

MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF ANTIGONISH

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE AGENDA

Tuesday, September 26, 2023
Immediately Following the Asset Management Committee Meeting
Council Chambers
Municipal Administration Building
285 Beech Hill Road
Beech Hill, NS B2G 0B4

1. Call to Order – Chair, Warden Owen McCarron
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of September 12, 2023 Committee of the Whole Minutes
4. Business Arising from the Minutes
5. Delegations
6. Continuing Business
 - a. Consideration of Warden and Deputy Warden Policy
 - b. Environmental Scan of Volunteer Fire Department Funding
 - c. Mount Cameron Speed Study and Crosswalk Request Follow-up
7. New Business
 - a. Antigonish Community Transit Discussion
 - b. Renaming of a Section of Mill Road
 - c. Discussion of Removal of HST from New Apartment Construction
8. Community Events

This item provides Councillors with an opportunity to briefly bring to the attention of Council events that are taking place in their communities.
9. Reports from Inter-Municipal Boards, Committees and Commissions
 - a. Antigonish Heritage Museum Board
 - b. Antigonish Arena Association
 - c. Eastern District Planning Commission
 - d. Eastern Regional Solid Waste Management Committee
 - e. Pictou Antigonish Regional Library
 - f. RK MacDonald Nursing Home
 - g. County Paqtnkek Joint Steering Committee
 - h. Consolidation Steering Committee
10. Additions to the Agenda
11. In-Camera Items
12. Adjournment

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES CHART (amended October 2022)

COUNCIL PRIORITIES	
<u>NOW</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> WATER UTILITY DEVELOPMENT <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Expansion & Renew Aging Infrastructure Securing Long-Term Source Water Long-Term Financial Plan DEVELOP & IMPLEMENT AN EVENTS & TOURISM PLAN CONNECTIVITY – CELLULAR AND BROADBAND RENEWABLE ENERGY NEXT GEN SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 	
<u>NEXT</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN: Update & Implementation ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN: Implementation COMMUNITY HUBS: Plan & Implementation 	<u>ADVOCACY/PARTNERSHIPS</u> <i>Connectivity Funding (Prov & Feds)</i> <i>TIR Service Provision (Prov)</i> <i>Long-Term Care Facility Funding (Prov)</i> <i>Aging In Place Program (Prov)</i> <i>Accessible/Affordable Housing</i>
ADMINISTRATION	FINANCE
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> CELLULAR & BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY EVENTS & TOURISM ASSET MANAGEMENT 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING: Plan & Implementation - Ongoing
PUBLIC WORKS	RECREATION
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> WATER UTILITY DEVELOPMENT NEXT GEN SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION COMMUNITY HUBS
SUSTAINABILITY	PLANNING
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> RENEWABLE ENERGY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LCC COMMUNITY SOLAR PROJECT 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> MANDATORY MINIMUM PLANNING: Development & Implementation EASTERN ANTIGONISH PLANNING STRATEGY & BYLAW: Complete Review

MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF ANTIGONISH

Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes

Tuesday September 12, 2023, 5:30 pm
Council Chambers
Municipal Administration Building
285 Beech Hill Road
Beech Hill, NS B2G 0B4

Present were: Warden Owen McCarron
Councillor Mary MacLellan
Councillor Donnie MacDonald
Councillor Remi Deveau
Councillor John Dunbar
Councillor Gary Mattie
Councillor Bill MacFarlane
Councillor Harris McNamara

Regrets: Deputy Warden Hugh Stewart
Councillor Shawn Brophy

Staff Present: Glenn Horne, CAO
Beth Schumacher, Deputy Clerk

Others Present: Gallery (in person and by Zoom)
John Heseltine, Stantec (by Zoom)
Jamie Burke, Stantec (by Zoom)
Maria Fraser
Trevor Reddick

Call to Order – Chairman, Warden Owen McCarron

The meeting of the Committee of the Whole was called to order by the Chair, Warden McCarron, at 5:33 pm.

Approval of Agenda

Warden McCarron called for any additions or deletions to the agenda.

Moved and Seconded

That the agenda be approved as presented.

Motion Carried

Approval of July 11, 2023 Committee of the Whole Minutes

Warden McCarron called for any errors or omissions in the Committee of the Whole minutes of July 11, 2023.

Moved and Seconded

That the minutes of July 11, 2023 be approved as presented.

Motion Carried

Business Arising from the Minutes

There was no business arising from the minutes of July 11, 2023.

Delegations

Antigonish County Boundary Review Presentation; John Heseltine, Stantec Consulting Limited

Mr. John Heseltine and Mr. Jamie Burke from Stantec Consulting provided members of the Committee with an overview of the electoral boundary review process that has commenced. The slides reviewed gave background information on the last review and provided some preliminary elector numbers to be used in this review. Where Antigonish County sits relative to other rural municipalities in terms of Council size, district size, and number of constituents per district were shared. Criteria that the UARB requires to be outlined during a boundary review were outlined.

Councillors asked questions about factors considered when grouping communities if boundaries are adjusted, and a concern was expressed about the use of an online surveys in areas where Internet connectivity may be a concern. Mr. Heseltine noted that he would follow-up with staff to ensure that appropriate measures are taken.

The presentation ended with questions to the Committee to get their feedback on council size, and whether there are any issues with the existing district boundaries. Warden McCarron opened the floor to members of the Committee to provide their feedback. Members of the committee expressed an interest in hearing from the public on their thoughts throughout the process. Councillor Deveau highlighted the Acadian community within his district. A suggestion to look at the boundaries of Districts 1 and 2 and where the public meeting is held in that area, to which Mr. Horne shared that in past reviews, the public meetings were held in the areas where changes to the boundaries were proposed.

A suggestion was also made to look at French-speaking communities in other districts. A question was asked about whether the report prepared by Stantec would be submitted to the UARB. Mr. Heseltine reviewed the purpose of the report and noted that if Council accepted their recommendation, that report could be used as part of the submission to the UARB. A question was asked about whether there was enough time to complete the necessary reviews required under the Municipal Government Act

(MGA), and Mr. Heseltine noted that he felt that there was still time to be able to complete the work. Clarification was asked about whether this review was connected to the review being done by the Town, who are undertaking their own boundary review at this time.

Mr. Heseltine and Mr. Burke were thanked for their presentations.

Continuing Business

Mini-Pitch Project Update

Ms. Maria Fraser and Mr. Trevor Reddick provided the Committee with an overview of the mini-pitch proposal. The location under consideration sits behind Antigonish Education Centre, between Appleseed Drive and D. MacIsaac Road. Ms. Fraser noted that Scotiabank has offered to purchase and install a single Mini-Pitch for a quoted price of \$286,000CAD + tax. They have a deadline of October 31, 2023 to confirm if they will be making this contribution.

Ms. Fraser reviewed the work done to date to evaluate the proposed site, including engineering to determine necessary ground prep work, access roads, parking, and the location of easements. Four options to complete the funding for different levels of development were put forward for Council's consideration, ranging from a contribution of \$480k to \$956k. She noted that the timeline for development would be May 2024, which would provide additional time to seek additional grants for amounts exceeding the contribution offered by Scotiabank, and that a presentation would be made to Town Council with a similar contribution request.

The floor was then opened to the Committee for their comments and questions. Comments were made about how exciting it is to have proposals in the community, examples of mini-pitches in other communities, the inclusion of bathrooms with recreational facilities in the community, as well as questions about the expense, whether funding from the Province has been sought, and what plans there are for the management and maintenance of the facility between the Town, County, and School Board. Ms. Fraser provided detail about discussions that had taken place about looking to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the facility between the partners, with scheduling primarily managed by the County's Recreation Department.

A question was asked about timelines for a decision on the funding request. Mr. Horne noted that a 60/40 split of the requested funding between the County and Town, and that if option D was selected, the funding amount would be up to \$583,000.

Moved and Seconded

That the Committee recommends that Municipal Council supports Option D for a Mini-Pitch development, contingent on a funding contribution being made by the Town of Antigonish and up to \$583,000.

Motion Carried

In the interest of addressing the in-camera business in advance of the regular Council meeting, the committee decided to advance to the in-camera items and continue with continuing business after the Council meeting.

In-Camera Items

Moved and Seconded

That the Committee of the Whole move to an in-camera session at 6:54pm to discuss the Acquisition of Municipal Property and Personnel Matters.

Motion Carried

Moved and Seconded

That the in-camera session adjourns at 7:38pm.

Motion Carried

Moved and Seconded

That the Committee recommends that the Municipality of the County of Antigonish endorse the recommendation of the RK MacDonald Nursing Home Board of Directors related to an Agreement of Purchase and Sale.

Motion Carried

Moved and Seconded

That the Committee of the whole meeting adjourn at 7:39pm.

Motion Carried

Warden McCarron called the meeting back to order at 8:17pm.

Continuing Business, Continued

Discussion of the Proposed Renegotiated Service Exchange Agreement

Mr. Horne provided a brief overview of the information included in the agenda package, discussing the changes proposed for grants, mandatory contributions, and the proposed infrastructure program. Discussion regarding the proposed changes to the roads arrangements as proposed in the service exchange agreement followed, with staff noting that Program B for roads as proposed would create substantial risk to the municipality due to the existing conditions of the roadways and the expense for their

maintenance. Concern with this option was flagged by many of the rural municipalities during nearly every consultation session. Discussion followed.

Road Name Change Recommendation – D-38, Greenwold

Mrs. Schumacher reviewed a staff report, outlining the process of the selection of the proposed name to rename “D-38 Road”.

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends that Municipal Council renames D-38 Road to Sears Ross Drive.

Motion Carried

New Business

There was no new business.

Community Events

Community events were shared at the Council meeting.

Staff Reports

Mr. Horne noted that the staff report was included in the agenda package.

Additions to the Agenda

There were no additions to the agenda.

Motion Carried

Adjournment

Moved

That the Committee of the Whole meeting be adjourned at 8:39pm.

Motion Carried

Warden Owen McCarron

Glenn Horne, CAO

MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF
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STAFF REPORT

TO: MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
FROM: BETH SCHUMACHER, DEPUTY CLERK
SUBJECT: UPDATE TO POSITION OF WARDEN AND DEPUTY WARDEN POLICY
DATE: 26/09/2023

SUMMARY

The Municipality's existing policy outlines the terms of the positions of Warden and Deputy Warden. Should the Deputy Warden find themselves in a situation where they may have an extended excused absence that does not exceed the term of their appointment in that position, there is no guidance in the policy regarding the appointment of an "Acting Deputy Warden". An amendment to the policy to provide this guidance is proposed.

DISCUSSION

The policy outlines the process for the selection of these positions, notes their term lengths, and states that the Deputy Warden can fulfill the duties for the Warden if they are absent or unable to fulfill their duties. As currently written, there is no provision for the situation of the Deputy Warden to have an appointed "backup" if they are unable to fulfill their duties for a limited period of time for an absence excused by Council that does not exceed the length of the remainder of their term. Examples of excused absences can include parental leaves, medical leaves, or absences due to employment obligations.

Staff is proposing an amendment to the existing policy to add a clause that speaks to the appointment of an Acting Deputy Warden, under certain circumstances and for a defined term. The selection of the individual to fulfill this position, should it be required, would follow the same process as the selection of the Deputy Warden at the beginning of the term as outlined in clause 3.2.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

The Committee may choose to:

- amend the policy as proposed, or
- maintain the status quo.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff is recommending that the Committee consider the following motion:

The Committee recommends that Municipal Council amend the Position of the Warden and Deputy Warden policy by adding the following clause and numbering it 3.4:

In the event that the Deputy Warden may not be able to fulfill the duties of their office for a limited period of time due to reasons as noted in sections 17(4) and 17(4A) of the MGA, but is expected to return to the position before the end of their term, an Acting Deputy Warden may be selected for a defined term as per the provisions noted in section 3.2 of this policy.

And renumbering the remaining clauses of the policy accordingly.

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TOPIC:	Position of the Warden and Deputy Warden
POLICY NUMBER:	2
DATE APPROVED:	January 17, 1989
DATE REVISED:	November 2000
	September 20, 2016 (#2016-119)
	2023 (#2023-)

1.0 TITLE:

1.1 This Policy may be cited as the “Position of Warden and Deputy Warden Policy” of the Municipality of the County of Antigonish.

2.0 PURPOSE:

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to establish the terms of the positions of Warden and Deputy Warden as provided for in Sections 12(1) and 16(1), respectively, of the Municipal Government Act (MGA), being Chapter 18 of the Revised Statutes of Nova Scotia, 1998.

3.0 POLICY:

3.1 The Warden shall be selected in accordance with Section 12 of the MGA.

- i. Notwithstanding the provisions of Section 12(7), the term of the position of Warden shall be four (4) years.

3.2 The Deputy Warden shall be awarded as per the democratic process to the individual who secures the majority of support of their fellow Councillors at the first regular meeting of Council following a Municipal Election.

3.3 In accordance with Section 16(2) of the MGA, the term of the position of Deputy Warden shall be four (4) years.

3.4 In the event that the Deputy Warden may not be able to fulfill the duties of their office for a limited period of time due to reasons as noted in sections 17(4) or 17(4A) of the MGA, but is expected to return to the position before the end of their term, an Acting Deputy Warden may be selected for a defined term as per the provisions noted in section 3.2 of this policy.

3.5 In the event that the position of Deputy Warden becomes vacant during the four (4) year term, the position will be filled for the remainder of the term as per the provisions noted in section 3.3 of this policy.

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3.6 In accordance with Section 16(5) of the MGA, the Deputy Warden has all the power and authority, and shall perform all the duties for the Warden when the Deputy Warden is notified that:

- i. The Warden is absent or unable to fulfil the duties of Warden; or,
- ii. The office of Warden is vacant.

DRAFT

MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF
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MEMO FOR INFORMATION

TO: Committee of the Whole
FROM: Glenn Horne, CAO
SUBJECT: ***SUMMARY OF VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT FUNDING***
DATE: August 28, 2023

Summary

In response to questions from councillors during the June 27 Committee of the Whole meeting, and in relation to a request to amend Council's Community Partnership Grant Policy to include eligibility for Volunteer Fire Departments (VFDs), please accept this following information.

Background

In Antigonish County, funding is provided to VFDs through the levying and remittance of area rates recommended by the individual VFDs and approved by Municipal Council on an annual basis. The rates vary by VFD as shown in the table below. The process to set VFD levy rates is outlined in Council policy, attached.

Volunteer Fire Department	Levy Rate (Per \$100 of Assessment)	2023/24 Budget Revenue			
		Levy	Other Municipal Sources	Other Sources	Total
Antigonish County	\$0.07	\$356,600	\$0	\$63,500	\$420,100
North Shore	\$0.15 max \$200 / ratepayer	\$96,300	\$0	\$15,000	\$111,300
Town / District 2	\$0.03 max \$100 / property	\$36,000			
4 Valley's	\$0.15 max \$200 / property	\$117,500	\$0		
Pomquet	\$0.15	\$266,200	\$0	\$65,000	\$331,200
Tracadie & District	\$0.10 max \$100 / property	\$68,900	\$0	\$66,000	\$134,900
St. Andrews & District	\$0.11	\$161,100	\$0	\$29,000	\$190,100

Goshen	\$65 / household or business	\$17,400	\$18,000	\$52,000	\$87,400
Auld's Cove	\$0.153	\$19,400	\$25,500	\$16,000	\$60,900
Havre Boucher & District	\$0.15	\$124,300	\$0		
Merigomish	\$0.155 max \$200 per property	\$11,600	\$134,000	\$10,000	\$155,600
TOTAL		\$1,275,300	\$177,500	\$316,500	\$1,769,300

At the time of writing this memo we have not received 2023/24 financial information from 4-Valleys or Havre Boucher for inclusion. The Town VFD contribution for coverage in District 2 is set out in an agreement between the municipalities at a set amount that is they allocated to rate payers through a levy.

Considerations

Twelve VFDs operate in Antigonish County; eight are based in Antigonish County, while four respond to Antigonish County from a neighboring municipality (Town of Antigonish, Pictou County or District of St. Mary's).

Of the eight VFDs based in Antigonish:

- there are six different levy structures.
- three cap their levies, either by property or ratepayer.

Municipal staff assessed the funding arrangements of other rural municipalities in Nova Scotia as well. Funding for VFDs varies widely across the province and across the County. However, there are specific trends:

- 18 of 21 rural municipalities fund VFDs through either a general or area rates (levy) or a combination of the two. Antigonish County falls into this category.
- Three of 21 rural municipalities provide grants to VFDs, funded through general or area rates.
- No rural municipalities that responded to the County's questions fund VFDs for operations or capital from their community granting programs.

Antigonish County funds 100% of VFD Worker's Compensation (\$25,000 in 2023/24).

In a review of municipal records back to 2009, the only request for community grant funding received from a VFD was the Auld's Cove VFD in 2023.

Conclusion

Municipal staff are providing this information at the request of the Committee. No next steps are being proposed.

MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF
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TOPIC:	Procedures for Setting of Fire Fighting Rates for Antigonish County Volunteer Fire Departments
POLICY NUMBER:	38
DATE APPROVED:	November 18, 2014 (#2014-172)
DATE REVISED:	

1.0 TITLE:

- 1.1 This Policy may be cited as the “Setting of Fire Rates Policy” of the Municipality of the County of Antigonish.

2.0 DEFINITIONS:

- 2.1 “Area Rate” means the annual rate set against residential and commercial assessments that make up a Department’s annual Fire Levy.
- 2.2 “Department” means any volunteer fire department that is providing fire protection services to residents of the Municipality of the County of Antigonish.
- 2.3 “Municipality” means the Municipality of the County of Antigonish.
- 2.4 “Ratepayer” is defined as a person who pays rates, or local taxes or a customer of a Public Utility.

3.0 POLICY:

- 3.1 Departments shall submit their annual budgets and proposed area rates to the Municipality no later than March 31st of each year.
- i. The annual budget shall include a projection of revenues, expenditures, capital investment and financing repayments.
 - ii. If a budget is not submitted by March 31, the proposed area rate will be assumed to be equal to the previous fiscal year.
- 3.2 In the event there is NO proposed increase in the area rate, the proposed rate will be reviewed by the Municipality’s Finance Committee with a recommendation to Municipal Council upon presentation of its annual budget.
- 3.3 Should a Department request a change to the area rate that results in an increase in rates for any ratepayer, the following procedure will apply:
- i. A public meeting shall be held in the area affected by the change in rate;
 - ii. Notification of the public meeting shall be advertised at least two (2) weeks prior to the meeting by any of the following means: local paper, church bulletins, radio, flyers, or any other method the Department feels would be appropriate.

- iii. The Municipality's Director of Finance and the municipal councillor(s) of the affected area shall be advised of the meeting at least two (2) weeks prior to the meeting date.
- iv. Department representatives shall conduct the public meeting providing ratepayers an overview of the Department's projected revenue and expenditures and the rationale for the proposed area rate change.
- v. After an opportunity has been provided to discuss the proposed change in rate structure, a motion if appropriate, will be put forward by the Department to support its request for an area rate increase.
- vi. Only those ratepayers in attendance, including Department representatives, will be allowed to vote. One vote per property within the affected area on which fire rates are being paid will be considered valid.
- vii. A record of the meeting will be kept by the Department and forwarded to the Municipality's Finance Committee. The Report will include the meeting purpose, the names and civic address of those in attendance, voting results if any, and the motion that was approved.
- viii. Upon receipt of the meeting record, the Department's request will be reviewed by the Municipality's Finance Committee with a recommendation to Municipal Council upon presentation of its annual budget.

3.4 The Municipality will not transfer a Department's annual Fire Levy until an annual budget and proposed rates are received.

3.5 Municipal Council reserves the authority to set area rates.

4.0 POLICY REVIEW:

4.1 This Policy will be reviewed biannually, unless deemed otherwise by the Committee of the Whole from time to time.

February 2, 2023

Hon. Kim Masland, Minister of Public Works
Department of Public Works
2nd Floor, Johnston Building
1672 Granville Street
P.O. Box 186
Halifax, NS B3J 2N2

Dear Minister Masland,

Since 2019, municipal staff has been working with the NSDPW team to address resident concerns in the area of Highway 337 and Mount Cameron Circle regarding driver speed and pedestrian safety. For context, the area of highway in question sits at the Municipal/Town boundary just past St. Martha's Hospital, and is adjacent to a residential subdivision that has experienced significant growth over the last decade. The intersection is in a 50km/h speed zone that transitions to an 80km/h zone approximately 150 metres east of the intersection. Council and staff are contacted on a regular basis by residents expressing concern with safety when turning at this intersection or attempting to cross the highway to access the walking trails and the Bethany Centennial Garden, which link to the hospital and sidewalks into town.

The initial request to NSDPW was to have a speed study done to see if the 80km/h zone could be moved beyond the residential development, to prevent drivers from speeding up prematurely in the 50km/h zone before the intersection. About a year and a half later, a request was submitted to NSDPW for consideration of a crosswalk at the intersection to support the connectivity of the Community Active Transportation Network as identified in the Joint Antigonish Town and County Active Transportation Plan (2014). This network includes the Antigonish AT Corridor Project, which the Province has been extremely supportive of through their partnership for its development.

To date, the feedback received from the NSDPW team regarding the crosswalk Highway 337 at Mt. Cameron Circle has been that it can not be supported because the crossing counts are too low to meet the TAC warrants for a crossing in that location. While these pedestrian counts averaged the number of pedestrians crossing at the intersection over a twelve-hour window, we found it interesting that there were twelve crossings of the highway at this location by individuals identified as seniors between the hours of 7 and 10am, given the hesitancy to cross at this location expressed by those who reach out to our Council and staff on a regular basis.

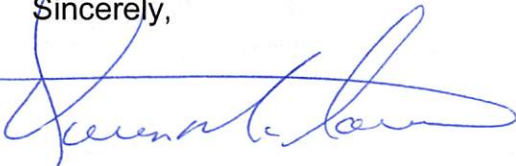
For your information, I have included a summary that was prepared by municipal staff earlier in 2022 to outline for the NSDPW team how a crossing of Highway 337 supports the overall system connectivity of the transportation network that was identified in the Active Transportation Plan. The Mount Cameron Trail Connector referenced in that summary, which creates a loop within the Mt. Cameron Neighbourhood, has since been completed.

The recommendations from NSDPW at their last meeting with our municipal team in late 2022 was to wait for another year to reassess if the ongoing residential and active transportation network developments increase pedestrian demand at the intersection in question. There seems to be a chicken and egg scenario created when we are asked by the public for a crosswalk to help those who wish to cross the highway but are unable to have one installed because not enough people are attempting to cross the unsignalized intersection to warrant one.

Our concern remains that the crossing of Highway 337 at Mt. Cameron Circle by pedestrians will continue to be perceived as unsafe without the speed and crossing visibility fears that lead to the crosswalk request being addressed. This gap in the Active Transportation network creates a disconnect between an area of residential concentration and a number of amenities, and will not encourage a behavioural change/shift in how people move about their day unless that gap is addressed. People will not choose Active Transportation as an option if they feel unsafe to do so.

The Municipality has done what it can by working with public and private partners, including the Sisters of St. Martha and S.F. Smith Developments, to strengthen the network of infrastructure within the two loops that would be linked by the crosswalk in question and continues to work with the local RCMP regarding speed enforcement in this location. We respectfully ask that the Province considers an exception to the TAC crossing counts in this circumstance, and installs a marked crosswalk with flashing beacons to improve the safety of those pedestrians who do, as well as those who wish to, cross Highway 337 at the intersection with Mount Cameron Circle.

Sincerely,



Warden Owen McCarron

Cc: Hon. Michelle Thompson, Antigonish
Paul Colton, District Director - Eastern
Basil Pitts, Area Manager, NS Department of Public Works

SYSTEM CONNECTIVITY: COMMUNITY ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

To: Bernie Murphy, CET
District Traffic Supervisor- Eastern
Nova Scotia Department of Public Works

Date: April 22nd, 2022

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of our Active Transportation (AT) vision and current AT projects. In addition, this document will provide information on the system connectivity of the proposed crossing at Hwy 337 and Mount Cameron intersection with regard to the entire Community AT Network and other AT opportunities of the area. This document will also support the information on system connectivity provided within the Pedestrian Crossing Review (Nov 2021).

Active Transportation Vision

Antigonish County is dedicated to the advancement of their Active Transportation Plan (joint Antigonish Town and County Active Transportation Plan, 2014) and continues to maintain and enhance existing AT programs and infrastructure, while guiding the development and implementation of new AT facilities and programs over time. Our plan is a long-term strategy developing environments that will encourage safe and accessible active recreation, active travel, and active oriented trips.

Active transportation networks are an important part of the plan to ensure that residents and visitors are provided with a network of on-road and off-road corridors and routes which provide a system connectivity throughout neighborhoods, communities, and destinations of both the Town and the County of Antigonish. There are currently two AT projects involving new infrastructure: The Antigonish AT Corridor Project and the Community AT Network Project.

Active Transportation Projects Overview

The Antigonish AT Corridor Project

The Antigonish AT Corridor (Corridor) project, in partnership with the Town of Antigonish consists of two foundational AT corridors that will become the spine of an AT network throughout Antigonish Town and County. The two corridors are described below:

1. The County corridor, developed in partnership with NSPW is roughly 11km and plans to repurpose several roads, routes, and intersections into a multi-modal AT network. The spine will run along Trunk 4 from Addington Forks to Highway 316 in Lower South River.
2. The Town corridor will run North/South through town from the Trunk 4 and West St intersection, ending at the Antigonish Landing.

The Corridor project will provide a huge shift in our current infrastructure and will also begin to shift the mode share from private vehicles towards active transport.

Community AT Network Project

The Community AT Network project will connect several existing AT opportunities including the Mount Cameron Circle and Parkway Court sidewalk, low-traffic roadways, and a few popular trails of the area with:

- Construction of a multiuse pathway
- Construction of the Mount Cameron Trail Connector (currently under construction)
- A crossing installation
- Upgrades to the Antigonish Landing (Landing) trail (currently under upgrades)

See attached graphic, Antigonish Active Transportation Projects, which illustrates the locations of the Trunk 4 (County) corridor, the Town corridor and the Community AT Network area. In addition, see attached the Community Active Transportation Network concept map which details the communities within the network, some existing AT infrastructure opportunities of both the County and Town, the proposed project infrastructure, and as well, the connectivity to the Corridor project and other highly used trails.

System Connectivity and the Community AT Network Project

The proposed infrastructure connections of the Community AT Network will greatly benefit several communities in the area along with all residents of both Town and County. The communities include Mount Cameron Development with both the Maple Retirement Living Units and Home, Sisters of St. Martha's including Parkland Estates retirement living, and St. Martha's Regional Hospital.

Significant development within the Mount Cameron community began in 2013 and has been progressing annually. There is a current estimate of 520 residents living in the Mount Cameron area in addition to 30 staff within the Maples home. There are also plans for 50 more residents to move in by the end of 2022. Attached is a Letter of Support from the Vice President/General Manager of The Maples Retirement Living. The letter provides information on their future road

and sidewalk developments which will eventually be developed in place of the Mount Cameron Trail Connector. Parkland Estates retirement living is at their capacity of 85 residents in addition to over 30 staff. They plan to build more residents on the estate to accommodate the demand for retirement living. The hospital is home to many patients, staff, visitors, and family and has a continual flow of people within the area on a daily basis.

With the ongoing residential developments and continual operations of the hospital, the population within the network area has been growing steadily. These communities have a large population of older adults who use the existing AT infrastructure for daily active recreation. There is also a population of residents from these communities who use the existing network for active travel and destination trips.

In addition, the Community AT Network is highly used recreationally by both residents of the Town and County. In particular, people come to the Landing for an opportunity to have a break in their day for some movement along the beautiful trail. The existing network and proposed connectivity will allow for a more heightened and beneficial experience as people would have the opportunity to connect to the Bethany Centennial Garden and other existing trails north of the Gardens.

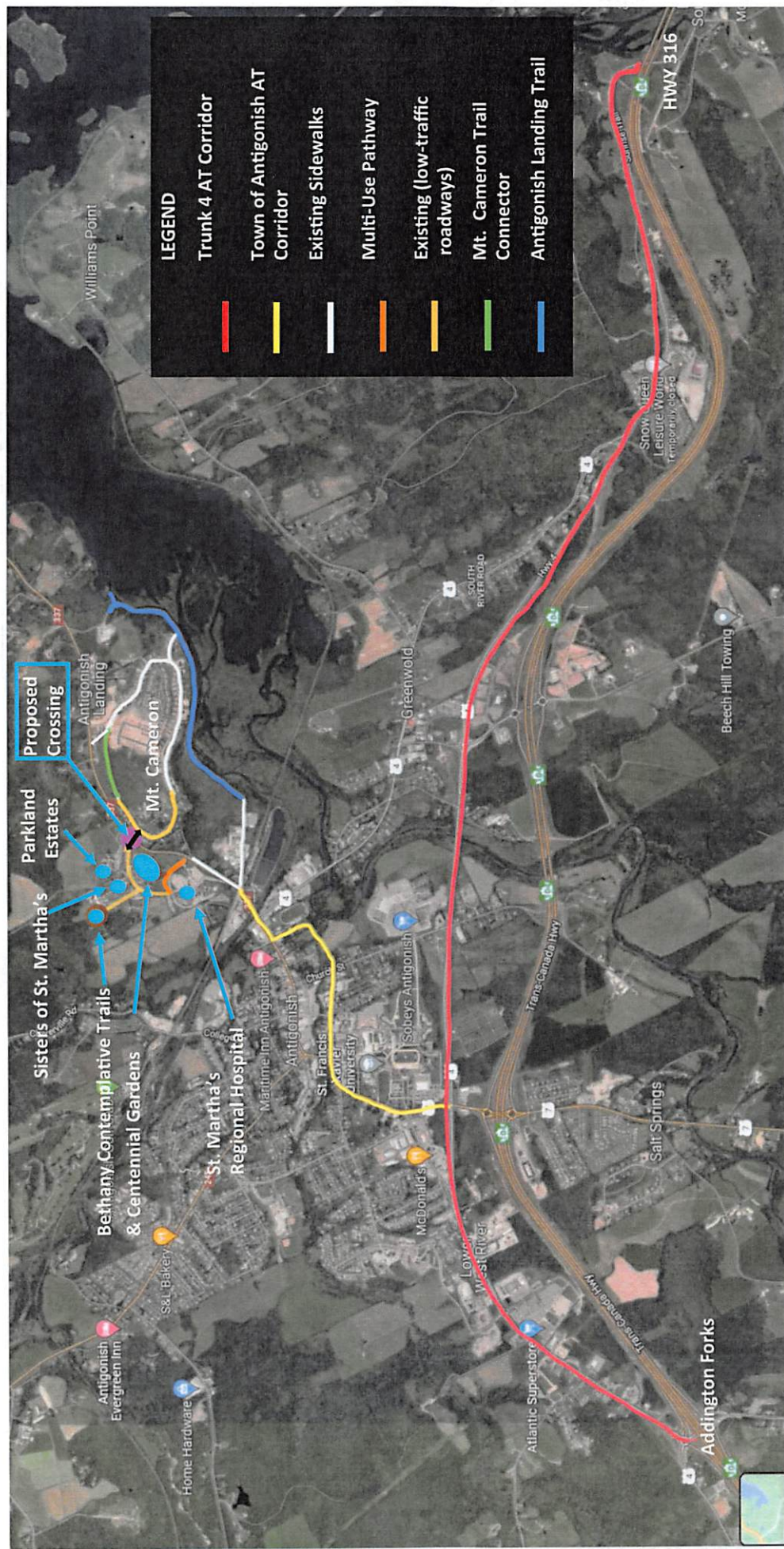
There is also opportunity for the Community AT Network to connect with the Towns AT infrastructure. The Town and County have a well-established recreational planning partnership and continually collaborate on AT projects to ensure that people have a seamless experience as they cross municipal boundaries. Along with the Corridor project, the existing AT infrastructure within the Town boundary that will provide further system connectivity to the network includes: a sidewalk on both the east and west sides of Bay St, and a sidewalk along Adam St. until the parking lot entrance of the Landing trail. Also, the Town is looking to continue an extension of their Corridor project by building a multi-use trail along Bay St. This link would connect the Town's AT Corridor Project with the Community AT Network. Attached is a Letter of Support form the Town of Antigonish, Active Living Coordinator which provides further information on our partnership and their support.

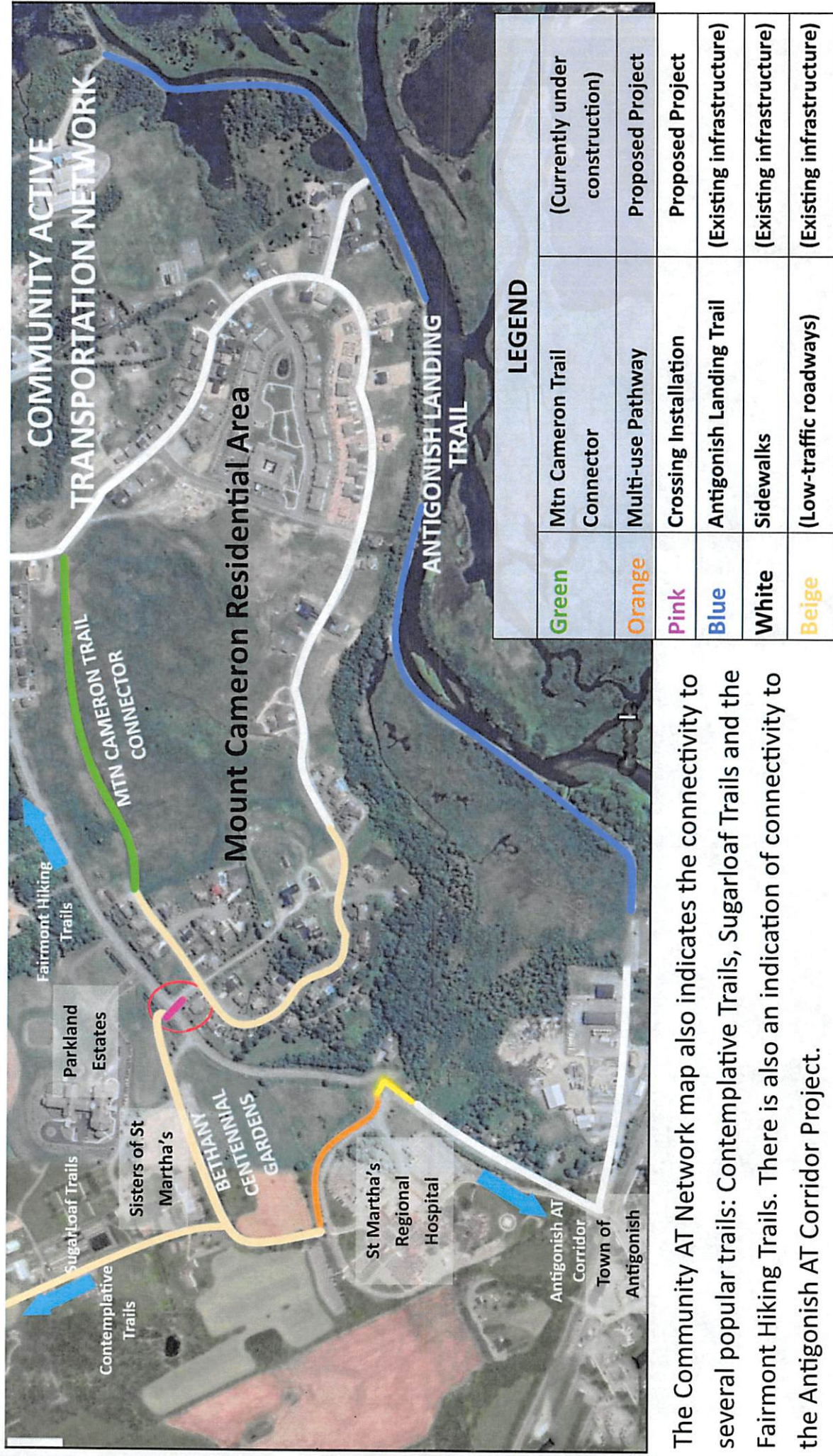
The existing AT infrastructure does not provide sufficient safe, accessible AT opportunities and there is a need to fill gaps within the network to provide further system connectivity throughout. The proposed infrastructure projects are crucial components to providing system connectivity within our Community AT Network. In particular, the crossing installation at Hwy 337 and Mount Cameron Circle intersection will provide a continuity of AT facilities to ensure safe active travel especially where there are no crossings within a reasonable distance.

Antigonish County continues to support and provide physical environments that encourage more safe and accessible daily movement. We embrace the shift in how people are moving

throughout their day as people want to walk, run, bike, and/or (st)roll more often. The demand for non-motorized transportation has increased however, our current infrastructure is not designed to encourage and sustain these behaviors and demands. The Community AT Network project will allow for a sustainable change in the way people move, benefitting both the individual and community well-being.

ANTIGONISH ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS





The Community AT Network map also indicates the connectivity to several popular trails: Contemplative Trails, Sugarloaf Trails and the Fairmont Hiking Trails. There is also an indication of connectivity to the Antigonish AT Corridor Project.

THE MAPLES

RETIREMENT LIVING

To: Bernie Murphy CET
District Traffic Supervisor- Eastern
Nova Scotia Department of Public Works

On behalf of the Mt Cameron Subdivision and S.F Smith Retirement Living, I would like to take this opportunity to express our support to the Municipality of the County of Antigonish with their project: Community Active Transportation Network (Community AT).

The Maples community is home to 300 older adult residents. A very popular activity of our community is walking which greatly supports their overall wellbeing, their social and physical health. The current opportunities for walking and other active transport provide some relatively safe options however, the network proposed with the Community AT project would provide a larger environment of safe, connected infrastructure with more opportunity to socially connect and be active.

We are currently working with the municipality to construct a trail within our development area which will create a safe connection throughout the network and close a crucial gap. This trail is located on land that will become a road when we start the next phase of development. We have discussed with the Municipality our plans to leave enough room to add a sidewalk to this road to keep a safe walking path for our residents as well as the many residents of the town and county who regularly use the landing trail and side of the HGWY 337 currently. The potential links of the entire network will provide our residents and community with safe, social connectivity for all types of active transport.

We look forward to continuing our support with the municipality and thank you for your time in the consideration of this project.

Respectfully,

Stewart Hargreaves
Vice President/General Manager
S F Smith Retirement Living/The Maples Retirement Living
31 Smith Way Antigonish NS



April 22, 2022

Municipality of the County of Antigonish
c/o Meghan MacNeil, Active Living Coordinator
285 Beech Hill Road
Beech Hill, NS B2G0B4

Dear Ms. MacNeil:

RE: Letter of Support – County of Antigonish - Community Active Transportation Network Project

On behalf of the Town of Antigonish, I would like to take this opportunity to express our support to the Municipality of the County of Antigonish with their project: Community Active Transportation (AT) Network.

The Town and County have a well-established recreational planning partnership, and we strive to support each other to further projects that mutually benefit Antigonish Town and County residents. Recently, the Town and County have collaborated to prioritize investments into the physical environment to create active transportation options comprising safe, supportive, and accessible multi-use trails that will encourage residents to incorporate movement into their daily lifestyles.

The Town was recently awarded funding for its Active Transportation Corridor project, which will see multiuse trails, active transportation bridges, and bike lanes established through the Town. Further to this project, the Town is hoping to continue to extend the Corridor to build multi-use trail along Bay Street. This link would connect the Town's Active Transportation Corridor Project with the County's proposed work around Mount Cameron, the Antigonish Landing, and Bethany Centennial Gardens. If all proposed work is completed, it would forge valuable active transportation and recreational connections for our community.

We look forward to continuing our support with the municipality and thank you for your time in the consideration of this project.

Sincerely,

Emily Stephenson
Active Living Coordinator



**Public Works
Office of the Minister**

PO Box 186, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada B3J 2N2

MAR 31 2023

Warden Owen McCarron
Municipality of the County of Antigonish
285 Beech Hill Road
Beech Hill, NS B2G 0B4

Dear Warden McCarron:

Thank you for your correspondence of February 2, 2023, regarding your request for a speed study and the installation of a crosswalk on Highway 337 at the Mount Cameron Circle intersection in Antigonish County.

The Department of Public Works' (DPW) policy requires we use Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) guidelines from the *Pedestrian Crossing Control Guide* when assessing crosswalk locations. By adhering to TAC guidance and existing policy, DPW ensures that locations are evaluated in a consistent manner across the province.

Local staff have committed to completing another speed review and will review pedestrian counts when the weather improves. It is understood that trail development is an important initiative with the Municipality and connectivity across Route 337 is desirable. Local staff will continue to work with you to explore options and look for a possible solution that will satisfy pedestrian movement in that area.

Thank you for bringing Council's concerns to my attention. If you have any additional questions or would like to discuss options going forward, you can reach out to A/District Director Paul Colton at 902-563-2250 or Area Manager Basil Pitts at 902-863-2270.

Yours sincerely,

Kim D. Masland
Minister

c: Paul Colton, A/District Director
Basil Pitts, Area Manager, Antigonish/Guysborough County
Michelle Thompson, MLA Antigonish

MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF
ANTIGONISH

MEMO FOR DISCUSSION

TO: Committee of the Whole
FROM: Glenn Horne, CAO
SUBJECT: ***ANTIGONISH COMMUNITY TRANSIT***
DATE: September 21, 2023

Summary

Following discussions with the Antigonish Community Transit Society (ACTS) Board of Directors, the County and Town Councils are being provided with an update and a proposal to assess future needs and service model options for community transit.

Background

On June 22, the Warden, Mayor, Town CAO and I met with the ACTS Board. The purpose of the meeting was to share the *Fixed Bus Route Report* that was completed earlier that same month (attached for your reference).

In summation, this report states that the fixed bus route service (the 1-hour loop around Town, Post Road & Mount Cameron) was not sustainable as it currently exists, and ACTS will have to make decisions about the future of this service by Mar/April 2024. The report also made a case for municipal ownership and operation of the Fixed Route and further recommended changes to the service to enhance ridership, including additional promotion, placement of bus shelters and partnerships with user groups.

The ACTS Board provided the report and spoke candidly about the challenges associated with the fixed route service. They asked that we work together to determine a way forward.

Considerations

Based on the report provided, and discussions with the ACTS Board, County and Town officials are prepared to recommend that the three groups work together to further assess the community's needs for fixed route transit and how that fits with the overall community transit system. Based on those needs, we would then develop service delivery model options including long-term financial, operational and governance structures.

With that information in hand, ACTS and the municipalities can further discuss the challenges of community transit and where to go from here. This approach will take a step back from the *Fixed Bus Route Report* and assess all options for community transit services, so we determine what service level and model aligns with residents' needs. All options will be on the table.

Both the Town and County have made applications to the federal government's Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) that, if successful, would provide funding for this purpose. We expect to know in fall 2023 if our applications are successful.

This proposed approach was discussed and agreed among the Town CAO, ACTS Executive Director and me. It was agreed that if the ACTS Board was supportive, it would be brought to County and Town Councils for consideration. The ACTS Board met on Tuesday, September 19 and agreed to this proposed approach.

Next Steps

If County Council is supportive of this proposed approach to assess community transit services and models, we will wait to learn if the County's HAF application is successful. Town Council will receive the same information for its consideration. If applications are successful and all organizations are aligned, this work will commence later this fall.

ANTIGONISH COMMUNITY TRANSIT



Fixed Bus Route Report

June 2023



COMMON GOOD SOLUTIONS

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Introduction

In Nova Scotia, two provincial organizations exist to support rural communities across the province with their efforts to ensure all Nova Scotians have access to transportation. The Nova Scotia Community Transportation Network (NSCTN) is a non-profit organization that advocates and supports the 22 community-based transportation providers in Nova Scotia. By sharing information, providing education, advocacy, and innovation, they help to build a strong integrated community transportation sector across rural Nova Scotia.

The Rural Transportation Association is also a provincial-wide body and network of community-based organizations that are on the ground, providing affordable door-to-door transportation services on a pre-booked basis in rural communities of Nova Scotia.



"Not everyone has access to a car, but everyone needs to travel. Public transit allows people to get to work, school, medical appointments or to just have fun."

- The Honourable Tim Houston,
Premier of Nova Scotia

Rural transit systems like the Antigonish Community Transit Society (ACTS) that offer a fixed-route bus service face many challenges associated with operating costs. This is primarily due to smaller populations, resulting in lower ridership and insufficient fare revenue to run a break-even operation.

Rural communities need more investment to have the financial capacity to maintain an accessible and affordable transit system. Unfortunately, at present, there is limited funding available specifically for the operations of a fixed bus route. Municipalities are not required to provide transportation as an essential service and must fund these operations through their budgeting process. While ACTS currently receives annual operating funds from both the County and the Town of Antigonish, given the challenges faced by rural municipalities due to competing priorities, this places ACTS in a tenuous position for the long-term sustainability of its operation.



Community Profile

The Antigonish region is in the northeastern part of the province of Nova Scotia, along the scenic Northumberland Strait. Antigonish is a popular stop for people travelling between Cape Breton and Halifax as it is conveniently located at the halfway mark on the journey.

It is home to St. Francis Xavier University, the Coady Institute, St Martha's Regional Hospital, the world-renowned Peace by Chocolate, the award-winning People's Place: Antigonish Town and County Library, the Weekly Farmer's Market, Festival Antigonish, and the very popular Antigonish Highland Games, celebrating 158 years in 2023. The Town of Antigonish also serves as the main shopping area with the larger grocery stores, the local shopping mall, several popular restaurants and many independent retail stores. It is also home to many health care services such as optometrists, pharmacies, and dentists, physiotherapists, and family physicians. It also has many businesses and community organizations.

The total population of the Municipality of the County of Antigonish is 20,129 persons. (2021 Census data) The Town's population is 4,626, While these numbers account for permanent residents, the population and demographics of Town doubles for eight months of the year with an additional 4,500 students attending St. Francis Xavier University. Approximately 1600 students reside in STFX housing, 35% of students are from outside the province, 45% from NS and 20% are International.

The Municipality of the County of Antigonish consists of many smaller communities and villages including Havre Boucher, Tracadie, Pomquet, Paq'tnkek First Nation, Heatherton, St. Andrews, Arisaig, Cape George and St. Joseph's.

Like many rural communities, the Antigonish region is becoming an older demographic community with several new senior housing developments, the Maples Supportive Living and Retirement and Antigonish Parkland and Shannex.

A recent article on the Web site "The Travel" ranked Antigonish second on a list of the top ten prettiest coastal towns in Nova Scotia. The site listed the local cultural and festival scene and highlighted the annual Highland games, and the beautiful natural surroundings including local beaches, parks, and forests.

Project Goals and Objectives

The overarching goal of this project is to provide guidance to Antigonish Community Transit Society (ACTS) to assist the Board of Directors and the Executive Director with any plans and decisions regarding future changes to the Fixed Bus Route Services.

- To understand the current and future demand for transit services in the Antigonish region.
- Review the existing route and explore improvements to better serve the area.
- Survey existing clients and others to determine awareness and knowledge of the service and seek feedback.
- Review current times of service and provide options to extend hours and possible weekend service.
- Determine the gaps in the service.
- Develop a project plan to implement suggested solutions to fill the gaps.
- Working with the town/county of Antigonish, explore areas where bus stop shelters could be erected and determine where bus stops should be added or removed.



Antigonish Community Transit Town Bus Schedule - Monday to Friday								
Bus Stop	Timing is approximate and dependent on traffic							
Antigonish Mall	9:00	10:00	11:00	12:00	1:00	2:00	3:00	4:00
Highland Housing Co-op	9:03	10:03	11:03	12:03	1:03	2:03	3:03	4:03
Bloomfield Centre	9:05	10:05	11:05	12:05	1:05	2:05	3:05	4:05
Keating Centre	9:08	10:08	11:08	12:08	1:08	2:08	3:08	4:08
Atlantic Superstore	9:13	10:13	11:13	12:13	1:13	2:13	3:13	4:13
Walmart	9:14	10:14	11:14	12:14	1:14	2:14	3:14	4:14
Whiddens Trailer Park	9:20	10:20	11:20	12:20	1:20	2:20	3:20	4:20
Shamrock Acres	9:23	10:23	11:23	12:23	1:23	2:23	3:23	4:23
Sylvan Valley Apartments	9:25	10:25	11:25	12:25	1:25	2:25	3:25	4:25
Hawthorne Variety	9:27	10:27	11:27	12:27	1:27	2:27	3:27	4:27
JJ Carroll House	9:30	10:30	11:30	12:30	1:30	2:30	3:30	4:30
Antigonish Manor	9:32	10:32	11:32	12:32	1:32	2:32	3:32	4:32
People's Place Library	9:34	10:34	11:34	12:34	1:34	2:34	3:34	4:34
Canadian Tire Gas Bar	9:36	10:36	11:36	12:36	1:36	2:36	3:36	4:36
The Maples	9:43	10:43	11:43	12:43	1:43	2:43	3:43	4:43
Parkland (Shannex)	9:46	10:46	11:46	12:46	1:46	2:46	3:46	4:46
St. Martha's Hospital	9:50	10:50	11:50	12:50	1:50	2:50	3:50	4:50
The Sunflower	9:53	10:53	11:53	12:53	1:53	2:53	3:53	4:53
Sobeys	9:57	10:57	11:57	12:57	1:57	2:57	3:57	4:57

Note:

The final action item needs to be further explored once the report has been made available to the Board of Directors for consideration. It would be premature to consider making any firm commitments to changes in the actual bus stops, until such time as the funding has been increased to allow for expanded hours. Two possible locations for the bus shelters is identified later in the report, as well as possible changes to the existing bus stops.

About Antigonish Community Transit

The Antigonish Community Transit Society (ACTS) is a non-profit, charitable organization that began in 2010 as a working group of the Antigonish Poverty Reduction Coalition (APRC). It was focused on exploring transportation options available to residents of the Town and County. In October 2013, it formed a society governed by a volunteer board of directors and began a pilot project in September 2014. By March 2015, it became a permanent transportation service offering both a fixed bus route and a Book-A-Ride service. Since then, it has received continued support from the Province of Nova Scotia, the Municipalities of the Town and County of Antigonish, local businesses and community members.

The Antigonish Community Transit Society provides services to both the Municipality of the County of Antigonish and the Town of Antigonish.

The Antigonish Community Transit Society is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors who provide the overall strategic direction for the organization. The Board employs an Executive Director who runs the day-to-day business and operationalizes the strategic goals and objectives.



Public transit options should be available to all Canadians, no matter where they live. Expanding the capacity of the Antigonish Community Transit Society to support our neighbours means that residents are not left isolated from essential services and can travel with ease within their community. The Government of Canada is committed to collaborating with other levels of government on infrastructure projects to improve communities."

The Honourable Sean Fraser, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and Member of Parliament for Central Nova, on behalf of the Honourable Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities

About Antigonish Community Transit

The mission of ACTS is to provide a green, sustainable, multi-faceted, community-based transit strategy that provides accessible, efficient, reliable and safe travel for all residents and visitors in Antigonish town and county.

The strategic priorities identified in the 2020 Business Plan for ACTS focus on eight key areas: accessibility, awareness, finances, governance, green initiatives, operations, outreach, and ridership.

However, due to Covid -19, ACTS, like many other organizations, has been challenged to make significant progress on identified priorities. Several of the objectives identified are still applicable and relevant to any proposed changes to the Fixed Bus Route, especially those related to financial awareness, outreach, and ridership.



Objective #1

To increase awareness of the transportation deficiencies within the Antigonish area through advocacy and public awareness meetings



Objective #2

To coordinate transportation services within the Antigonish area



Objective #3

To be environmentally conscious and aware of the impacts a transportation system can have on the environment



Objective #4

To respond to people's limited access to services, programs and community activities by facilitating more accessible, barrier-free, inclusive, efficient, reliable and safe transportation options for community members within the Antigonish area



Objective #5

To initiate a mechanism for effective management and fundraising to establish, operate and sustain the ACTS organization.

About Antigonish Community Transit

The Book-A-Ride service is one of 22 operated in rural communities throughout the province that provide affordable door-to-door transportation. The Community Transportation Assistance Program (CTAP) funding is managed within the Active Transportation and Community Transit Division of the Department of Public Works.

To support the Book-A-Ride service, ACTS receives an operating grant each year for \$85,580 based on a set formula. The formula provides a base amount allocated for population and service area population, a percentage based on the linear kilometers in the catchment service area and a percentage based on the population served.

ACTS receives an annual operating grant from both the County and the Town of \$45,000, applied to both services. A request for an additional increase of \$15,000 has been made for the 2023-2024 budget year.

In addition to receiving funding to undergo a review of the Fixed Bus Route, ACTS also received funding through the Government of Canada's Rural Transit Fund for \$984,388 and the Government of Nova Scotia, \$241,722, for a combined investment of more than \$1.22 million. This funding will allow ACTS to expand its fleet by purchasing two hybrid vans, an electric bus and support charging infrastructure to serve those in the town and county of Antigonish, including Paq'tnkek First Nation. It will also fund the construction of two bus shelters. The new vehicles and supporting infrastructure will enhance the existing fixed-route transit system and the bookable door-to-door transit service.



About Antigonish Community Transit

Book-A-Ride is service that is accessed mainly by seniors, persons with disabilities, and people with limited access to vehicles. Book-A-Ride services must be booked by 1 pm the day before the service is needed or on Friday before for service on Monday. It is offered mainly as a Monday-to-Friday operation between 8 am to 5 pm. However, they provide rides earlier in the morning and on weekends as needed. The fee structure is based on distance. One-way fares within the Antigonish town limits are \$3.00, trips up to 5 km are \$5.00, 5km to 15km are \$8.00 and over 15km are \$8.00 for the first 15km and .75¢ per km for each additional km.

Other one-way fares for local communities are as follows:

Heatherton/Bayfield – \$10.00

Pomquet/South Side Harbour – \$8.00

Monastery – \$12.00

Linwood/Havre Boucher – \$15.00

Anyone using the book-a-ride service can also take advantage of the Fixed Bus Route at no charge all day.

The service has had increased demand in recent years due to an aging population within the Antigonish Region. (Antigonish Community Transit Business Plan, 2020)



The Fixed-Flex Bus Route operates from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm hourly, Monday through Friday. Riders can request to be let off or flag the bus down anywhere along the route if it is safe for the driver to do so. The fixed route service is a 20.8-kilometer route providing service to throughout the Town of Antigonish, but also extends outside Town limits and includes stops in the County such as Walmart, Superstore, Shannex, The Maples and St Martha's Regional Hospital.

Fixed Route Fares (town routes)

One way – \$2.00;

Day pass - (Unlimited) – \$5.00;

20-day pass (Unlimited) – \$55.00.

Children under 12 ride for free.

Importance of Transit as a Social Determinant of Health and Quality of Life Issue

Transportation plays an essential role in the overall quality of life and is an important social determinant of health in rural communities. The availability of reliable transportation impacts a person's ability to access appropriate healthcare, purchase groceries, run errands, get to and from work, pursue educational opportunities, participate in social and recreational activities, and remain socially connected. Efficient, accessible, and affordable transportation is an important driver in economic growth in rural areas and helps ensure that people can obtain services and participate fully in their communities. The benefits of accessible, affordable public transit in rural communities are economic, social, and environmental through greenhouse gas emission reduction. It also helps to make communities more attractive to potential new residents and helps to attract potential employers.

While the Town of Antigonish is often considered a walk-able community for many residents, many others are not healthy, have mobility challenges, and must rely on family, friends, and transit to get around. Additionally, most residents live in adjacent communities outside of Town, which means that at present, only some residents residing in the County directly benefit from the Fixed Bus Route.

Reliable transportation options can determine whether many people in rural areas have access to healthcare, which is critical for promoting and maintaining health and preventing or managing illness. Often older individuals and individuals with disabilities have more significant healthcare needs than other rural residents, and living in rural areas isolated from healthcare providers can significantly impact their quality of life, their health, and their safety.

Population groups most likely to need a responsive and accessible fixed bus route to maintain their health and well-being include:

- Older adults
- People with disabilities or other health care needs
- Low-income individuals and families
- Students
- Newcomers



Importance of Transit as a Social Determinant of Health and Quality of Life Issue

One of the main challenges for people using a fixed bus route for healthcare appointments and to go to and from work is the need to match appointments or work hours with the bus schedule, which is often inconvenient.

Antigonish Community Transit and its' fixed bus route is an essential service that provides many health, social and environmental benefits. In the recent survey for the fixed bus route, 95% of respondents indicated that community transit plays an important role in your community's quality of life. It also helps to reduce economic disparities and improves equity in the community. Several factors contribute to many people living in rural communities requiring access to transit, such as age, health and mobility conditions, adequate income to own a vehicle, or those who choose not to drive. The Antigonish area also has a growing population of newcomers who access the fixed bus route. An enhanced fixed bus service can provide these populations an affordable and independent way to access jobs, employment, essential services and recreational or social opportunities.



Importance of Transit as a Social Determinant of Health and Quality of Life Issue

Using transit also contributes to improved mental health outcomes as it requires someone to walk to the bus, increasing physical activity and improving overall wellness.

The built environment influences ridership on community transit. The location of bus stops and the distance one must walk to access them, whether the service gives you access to the places you wish to go and if there are bus shelters in place to deal with weather conditions are all considerations for people while deciding if they will use transit. Residents with options that include convenience and comfort are more likely to choose a fixed bus route.

This focus on the quality of life is not a new conversation and access to transportation is a shared responsibility among the federal, provincial, and municipal levels of government. The roles of the federal and provincial governments are defined in the Constitution Act of 1867. However, the role that municipalities have in transit varies across the province. Since it is not a required essential service, cities can choose whether to provide public transit.



“Investing in public transit infrastructure will build strong communities across the country and deliver a better quality of life for all Canadians.”

“Canadians need good, reliable transit to get them to work on time in the morning and home safely at night.”

“When we invest in public transit infrastructure, we are supporting good middle-class jobs, creating better commutes, fighting climate change, and helping make life easier and more affordable for Canadians. We will continue to do what it takes to ensure our economic recovery from COVID-19 and build back a more resilient country for everyone.”

- The Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada

Snapshots of Other Fixed Bus Routes

While there are technically nine locations in Nova Scotia that operate some version of a Fixed Bus Route, Antigonish Community Transit is the only non-profit organization operating a one-hour, fixed bus route with 21 designated stops within the town core area. Other providers either are municipally owned and operated or run a different version of a fixed bus route.

Halifax Transit is owned and funded by Halifax Regional Municipality. It operates two ferry routes, over 60 bus routes (including the corridor, local, and express services), three regional express, and three rural routes. It also operates Access-a-Bus, a door-to-door para-transit service for seniors and persons with disabilities.

Transit Cape Breton is owned and funded by Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM) and operates bus routes in the urban core, which includes the communities of Sydney, Glace Bay, North Sydney, Sydney Mines, Reserve Mines, and New Waterford.

Kings Transit Authority operates buses in the Annapolis Valley. It is owned and funded by Kings County, Annapolis County, Digby County and the towns of Berwick, Wolfville, Kentville, Middleton, Annapolis Royal, and Digby.

Eskasoni Transit Service has a scheduled fixed-route service available Monday to Friday, offered twice daily. The driver will stop at five designated bus stops throughout Eskasoni to pick up/drop-off riders on a 20-passenger accessible bus that travels to six stops within the Sydney area. The cost is \$10.00 for a one-way trip or \$20.00 for the return trip. All services must be pre-booked at least 24 hours in advance.

Strait Area Transit (SAT) also runs the Inverness Fixed Route Monday to Friday. It also operates much the same as a Dial-A-Ride, requiring pre-booking 24 hours in advance. It travels the route at “fixed set times” between Port Hawkesbury and Inverness. The cost is \$7.50 one way (up to two zones within the service area) or \$15.00 within two zones in communities SAT serves.

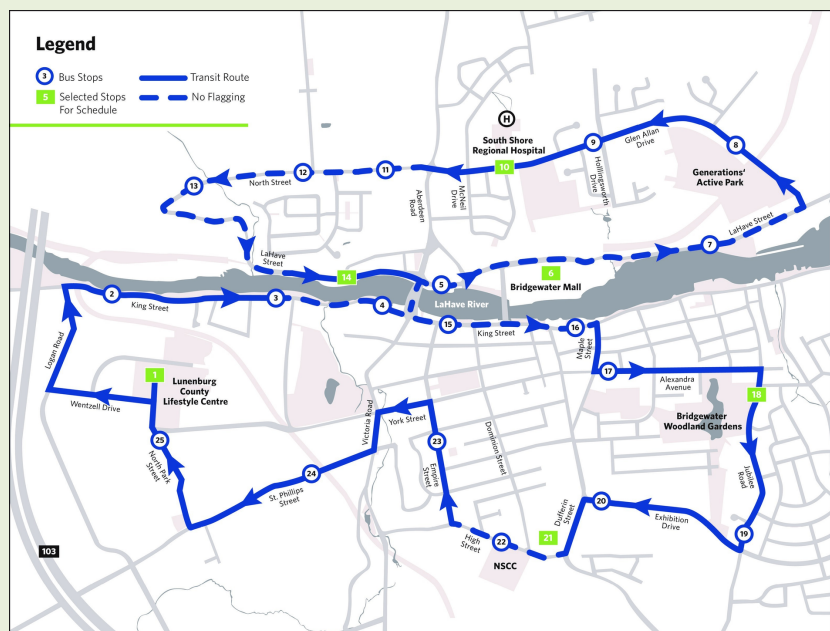
Snapshots of Other Fixed Bus Routes

Bridgewater Transit

The population of the Town of Bridgewater has approximately 8600 residents. Bridgewater Transit is a municipality-run transit system within the Engineering and Public Works Department. It began as a 6-month pilot project in September 2017, with donated buses from Halifax Transit; the pilot was then extended for an additional year. As of April 1, 2019, Bridgewater Transit became a permanent and core service of the Town. Since the buses have been operational, there has been tremendous growth in the transit service.

Bridgewater Transit completes a one-hour (16 km) loop of the Town with a single bus on a fixed route with 25 designated stops. In late 2020, the Town replaced the two start-up buses with two(2) 2020 Champion LF (2021 Ford E-450 Chassis), 19-seat capacity buses, including two wheelchair spaces. The hours of operation from Monday to Friday are 6 am to 8 pm, reduced to 8 am to 6 pm on Saturdays. The service day is approximately 14 hours and 240 km, reduced to 10 hours and 170 km on Saturdays. Sunday service was previously offered but discontinued due to low uptake. Bridgewater Transit uses a flag stop system, where it is safe to do so, along the fixed route, to meet the needs of the residents of Bridgewater.

The ridership has been consistent in the region despite covid, proving the importance of transit for the local community. The ridership ranges between 1500-3000 people per month, with an increase in the winter months. The municipality currently has casual and part-time bus drivers who are not unionized and are not eligible for benefits as they don't work full-time. The current wage rate for drivers is \$19.89.



Snapshots of Other Fixed Bus Routes

Bridgewater Transit

Fares have stayed the same since inception, costing \$1.50 for students and youth, \$2.00 for adults, a 10-ride adult pass is \$18 and \$13.50 for students. They also provide an unlimited adult monthly pass for \$45 and \$30 for students. Most riders in the area use the bus to run errands and commute to work or school outside peak hours. Other trip purposes include tutoring, church, evening classes, and going to the Lunenburg County Lifestyle Centre (LCLC). While the service is essential for the entire town, the three groups who use the service the most are people who have difficulty getting around, youth, and seniors.

The transit system is a line item in the municipal annual operating budget. The annual operating costs in 2022- 2023 were \$73,428, and salary costs were \$172,065. They access grants such as the public transit assistance program. Additionally, the transit has gained significant support within the municipality, wherein engineers and community development associates work closely to make the system efficient. The biggest strength of the municipality-run transit is that it is considered a service for the municipality, and the operating costs are part of the annual operating budget, which ensures financial stability. The municipality views transit as a quality-of-life issue for all its residents.

One of the reasons for the success in ridership is connected to a strong marketing campaign when the fixed link was launched.



Snapshots of Other Fixed Bus Routes

Pictou County Transit Corporation

The Towns of New Glasgow, Trenton, and Stellarton have a combined population of about 15,000 residents. Pictou County has a long history of transit in the region dating back to the early 1900s when a tram service and later a bus service ran under the Pictou County Electric Company. Pictou County Regional Transit Authority began around 1980 for New Glasgow, Trenton, and Westville and ceased operations in 1996 due to funding issues.

During these years, a door-to-door pickup service was carried out by the Central Highlands Association of the Disabled Transit (CHAD). Still, residents identified a need for a more agile service in the region. Pictou County Transit (PCT) has since revived itself, and CHAD conducted a feasibility study and a business plan in 2015 and 2016. As the initiatives started coming together, the PCT fixed bus route system became a co-run initiative between the Pictou County Transit Corporation and CHAD; CHAD takes care of the management. PCT's three-year pilot project launched on May 17, 2021, in the midst of a COVID lockdown. People were using the bus to get to work, medical appointments, and grocery shopping. The Province of NS supported the implementation of the transit system by buying a bus for the community for \$190,000, and they also fully funded the first year of operations at \$200,000. Pictou County Transit completes a one-hour loop between New Glasgow and Stellarton.

The hours of operation from Monday to Saturday are 7 am to 9 pm. Pictou County Transit has nine fixed bus stops and uses a flag stop system, where it is safe to do so along the fixed route to meet the needs of the residents. More than 70% of the route is flaggable.

The ridership has been consistent in the region even during Covid, proving the importance of transit services for the local community. The ridership averages 435 people per week, with higher uptake in the summer and fall months. The municipality currently has two full-time drivers who are entitled to the benefits of municipal employment. Their current wage rate is \$17.75 per hour and is expected to go to \$20.00 in April.

The bus service fares are \$3.00 per ride and \$7.50 for a day pass. They also provide monthly passes of \$70 for adults, \$60 for students, and \$40 for youth. Most riders in the area use the bus for transit to service-related jobs, running errands, and commuting to work or school outside peak hours. The PCT bus is fully accessible and equipped with a modern ramp and low floor. CHAD provides a backup bus as required as part of its management agreement. The bus has a debit machine for ease of payment. Additionally, the bus is a Wi-Fi hotspot, so the riders can access the internet on their ride without using their data.

The total operating costs to run the service for 2023-24 are \$213,800, \$105,000 are wages, and CHAD is paid a \$20,000 management fee.

Snapshots of Other Fixed Bus Routes

Yarmouth Transit

The Town of Yarmouth has a population of about 7,200 residents. Yarmouth Transit is a municipality-run transit system. It began in February 2017, with two buses, one operating at a time. The bus covers a 14.2 km route in 45 minutes. It has 17 fixed bus stops and a flaggable route that residents can use. The town currently has two 16-seat capacity buses.

Since the buses have been operational, there has been a tremendous improvement in the transit service. The hours of operation are Monday to Friday, 7 am to 7 pm, and Saturday from 8 am to 6pm. The ridership has been consistent in the region despite the Covid pandemic, proving the importance of transit for the local community. In February of 2023, with two service disruptions, ridership was 1250, as compared to previous years, pre-Covid, where ridership was 1900 in the same month. Ridership sees an increase in the winter months. The municipality has casual and two full-time bus drivers who are unionized and are eligible for benefits. Their current hourly wage is \$20.00.

The fares have remained the same since the introduction of the service. The costs are Cash for \$2, One-Pass for \$1.50, and a Monthly pass for \$50. They had other fare options. Including a day pass and unlimited weekly and monthly passes, which have been discontinued due to the crash of the smart card system. Their ridership grew year-over-year from 2017 at 55%, 2018 at 8%, and 2019 at 28%. In 2020, ridership decreased by 54% due to shut down of the service during the pandemic emergency measures, and there is now a slow return of users. In 2021 and 2022, ridership increased by 24% yearly from ridership participation in 2020. Most transit bus riders are seniors and lower-income adults living near senior housing and public housing units. One of the biggest strengths of the fixed bus service is the retention of the residents' quality of life. Since its establishment, the service has been consistent, with operational and budget costs being stable as well. However, drawbacks for the municipality are the high maintenance costs and driver attraction and retention. The 2023-24 budget projects annual operating costs to be \$206,000, with \$125,000 for wages and benefits.

A lot more opportunities exist for transit as the town has recently established a Transit Citizen Advisory Committee that will look at the future needs of the service to the community. As they are aging in place, the community sees the service as “essential” to them for their mobility, social interactions, and to help with budgeting finances. There is future scope to establish bi-directional buses running seven days a week and the route extended.

Snapshots of Other Fixed Bus Routes

Hinton Transit

The Town of Hinton is located in west-central Alberta, with a population of 9,800. Hinton Transit System is a permanent service for the residents of Hinton. The fixed bus route service runs six days a week throughout the community and arrives at each stop on the hour. The hours of operation are Monday to Friday, 8 am to 8 pm and on Saturday from 8 am to 6 pm. The bus currently does not offer service on Sundays or holidays. The bus can carry 12 passengers.

The Town of Hinton also manages the Freedom Express, a 12-passenger bus equipped with a lift and ramp for wheelchair users. Freedom Express is the door-to-door, accessible, shared-ride transit service for Hinton residents who cannot use regular transit for some or all trips due to a physical or cognitive disability. This service is also available for children with disabilities who qualify. The service may be used for school, work, therapy, medical appointments, all senior programs, and social and shopping trips.

The fares are \$3 for a single ride. They also offer a day pass for \$8, a monthly pass for \$70, and a 12-ride punch card for \$30. Additionally, they offer a quarterly senior pass for \$50. The 2023 annual operating budget for Hinton Transit is \$362,185, which includes both services.

Yorkton Transit

Yorkton is a small city in south-eastern Saskatchewan; it has a population of 16,738 (2022). Yorkton Transit provides safe, reliable, and affordable transportation based on two distinct scheduled, fixed routes, the North and South Lines. Each route is a 30-minute loop, with the bus switching routes. The service operates from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Monday-Friday, and from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Saturdays. The fixed bus route is not available on Sundays or holidays. The fleet is comprised of two buses that are fully accessible.

A single fare is \$2.50 for children under 18 years and students with IDs and \$3.50 for all others. A book of 30 tickets is \$62.50 for those under 18 and students and \$87.50 for all others. Monthly passes are \$37.50 for under 18 and students, \$75.00 for adults 18-60, \$60.00 for adults 60 plus and \$25.00 for low-income.

The annual operating budget for Yorkton Transit is \$449,400, which includes contract fees to SaskAbility to provide the accessible service.

The Connection Between Transit and Age-Friendly Communities

The concept of age-friendly communities has become increasingly important in recent years with an aging demographic. Atlantic Canada has the highest proportion of older adults per capita, more than any other region in the country (Statistics Canada, 2022). Nova Scotia also has the highest rates of disability, greater than any other province in Canada, with over 40% of older adults with at least one disability (Statistics Canada, 2017). Antigonish Town and County is no exception, with 24% of its population 65 years and older and 39% over 55 years old. (2021 Census Data)

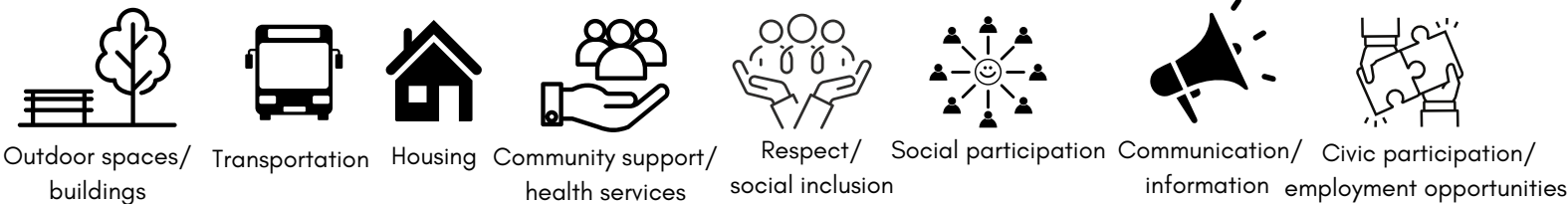
In rural communities like the Antigonish region, access to transportation is vital for older adults to age in place and lead full and active lives.



Many older adults who live in rural communities do not reside close to many essential services like grocery stores and health services. The Antigonish Ageing Well Coalition was recently involved in a research project funded by the Change Lab Action Research Initiative (CLARI) in partnership with Dr Adam Perry in the Faculty of Education at STFX. The purpose of this project was to engage adults 55 years and older to get their views on the needs, strengths, opportunities, and challenges to the Antigonish region becoming an age-friendly community. The survey had 307 respondents.

The project also involved ten interviews with stakeholders who represented the eight domains and (2) two conversation circles with 30 older adults in which experiences related to the eight domains were discussed (30 participants). As noted above, one of the eight domains for an age-friendly community is transportation, and this research project provided some important insight relevant to this project. Additionally, many of the other domains for an age-friendly community have a strong connection to transportation to access services, feel socially included and be able to participate in the community.

Eight domains of an age-friendly community



The Connection Between Transit and Age-Friendly Communities

Transportation was identified as a significant barrier to the Antigonish region becoming an age-friendly community and was recognized as a key area to focus attention, especially for those older adults who experience social isolation due to a mobility disability. Because there are limited public transportation options, older adults must rely on private transportation. Participants highlighted the inconvenient hours of the Antigonish Community Transit system, the limitations and inconvenience of booking Dial-a-Ride services by 1 pm the day before, and the increasing cost of taxis in the town and county. While Antigonish Community Transit does have a fixed bus route from 9 to 5 pm weekdays and does have an accessible vehicle, the lack of access to accessible transit during evenings and weekends is especially challenging for older adults with disabilities, as during these times they may be reliant on ambulance services or other privately organized transportation to access to medical and other services.

While several interviewed stakeholders and session participants agreed that the transit provided was an essential service, the issue of limited access was identified as negatively affecting their quality of life and was reducing access to necessary services, such as groceries and medical appointments.



“Older adults with disabilities are trapped in their homes. They can’t go out at night because there’s no transit. They have to take an ambulance sometimes to the hospital because there’s no transit.”

- Anonymous respondent



“If you don't have a vehicle here, or a family to take you around, you're really out of luck. One of the big things with the public transportation that exists currently is that it's only available from nine to five. So, you couldn't go anywhere in the evening. It's difficult to be spontaneous.”

-Anonymous respondent

Ridership

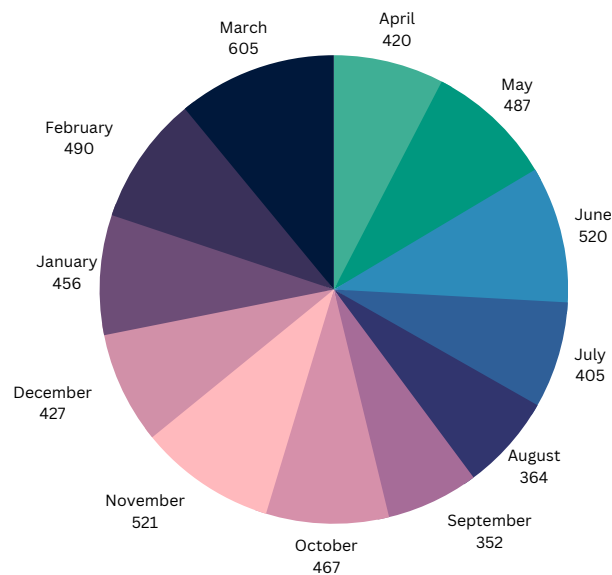
At present, the majority of people who access the Fixed Bus Route are older adults, persons with limited income, and newcomers. There is little student uptake, and due to the limited hours, the fixed bus route does not attract employees requiring transit to and from work. With an aggressive marketing campaign, there is significant potential to increase ridership and attract new demographics as passengers. Recorded ridership shows the number of one-way fares in that month and does capture the number of actual users. These numbers show very low overall use of the fixed bus route in Antigonish, even though it has been in operation for nearly ten years. The revenue generated through the fixed bus route fares only represents about 14% of the actual expenses to run the service. In 2022-2023 the expenses were \$71,000, and the revenue was \$9,591. This effectively means it needs to be subsidized annually by \$61,500, which is 86% of the annual operational costs, with the current hourly rate of \$16.00 for bus drivers and no increase in hours. So effectively, running a fixed bus route service is far from a break-even operation. It presents a challenge for the long-term sustainability of a not-for-profit organization that relies on different levels of government funding for its operations. The last three years have proven challenging to determine whether ridership has grown as Covid -19 has caused significant variations and discontinuity in the data. For comparison purposes, the two years included in this report are taken from ridership data collected the year before Covid and from the past fiscal year. Comparing data from the two years in between these years, would not provide an accurate picture.

The revenue generated from the fixed bus route cannot be a big factor in evaluating the importance of this service

2019-2020 revenue was \$8,695, with a total ridership of 5,021.

2022-2023 revenue of \$9,591, with a total ridership of 5,514.

2022-2023 Total Ridership of 5,514



The overall increase when comparing these two years shows an increase of about 10%. This could be attributed to the promotional efforts and a higher awareness of the fixed bus route.

The two-year comparison does show a steady increase recovery from two years with low ridership due to Covid-19 restrictions. March 2023 saw the highest ridership numbers at 605. Of interest is the slight rise in February and March, and then in April (630) and May (631) which also coincides with a great deal of social media coverage and press coverage related to both the survey in February and community consultations held in March.

Antigonish Community Transit Board of Directors SWOT Analysis

Completed on February 21, 2023

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ten-year history of providing transit services in the Antigonish region • Executive Director and staff • Committed volunteer board • Bus Drivers who are willing to work for a low hourly wage • Funding for a new electric bus • Financial support from both Town and County to support operations - 45K each • Core funding for the Book-A-Ride service from Province • Donation from Sisters of St. Martha's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost to run service far exceeds income generated from fares • Low ridership on Fixed Bus Route • Bus leaves the road for stops and is therefore not as a visible or regarded as an essential service • Risk of staff turnover due to low hourly wages and part-time positions • Lack of awareness of both services, especially fixed bus service • Poor Signage - No bus shelters • Little to no financial support for a fixed bus service • Limited hours of operations for both the fixed bus route and Book-A- Ride • No weekend services for either service • Fixed Route is located Town not very relevant to County residents • Departure of the current staff and Executive Director retirement next year • Cannot pay drivers a living wage due to limited revenue
THREATS	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk of reduction in funding provided by the province and the two Municipalities • Competition for volunteers for the Board of Directors with other worthwhile community organizations • Staffing challenges due to a lower hourly wage and competition with higher wages offered by the Strait Regional Center of Education • Rural transit providers are governed under NS UARB regulations and some of these rules can be a barrier to providing transit for clients. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on positioning transit as an essential service for the local region and economy • Develop a strong marketing campaign to promote the services and increase awareness and ridership • Stronger relationship with STFX, potential to build a more comprehensive service and look at funding through student fees • Stronger relationship with NS Health • Stronger relationship with the Antigonish Chamber of Commerce so transit can be considered a viable option to travel to work • Sponsorship from businesses for extra bus services for special events or outside bus service • Sponsorship and advertising opportunities on the outside of the bus and bus shelters

Note: Strengths and weaknesses are internal factors related to the organization, threats and opportunities are external considerations.

The Connection Between Accessibility and Community Transit

More and more research in recent years demonstrates the strong connection that social participation has to achieve better health outcomes. We also know that social participation tends to have a particularly noticeable effect on the health outcomes of older people and persons with accessibility issues.

The legislation for Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act mandates the development of Accessibility Advisory Committees and Accessibility Plans for Municipalities and other public sector bodies within the province. The five areas addressed in municipal plans include awareness and education; goods & services; information & communications; transportation; employment; and the built environment.

The Town of Antigonish and the County have both identified the need for accessible transportation as an important priority in their plans and have also identified the need for ensuring specialized transit services (door-to-door service). In addition, through their plans, they have committed to supporting accessible transportation options. Both Councils strongly support public transit and provide funding for their annual operating budget as a grant to Antigonish Community Transit.

During the Accessibility Planning Engagement phase for the Town, many stakeholders reported transportation as a key challenge for community members, especially for groups who are less likely to own a vehicle, including people with disabilities, low-income households, and newcomers. While both transit services offer wheelchair-accessible vehicles, stakeholders and transit operators identified many accessibility concerns, such as securing wheelchairs on ramps and buses, leading to second-hand reports of injuries. Transit operators indicated that addressing some of these gaps is necessary to increase ridership while increasing ridership is necessary to access additional funding. Some users who require assistance getting on and off vehicles and attending appointments do not have access to a support person, leaving the responsibility to drivers who are not trained and equipped to assist with this.

Town of Antigonish Accessibility Plan Draft, Summer 2022



In addition, the Town Council identified exploring a parking strategy with St. Francis Xavier University to reduce the number of automobiles driven to the university by students living off-campus. The Town will seek to improve public transit towards this end. Town Council also identified park-and-ride lots and other opportunities to reduce the need to own a personal vehicle, which could be an additional way to improve employee transit and expand the Fixed Bus Route.

Highlights of Survey Findings

The online survey was live from Feb 2nd until the end of February. Following the removal of about 30 “bot” surveys, there were 404 online responses and 44 hard copies. Throughout February, weekly social media posts were shared on the ACTS transit Facebook page and also shared by many community partners to help promote the survey. [The video featuring Marilyn McLellan, released on Feb 13th to promote the survey, was shared 14 times and viewed nearly 800 times.](#)

Weekly draws for the grocery gift cards were held for survey respondents to encourage more responses.

Although printed copies were available at the following locations Antigonish Library, Antigonish Community Transit Offices and on all Vehicles, Town of Antigonish Municipal Office, Antigonish County Municipal Office, and the Antigonish Women’s Centre, only 44 print surveys were returned.



PARTICIPATE IN OUR SURVEY
Month of February



Are you a resident of the Town of Antigonish or Antigonish County?

We need your input to help shape the future of the bus route!

Weekly draws to win a \$50 grocery gift card






If interested, scan the QR below or link to access the survey

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GQJ8K5P>



In addition to weekly posts on the [ACTS Facebook \(FB\) page](#), other requests for support for social media promotion were sent to the following:

- All board members
- Municipal Councillors on the Board to share with other councilors on their FB pages
- NS Community Transit Network and Rural Transportation Association
- Antigonish Coalition to End Poverty, Antigonish Kids First, Antigonish Community Health Board, ACALA
- Town and County Staff
- STFX Student Union and STFX Student Services
- Antigonish Chamber of Commerce
- Rural Communities Foundation of NS
- 98.9 XFM, 101.5 The Hawk, The Reporter

Content				Create a post	Last 90 Days	Post reach
	Participate in the survey by clicking on the following link and enter your name into a weekly draw for a \$50.00 Grocery card https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GQJ8K5P	Post reach	Engagement	Boost post		
	Thu, Feb 2	6,794	518			
	A reminder of our Volunteer Fair taking place Tuesday January 17th at the People Place Library. 12 to 1pm and again from 5 to 6pm. Can you spare a few hours for a local community group?	Post reach	Engagement	Boost post		
	Thu, Jan 12	2,199	111			
	If you want to attend a community session, please RSVP so we know numbers and can plan refreshments.	Post reach	Engagement	Boost post		
	Sat, Feb 25	2,152	82			
	A reminder that we are having a Free Ride week on the fixed route starting tomorrow. Don't forget to fill out the survey for a chance to win a \$50 grocery card.	Post reach	Engagement	Boost post		
	Mon, Feb 20	1,972	49			
	Participate in the survey by clicking on the following link and enter your name into a weekly draw for a \$50.00 Grocery card https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GQJ8K5P	Post reach	Engagement	Boost post		
	Tue, Feb 21	1,923	68			

Highlights of Survey Findings

Email requests asking for several partners to promote the survey were shared by the following organizations: Antigonish Aging Well Coalition, Keep Well Antigonish, CHB Contacts, Antigonish Coalition to End Poverty, and the Antigonish Women's Centre List Serve.

The overall response to the survey was excellent and provided valuable feedback on residents' views on the Fixed Bus Route. This information is essential for the Board of Directors to consider when making any changes in the future.

Highlights of the Responses

- 448 people took the time to share their opinions.
- 60% of respondents do not use the Fixed Bus Route, demonstrating a great deal of growth potential with more awareness and an enhanced route.
- 95% of respondents agreed that community transit plays a role in the quality of life of a community
- 61.2% of respondents were employed, and 26% were retired.
- 72.7 % of respondents were women
- 40% or 170 of people that use transit use the fixed bus route
- 87% of respondents indicated they might be or would be more likely to use the fixed bus route if hours were extended
- 33% of respondents use transit because they have no access to a vehicle

Limitations

While there was an excellent response rate, many residents were likely unaware of the survey. Therefore, the results represent a select group of people during a window in time. The majority of these responses were for the online survey, and this format may not have been accessible to individuals who do not use social media, have internet access or do not have the computer literacy required to complete the survey. The option for completing a hard copy of the survey was limited to the locations listed above. In addition, most of the promotions were via social media and through the requests of partners to share information. Again, people who do not use social media may have been unaware that the survey was taking place. While 98.9XFM did promote the survey through free public service announcements, however, it would not have been helpful for those who do not listen to that radio station.

An additional and noteworthy limitation of the survey results was that we were unable to capture significant information from people who identified as Indigenous, African Nova Scotian, and other racialized members of our community, including newcomers. This is important information as we know that transportation contributes to barriers related to the social and structural determinants of health (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2022)

Antigonish Community Transit: Fixed Bus Route Survey

Who did we hear from?



Education Completed

45% of the respondents had a college education

27.3% of the respondents are a postgraduate

23.7% of the respondents are a high school graduate

72.7% of the respondents were women

24.8% of the respondents were men

2.5% of the respondents were Non-Binary, Two-Spirited, or Prefer Not to Say

88.8%

English is their first language

11.2%

English was not their first language

95% Said community transit plays an important role in your community's quality of life.

48%

Of respondents had used the Antigonish Community Transit previously

52%

Of respondents who had not used the Antigonish Community Transit previously

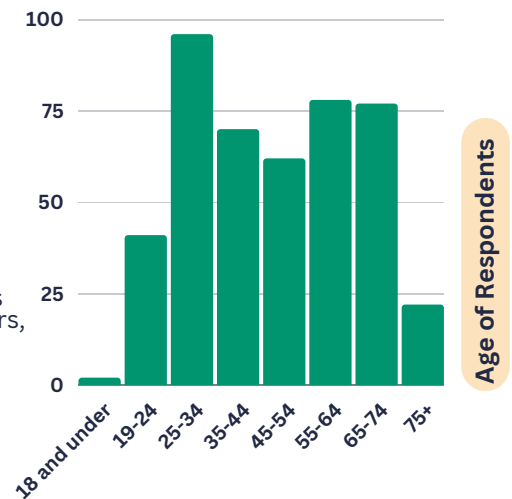
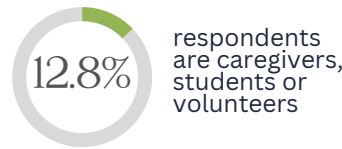
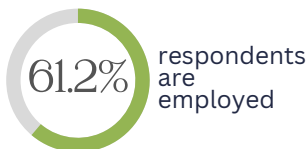
Where do they live?



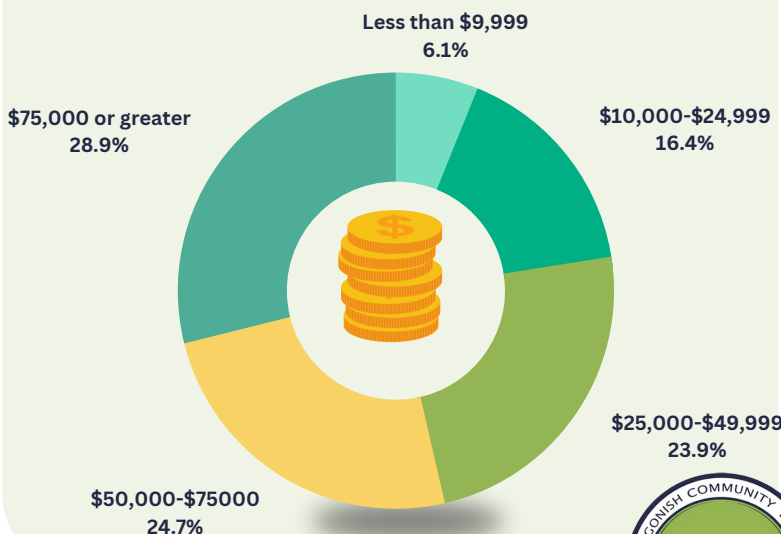
Municipality of the County of Antigonish 49.2%

Town of Antigonish 50.8%

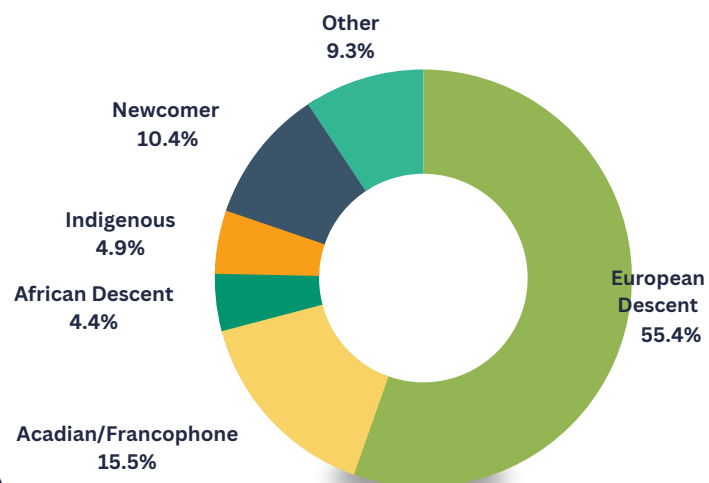
Current paid or unpaid work status



Household income



Ethnic/cultural background

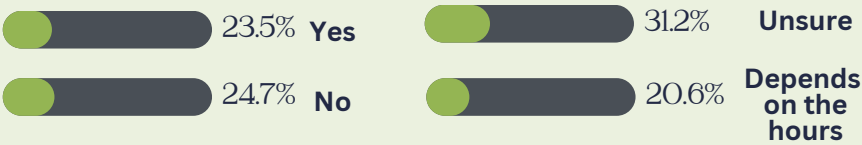


Antigonish Community Transit Fixed Bus Route Survey

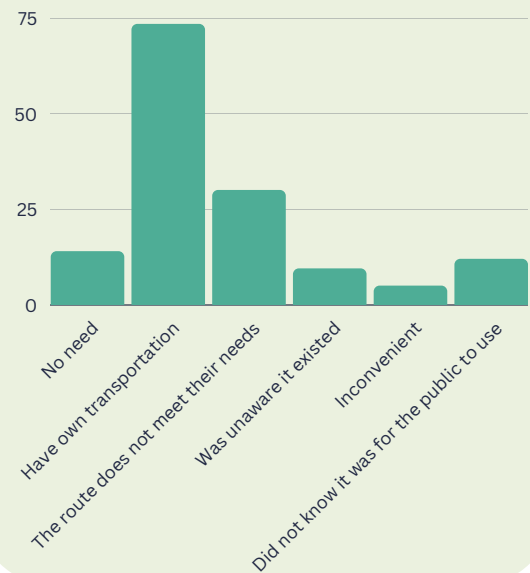


of people surveyed do not use the fixed bus route

If the hours were extended, would they be more likely to use?



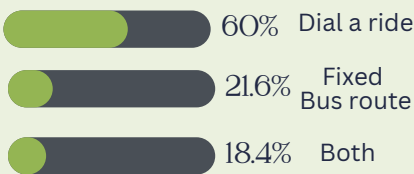
Why do you not use the fixed bus route? Respondents checked all that applied



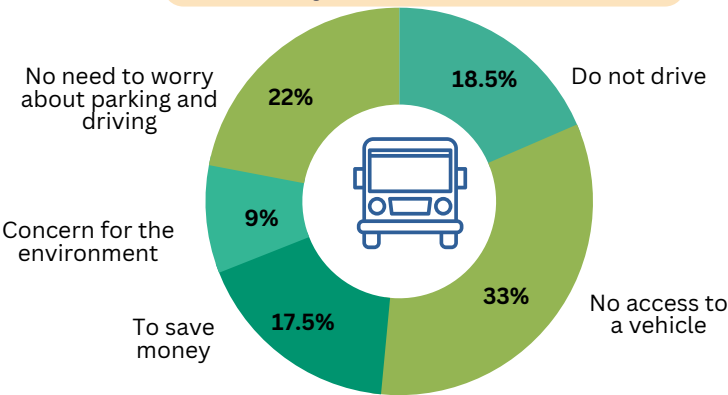
of survey respondents said they used Antigonish Community Transit; this is what they shared

"There is a need for better promotions, marketing and visible signage."

Services used

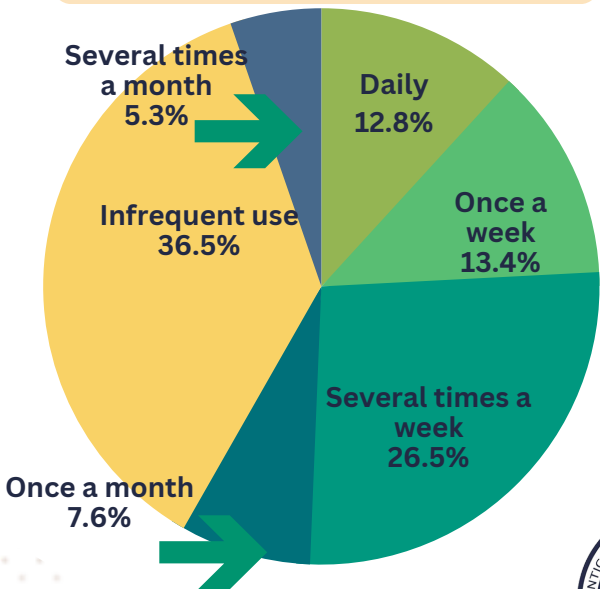


Primary reason to use bus service

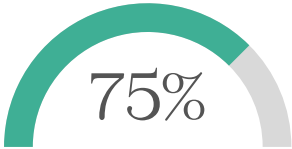
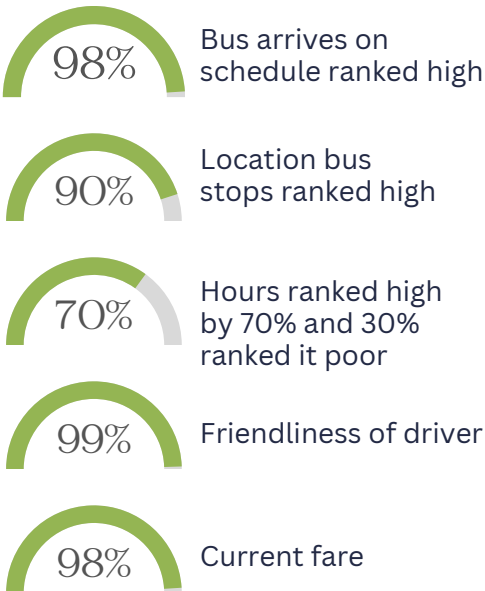


Respondents said a small fare increase would impact their using the bus

How often they used fixed bus route



Overall Satisfaction – 1 being poor, 5 being excellent









Are you aware the bus route has a flex option to flag down the bus on the route?

75% said Yes
25% said No



Antigonish Community Transit Fixed Bus Route Survey

What people use the bus for?

-  58.2% Errands/shopping
-  23.5% Access to food
-  22.4% Medical appointments
-  30.6% Work
-  15% Recreation/social activities
-  8.8% Education/training

Accessibility and mobility

- 40% of respondents communicated that accessible signage, seating, and path to access the bus was important to them.
- 45% of respondents expressed overall safety as important.
- 85% of respondents using a mobility device, agreed that the current stops safely accommodate their needs.

13.5%

of respondents did not know where the location of the closest bus stop was to their home.

"There is a need for more frequent bus service and extended operating hours, especially during the evening and early morning, to cater to healthcare workers and others."

How current users rated the 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. bus schedule



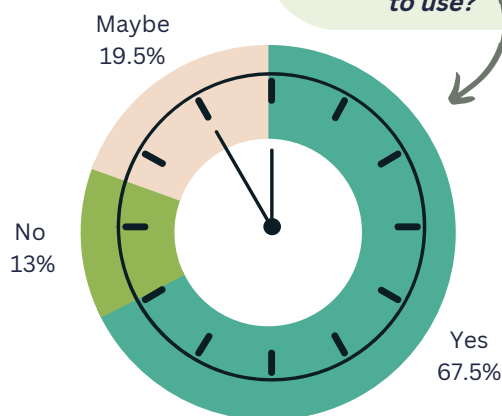
- 57.6% Extremely/Very Convenient
- 25.9% Somewhat Convenient
- 16.5% Not Convenient

If hours were extended in morning and run later, would you be more likely to use?

Current users' interest in Saturday service

Saturday

- 76.9% Yes
- 4.7% No
- 18.4% Not Sure



Antigonish Community Transit Town Bus Schedule - Monday to Friday								
Bus Stop	Timing is approximate and dependent on traffic							
Antigonish Mall	9:00	10:00	11:00	12:00	1:00	2:00	3:00	4:00
Highland Housing Co-op	9:03	10:03	11:03	12:03	1:03	2:03	3:03	4:03
Bloomfield Centre	9:05	10:05	11:05	12:05	1:05	2:05	3:05	4:05
Keating Centre	9:08	10:08	11:08	12:08	1:08	2:08	3:08	4:08
Atlantic Superstore	9:13	10:13	11:13	12:13	1:13	2:13	3:13	4:13
Walmart	9:14	10:14	11:14	12:14	1:14	2:14	3:14	4:14
Whiddens Trailer Park	9:20	10:20	11:20	12:20	1:20	2:20	3:20	4:20
Shamrock Acres	9:23	10:23	11:23	12:23	1:23	2:23	3:23	4:23
Sylvan Valley Apartments	9:25	10:25	11:25	12:25	1:25	2:25	3:25	4:25
Hawthorne Variety	9:27	10:27	11:27	12:27	1:27	2:27	3:27	4:27
JJ Carroll House	9:30	10:30	11:30	12:30	1:30	2:30	3:30	4:30
Antigonish Manor	9:32	10:32	11:32	12:32	1:32	2:32	3:32	4:32
People's Place Library	9:34	10:34	11:34	12:34	1:34	2:34	3:34	4:34
Canadian Tire Gas Bar	9:36	10:36	11:36	12:36	1:36	2:36	3:36	4:36
The Maples	9:43	10:43	11:43	12:43	1:43	2:43	3:43	4:43
Parkland (Shannex)	9:46	10:46	11:46	12:46	1:46	2:46	3:46	4:46
St. Martha's Hospital	9:50	10:50	11:50	12:50	1:50	2:50	3:50	4:50
The Sunflower	9:53	10:53	11:53	12:53	1:53	2:53	3:53	4:53
Sobeys	9:57	10:57	11:57	12:57	1:57	2:57	3:57	4:57

RATES	One Way Fare		Unlimited Day Pass		ACTS 20	
	Town Route		Same Day Only		20 Unlimited Day Passes	
	\$2.00		\$5.00		\$55.00	

Book-A-Ride services also available for areas beyond the town route.
Call 902 867 0411 for more information.

Current users would like to see these changes



Bus stop closer to home

24.7%



Bus service during special events

28.8%



Possibility of a different route

36.5%



Weekend service

41%



Extended hours in morning and evening

33%



February 2023 Survey Results

COMMON
GOOD
SOLUTIONS

Themes from Survey Comments

Driver and Service Satisfaction:

Several respondents praised the drivers for their excellent service and friendly attitude. There were also comments on the importance of transit services for seniors and the need for bus shelters or waiting areas..

“The transit service is wonderful. The drivers are so friendly and helpful and go out of their way to help individual people. I am very impressed with their kindness and skill. If you mention you have a need they treat people with dignity. “

- Anonymous survey respondent



“The transit service is needed especially by seniors.”

- Anonymous survey respondent



Route and Stop Improvements: Some respondents suggested the creation of new stops in areas where there are currently none, such as James Street, Appleseed Drive, Keating Court, Mount Cameron, old South River Road, and Greenwold Manor. Others recommended the addition of two shorter routes, splitting up the existing long route, and providing transfer options. There were also comments about the needs for more visible signage at stops and schedules posted at each stop to make it easier for riders to know where to catch the bus, as well the addition of bus shelters. Bus stops that require the bus to leave the main road for pick up result in lower visibility. More visibility would lead to more impromptu bus rides.

Special Services and Events:

Respondents suggested that transit should work with the town and county to provide services to special community events, such as the Highland Games, and provide access to the beaches during the summer months.

Frequency and Schedule:

Many respondents mentioned the need for more frequent bus service and extended operating hours, especially during the evening and early morning, to cater to healthcare workers and other commuters. There were also comments about the need for better adherence to schedules and reducing wait times.

Communication and Promotion:

Some respondents mentioned the need for better communication and promotion of transit services, including information on routes, fares, and communicating the value of using the bus as a cheaper option than cars and taxis.

Highlight of Community Conversations

Considerable efforts were made to promote the community conversation sessions, including providing survey respondents with the opportunity to indicate their interest in attending a conversation session when completing the survey. Over 70 people responded that they were interested in attending the session; however, when contacted later for confirmation via email or telephone, it resulted in very few people attending. Promotional ads were developed for all general sessions, and targeted ads were explicitly generated for students.

These were circulated on social media, shared with key community stakeholders, including the Town and County municipal staff and sent to various email list serves to share. Student Services at STFX sent two separate emails to all students, one to have them participate in the survey and one to promote the sessions. Student sessions were held at STFX, and the other sessions were held in the Antigonish Community Library. The local radio station 98.9 XFM also promoted the survey and the sessions on air.

Five in-person community conversations were held on the following dates:

- March 6th for STFX Students
- March 7th, two General Public Sessions
- March 9th for STFX Students
- March 10th for Seniors (55 and over)
- An additional general session planned for the evening of March 14th was cancelled due to weather conditions.



PARTICIPATE IN THE FIXED BUS ROUTE REVIEW

Are you a resident of the Town of Antigonish or Antigonish County? We invite you to attend one of our upcoming community conversations to provide input to help shape the future of the fixed bus route.

SESSION DATES	
Antigonish Library	STFX University
March 7th 11-12:30pm for General Public	March 6th 3:30 -5:00pm for STFX Students
March 7th 4 -5:30pm for General public	March 9th 6:30-8:00pm for STFX Students
March 14th 6:30 to 8pm for General Public	
March 10th 1:30 - 3:00pm for Seniors 55 years and older	

RSVP by Feb 28, 2023 to antigonishcommunitytransit@gmail.com

Attend a session and enter your name to win a \$50.00 gift card.



While the number of participants was considerably lower than anticipated and hoped for, the 28 attendees provided excellent input and feedback. The ACTS Executive Director attended all four sessions, and three board members attended three of the sessions. The attendees and their residence locations are summarized below:

- A total of six students participated (all residing in Town)
- 13 community members (Seven residing in Town and six in the County)
- Three Town Councillors and One County Councillor attended the general sessions
- Nine seniors attended the community sessions (Six residing in the Town and three in the County).

It is important to note that during the community conversations, at times, some people confused the Book-A-Ride service offered with the Fixed Bus Route, and while we did remind them the review was of the fixed bus route, we also captured some of the Book-A-Ride feedback as well.

Highlight of Community Conversations

“Access to transportation, like housing it should be considered a basic human right.”

- Participant quote



Students at STFX University weigh into the discussion about the Fixed Bus Route for Antigonish.

Signage of Bus Stops and Posted Schedules

Many responded that the signage for the bus stops and schedules was either non-existent or insufficient to draw attention to the bus route in Antigonish. In the few locations where signage exists, the comments were that it is not highly visible.

Bus Leaving the Main Road for the Stops

Several people commented that the bus leaving the main road reduced its visibility and also meant it was not viewed as an essential service operated for the Town. This is especially true along the main street, where there is the added impression that the stops were only designed for certain groups, such as seniors. Finally, it was noted that when the bus leaves the main road, it also takes more time along the route.

Hours of Fixed Bus Route Operations - Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm

The current hours for the fixed bus route are 9 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday, and these hours are only attractive to people who find it convenient during these specific periods. It does not encourage those who start work before 9 am or finish after 5 pm to use the system. Both the feedback provided during the in-person consultations and as confirmed through the survey from both users of the services and non-users all confirm that the current times do not contribute to people taking the bus.

Limited Monday to Friday service and no weekend hours means that people working during the week that would consider using the bus for errands during the weekend have no access at present.

In addition, the one-hour loop is a long time to be on a bus to get from point A to B in town.

Highlight of Community Conversations

General Awareness and Resident Knowledge of Transit

Overall, there is a general lack of awareness that a Fixed Bus Route is available in Antigonish. Even though this has operated for approximately ten years, many do not know the service exists unless they are bus users. This may be a result of many factors, and some that were highlighted during the community conversations include:

- They do not need to take the bus, so it is not on their radar
- They do not recognize that the smaller passenger bus has an actual bus route
- The route's location may not be visible enough to draw enough attention to the bus
- Even though it is promoted on 98.9XFM or Facebook, they do not listen to that radio station or do not use Facebook.

Ideas for promotion

Many ideas were put forth to help promote the bus. These ideas included:

- Targeted marketing messages for different demographics
- Promotion during STFX Orientation week
- Parking the bus in locations throughout the region could help to promote the fixed bus route service, not just at the mall with low exposure to other areas
- Park the buses at locations over Town to increase attention
- Put signage on the bus that is creative and tells a story
- Target marketing that would appeal to students, students tend to use Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp
- Large map and schedule on the buildings where there is a bus stop and also include in residences
- While ACTS has a Facebook page and website, unless you follow the FB page, you would not be likely to hear about it or the website
- Google Maps app for the route would provide easy access to information
- Physical bus shelters located in key traffic areas that are visible would be beneficial, especially if they were also used to promote events happening in the community.

Location of Bus Stops

Many people in both the in-person consultations and the survey confirmed that some of the existing locations for the fixed bus stops could be better located. Several locations are not visible, others are off the actual road and need protection in poor weather conditions. Others commented that with the Flag Down Option available, some less busy bus stops could be replaced with stops that are more likely to be used more frequently.

Several possible locations for stops identified include areas where there is a higher population of potential users, such as:

- Appleseed Drive, Antigonish Affordable Housing Development location, student housing, and the schools
- St Andrews's Street near the housing units
- South Side Harbour
- Greenwold Manor
- Keating Court area and Ponderosa Drive Area
- Greenhill Drive, near the trailer park
- Lower South River trailer parks

It was also suggested that if there were a couple of key locations, such as the mall and Walmart, where people could park and ride to take the bus to work or school, that would be ideal, especially given the parking situation at St. Martha's Regional Hospital and StFX University.

Highlight of Community Conversations

In addition, targeted consultations were held with the Antigonish Coalition to End Poverty members on March 13th, the Antigonish Community Health Board members on March 22nd, and staff with the Antigonish Women’s Centre on April 4th. Through these sessions, we met with 21 additional volunteers and staff involved in providing direct client support and brought forward a broad perspective on community transportation needs. Much of the feedback gathered in these sessions was consistent with what we heard via the survey and the general sessions.

Access to transportation is an important social determinant of health that improves the quality of life. It is very costly to own a vehicle, and a more robust transit system will help to reduce barriers for many members of the population. The overall signage and general awareness are problematic, and people are not always aware that there is a bus route. Locations of the bus stops need to be closer to where more people would be likely to use the bus; for example, the two trailer parks in town, near public housing and affordable housing locations. The hours of operation also present challenges for many since it is only available 9 am - 5 pm, and this is not convenient for people using the bus to get to and from work.



Antigonish Town and County Community Health Board Members provide feedback on the Fixed Bus Route

A potential opportunity is to increase ridership by school-aged children of families that do not have a vehicle and could help with travel to extracurricular activities. Bus shelters would also be helpful and are needed in key locations to protect users from inclement weather. Saturday bus service is also required for people who work during the week and would like to use public transit for errands on the weekend.

Additionally, more STFX students could benefit from using the bus if they saw it as a viable option.

It would be great if there could be extended service to a couple of communities, such as the trailer parks in Lower South River, North Grant and on the #7, where many people would likely use the bus.

“For many newcomers, this is the only way they have to get to and from English classes at the library and to work.”

-Participant Quote

Cost Analysis Financial Assessment of Potential Changes to Hours and Wages

To attract and retain bus drivers, ACTS would like to be in the position to offer a competitive wage to all its' employees. At present, the ACTS hourly rate for bus drivers is \$16.00. Please see examples below of other wages.

Strait Regional Centre for Education
Hourly Average Bus Driver Wage
\$25.00 with full benefits

Northern Nova Scotia Living
Wage Canadian Centre for Policy
Alternatives
2022 REPORT
Hourly Living Wage - \$20.40



Pictou County Transit Corporation
Municipally Owned and Operated
Annual Budget - 2023-24 is \$213,800, \$105,000 for wages, and CHAD is paid a \$20,000 management fee. Hourly Rate for Bus Drivers – The wage rate in 2022 was \$17.75 per hour and was expected to increase to \$20.00 for full-time employees in April 2023.

Yarmouth Transit - Municipally Owned and Operated
Annual Budget - 2023-24 budget projects annual operating costs to be \$206,000, with \$125,000 for wages and benefits.
Hourly Rate for Bus Drivers- \$20.00

Living Wages in
Nova Scotia 2022
Working for a Living, Not Living to Work
Christine Saulnier

Town of Bridgewater - Municipally
Owned and Operated
Annual Budget - 2023-23 budget
was \$245,493, with \$73,428 for
operating costs and \$172,065 for
salary costs.
Hourly Rate for Bus Drivers - \$19.89



Cost Analysis Financial Assessment of Potential Changes to Hours and Wages

	Total Annual Operating Budget	Admin Costs	Hourly Wage	Total Annual Salary Costs With MERC Monday to Friday 9-5pm Service	Total Operating costs for current service Based on Hours of service	Projected Salary Costs with Increase in hours to 7 am to 7pm Monday to Friday service	Increased Hours Operating Costs based on hours of service	Saturday Service Wages for 8am to 2pm service	Saturday service Operating Costs based on hours of service
ANTIGONISH COMMUNITY TRANSIT COSTS BASED ON \$16.00 AN HOUR WAGE	\$85,000	\$25,000	\$16.00 Current	9 hours@ 230 days 2,070 hours \$33,120 \$3,312 MERC Total is \$36,500	\$27,450 Works out to \$13.26 an hour	13 hours \$ 16.00 230 days 2,990 Hours \$47,840 \$4,784 MERC Total is \$52,624 For an additional 920 hours of service	Projected operating increase for extended service based on an additional 920 hours \$13.26 an hour \$12,200	7 hours@ \$16.00 52 days 364 Hours \$5,824.00	Projected operating increase for Saturday service based on 364 hours @ \$13.26 an hour \$4,827.00
ANTIGONISH COMMUNITY TRANSIT SCENARIO BASED ON \$20.00 WAGE		\$25,000	\$20.00 Proposed is more inline with a Living wage for this area	\$45,540 MERC included	May change in future based on higher costs	\$65,780 MERC Included	May change in future based on higher costs	\$8,008 MERC Included	May change in future based on higher costs

Note - The total annual operating costs at 85K is lower than when totalling the projected salary costs in the table, the projections included costs for 230 days and the actual n change based on number days that the bus runs. Both the actual salaries and fluctuation of actual costs for bus repairs, gas may vary.



Final Observations and Recommendations for the Future

Any changes to the Fixed Bus Route will have significant financial and operational considerations that will need to be carefully weighed to minimize hardship to riders, address community needs that have been identified and minimize potential risk for the organization.

There are three scenarios that can be considered by the Board of Directors for the future of the Fixed Bus Route.

Status Quo

The Fixed Bus Route remain the same, with a couple of minor changes to bus locations, the addition of the two bus shelters and the opportunity for growth with more visibility and marketing to increase ridership.

However, current ridership only represents approximately 10% of the overall revenue, which does not make the service feasible without substantial grant contributions from both municipal units. At present, the Province does not cover operating costs to support a fixed bus route operation. The current annual operating budget (without an increase in municipal grant contributions) does not have sufficient revenue to account for recent increase in expenditures because of higher gas process and the overall rate of inflation.

Other communities offering a similar service in Nova Scotia have operating budgets considerably higher than ACTS and the service is a line item in municipal budgets.

Unless there is a substantial increase to the funding provided by both municipalities, any identified changes in the hours are not possible and the long term future for a Fixed Bus Route offered by ACTS is at risk.

Final Observations and Recommendations for the Future

Fixed Bus Route Operate as a Municipally Run Service

While the research undertaken about the importance of transit and the input provided by the community clearly support the need for expansion and improvements to the route, there are significant economic risks for a non-profit organization like ACTS being the provider of a Fixed Bus Route.

For this reason, it is recommended that the Board of Directors begin discussions immediately with both Municipalities about the possibility of the Fixed Bus Route being operated as a municipal service. Given that ACTS is the only fixed bus route of its kind in Nova Scotia that is operated by a non-profit organization, this seems to make the most sense to ensure long term sustainability and growth of community transit in the Antigonish Region.

It should be noted that the unresolved consolidation between the Municipality of the County of Antigonish and the Town of Antigonish might have potential positive or negative implications for any immediate changes to the Fixed Bus Route and this could either delay or expedite the discussion.

For this reason, it is recommended that this proposal occur over a two to three-year period, which also allows for time to consider the introduction of the new electric bus to the fleet. If ACTS and the Municipalities can come to an agreement, it is recommended that that they work together to come up with a three-year transition plan before all is completed, potentially beginning with an arrangement similar between the Pictou County Transit Corporation and CHAD Transit providing the management oversight for the first year with the view of the Municipality eventually assume operations. In the case of the CHAD business relationship this allows for the Pictou County Transit to also access one of CHADs vehicles as required.

Final Observations and Recommendations for the Future

Specialized Services Offered by ACTS

The third scenario includes the Municipalities taking on the responsibility to operate the Fixed Bus Route and ACTS continue to be the provider of the Book-A-Ride and offer specialized services, which is a bus service with specific target populations and communities. This would mean outreach could be provided to County locations on a weekly basis, such as St. Andrew's and Paqtnkek First Nation.

This could also include a park and ride program offered during peak work hours between 6:30 to 8:30am and 4:30 to 7pm route to offer the opportunity for STFX University and St Martha's Regional Hospital employees to use bus to assist with the parking situation. This could also include a route down main street to accommodate people who work in areas in the downtown core. Parking locations might include the Antigonish Mall and the Walmart.

It is recommended that ACTS approach Nova Scotia Health and STFX University to discuss a partnership in this service. A first step may be for both organizations to survey their existing staff to determine level of interest and then offer the service as a one-or-two month pilot and offer people an opportunity to see if this meets their needs. Future considerations might include the option to purchase a bus pass in the same way that can purchase parking monthly passes.

ACTS can also approach the Paqtnkek First Nation and the St Andrew's seniors housing to request they survey their residents to identify interest.

Final Observations and Recommendations for the Future

Key Considerations

In the interim while these discussions get underway, there are some incremental steps that can be taken by ACTS to improve the Fixed Bus Route for residents in the Antigonish region.

The planned up-coming retirement of the Executive Director for March 2024 will need to be taken into consideration when making any changes to the services provided by ACTS. With the Board of Directors not meeting during the summer months, it will be September before this report can be carefully reviewed and actions planned accordingly over a period.

Related to an expanded Fixed Bus Route is the recent announcement of the funding for ACTS to purchase of a new electric bus. Research will need to complete undertaken to purchase of the bus, including where to place a charging station. The research must be completed by June of 2025. This is an excellent opportunity to collaborate closely with municipal partners to move forward with this project.

Recommendations

That the Board of Directors request a meeting with both Councils to present the findings of the review at the earliest opportunity available in the Fall.

That the Board of Directors come up with a plan to release the findings of the review to the community through local media, social media and also share the report with key stakeholders.

As recommended in the 2020 business plan, ACTS proceed with the development of a communication and marketing strategy to increase general awareness and knowledge of the fixed bus route. This will ensure all residents are aware of the availability of the Fixed bus Route and will help to increase ridership and fare revenue.

- Targeted key messages and actions are required to meet the needs of the different population demographics.
- A marketing campaign to all riders to promote the Flag Down option that is available may help to mitigate any changes on the regular route in locations where it is deemed more likely to be safe to do so.

Final Observations and Recommendations for the Future

- Consider a promotional blitz this up-coming fall for STFX students during orientation week by offering free bus service to that week to increase ridership. Ensure that the one of the buses is visible throughout the week, parking it at various locations throughout the campus throughout the week and driving the bus throughout the campus. This will require coordination with the University to seek permission and exemption from parking the bus in key agreed on locations. If funds are available consider hiring someone to assist with this campaign.
- That discussions begin with STFX University officials about the possibility of introducing an annual student fee being charged to on an annual basis that provides students with free access to the fixed bus route. This would help with the parking station by encouraging students to use transit instead. It could also potentially include adding on a couple of additional specialized services such a once-a-week grocery run.
- Proceed with the placement of bus shelters.
Funding is available for five in total, this includes two approved approved through the 2025 Government of Canada's Rural Transit Fund. ACTS will need to work with Public Works with the Town of Antigonish to finalize locations and assist with this process to ensure the structures meet all requirements and plans are in place for on-going maintenance. Possible locations might include one on St. Ninian's Street, for a possible move of the stop behind Highland Housing Co-op, Bloomfield Centre at STFX and a proposed new bus location to replace Whidden's Trailer Park on Hawthorne Street and Pleasant Street.
- Meet with municipal staff in public works to discuss signage and timetables to be permanently affixed to all stops in locations where it is possible to do so. Also, discussions are required about the possibility of existing stops that currently require the bus to leave the road be looked at to determine the feasibility of this stop remaining on the road to both save time and increase visibility. This will mean that portion of the street will need to be blocked for bus traffic only and parking meters removed. There are locations where that is not possible such as Superstore, Walmart St Martha's Regional Hospital, Parkland, The Maples where it is necessary to leave the road for the bus stop.



Final Observations and Recommendations for the Future

- Make minor adjustments to the current route to allow for changes in locations can be done without a communication strategy being completed and approval by the Town and notification to the URAB.
- A proposed change to relocate the stop inside Whidden's Trailer Park to a stop closer to the intersection of Hawthorne Street and Pleasant. Relocate the Highland Housing Co-op to St Ninian's Street. Both these changes will reduce time and may allow for possible additional stops.
- Other changes to the two locations on STFX campus to include moving the current bus stop from the lower parking lot at Bloomfield Centre to the main road, Notre Dame Avenue and the route located at Keating Centre be adjusted to loop around West Street.



If additional funding can be secured, that ACTS consider offering extended hours and a Saturday service as a pilot project for a six-month period following a marketing campaign in advance. It is impossible to measure the uptake of the service if people do not know about it.

It is important to note that adding new additional stops that were identified during the consultation phase may result in other stops being discontinued. Minor changes to relocation of other stops might reduce time and allow for additions.

Possible new stops might include: Greenwold Manor, Appleseed Drive, Antigonish Landing (Tony's Meat area) and a location in the Keating Court/Ponderosa Drive area.

References

1. How Does Transportation Impact Health Research Oct-25-2012
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
2. Social Determinants of Health: The Canadian Facts (2nd edition, 2020)
by Dennis Raphael, Toba Bryant, Juha Mikkonen and Alexander Raphael.
3. Statistics Canada's Census Profile presents information from the 2021 Census of
Population - Antigonish, County (CTY) [Census division], Nova Scotia.
4. Antigonish Accessibility Plan Engagement Summary -UPLAND Planning + Design and
RHAD Architects
5. Town of Antigonish Accessibility Plan Draft, Summer 2022 - UPLAND Planning + Design
and RHAD Architects
6. Municipality County Antigonish Accessibility Plan March 2022



Antigonish Community Transit Fixed Bus Route 2023

COMMON
GOOD
SOLUTIONS

Antigonish Community Transit (ACT) is working with Common Good Solutions to review our Fixed Bus Route. We are interested in hearing your thoughts and ideas on the Fixed Bus Route offered in Antigonish to ensure our service is meeting the needs of our residents. Your opinions are important and all responses will only be reviewed by Common Good Solutions and will be kept confidential. The information gathered will be used to inform any changes we make to the fixed bus route, but will also provide us with important information on who takes the bus and who doesn't, which will help with any community outreach plans.

Please do not fill out this survey more than once. This survey is available online at or by scanning the QR code. Hard copies will be available on the ACT bus or any Book-A-Ride driver, and can be picked up and dropped off at the following locations: The ACT office at Market Square between 9:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m., Monday to Friday, Antigonish Library, Antigonish Women Resource Centre and both the Town of Antigonish and County municipal offices.

Thank you for your feedback. **Survey closes February 28, 2023.**

All surveys will be entered into a draw for a \$50.00 grocery card each week during the month of February. If you wish to have your name entered, please ensure you complete the bottom section.

Part A

1. Do you believe that community transit plays an important role in your community's quality of life?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

2. Which age group best describes you?

☐ 18 and under ☐ 19-24 ☐ 25-34 ☐ 35-44 ☐ 45-54 ☐ 55-64 ☐ 65-74 ☐ 75+

3. Where do you live?

☐ Town of Antigonish ☐ Municipality of the County of Antigonish

4. What best describes your gender?

☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Non-Binary ☐ Two-Spirited ☐ Prefer not to say

☐ Prefer to self-describe as: _____

5. What is your highest level of education?

☐ No formal schooling ☐ Elementary ☐ High School ☐ College e. Undergraduate ((University)

☐ Post-graduate (University)

6. Which of the following best describes you?

- ☐ Full-time employed ☐ Part-time employed ☐ Not employed for pay (volunteer)
- ☐ Caregiver (e.g. for children, grandchildren, or parents) ☐ Self-employed ☐ Student ☐ Retired
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

7. Which of the following best describes your household income last year?

- ☐ \$0 ☐ \$1 to \$9,999 ☐ \$10,000 to \$24,999 ☐ \$25,000 to \$49,999 ☐ \$50,000 to 74,999
- ☐ \$75,000 to \$99,999 ☐ \$100,000 or greater ☐ Prefer not to say

8. How do you describe yourself? You can choose more than one answer.

- ☐ European descent ☐ Acadian/Francophone ☐ African descent ☐ First Nation, Métis, or Inuit
- ☐ 2SLGBTQIA+ ☐ Newcomer (Immigrant/Refugee) ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

9. Is English your first language?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ If no, what is your first language? _____

10. Have you used Antigonish Community Transit?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

11. If yes, what services have you used?

- ☐ Dial a ride ☐ Town Fixed Bus Route ☐ Both ☐ N/A

Part B

If you answered "Yes" to **question 10**, and picked either **option B** or **C** in **question 11**, please complete this page. If you **did not** pick either of these options please **skip to Part C** and **do not complete** questions 12-26.

12. How often do you use the fixed bus route?

- ☐ Daily ☐ Once a week ☐ Several times a week ☐ Once a month
- ☐ Several times a month ☐ Only used it a couple of times, infrequent use

13. The Fixed Bus Route operates Monday to Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. How would you rate this schedule?

- ☐ Extremely convenient ☐ Very convenient ☐ Somewhat convenient ☐ Not convenient

14. If the hours for Monday to Friday were extended beyond 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., i.e. start earlier in the morning and run later, would you be more likely to use the Fixed Bus?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe




15. Would you be interested in services offered on Saturday?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

16. The following is the price for bus fare. While Antigonish Community Transit is committed to keep its fare low, would a small increase impact you using the bus?

☐ Yes, one-way fare, \$2.00 increased to \$2.25 ☐ Yes, unlimited day pass, \$5.00 increased to \$5.50
☐ Yes, 20 unlimited day passes, \$55.00 increased to \$60.00 ☐ Yes to all of the above

17. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent, how would you rate your overall satisfaction with the following?

					
Bus arrives on schedule	1	2	3	4	5
Location of bus stops	1	2	3	4	5
Hours for the bus route	1	2	3	4	5
Friendliness of driver	1	2	3	4	5
Current fare	1	2	3	4	5

18. What is the primary reason you use the bus service?

☐ Do not drive ☐ I do not have access to a vehicle ☐ Save money
☐ I am concerned about the environment ☐ No need to worry about parking and driving

19. What do you use the bus service mostly for?

☐ Errands/shopping ☐ Access to food ☐ Medical Appointments ☐ Work
☐ Recreation/Social activities ☐ Other (please specify): _____

20. What change if any, would you like to see to the fixed bus route? Check all that apply.

☐ A bus stop that is closer to my home ☐ Morning hours ☐ Weekend service ☐ Evening hours
☐ Bus service offered during special events, i.e. Highland Games, concerts, Canada Day, etc.
☐ Possibility of a different route, with other bus stops at certain times during the day
☐ Longer hours, currently operates on weekdays, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Please indicate suggested hours:

21. Do you know the bus stop that is closest to your home?

- ☐ I don't know the bus stop closest to my home ☐ Antigonish Mall ☐ Highland Housing Coop
☐ Bloomfield Centre ☐ Keating Centre ☐ Atlantic SuperStore ☐ Walmart ☐ Whiddens Trailer Park
☐ Shamrock Acres ☐ Sylvan Valley Apartments ☐ Hawthorne Variety ☐ J.J. Carrol House
☐ Antigonish Manor ☐ People's Place Library ☐ Canadian Tire Gas Bar ☐ The Maples
☐ Parkland (Shannex) ☐ St. Martha's Hospital ☐ The Sunflower ☐ Sobeys
☐ Other (please specify): _____

22. The following question will provide us with the important information related to accessing the fixed bus link when a person has an accessibility concern. We have a broad definition which includes all abilities such as physical, visual, hearing, mental health, intellectual, and learning.

To use the fixed bus route, what is important to you? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Accessible signage at bus stops ☐ Accessible path of travel to the bus stop ☐ Adequate lighting
☐ Seating ☐ Space to accommodate mobility devices ☐ Made to feel welcome
☐ Landscape that maintains visibility to and from the bus stop and it's signage ☐ Overall safety
☐ Adequate stop amenities, including connection information
☐ Other (please specify): _____

23. Are you aware there is a Fixed-Flex Route Option? (Riders can request to be let off or can flag the bus down anywhere on the route. The driver will pull over only if it is safe to do so and traffic is not impeded.)

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

24. If you use a mobility device, do the bus stops you use typically provide enough space and even ground to safely accomodate your mobility device while waiting for and loading onto the bus?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

25. I agree to have my name in for the draw for a \$50.00 gift card.

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

26. Are you interested in and willing to participate in a community conversation? In addition to the weekly draw, a \$50.00 grocery gift card will be drawn at each session.

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

Part C

If you answered "No" to **question 10**, and picked either **option A or D** for **question 11**, please complete this section.

27. Why do you not use the Fixed Bus Route?

- ☐ I have no need ☐ I have my own transportation ☐ The Route does not meet my needs
☐ Bus service is inconvenient ☐ Was unaware of the service ☐ Did not know it was for anyone to access

28. If there were new bus stops added to the existing route, would you be more likely to take the bus?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

29. If the hours for Monday to Friday were extended, i.e. start earlier in the morning and run later, would you be more likely to use the Fixed Bus?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure ☐ Depends on the hours

30. I agree to have my name in for the draw for a \$50.00 gift card.

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

31. Are you interested in and willing to participate in a community conversation? In addition to the weekly draw, a \$50.00 grocery gift card will be drawn at each session.

- ☐ Yes ☐ No



Antigonish Community Transit Fixed Bus Route 2023

COMMON
GOOD
SOLUTIONS

Personal Information

PLEASE READ:

If you answered "yes" to attending a Community Conversation, please remove this last page from the survey, then **place the completed survey in the envelope labeled "Survey"**.

Then you may add your contact information on the additional page that has been torn away. When completed, **place this page in the envelope labeled "contact information"**.

Please make sure that you detach the completed survey from your contact information, so that we may maintain your anonymity.

NAME: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

Please indicate which session you would like to attend:

- ☐ Tuesday, March 7, 2023 at 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. for General Public at the Antigonish Library
- ☐ Tuesday, March 7, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. for General Public at the Antigonish Library
- ☐ Monday, March 6, 2023 at 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. for St. F.X. Students at the Council Chambers, 4th floor, Bloomfield Centre
- ☐ Thursday, March 9, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. for St. F.X. Students at the Council Chambers, 4th floor, Bloomfield Centre
- ☐ Friday, March 10, 2023 at 1:30 p.m. for Seniors (55+) at the Antigonish Library

MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF
ANTIGONISH
STAFF REPORT

TO: MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
FROM: BETH SCHUMACHER, DEPUTY CLERK
SUBJECT: PROPOSAL TO RENAME A SECTION OF MILL ROAD
DATE: 26/09/2023

SUMMARY

With the twinning of Highway 104 between Addington Forks and James River severing Mill Road into two sections, Department of Public Works (Highways) staff requested that the Municipality look to rename the northern section of the roadway between Trunk 4 and Highway 104. After consultation with residents on this section of the roadway, staff is proposing that the Committee consider renaming the northern section of Mill Road to “**Old Mill Road**”.

DISCUSSION

Prior to the twinning of Highway 104, those travelling along Mill Road were able to cross the highway. With the twinning of the highway, the section between the Addington Forks and James River became controlled access and this intersection was closed. A concern was raised that, in the event of an emergency, responding vehicles may travel to the wrong section of the roadway and not be able to easily cross Highway 104, causing delay. The suggested solution to this concern was to look at renaming one or the other side of Mill Road.

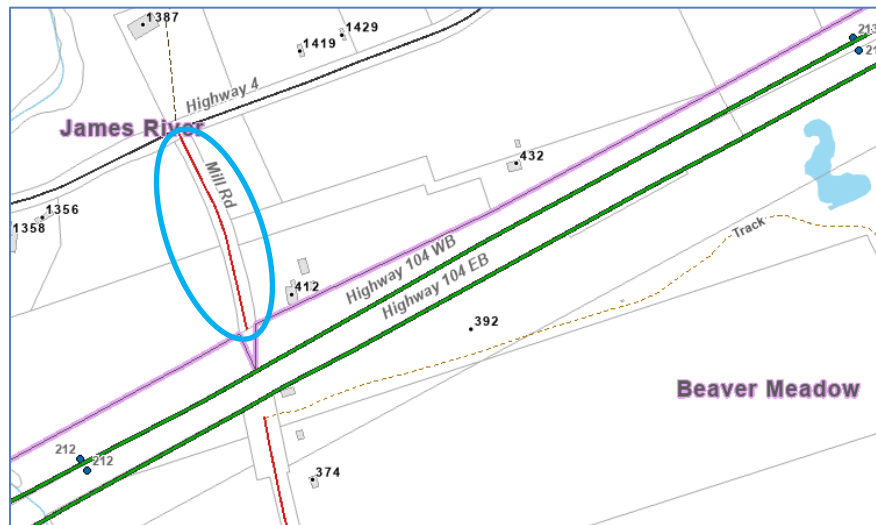


Figure 1: Section of Mill Road proposed to be renamed "Old Mill Road" (blue circle)

Where only two civic addresses were on the section of roadway between Highway 104 and Trunk 4, this section was selected for renaming. Deputy Warden Stewart spoke to the residents on this stretch of roadway and facilitated the selection of the proposed road name of “Old Mill Road”. The Municipality’s Civic Addressing Coordinator has confirmed that “Old Mill Road” meets the road naming criteria under this policy.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff is recommending that the Committee consider the following motion:

The Committee recommends that Municipal Council renames the section of Mill Road between Highway 104 and Trunk 4 to “Old Mill Road”.



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Enhanced GST Rental Rebate to build more apartments for renters

From: [Department of Finance Canada](#)

Background

On September 14, 2023, the Prime Minister announced that the government will introduce legislation to enhance the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Rental Rebate on new purpose-built rental housing, to incentivize construction of much-needed rental homes for Canadians.

To build more rental housing, the removal of GST will apply to new purpose-built rental housing, such as apartment buildings, student housing, and senior residences built specifically for long-term rental accommodation.

This enhancement increases the GST Rental Rebate from 36 per cent to 100 per cent and removes the existing GST Rental Rebate phase-out thresholds for purpose-built rental housing projects. The enhanced GST Rental Rebate will apply to projects that begin construction on or after September 14, 2023, and on or before December 31, 2030, and complete construction by December 31, 2035.

For a two-bedroom rental unit valued at \$500,000, the enhanced GST Rental Rebate would deliver \$25,000 in tax relief.

Qualifying new residential units would be those that qualify for the existing GST Rental Rebate and are in buildings with at least:

1. Four private apartment units (i.e., a unit with a private kitchen, bathroom, and living areas), or at least 10 private rooms or suites (e.g., a 10-unit residence for students, seniors, or people with disabilities); and,
2. Ninety per cent of residential units designated for long-term rental.

Projects that convert existing non-residential real estate, such as an office building, into a residential complex would be eligible for the enhanced GST Rental Rebate if all other above conditions are met. Public service bodies would also be eligible to access the enhanced GST Rental Rebate.

The enhanced GST Rental Rebate will not apply to individually-owned condominium units, single-unit housing, duplexes, triplexes, housing co-ops, and owned houses situated on leased land and sites in residential trailer parks, but this housing would continue to qualify for the existing GST Rental Rebate where the conditions for the existing rebate are met.

To protect Canadian renters from renovictions, the enhanced GST Rental Rebate will not apply to substantial renovations of existing residential complexes. This is intended to stimulate new supply, not take supply off the market.

The enhanced GST Rental Rebate for purpose-built rental housing will be effective as of today, subject to the passage of implementing legislation.

Search for related information by keyword: [EC Economics and Industry](#) | [Department of Finance Canada](#) | [Canada](#) | [Money and finances](#) | [general public](#) | [backgrounders](#)

Date modified:

2023-09-14

Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia to remove provincial portion of HST from new apartment building construction projects

Premier Tim Houston says his government will reassess the measure after 2 years

[Michael Gorman](#) · CBC News · Posted: Sep 21, 2023 4:35 PM ADT | Last Updated: September 21



Premier Tim Houston says the removal of the provincial portion of HST from new apartment building construction projects will cost between \$80 million and \$100 million a year. (CBC)

[comments](#) 

The Nova Scotia government will match steps announced by Ottawa last week and remove the provincial portion of the HST from new multi-unit apartment building construction projects.

"I would say that Nova Scotians can expect that this is a first step on a journey to solve [the housing crisis]," Premier Tim Houston told reporters following a cabinet meeting in Halifax on Thursday.

"It's an idea and we're in the business of trying ideas to solve problems, so we're trying this one."

[Ottawa made the announcement last week](#) in the face of a growing housing crisis across the country caused at least in part by housing construction lagging behind

population growth. It's a move the federal Liberals first announced in 2015, but did not act upon.

- [Housing developers say they can't keep up with population growth in N.S. without big changes](#)

Nova Scotia's portion of the HST is 10 per cent. Houston estimated the change would cost between \$80 million and \$100 million a year.

"In many ways, I hope the cost goes up because that means there's more housing starts and more construction happening," said Houston.

His government will reassess the situation after two years, he said.

Passing on savings to tenants

Houston said his government is pursuing other measures, too, and noted that finding enough skilled labour also remains a challenge.

Housing Minister John Lohr said he's hoping the tax change will help. Removing the HST from new building construction is something he's been hearing about since his party came to power and he became minister two years ago, Lohr told reporters.

He said he expects that if the measure helps developers save money, those savings will be passed along to the eventual tenants of the new buildings.

"It's certainly the case that if increased costs are incurred by developers, they're passed on. So we would think that works both ways."



NDP Leader Claudia Chender says the government needs to take more steps to address the housing crisis. (Michael Gorman/CBC)

NDP Leader Claudia Chender said she'd like to see the incentive program be tied to objectives for developers, such as construction timelines and affordability for tenants.

"The main question about this kind of incentive is, you know, is this lining the pockets of developers or is this going to translate into affordable housing for Nova Scotians?" she asked

"And we can have a say over that."

Chender said the government also needs to bring in [an enforcement unit to oversee the rental market](#) and institute other protections for renters who have few options in a market with a one per cent vacancy rate.

- [Consultant's report on rental housing says Nova Scotia needs residential tenancy enforcement unit](#)

Liberal MLA Kelly Regan said the decision by Houston's government is a first step in addressing the province's housing crisis, but she said it's also time for the Tories to release their housing strategies for students and the general public.

Those documents were due last spring and do not have updated delivery dates.

"It would be really nice if the government actually showed up and did what they said they were going to do," she told reporters.

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