourism and economic development. Since the year 2000, Quebec has seen significant increases in bicycle use in all age categories, with by far the largest gains among children and youth. On the economic front, the latest study from Velo (Bicycle) Quebec, reports that Route Verte users spend 134 million dollars annually in the province.

Our vision for the Blue Route follows the same basic model as Quebec's Route Verte: creating a network of cycling routes by linking bike friendly provincial roads, bikeable trails, and safe city streets. The plan is for the Blue Route to make connections through and between communities, as well as destination trails and sites. The goal is to help more Nova Scotians choose cycling as a form of transportation and recreation, while growing our bicycle and outdoor tourism sector. When all the potential benefits are considered, we know the Blue Route is an exciting opportunity. Cities and regions across Canada and around the world are realizing that when we create safe, appealing environments for cycling we are rewarded with better functioning transportation systems, healthier communities, improved quality of life, reduced environmental impacts and new economic opportunities.

Although the potential is different from place to place, the Blue Route can bring something to all communities across Nova Scotia, from new destination trails, to commuter cycling routes. That vision may be a ways out, but the support to undertake the effort is falling into place.

In April 2013, the Province released *Choose How You Move*, Nova Scotia's Sustainable Transportation Strategy. The Strategy included a commitment to working with municipalities and other organizations to implement a provincial cycling network, and mentions the Blue Route name. At the Nova Scotia Cycling Summit held in Sydney in October, Nova Scotia Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal (TIR) announced it would take the lead on Blue Route implementation and coordinate among government departments. This was great news and we look forward to working with TIR over the next several years in seeing the Blue Route come to fruition on our roads and trails in Nova Scotia. In fact, we intend to take the first steps toward implementation this year. We are working closely with the Route Enhancement Committee of the Aspotogan Peninsula to pilot the first section of the Blue Route on the Aspotogan Loop near Hubbards. It is truly exciting to see the Blue Route advancing. While there is a long road ahead,

many of the basic ingredients are already here. With Nova Scotia's many low traffic provincial roads, excellent trails, and beautiful communities dotted across some of the most amazing coastline anywhere, we have a lot to build on. We are very pleased with the progress that has been achieved to date and optimistic about

what the future holds. Please contact us or visit our website for more information about the Blue Route and look for more updates in the near future.



Resting in the Shade on Route Verte

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Almost—but not quite: Destination Trails in Nova Scotia

It's a great idea. Create a dedicated system of trails in Atlantic Canada to attract hiking and cycling tourists. The idea is gaining traction in Nova Scotia for several good reasons. For one thing, cyclists travel in groups with family, friends, or as part of organized rides or events. Cycling networks can generate interest in destinations exponentially. A spectacular example is the Gran Fondo ("Big Ride") movement - mass participation cycling trips .

A case in point: in August 2013 PEI hosted its first Gran Fondo. A Press Release from Charlottetown, March 15, 2013: *"Prince Edward Island is quickly becoming a top of mind destination for cyclists across Canada with its rolling green hills, beautiful vistas, and one of the premiere cycling venues in the country, the Confederation Trail,"* said Minister Henderson. The Gran Fondo is returning in 2014, timed as it was last year to coincide with the TD Jazz and Blues Festival. They expect to triple their numbers this year.

Cycling tourists come in large numbers once a destination is established. Family groups, including children, tour-guided expeditions, or cycling clubs, have been attracted for years to the Confederation Trail. (The Atlantic Canada Trails Association Economic Impact Study produced a figure of 11,280 cycling users from June 1-September 30, 2012.)

In addition to large numbers, cyclists tend toward multi-day events or trips. During multiple overnight stays, cycling tourists spend money on the local economy as they explore enroute or at destination. They spend from 1.3 to 4 times more per visit than motorized or non-motorized daytrippers. Among many sources for these figures:

- ◆ **Andrew McEvoy, Tourism Australia, 2006 Australasian Cycle Tourism Conference**
- ◆ **Vélo Québec, www.veloquebec.info**
- ◆ **Ivan Zovko, Opportunities for the Scottish Economy: A Report Commissioned by Sustrans Scotland, June 2013**

A recent economic report on the potential for the State's canal communities as a Destination Canalway Trail estimated that "A group of six cyclists ... each spending \$250 per day on, say, a seven-day trip would leave behind \$10,500 along their path. If the Canalway Trail could attract 1,000 such bicycle tourist groups in a season, those visitors would contribute \$10.5 million to canal community economies."

<http://www.americantrails.org/resources/economics/Bicyclists-Bring-Business-New-York-Canal-Trail.html>

There is no question that cycling tourism is good business and that Destination Trails can be a major contributor to that business. There is also no question that the best possible routes for Destination Trails in Nova Scotia are found on the old rail corridor system.

The Atlantic Canada Trails Association' has created an assessment tool for Destination Trails. swconnections.com/assets/ACTAssessmentToolUserGuide.pdf

A trail seeking this status needs a high score. The Confederation Trail in PEI has already qualified. For Nova Scotia, there is some good news: our rail corridors already have many of the attributes needed. e.g. "Attractive perspectives of towns and settlements that intersect with the trail route", frequent intersections with "distinct ecological features", "varied perspective of natural elements", "frequent access to viewpoints, points of interest or interpretive sites". It is also good news to see that many deficiencies are easily remedied. e.g. websites, apps, mapping, signage, navigation, entry points, rest areas, and creative marketing, themes and interpretive panels are all within reach.

But there is a significant barrier for Nova Scotia. In our province, most of the abandoned rail corridors are motorized. In August, 2013, PEI rejected the attempt by ATV organizations in the province to gain access to the Confederation Trail. As the Tourism Minister, Minister Rob Henderson explained, "The compatibility of motorized vehicles on the Confederation Trail during the summer is just probably not conducive to a successful tourism industry." While this is

no reflection on ATV users, it is a reality that there is an inherent conflict between the **type of trails** needed by motorized users and those that can qualify as Destination Trails. ATV's and snowmobiles travel at 50 km along the rail beds in many places. Even at slower speeds, they need to see far ahead for their safety, so trees and greenery on the trail shoulders are "brushed" or removed. The resulting wide, barren trails are unattractive to cyclists.



Clear sightlines provide safety but also encourage speed through communities. This one is in Annapolis County. The former railway station, left, is the Memory Lane DAR railway museum.



This trail in Nova Scotia is safe for OHV riders but not an attraction for cycling tourists.

Cyclist tourists come for a very different trail experience– they want greenery, curves, scenic variation and natural surroundings.



This rail trail in Norfolk County Ontario is promoted for cycling tourists. Note green canopy.

The second imponderable is the **surface of the trail itself**. The assessment tool says that Destination Cycling trails need "a smooth hard surface throughout". The trail surface must be in good condition, "without erosion and free of ruts, rocks or potholes". The ideal is paving of course. But for long distances, paving is cost-prohibitive. Second best is a hard-packed crusher dust, which is also not cheap, but an acceptable cost for hiking and cycling trails, because it lasts for many years. Unfortunately, the deep treads of ATV's make short work of crusher dust.

A third problem in Nova Scotia is the **loss of grade** on many rail beds. A Destination Trail needs "moderate" slopes, "less than 10%." In the Annapolis Valley, and perhaps elsewhere, motorized use, a lack of proper drainage control, and years of neglect caused collapsed bridges and culverts. Culverts were replaced, but instead of restoring the grade, a quick fix was to install culverts at the bottom of the compression, creating a sharp dip in the trail. These slopes are dangerous for cyclists. Restoring the proper grade is necessary for hiking and cycling use.

Finally, there are the **crossings**. There are many places along the old rail corridors where the trains intersected the highway at tight angles. This worked for trains, as there were gates or signal lights to stop traffic. But for vehicles travelling on these secondary roads, there is no warning that an OHV crossing is ahead, and little visual cue because of the angle. The sudden encounters create a risk management issue, which can be unnerving at best, and could be potentially tragic at worst. That is why OHV Legislation calls for crossings only at right angles.



The Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal has created a policy around these crossings which acknowledges the issue. As things presently stand, off-highway vehicles are scarcely aware an intersection is near, and there is no signage on the highways to alert motorists that an OHV may suddenly appear. Destination Trail standards call for “barriers ... in place to insure trail users slow down or pause at crossings.” No such barriers exist at this time.

In January, 2014, \$178,000 in public money was announced (\$83,000 from the federal government through the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, \$65,000 from the provincial Economic and Rural Development and Tourism Department, \$20,000 from Halifax Regional Municipality and \$5,000 each from the districts of Chester and Lunenburg) to “upgrade and unify” seven motorized trails on the rail corridor from Halifax to Lunenburg. (**The Chronicle Herald**)

The trails are to be “branded as a continuous 109-kilometre hiking and cycling route linking communities along the way.” The money will be used for such things as branding, website, signage and rest areas. There are a number of these trails in need of significant upgrades and reconstruction of the trails before they are even useable for cyclists.

(See **Greenways Newsletter, Vol. 4, Issue 3 November 2013** <http://greenwaysnovascotia.ca/news.html>)

This is unfortunate as they pass through areas otherwise excellent for Destination Trails: there are great amenities, attractions, scenery, and loads of local culture. But it is unlikely that cycling groups who are promised a quality cycling trail will review the trail favourably, recommend it, or return, once they have struggled through a poor-grade surface and trails which have lost grades and aesthetic value. In the words of one cycling tourist who is familiar with this stretch of rail trail, “While the objective is laudable I fear this is shaping up to be a classic case of oversell and under deliver.” And if that is the case, we will have lost a major economic opportunity. The Yarmouth Ferry will bring people to Nova Scotia, and cycling destination trails are sorely needed for our struggling tourism industry.

**We're on the Web:
Join us!**

[www.http//
greenwaysnovascotia.ca](http://greenwaysnovascotia.ca)



Greenways Nova Scotia: Who Are We?

We are a coalition of communities, individuals, and organizations supporting a vision of active, healthy, and sustainable lifestyles supported by community trails and pathways that are devoted to human-powered forms of travel throughout Nova Scotia.

We recognize **active transportation (AT)** as any form of travel that is **human-powered**.

We actively **advocate** and **promote human powered** forms of travel.

We promote and create **sustainable trails and pathways** that accommodate all forms of human powered transportation including reasonable mobility aids.

Where appropriate, we **challenge public trail policies** that fail to embrace and promote active living.

