

MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF ANTIGONISH

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE AGENDA

Tuesday, April 22, 2025, Following Asset Management
Council Chambers
Municipal Administration Building
285 Beech Hill Road
Beech Hill, NS B2G 0B4

1. Call to Order – Chair, Warden Nicolas MacInnis
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of April 8, 2025 Committee of the Whole Minutes
4. Business Arising from the Minutes
5. Delegations

- a. ABC for Kids Society
- b. Antigonish Community Transit

6. Continuing Business

- a. Tourism Strategy Updates
- b. Code of Conduct Investigator Selection
- c. Climate Action Plan

7. New Business

- a. HAF Initiatives Review
- b. PARL Request for Funding

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. Community Navigation & Physician Retention Services Association
- i. PARC
- j. ACALA
- k. Antigonish Community Transit

I. AREMO

10. Additions to the Agenda

11. In-Camera Items

12. Adjournment

MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF ANTIGONISH

Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes

Tuesday April 8, 2025, 5:30pm
Council Chambers
Municipal Administration Building
285 Beech Hill Road
Beech Hill, NS B2G 0B4

Present were: Warden Nicholas MacInnis
Deputy Warden John Dunbar
Councillor Mary MacLellan
Councillor Adam Baden-Clay
Councillor Richelle MacLaughlin (by Zoom)
Councillor Shawn Brophy
Councillor Wayne Melanson
Councillor Gary Mattie
Councillor Harris McNamara
Councillor Sterling Garvie

Regrets: None

Staff Present: Shirlyn Donovan, CAO
Beth Schumacher, Deputy Clerk
Meg MacInnis, Strategic Initiatives Coordinator

Others Present: Stephanie Cooper, PARC
Paul Curry, PARC
Deirdre Smythe
Gallery (in person and by Zoom)

Call to Order – Chairman, Warden Nicholas MacInnis

The meeting of the Committee of the Whole was called to order by the Chair, Warden MacInnis, at 5:30pm.

Approval of Agenda

Warden MacInnis called for any additions or deletions to the agenda. Mrs. Donovan asked to have the in-camera item moved to take place during the Council meeting.

Moved and Seconded

That the agenda be approved as amended.

Motion Carried

Approval of March 25, 2025 Committee of the Whole Minutes

Warden MacInnis called for any errors or omissions in the Committee of the Whole minutes of March 25, 2025. Hearing none, the minutes were considered approved.

Business Arising from the Minutes

There was no business arising from the minutes.

Delegations

Stephanie Cooper and Paul Curry – PARC – Request for a Recreation Needs Assessment

Ms. Cooper and Mr. Curry provided members of the Committee with an overview of the actions that led to the establishment of PARC, the actions that have been undertaken by the group since they last presented to the Committee, and provided an overview of the request being put forward regarding a recreation needs assessment.

Two options were presented, with a proposal to have a Town and County steering committee facilitating the work. The first option would be to undertake a needs assessment, looking at facilities, community input, gap identification, and prioritization of needs. The estimated expense of this option is approximately \$75,000. The second option would be to undertake a feasibility study, with an estimated expense of approximately \$200,000. More details were shared regarding what a recreation needs assessment would entail.

A request was made to the committee for a contribution of \$25,000 towards a recreation needs assessment to be supported by Town and County staff in collaboration with PARC in the 2025/26 fiscal budget. The same request is being made of the Town of Antigonish, and the remainder would be sought through different grants.

The floor was opened for questions from the Committee. Questions were asked regarding the timelines of the assessment relative to the timeline of any development of facilities, comments were shared regarding challenges experienced with access to the school gyms on weekends, and a discussion followed regarding the investment of municipal staff time in their involvement with the exercise.

Further discussion followed regarding registration status of PARC, options for funding, and communication with organizations such as the school board and St. FX. A question was asked about how the \$75,000 figure was determined, and Ms. Cooper provided an overview of the examples from different Nova Scotian municipalities that they had looked into as part of their project research.

Warden MacInnis thanked Ms. Cooper and Mr. Curry for their presentation.

Deirdre Smythe – Proposal to Prohibit Gas Powered Leaf Blowers via the Noise By-law

Ms. Smythe spoke to the committee regarding the harmful effects of gas-powered gardening tools, particularly leaf blowers. She provided her personal reasons for making her request to the committee for their consideration of amendments to the noise by-law to prohibit specific gas-powered machines for lawn care. She then provided an overview of the mechanical specifics of leaf blowers, their environmental impacts, and the health impacts of their operation.

The floor was opened to the committee for questions and comments. Councillor Mattie noted that many of the machines now are battery-run instead of gas-powered. Ms. Smythe noted that there may be a desire to have a deferred introduction of a prohibition to provide those who have invested in gas-powered machinery to change over to battery-operated machines. A comment was shared about the challenge with imposing such a prohibition across the County in response to a single complaint. Discussion regarding the differences in the suburban areas of the municipality vs. in the rural areas of the County with respect to the impact of sound. A suggestion was made to look at the concern in a future discussion of the committee regarding the by-law when it comes up for review.

Warden MacInnis thanked Ms. Smythe for her presentation and noted that her concern would be taken under consideration.

Continuing Business

Climate Risk Assessment Update

Mrs. Donovan provided an overview of the funding opportunity and summarized the presentation that was provided by Mr. MacAllister at the previous Committee of the Whole meeting. She provided mention of the staff members identified to assist with the project, as well as the other in-kind services that could be provided by the municipality, such as advertising and the provision of meeting space.

The floor was then opened for questions from the committee. A question of clarification was asked about the cost and the capacity of staff to be able to contribute to the project. The in-kind contribution would be spread over the 18-month timeline of the project. Discussion followed regarding the importance of community-driven consultation processes, and concerns were raised as to whether risks being identified in the plan could create a liability for the municipality. A suggestion was made to talk

further with staff regarding the project and having a broader discussion about the topic before committing to the specific funding application. Staff was asked to reschedule the item on the April 22, 2025 Committee of the Whole meeting for further discussion.

New Business

Tourism Strategy Overview and Updates

Ms. MacInnis provided the committee with an overview of the Tourism Strategy. A number of recommendations that were put forward to support strategic directions listed in the document were outlined. An overview of actions taken over the past year, including budget amounts, the development of a working group, the hiring of a consultant, and work done on the Antigonish Tourism Association structure to revise their by-laws and implement a board of directors.

Ms. MacInnis outlined the recommendations being put forward by staff, which included drafting a partnership agreement with the Antigonish Tourism Association, advertising and hiring a full-time Tourism Director, and increasing the municipality's annual budget contribution to the Tourism Strategy from \$50,000 to \$70,000 for the next four years.

The floor was then opened for questions from the committee. A statement was made about how the County's contribution would be coming out of the general operating, while the Town and St. FX contributions would be coming from their marketing levy collections, and a concern was raised about the budget increase request. Mrs. Donovan provided some clarification regarding how the budget figures that were used in the County's contribution towards tourism initiatives in 2024/2025 were determined, and why those numbers are looking different for 2025/2026. Discussion followed.

A suggestion was made to have ATA provide feedback regarding their representation and the measures taken to ensure that it is representative of the community with County representation in advance of committing budget funds.

Recess of Committee of the Whole

Moved and Seconded

That the Committee of the Whole meeting recess for the Municipal Council meeting at 7:29pm.

Motion Carried

Call to Order – Warden Nicholas MacInnis

The meeting of the Committee of the Whole was called back to order by the Chair, Warden MacInnis, at 8:51pm.

New Business Continued

Code of Conduct Investigator Selection

Ms. MacInnis provided the committee with an overview of the recommendation being put forward by staff for the selection of an Investigator. A question was asked regarding the payment structure of the retention of the firm for the purpose of acting as an Investigator.

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends that Municipal Council appoint Burchell Wickwire Bryson LLP as their Investigator under subsection 23C(1) of the Municipal Government Act to receive and investigate complaints received under the Municipal Code of Conduct for Elected Officials Policy.

**Motion Carried
(8 in favour, 2 opposed)**

Moved and Seconded

That the Committee of the Whole adjourn to an in-camera session to discuss Contract Negotiations at 9:04 pm.

Motion Carried

Moved and Seconded

That the in-camera session adjourns at 9:08 pm.

Motion Carried

Moved and Seconded

The Committee rescinds the motion recommending that Municipal Council appoint Burchell Wickwire Bryson LLP as their Investigator under subsection 23C(1) of the Municipal Government Act to receive and investigate complaints received under the Municipal Code of Conduct for Elected Officials Policy.

Motion Carried

EDPC Appointments

Mrs. Donovan noted that this item was a standard annual process to appoint the EDPC staff members to specific positions acting on behalf of the municipality. Mrs. Donovan read through the list of EDPC staff appointments provided by Mr. Bain.

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends that Municipal Council approves the annual appointments of Eastern District Planning Commission staff to Municipal positions, as proposed.

Motion Carried

Councillor Baden Clay was absent for the vote

A Roof Over Your Head Request for Board Representation from Council

Mrs. Donovan spoke to a request received from a Roof Over Your Head for a representative from Council to their board, outlining the information shared by the organization to address the municipality's policy regarding external boards. Mrs. Donovan noted that legal is reviewing the request in the scope of the questions raised from the Code of Conduct legislation recently passed with respect to Councillors on external boards, as raised by Chester to the Province earlier in the year. Discussion followed. A majority of the group expressed a desire to wait until the information noted by Mrs. Donovan was available to facilitate further discussion on the matter.

Antigonish Jr. B Bulldogs Request for Funding

Mrs. Donovan reviewed a request that was sent to Councillors requesting funds to assist with the team going to the Atlantic Canadian Championship in New Brunswick. Discussion regarding the amount of the donation followed. Staff is recommending a donation of \$1000, to keep in line with the amounts provided to youth travel sports teams.

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends that Municipal Council approves a contribution in the amount of \$1,000 to the Antigonish Jr. B Bulldogs team to assist with their travel to the Atlantic Canadian Championships, Don Johnston Cup, in New Brunswick.

Motion Carried

Policy Review

A request was made to defer this item to the April 22nd Committee of Whole meeting.

Staff Reports

Mrs. Donovan noted that the staff reports were included in the agenda package.

Community Events

This item was deferred, where similar updates had just been provided at the Council meeting.

Additions to the Agenda

There were no additions to the agenda.

Adjournment

Moved and Seconded

That the Committee of the Whole meeting be adjourned at 9:41pm.

Motion Carried

Warden Nicholas MacInnis

Shirlyn Donovan, CAO



WHY DOLLY PARTON STARTED THE IMAGINATION LIBRARY

Dolly launched the Imagination Library to honor her father who was smart and hardworking, but never learned to read or write. The program is designed to give children from all walks of life the opportunity that Dolly's father never had.

HOW IT WORKS, LOCAL INPUT

Through printing in large scale, the Dollywood Foundation provides high-quality, age appropriate books for an average cost to the community in Canada of \$3.85 per child per month, making the program totally free for families. Forty percent of the books selected for Canada contain Canadian content.



THE IMPORTANCE OF READING WITH YOUR CHILD

The early years, from birth through school entry are crucial for a child's healthy development. Reading together strengthens the child/parent bond, improves attention span, develops critical thinking skills, sparks imagination, and leads to a wider world view and love of learning.

IMPROVED OUTCOMES THROUGHOUT LIFE

Studies conducted show that with Dolly's monthly reading program there is 30% more daily reading in the home, a 28.9% improvement in school readiness and an 11% improvement in Grade 3 reading scores. Better outcomes in school help build stronger communities and engaged citizens.



ABC FOR KIDS SOCIETY

**was created to locally administer and sustain the program
since launching in April 2023:**

- 880 children have been registered for the program
- 682 children are currently receiving books each month - 204 graduates
- 14,263 books have been delivered to children in Antigonish Town & County

Our 'kitchen table model' of grass roots organizing, inspired by the Antigonish Movement, has been recognized by the Dolly Parton Imagination Library National Coordinator for our rapid enrollment success.

COMMUNITY PROMOTION AND OUTREACH



- Partnered with 989 XFM to promote program throughout the year
- Partnered with St. Martha's Women's and Children's Health unit to reach families at birth
- Promoted through Antigonish Library, Kids First, Early Intervention, and pre/primary programs with Strait Regional School Board
- Featured on *Tunes and Wooden Spoons*
- Hosted a Story Walk at Bethany Gardens with Let's Move Antigonish and the Sisters of St. Martha
- Celebrated local support with Lions Club 'Breakfast with Dolly' events

INNOVATIVE COLLABORATIONS

- Selected by the Nova Scotia provincial government to participate in the Clari Initiative research study.
- Research report by StFX Clari team on effective community outreach and social media strategies
- Partnered with Advance Majors Consulting course at StFX on their Major Project to: streamline program operations into a single online site, design multi-language promotional materials, create a social media toolkit to increase visibility and engagement.



OUR GOALS GOING FORWARD



- Expand enrollment: increase the number of registered children by 20% in the next year
- Enhanced engagement: launch social media platforms
- Sustainability initiatives: develop partnerships with local governments, charities and businesses to ensure long-term funding
- Volunteer opportunities: create volunteer roles for community members to assist with program promotion
- Feedback mechanism: implement a Feedback system to get insights from families and caregivers.

OUR MAJOR SPONSORS

Kinsmen Antigonish
989 XFM
Municipality of the County of Antigonish
Town of Antigonish
Monsignor Hugh MacPherson Council of the Knights of Columbus

100 Women Who Care
Antigonish Lions Club
St. Francis Xavier University
Private donors and Community Champions

THANK YOU

With your support, we are building a stronger, more literate, more connected Antigonish
one book at a time

Facebook & Instagram: @antigonishimaginationlibrary
email: abcantigonish@gmail.com phone: (902) 318-7653



Antigonish Community Transit Society

Richie Connors
General Manager
April 2025

Who We Are



Antigonish Community Transit Society (ACTS) is a registered not-for-profit, charitable organization providing transit service for the town and county of Antigonish.



We were established under the Societies Act on October 15th, 2013, (Registration # 3276038) and have been providing transit services since September 2014.



We achieved CRA charitable status in February 2021.



Our mission is to provide safe, affordable, and accessible transportation to all residents of Antigonish town & county.

Services That We Provide

- ▶ **Book-A-Ride** - offered Monday - Friday *Flexible hours
**Drives must be booked by 1:00 PM the previous day
- ▶ **Fixed Route** - a 1-hour loop that operates in the Town and County, providing service Monday - Friday 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM & Saturdays 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM

But That's NOT All We Do

- ▶ **Door-to-door** transit services for all residents
- ▶ **Accessible transportation** for seniors & persons with disabilities
- ▶ **Rural route service** connecting communities throughout the county
- ▶ **Medical transportation** (local & out of town)
- ▶ **Recreational Transit** - County & Town Rec, CACL & local daycares
- ▶ **Essential trips** - groceries, pharmacy, social services, etc
- ▶ **Fare Assistance Program** - \$12,833 NSFA subsidy

LOCATION #

1
H:00

EACH HOUR

9:00am - 5:00pm

Monday - Friday

FLAG
DOWN



DROP
OFF

Flag us down or request a drop off
anywhere along the fixed route.

Fixed Route Fares

Children Under 12 - Free

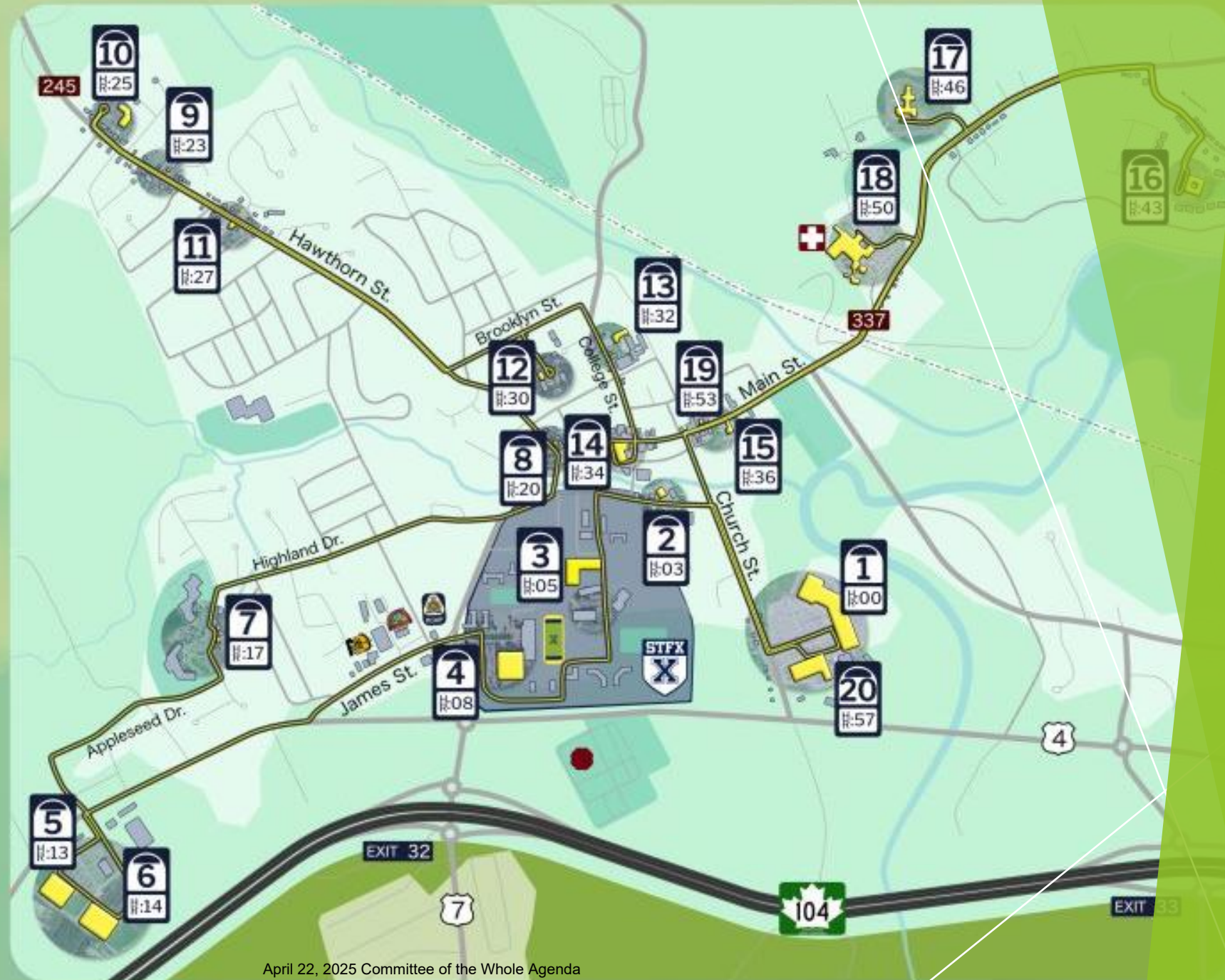
One Way 2.00

Day Pass 5.00

Bundle x20 55.00

Day Pass Bundle
will not expire.

Debit and Credit accepted
- on Fixed Route only -





**ANTIGONISH
TRANSIT**

**FIXED
ROUTE**

Schedule



Information & Service
Call **0411**
902 867

Funders & Partners



Provincial Government
of Nova Scotia



The Town of Antigonish



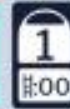
The Municipality of the
County of Antigonish



The Sisters of St. Martha
of Antigonish

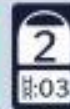


98.9 XFM Radio
Nothing But Hits



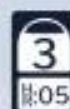
Antigonish Mall

133 Church St



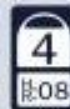
Highland Housing

86 St Ninian St



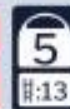
Mulroney Centre

2329 Cathedral Way



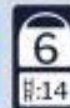
Keating Centre

1100 Convocation Blvd



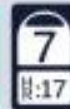
Atlantic Superstore

26 Market St



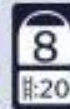
Walmart

50 Market St



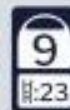
Appleseed Court

23 Appleseed Dr



Pleasant St.

Hawthorne St & Pleasant St



Shamrock Acres

14 Shamrock W



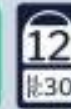
Sylvan Valley Apt.

12 Sylvan Valley Rd



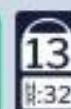
Hawthorne Variety

201 Hawthorne St



JJ Carroll House

20 Orchard Terrace



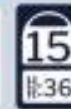
Antigonish Manor

138 College St



People's Place Library

283 Main St



Canadian Tire Gas Bar

165 Main St



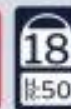
The Maples

31 Smiths Wy



Parkland (Shannex)

153 NS-337



St. Martha's Hospital

25 Bay St



The Sunflower

194 Main St



Sobeys

151 Church St

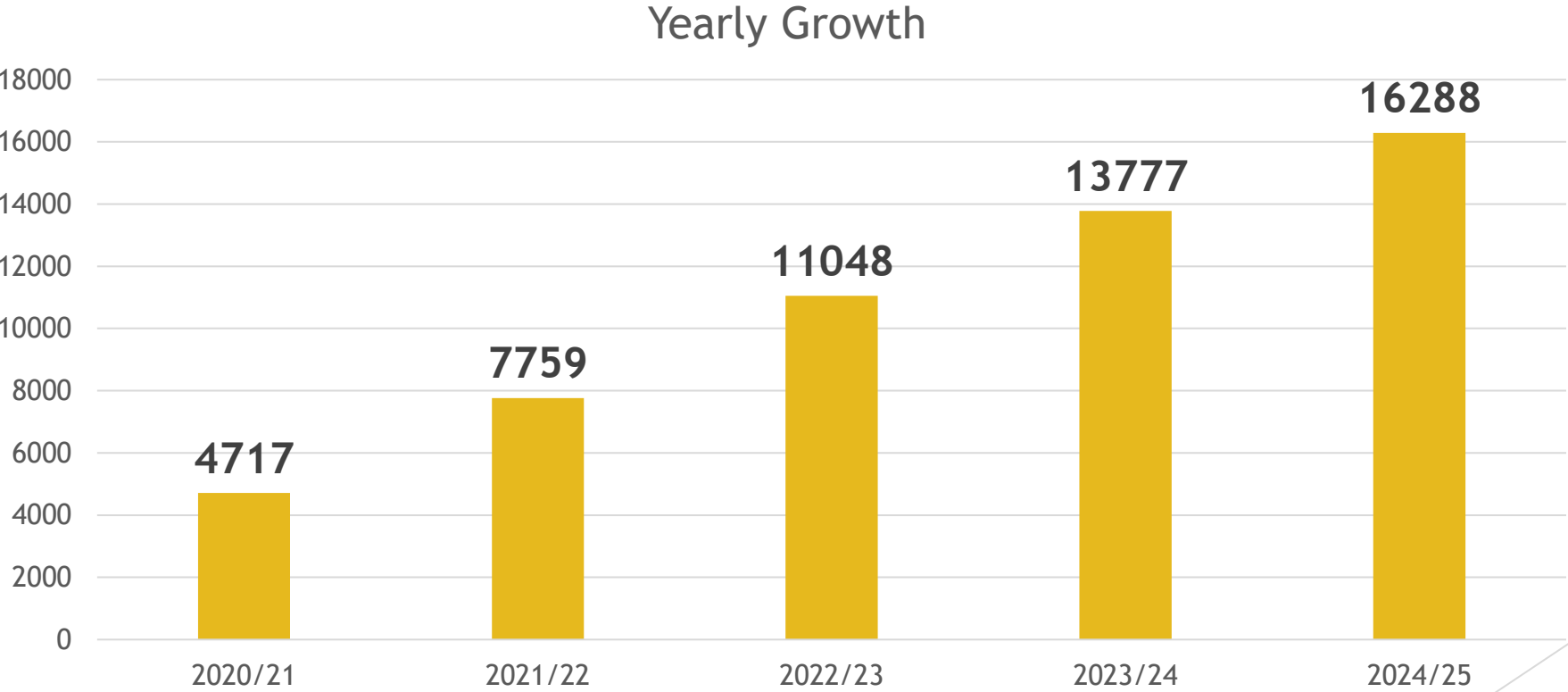
Who We Serve

- ▶ ALL RESIDENTS of Antigonish Town & County
- ▶ Seniors
- ▶ Students & Youth
- ▶ Residents with mobility issues
- ▶ Low-income individuals & families
- ▶ Rural community members with limited transportation options

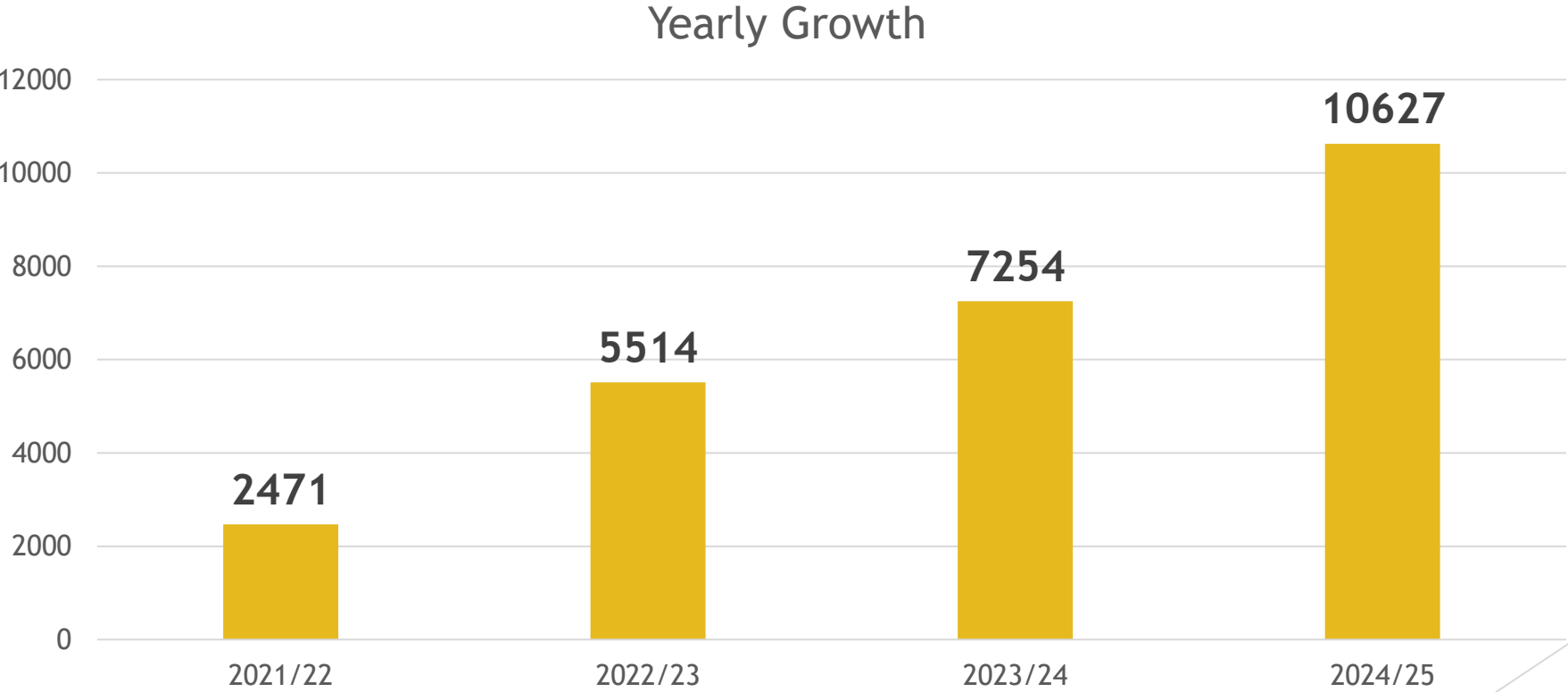
Community Impact

- ▶ In 2024/25, ACTS drivers completed 16,288 drives in Antigonish. This number surpassed the 13,777 completed in 2023/24.
- ▶ Increased access to healthcare, education & employment
- ▶ Reduced social isolation for vulnerable populations
- ▶ Lower transportation barriers in rural communities

BY THE NUMBERS - BOOK-A-RIDE



BY THE NUMBERS - FIXED ROUTE RIDERSHIP



A photograph showing the interior of a bus, looking down the aisle. The seats are blue with a colorful pattern. Yellow handrails are visible along the ceiling. The floor is dark and polished.

A Day In The Life: From The Driver's Seat

A Personal Perspective

- ▶ *Senior who rides the bus daily for social connection*
- ▶ *Clients getting to work daily, allowing them to work*
- ▶ *Drivers hearing directly from clients about a recent medical diagnosis*
- ▶ *Personal connection with clients & their daily routines*
- ▶ *Letter Riding the bus “blesses our socks off”*

Working Together

ACTS success depends heavily on strong Municipal partnerships



On-going support & funding from the Town & County are appreciated & allow us to continue to keep our community moving



Gary Mattie (County councillor) & Diane Roberts (Town councillor) are valued members of our Board Of Directors.

Year 1 Actions	Funding Source Options
1.1 Purchase a new bus with low-floor accessibility, air conditioning, and a more comfortable ride experience. (Buy an interim bus)	ACTS, federal grants
1.2 Conduct a operational review to address driver shortage	Town & County HAF programs, NS Pubic Works
2.1 Engage consultant(s) to redesign and rebrand the route	Town & County HAF programs
4.1. Maintain Saturday service	NS Environment & Climate Change

Action 1.2- OPERATIONAL REVIEW

► Purpose:

To conduct a full operational review of Antigonish Community Transit to improve organizational effectiveness & prepare for future growth.

► Total Project Cost: \$40, 000

► Funding

- \$20,000 NS Public Works

- \$20,000 (split between Town & County HAF Programs)

Action 2.1- REBRAND & REDESIGN

- ▶ **Purpose:**
Rebrand & redesign of ACTS & FIXED ROUTE
- ▶ **Total Project Cost: \$80,000**
- ▶ **Funding**
 - ▶ NS Dept of Environment \$65,000
 - ▶ \$15,000 (split between Town & County HAF Programs)

Thank You for supporting Antigonish Community Transit

Together, we keep our community connected.

Richie Connors

General Manager

antigonishcommunitytransit@gmail.com

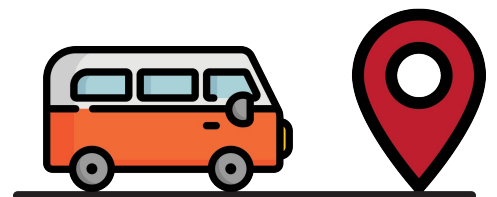
902-870-4504

Recommendations report

Fixed route transit service expansion pilot study

Prepared by Happy Cities for the Nova Scotia Community Transit Network and the Province of Nova Scotia

February 2025



Project partners

The recommendations from this pilot study were developed in collaboration with transit providers and municipal partners from each community, including:

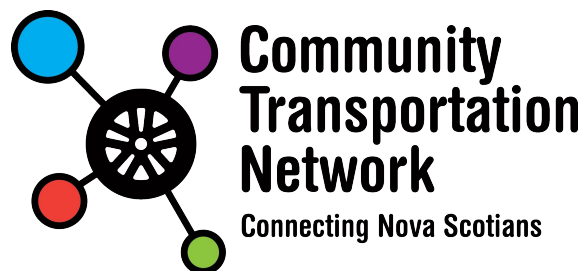
- Town of Antigonish
- Antigonish County
- Antigonish Community Transit Society
- Town of Bridgewater
- Bridgewater Transit
- Pictou County
- Pictou County Transit
- CHAD Transit
- Town of New Glasgow
- Town of Stellarton

This study was conducted by Happy Cities on behalf of the Nova Scotia Community Transportation Network (NSCTN). The study received funding from the Province of Nova Scotia Department of Energy. This project takes place in Mi'kma'ki, the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq people.



About the Nova Scotia Community Transportation Network

The Nova Scotia Community Transportation Network (NSCTN) is a non-profit that advocates and supports community-based transportation in Nova Scotia. Within the community transportation sector in Nova Scotia, we act as a hub for providers, funders, clients, and supporters. Out of this hub we offer information sharing, education, advocacy, innovation, and support to new and existing providers within the community transportation sector. We are working to build a strong, integrated community transportation sector across rural Nova Scotia.



About Happy Cities

Happy Cities is an urban planning, research, and engagement firm based in Halifax and Vancouver. Our firm works with governments, non-profits, developers, and organizations across Canada and beyond to create happier, healthier, more inclusive communities. We use an evidence-based approach to design streets, transportation, housing, and public spaces that strengthen human wellbeing and sustainability.



1

Executive Summary

Executive summary

This project outlines recommendations and a budget for transit service improvements in Antigonish, Bridgewater, and Pictou County from 2025 to 2028, with the goal of increasing ridership, efficiency, and impact in each community.

Why invest in transit

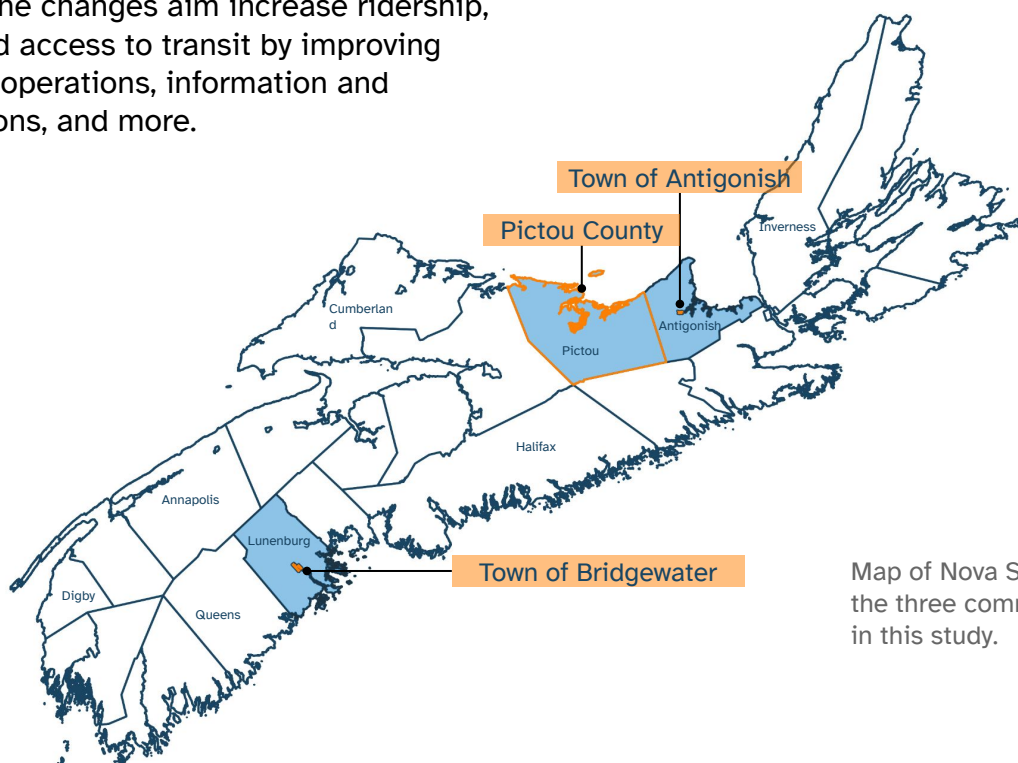
Transit plays an essential role in creating healthy, liveable communities, ensuring people have an affordable way to get to the places they need to go. Well-designed, efficient transit systems connect people to jobs, education, social activities, shops, and services—supporting independence for people of all ages and abilities.

However, rural transit systems face unique challenges, often operating with limited budgets, staff, and resources. Recognizing the critical role of transit in rural communities, the Nova Scotia Department of Energy has allocated \$350,000 of funding annually for bus service improvements in Antigonish, Bridgewater, and Pictou County over three years. The changes aim increase ridership, efficiency, and access to transit by improving route design, operations, information and communications, and more.

About this pilot study

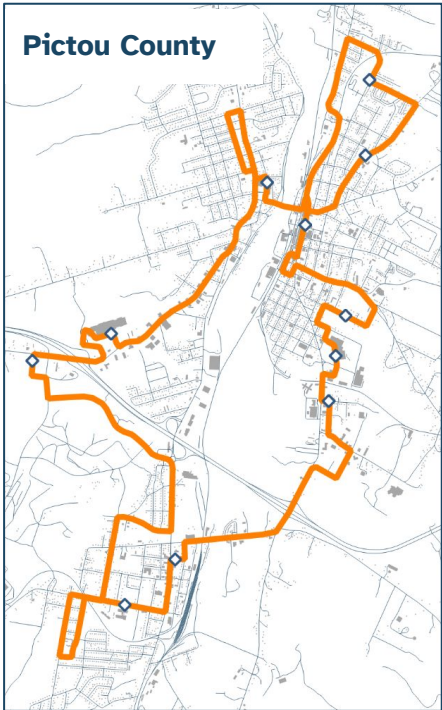
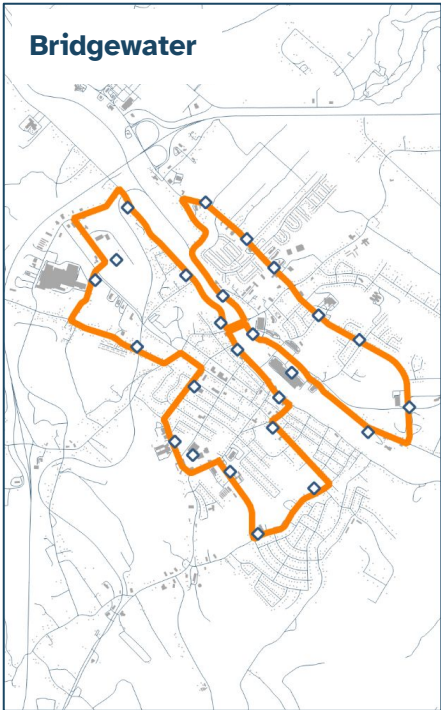
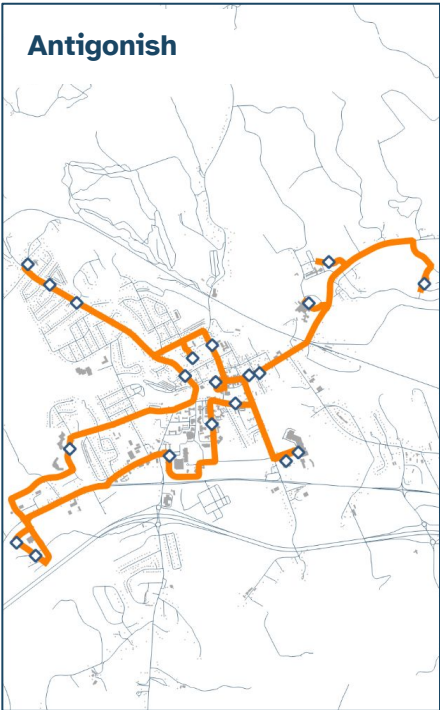
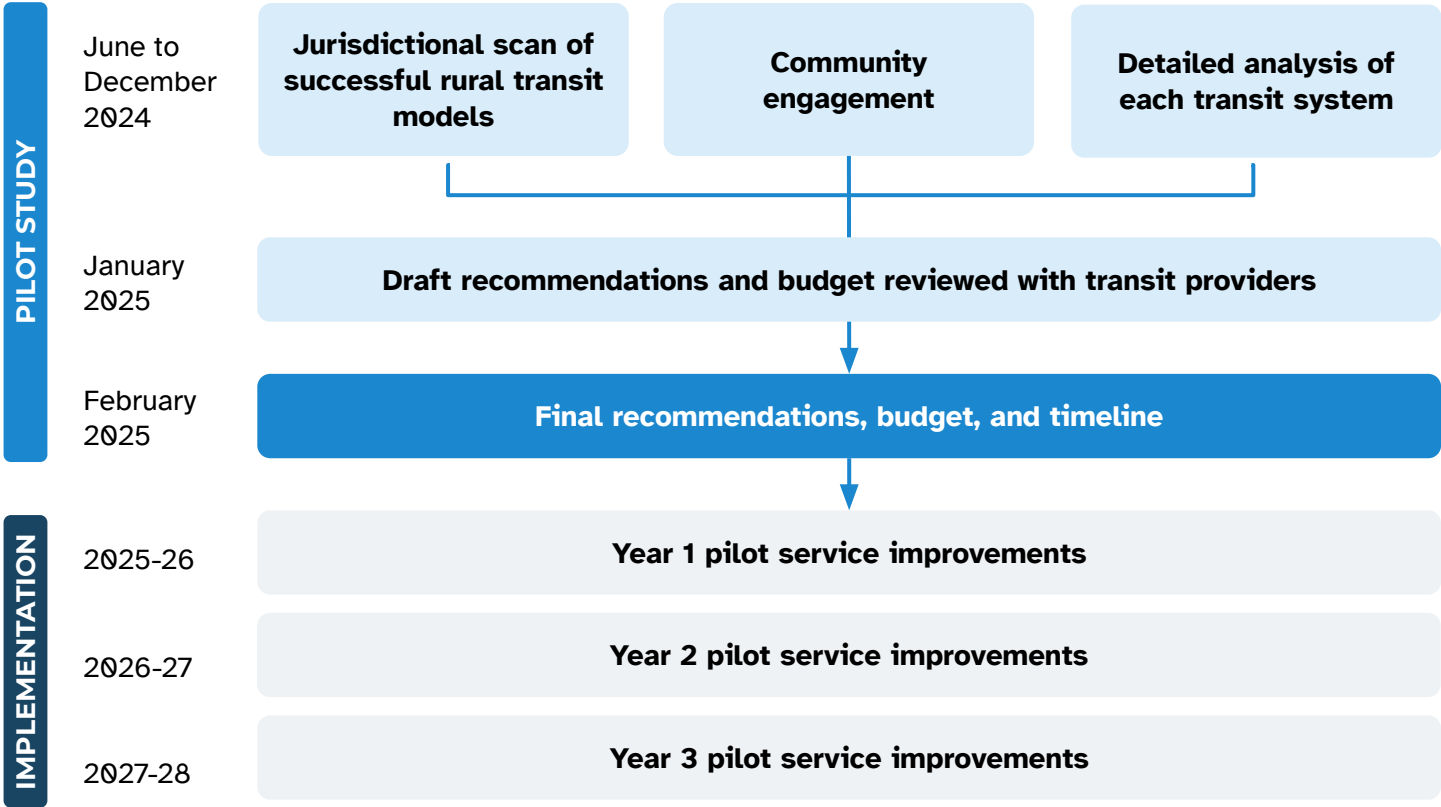
In 2024, the Province commissioned a pilot study to test strategies for increasing transit ridership. The study was administered by the Nova Scotia Community Transportation Network (NSCTN) and conducted by Happy Cities. This report details the results and recommendations of this study, including detailed analysis of and community engagement around four transit routes: one in the Town and County of Antigonish, one in the Town of Bridgewater, and two in Pictou County—presently named the main route and expansion route.

Throughout the process, Happy Cities worked closely with NSCTN, the Province of Nova Scotia, transit providers, and partner municipalities to ensure the recommendations are implementable and reflect the unique context and needs of each community. Together, the team developed and refined a comprehensive set of proposed transit service improvements, along with a budget and timeline for each recommendation.



Map of Nova Scotia, highlighting the three communities included in this study.

Timeline and methodology



Transit routes for Antigonish, Bridgewater, and Pictou County main route.

Recommendations

The project team developed a set of recommendations to be implemented by all three transit systems, based on detailed analysis and engagement in each community. Each recommendation includes the estimated cost, timeline, and partners needed for implementation.



Photos from community pop-up engagement events to hear priorities from local residents.

Recommendations were selected based on the following criteria:

- **Public engagement feedback:** Interventions should address the top challenges and barriers identified by current riders and potential future riders. (see Engagement Summary in Section 2).
- **Demonstrated success in partner communities:** Many of these interventions are already being tested within Nova Scotia. Reinvesting in what has been shown to work will give pilot projects a better chance of success.
- **Demonstrated success elsewhere:** Where relevant, the interventions apply learnings from rural communities outside of Nova Scotia.
- **Ease of implementation:** Interventions that a partner municipality can implement on its own, with only small changes to existing service, help reduce cost and complexity.
- **Transit partner stewardship:** Transit partners will be responsible for implementing these interventions; therefore, it is essential that they support the recommendations. Their priorities inform all proposed interventions.
- **Attractiveness to potential institutional partners:** Some communities have major employers or institutions that are well positioned to dramatically increase ridership, such as by offering transit passes to employees or students. Interventions that meet the needs of these potential partners will see greater impact.

Antigonish

Community engagement and analysis revealed that the fixed route in Antigonish has several foundational challenges that prevent the service from running efficiently. These challenges are primarily due to the system’s inadequate buses.

Our recommendations focus first on improving the system to provide consistent, reliable service for Antigonish Town and County residents, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., six days a week. We recommend maintaining Saturday service (first implemented in June 2024), due to the increase in ridership this service brings. Further improvements seek to improve the route design and attract more riders, including through partnerships, communications campaigns, operational improvements, and capital upgrades.

Antigonish presently has a significantly higher cost per service hour than Bridgewater and Pictou County, and significantly lower ridership. Improvements to increase awareness of the service, encourage use, and improve efficiency and reliability will all help generate greater ridership and revenue, improving long-term financial sustainability.

Table of recommendations and actions for Antigonish

Recommendation 1. Improve system reliability

Action 1.1. Purchase two new buses with low-floor accessibility, air conditioning, and a more comfortable ride experience.

Action 1.2. Conduct an operational review to identify issues behind driver shortage.

Recommendation 2. Redesign and relaunch the Antigonish fixed route

Action 2.1. Engage consultant(s) to redesign and rebrand the route.

Action 2.2. Make capital upgrades to improve comfort and navigation.

Recommendation 3. Establish a strategic partnership with St. Francis Xavier University

Action 3.1. Explore partnerships, such as a discounted U-Pass program with St. FX University.

Recommendation 4. Modify extended service hours

Action 4.1. Maintain Saturday service.

Action 4.2. Restore and expand weekday service hour extensions in Year 2, only after system has been relaunched.

Action 4.3. Add Sunday service in the third year of this pilot project.

Bridgewater

Bridgewater Transit has achieved significant success, with the highest ridership-to-population ratio of the three systems. The primary goals for service improvements in Bridgewater are to optimize the current route and service hours, and attract more potential riders from major institutions. These changes will help Bridgewater reinforce its success.

Partnerships with local institutions, including Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) and Michelin can help increase ridership. Adjusting the bus schedule to better serve these important destinations are top priorities.

During engagement, the most common concern we heard that was that buses do not come often enough or the trip takes too long to complete. Several participants expressed that they would like the bus to reach Walmart and Canadian Tire, two destinations just outside the Town of Bridgewater boundary.

To further improve Bridgewater Transit’s service level, the Town should explore the potential to add another bus to the system and consider expanding or adding a route to serve destinations outside the town, such as Walmart. Many of these recommendations will be considered as the Town initiates its five-year transit plan and furthers conversations with the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg (MODL) for an inter-municipal transit service.

Table of recommendations and actions for Bridgewater

Recommendation 1. Continue extended service hours

Action 1.1. Maintain Sunday service.

Action 1.2. Cancel Friday late-evening service and extend weekday and Saturday service.

Recommendation 2. Consider optimizing the existing route and schedule to service Michelin plant

Action 2.1. Adjust bus schedule to serve Michelin shift start and end times.

Action 2.2. Add a new bus stop at the Michelin plant, and modify the route to serve the plant at the start and end of shifts.

Action 2.3. Work with Michelin to implement a subsidized bus pass and promotion program.

Recommendation 3. Explore a subsidized pass program with NSCC

Action 3.1. Explore a subsidized pass program with NSCC.

Consideration 4. Expand service to Walmart

Consideration 4.1a. Adjust the main Bridgewater Transit route to include Walmart.

Consideration 4.1b. Create a new route to Walmart, in partnership with MODL.

Pictou County

Pictou County Transit’s main route is highly successful and has the highest ridership of the four routes we analyzed. This route also has the lowest net cost per rider, due in large part to high fare revenue and low operational costs. Pictou County also introduced an expansion route in 2024, which connects several towns outside of Stellarton and New Glasgow. However, the expansion route has struggled to meet projected ridership numbers, despite a notable demand for regional transit.

During engagement, many people did not know the expansion route existed, or did not know how to ride it.

We recommend a significant redesign to the expansion route, with minor modifications to optimize the main route. Ideally, these changes should be implemented at the same time, so that the two routes can be redesigned and rebranded together, and communicated on the same map and web page.

Table of recommendations and actions for Pictou County

Recommendation 1. Redesign and relaunch the expansion route

Action 1.1. Engage a consultant to redesign and rebrand the expansion route.

Recommendation 2. Optimize the main route

Action 2.1. Consider simplifying the routing along East River Road and adding service to Mt. Batton Drive and Forest Hill Drive.

Action 2.2. Consider an additional bus in Year 3 on the main route to increase frequency to every 30 minutes.

Action 2.3. Improve access to transit information.

Action 2.4. Continue to make investments in comfort and safety.

Recommendation 3. Explore a subsidized pass program with Nova Scotia Community College

Action 3.1. Explore a subsidized pass program with NSCC.

Recommendation 4. Continue extended service hours

Action 4.1. Continue Sunday service for the main route.

Action 4.2. Continue fare reduction for the expansion route upon redesign.

Consideration 5. Provide targeted fare relief to boost ridership for both routes

Consideration 5.1. Provide at least 5,000 bus passes to low-income families through non-profit partners.

Consideration 5.2. Establish fare-free periods to promote the system.

Monitoring and implementation

The recommendations in this report will be implemented by each transit provider, in coordination with NSCTN and the Nova Scotia Department of Energy. Service improvements will be funded through both provincial and municipal contributions.

To measure success of each intervention, this report identifies a set of evaluation metrics that each community will track and report on a biannual basis (every six months), including:

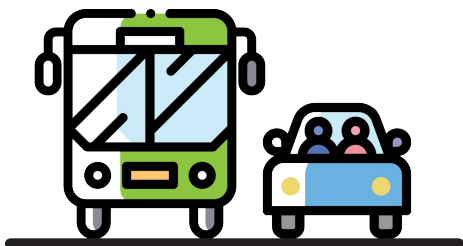
- Daily ridership, broken down by hour
- Transit system costs
- The number of subsidized passes sold
- A progress report on the implementation of actions in this report

In addition to these broad metrics, each community has a detailed plan of additional metrics to track its success, based on the existing performance of the transit system. Each community is also encouraged to install Automatic Passenger Counters and Automatic Vehicle Locators.

Regular reporting and metrics tracking will ensure that each community can evaluate the success of the pilot program interventions and collect data to inform future changes.

Beyond 2028

These recommendations aim to improve the baseline operations and design of each transit route, to set each community up for success for the next three years and beyond. The recommendations have been developed through a detailed research, analysis, and engagement process, ensuring that they are tailored to meet the needs of each community. By increasing ridership, the recommendations will bring greater fare revenue and awareness to each transit system, setting the providers up for long-term success. The success of transit in Antigonish, Bridgewater, and Pictou County will contribute to stronger health outcomes, sustainability, and quality of life for all residents—while providing innovative models for rural transit across Nova Scotia and beyond.



2

Engagement summary

2. Engagement summary

A primary goal of this pilot project is to ensure that service improvements meet the needs of current and potential transit riders. To inform the recommendations in this report, NSCTN sought community input in September and October 2024. This included input from local residents, community organizations, and major employers or institutions.



Outreach and promotion

In each community, the project team:

- Distributed posters to print and install at at key community locations
- Handed out informational flyers at pop-up events, with QR codes and URLs to fill out the public online survey
- Shared information and engagement opportunities on social media through:
 - Paid ads, targeted at the relevant community
 - Organic posts from Happy Cities, NSCTN, and transit provider accounts
 - Posts in local community Facebook groups
- Emailed key actors to encourage them to share input and share opportunities with their networks (including employers, institutions, community-based organizations, schools, facilities, and more)
- Created a dedicated project web page on the NSCTN website

Engagement activities

For each community, the project team conducted the following engagement activities:

- **Pop-up events:** In each community, one pop-up took place on the bus, and others were held at well-trafficked community location(s):
 - **Antigonish:** People's Place Library and St. FX campus
 - **Bridgewater:** South Shore Centre
 - **Pictou County:** Pictou County Wellness Centre
- **Public online survey:**
 - **Antigonish:** 106 complete responses
 - **Bridgewater:** 52 complete responses
 - **Pictou County:** 63 complete responses
- **Employer survey:** 5 complete responses
- **Interviews:** 5 participants

The engagement findings are outlined in greater detail in the Engagement Summary Report. This section provides an overview of the high-level findings, including priorities and challenges for transit users. Findings are broken down by community.

2. Engagement summary

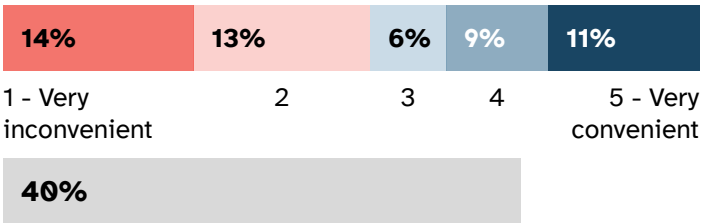
2.1. Antigonish

We reached local residents and community groups in Antigonish through a wide variety of methods, including one pop-up engagement event on the bus, two pop-up events in the Town of Antigonish, online and phone outreach, and an online survey.

Overall, the majority of people we heard from in Antigonish do not presently use the bus, aside from those we engaged while riding the bus route itself. At the pop-ups and in the survey, the two most common modes of transportation were driving a car or motorcycle, and walking or rolling. Residents expressed several challenges with using transit in Antigonish, with many not knowing how to take the bus, and not knowing that it could be flagged anywhere along the route.

Ease and convenience of taking the bus

Survey respondents were asked to rank the convenience of taking the bus in Antigonish on a scale of one to five. Responses were distributed across the scale, with more respondents rating the bus as inconvenient (27.4% total) compared to convenient (20.8%).



“I do not take transit in my community.”

Who we heard from

- 60 pop-up participants
- 106 complete survey responses
- 30 key actors emailed or phoned



Demographics

In the survey, participants were given the option to self-report demographics:

- 36% self-identified as women, and 12% as men
- 23% indicated they are 50 or older, and 15% self-identified as a senior or older adult
- 29% reported being employed full-time
- 19% reported they are retired

2. Engagement summary: Antigonish

Barriers to taking transit

The survey asked people to select the top three factors that have discouraged or prevented them from taking the bus in the past six months, if any. The top responses were:

1. Hours of service do not meet my needs (23%)
2. Lack of information on how to ride (22%)
3. Buses do not come often enough (19%)
Trip takes too long or follows an inefficient route (19%)
4. Transit route does not take me where I want to go (16%)
Transit stop is too far of a walk from my home or destination (16%)

Priorities

The survey proposed a list of changes to transit infrastructure and service, and asked participants to select the top three changes that would make them more likely to take transit in Antigonish. The top five responses were:

1. Better signage at transit stops (32%)
2. Real-time bus tracking to know when the bus will arrive (31%)
3. Ability to use an app to plan my trip (e.g. Google Maps) (21%)
4. Seating and weather protection at transit stops (20%)
5. Free transit (e.g. removing fares to ride the bus) (19%)

"I like the idea of community groups or businesses exploring purchasing transit passes for their staff."

— Survey respondent

Pop-up findings

Participants expressed similar challenges and priorities to those that came out in the survey. Challenges included:

- Lack of information or awareness about the transit system and how to use it.
- The bus route and schedule are inconvenient, or do not run at the times needed to get somewhere.
- The bus is unreliable, in large part due to the length of time it takes to board a wheelchair user.
- The bus ride is uncomfortable and bumpy.

Participants also expressed appreciation for the service, including:

- The bus can stop anywhere along the route.
- It is a cost-effective way to get around.
- It avoids the challenges of finding parking.
- The 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. service works well.

Participants suggested several changes to help the transit system better meet their needs, including:

- Clearer information and more signage to promote transit use.
- More accurate trip planning information, including a live bus tracker and integration with trip-planning apps.
- More frequent service.
- Evening and early morning service.
- More bus stops and amenities at stops.

2. Engagement summary: Antigonish

Destinations (any travel mode)

The survey asked participants about how often they visit destinations in their community. When combining weekly and daily responses, the most frequently reported destinations (by any travel mode) were:

1. 93% go to shops weekly or daily
2. 65% to work or school (for themselves)
3. 64% to meet family and friends

These are followed by recreational facilities (49%), civic facilities (37%), work or school (for someone else) (32%), and health care facilities (13%).

Destinations (by bus)

Very few people reported taking the bus to any of these destinations, with 75% to 90% each responding that they never take the bus to each destination.

The most common type of destination that survey respondents visit by bus is shops, with 10% reporting that they take the bus to shops weekly. Another 7% travel to work or school daily or weekly by bus for themselves, and 6% for another person. Not more than five respondents each reported taking the bus weekly or daily to all other destination types.

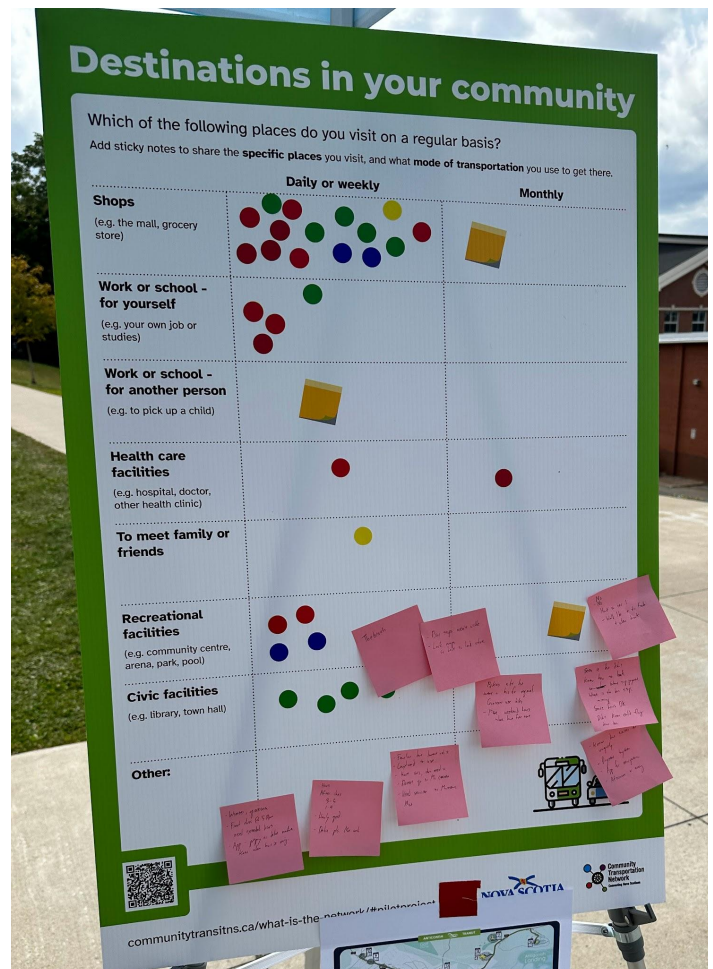
“Community events [often] occur when there is no dial-a-ride. Many medical things happen on the same day and then [there is] no transit. Recently had to stay overnight in the ER because no way to get back there on a Saturday morning [for an appointment]. We were all pretty frustrated that I used a hospital bed because of lack of transit.”

— Survey respondent

Pop-up findings

Frequent destinations (any travel mode)

- Shops were the most common daily or weekly destination, followed by civic facilities.



“Workplace is Port Hawkesbury and there is no transit available. For my travel in Antigonish, transit is not time efficient.”

— Survey respondent

2. Engagement summary

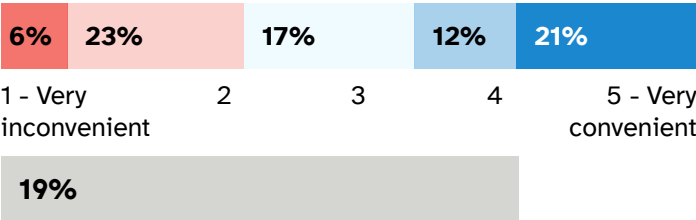
2.2. Bridgewater

We reached local residents and community groups in Bridgewater through a wide variety of methods, including one pop-up engagement event on the bus, one pop-up event at the Bridgewater Mall, online and phone outreach, and an online survey.

Many people we engaged use transit in Bridgewater. The primary challenge we heard from residents is that the bus does not travel to the destinations they need to get to, such as Walmart and Canadian Tire. Many also mentioned that the one-hour loop makes it inefficient to use transit. In the survey, the most common mode of transport was car or motorcycle. However, 13% reported that public transit is their primary means of getting around.

Ease and convenience of taking the bus

Survey respondents were asked to rank the convenience of taking the bus in Bridgewater on a scale of one to five. Overall, more respondents rated the bus as convenient (31% total) compared to inconvenient (29%). The majority of these indicated the bus was “somewhat inconvenient” (23%) compared to “very inconvenient” (6%). Positively, 21% reported the bus is “very convenient.”



“I do not take transit in my community.”

Who we heard from

- 33 pop-up participants
- 52 complete survey responses
- 16 key actors emailed or phoned
- 1 interview participant



Demographics

In the survey, participants were given the option to self-report demographics:

- 63% self-identified as women, and 21% as men
- 54% indicated they are 50 or older, and 38% self-identified as a senior or older adult
- 35% reported being employed full-time
- 52% reported they are retired
- 52% reported a household income less than \$100,000

2. Engagement summary: Bridgewater

Barriers to taking transit

The survey asked people to select the top three factors that have discouraged or prevented them from taking the bus in the past six months, if any. The top responses were:

1. Buses do not come often enough (37%)
2. Trip takes too long or follows an inefficient route (35%)
3. Transit route does not take me where I want to go (25%)
4. Transit stop is too far of a walk from my destination (19%)
5. Hours of service do not meet my needs (10%)

Priorities

The survey proposed a list of changes to transit infrastructure and service, and asked participants to select the top three changes that would make them more likely to take transit in Bridgewater. The top five responses were:

1. Seating and weather protection at transit stops (35%)
2. Free transit (21%)
3. Real-time bus tracking* to know when the bus will arrive (17%)
4. Better signage at transit stops (15%)
5. Ability to use an app to plan my trip (e.g. Google Maps) (12%)

**Bridgewater Transit offers real-time bus tracking on its website. It is possible that respondents were not aware this feature exists.*

Pop-up findings

Participants expressed similar challenges and priorities to those that came out in the survey. Challenges included:

- Lack of awareness about the transit system and how to use it.
- The bus route and schedule are inconvenient, or do not run at the times needed to get somewhere.
- The month pass is hard to afford, and finding exact change is difficult.

Participants also expressed appreciation for the service, including:

- It offers friendly service.
- The system works well, is easy to navigate, and offers a way to get around without as much walking.
- The transit tracker is helpful.
- The bus pass is easy to get.
- Extended service hours are useful.

Participants suggested several changes to help the transit system better meet their needs, including:

- More frequent service (e.g. every 30 minutes)
- Two-way service
- Service to more destinations, including Walmart
- Regional connections to Lunenburg and Mahone Bay
- Improvements to the trip-planning system
- Card payment options on the bus
- Improvements to bus stop amenities and comfort, including seating, shelters, schedules, and maps

2. Engagement summary: Bridgewater

Destinations (any travel mode)

The survey asked participants about how often they visit destinations in their community. When combining weekly and daily responses, the most frequently reported destinations (by any travel mode) were:

1. 90% go to shops weekly or daily
2. 58% to meet family and friends
3. 50% to recreational facilities

These are followed by work or school (for themselves) (37%), civic facilities (31%), work or school (for someone else) (25%), and health care facilities (8%).

Destinations (by bus)

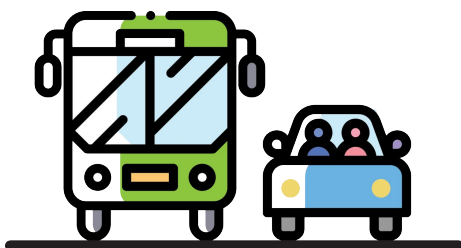
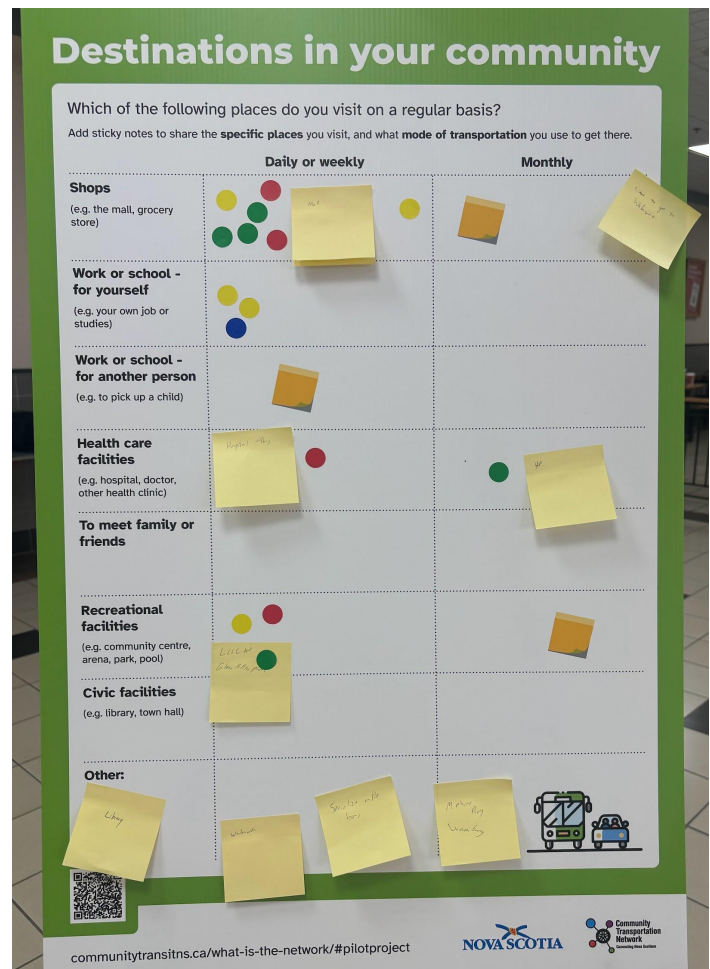
Very few people reported taking the bus to any of these destinations, with 60% to 90% each responding that they never take the bus to each destination.

The most common type of destination that survey respondents visit by bus is shops, with 13% reporting that they take the bus to shops daily or weekly. Another 13% reported taking the bus daily or weekly to visit family and friends. Fewer than five respondents each reported taking the bus weekly or daily to all other destination types.

Pop-up findings

Frequent destinations (any travel mode)

- Shops were the most common daily or weekly destination, followed by work or school and recreation.



"I'd like the bus to go to the Walmart/Canadian Tire plus my eye doctor. I take the bus to its last stop before it turns on Lahave St. and then I have to walk on the highway. It's dangerous plus quite a long walk there and back."

— Survey respondent

2. Engagement summary

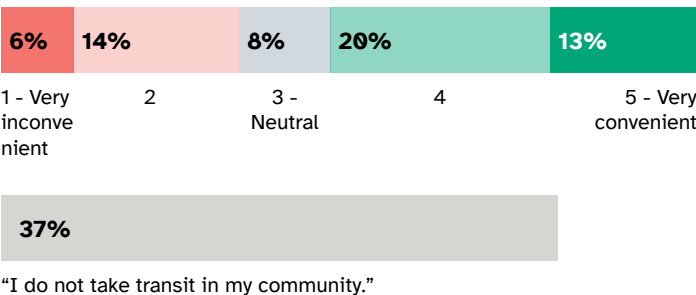
2.3. Pictou County

We reached local residents and community groups in Pictou County through a wide variety of methods, including one pop-up engagement event on the bus, one pop-up event at the Wellness Centre, online and phone outreach, and an online survey.

About half the people we engaged use transit in Pictou County, with a greater proportion of survey respondents having used the main route (38%) compared to the expansion route (13%). In general, people valued the main route as a way to get around; however, several mentioned that the one-hour loop takes too long, and that they would like real-time bus tracking and trip-planning app integration. Others expressed desires for better bus connections to other towns in Pictou County. In the survey, the most common mode of transport was car or motorcycle. Just 8% reported that public transit is their primary way of getting around.

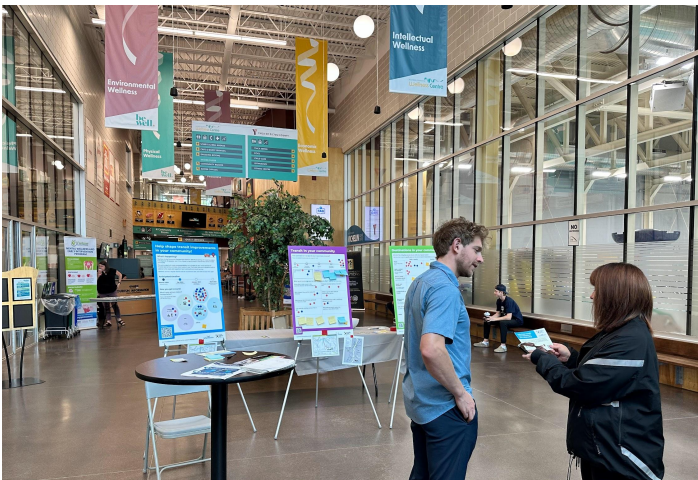
Ease and convenience of taking the bus

Survey respondents were asked to rank the convenience of taking the bus in Pictou County on a scale of one to five. Overall, more respondents rated the bus as convenient (32% total) compared to inconvenient (21%). The majority of these indicated the bus was “somewhat inconvenient” (14%) compared to “very inconvenient” (6%).



Who we heard from

- 37 pop-up participants
- 63 complete survey responses
- 31 key actors emailed or phoned
- 2 interview participants



Demographics

- In the survey, participants were given the option to self-report demographics:
- 66% self-identified as women, and 19% as men
 - 50% indicated they are 50 or older, and 25% self-identified as a senior or older adult
 - 54% reported being employed full-time
 - 24% reported they are retired
 - 55% reported a household income less than \$100,000, including 35% reporting under \$60,000

2. Engagement summary: Pictou County

Barriers to taking transit

The survey asked people to select the top three factors that have discouraged or prevented them from taking the bus in the past six months, if any. The top responses were:

1. Buses do not come often enough (24%)
2. Trip takes too long or follows an inefficient route (22%)
3. Transit stop is too far of a walk from my destination (22%)
4. Hours of service do not meet my needs (19%)
5. Transit route does not take me where I want to go (14%)

Priorities

The survey proposed a list of changes to transit infrastructure and service, and asked participants to select the top three changes that would make them more likely to take transit in Pictou County. The top five responses were:

1. Real-time bus tracking to know when the bus will arrive (41%)
2. Seating and weather protection at transit stops (27%)
3. Ability to use an app to plan my trip (e.g. Google Maps) (27%)
4. Free transit (25%)
5. Receiving a monthly transit pass through my employer or university (21%)

Pop-up findings

Participants expressed similar challenges and priorities to those that came out in the survey. Challenges included:

- The bus route and schedule are inconvenient, or the bus does not come frequently enough.
- The bus does not run at the times needed to get somewhere (e.g. late evenings).
- Bus tickets are too expensive.

Participants also expressed appreciation for the service, including:

- Great transit system
- Affordable way to get around
- Friendly service
- Reduces the need to walk
- Reliable service
- Easy to navigate
- Sunday service is useful

Participants suggested several changes to help the transit system better meet their needs, including:

- More frequent or two-way service
- Greater clarity on where users can flag the bus or not
- Real-time transit tracker and better information on trip planning (e.g. post updates on the Pictou County website when there are service interruptions)
- A youth fare or pass
- Card payment options on the bus
- Improvements to bus stop amenities and comfort, including seating and shelters

2. Engagement summary: Pictou County

Destinations (any travel mode)

The survey asked participants about how often they visit destinations in their community. When combining weekly and daily responses, the most frequently reported destinations (by any travel mode) were:

1. 98% go to shops weekly or daily
2. 75% to meet family or friends
3. 70% to work or school for themselves

These are followed by recreational facilities (57%), work or school for someone else (37%), civic facilities (30%), and health care facilities (3%).

Destinations (by bus)

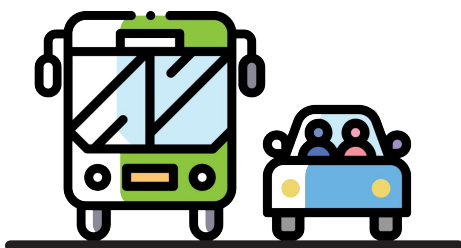
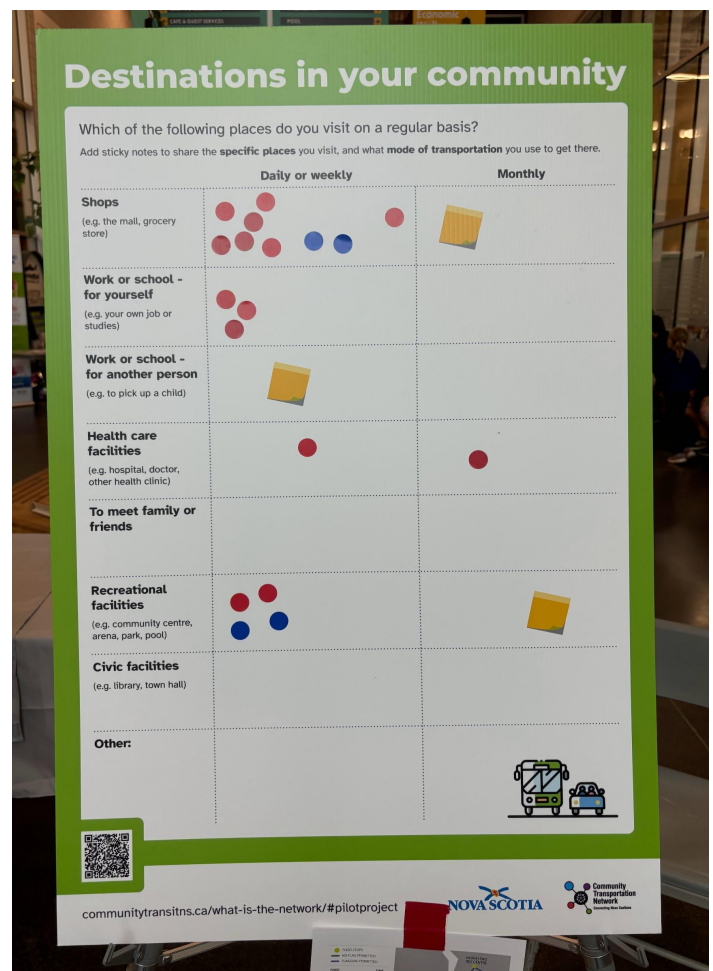
Very few people reported taking the bus to any of these destinations, with 60% to 90% each responding that they never take the bus to each destination.

The most common type of destination that survey respondents visit by bus is shops, with 19% reporting that they take the bus to shops daily or weekly. Another 13% reported taking the bus daily or weekly to recreational facilities. Fewer than seven respondents each reported taking the bus weekly or daily to all other destination types.

Pop-up findings

Frequent destinations (any travel mode)

- Shops were the most common daily or weekly destination, followed by recreation facilities and work or school.



"Our bus runs on an hour loop, it would be nice if it ran every 1/2 hour. So if getting off work at 5pm not having to wait until 6pm for the next bus as an example."

— Survey respondent

MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF
ANTIGONISH

MEMO FOR DECISION

TO: COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
FROM: MEGAN MACINNIS, STRATEGIC INITIATIVES COORDINATOR
SUBJECT: ***ANTIGONISH TOURISM STRATEGY***
DATE: APRIL 22, 2025

Recommendations

That Municipal Council approve the proposed increase to the tourism strategy budget to \$70,000 annually for a period of four years; endorse the Partnership Agreement with the Antigonish Tourism Association; and authorize the Chief Administrative Officer to execute the agreement on behalf of the Municipality of the County of Antigonish.

Summary

At the Committee of the Whole meeting on April 8, 2025, Council received an update on the Antigonish Tourism Strategy, including a request to increase the annual tourism strategy budget from \$50,000 to \$70,000 for a four-year period. The proposed funding would be allocated to the Antigonish Tourism Association to strengthen and expand tourism development efforts in the region.

As part of the Partnership Agreement, representation from both the Town and County on the Antigonish Tourism Association's Board of Directors will be maintained.

Discussion

Included in your Council package is a draft Partnership Agreement between the Municipality and the Antigonish Tourism Association. This agreement outlines the terms under which the County would transfer the approved tourism budget to the Association, should Council decide to proceed.

Next Steps

Should Council choose to proceed, staff will engage legal counsel to review the Partnership Agreement and consult with the Municipality's insurance provider to assess any related considerations. Following these reviews, staff will initiate the recruitment process for the position of Director of Tourism.

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT
Between
The Municipality of the County of Antigonish
And
The Antigonish Tourism Association

Effective Date: *(Date of Signing)*

1. Purpose

This Partnership Agreement ("Agreement") establishes the terms and conditions under which the Municipality of the County of Antigonish ("County") and the Antigonish Tourism Association ("Association") will collaborate to support and enhance tourism development in Antigonish through financial support and strategic partnership.

2. Transfer of Tourism Strategy Funds

The County agrees to allocate \$ [REDACTED] annually for four years from its Tourism Strategy budget to the Association. Funds will be transferred on a quarterly basis, contingent upon the Association submitting an invoice to the County.

3. Use of Funds

The Association shall allocate the transferred funds exclusively for tourism-related activities, including but not limited to marketing, promotions, and development initiatives, that benefit Antigonish. Additionally, the levy money may be used to fund up to 50% of the salary of a staff person responsible for tourism-related activities supporting Antigonish.

4. Reporting

Each year by March 31, the Association shall submit the following report to County Council containing the following:

- Starting in 2026 and in future years, a budget outlining planned expenditures and an overview of initiatives for the upcoming year.
- Finances detailing the expenditure and allocation of the transferred funds for the year just ending.
- County council may require the Association to submit an independent financial review.

5. Governance and Representation

- The County shall have a voting member on the Association's Board of Directors.
- The Board of Directors will have representation from both the Town and County.
- The County's Chief Administrative Officer or a designated representative will assume this role by April 1, 2026.

6. Review and Renewal

- The partnership will be evaluated after the first year to assess its effectiveness and impact.
- If either party wishes to terminate the Agreement, written notice must be provided to the other party no later than January 1 of the applicable year. Termination will be effective March 31 of the fiscal year

7. General Provisions

- This Agreement may be amended only through mutual written consent of both parties.
- Both parties agree to work collaboratively and in good faith to ensure the success of the partnership.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have executed this Agreement as of the Effective Date.

Signed for and on behalf of the Municipality of the County of Antigonish:

Name: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

Signed for and on behalf of the Antigonish Tourism Association:

Name: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

Witness:

Name: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

DRAFT

Antigonish Tourism Association Members - April, 2025

Antigonish County Businesses

Organization(s)
• Keppoch Inn
• Antigonish Evergreen Inn
• Antigonish Microtel Inn
• Coastal Inn Antigonish
• Bayside Travel Centre
• Lochaber Lake Cottages
• Steinhart Distillery
• Pomquet Beach Cottages
• Hyclass Ocean Campground
• Half Cocked Brewing
• Pending confirmation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Island Beach Hideaways ○ South Side Vacations ○ Seas 'scape Cottages

Antigonish Town Businesses

Organization
• Homeward Inns of Canada
• Brownstone Restaurant
• Gabrielle's Bistro
• Maritime Inn / Mainstreet Café
• Claymore Inn & Suites / Justamere Café & Bakery
• Antigonish Visitor Information Centre
• Candid Brewing
• Antigonish Townhouse
• Burnside Brewing, Oak Manor
• Coldstream Distillery
• Next Level Skateboards
• Whidden's Campground

MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF
ANTIGONISH

MEMO FOR DECISION

TO: COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
FROM: MEGAN MACINNIS, STRATEGIC INITIATIVES COORDINATOR
SUBJECT: ***SELECTION OF INVESTIGATOR FOR MUNICIPAL CODE OF CONDUCT***
DATE: APRIL 22, 2025

Recommendation

Staff is putting forward the following recommendation for consideration by the committee:

The Committee recommends that Municipal Council appoint Charles Thompson of Burchell MacDougall LLP as their investigator under subsection 23C(1) of the Municipal Government Act to receive and investigate complaints received under the Municipal Code of Conduct for Elected Officials.

Summary

In November 2024, Municipal Council adopted the model Code of Conduct for Municipalities prescribed by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. In accordance with the provincial legislative requirements, all municipal units and villages must retain legal counsel to provide guidance and conduct investigations should the need arise.

Background

At the Committee of the Whole Meeting held on April 8, 2025, staff presented Council with a recommendation. Due to a potential conflict of interest, Council requested that staff re-evaluate the list of qualified investigators and submit a revised recommendation.

Discussion

Following a re-evaluation of the list of qualified investigators provided by AMANS, staff recommends Charles A. Thompson, Partner at Burchell MacDougall LLP, as the preferred candidate to conduct municipal investigations.

Based in Truro, Mr. Thompson brings extensive experience and a thorough understanding of recent amendments to the Municipal Government Act and the new Code of Conduct. As the current solicitor for multiple municipalities, he provides a wide range of legal services on an ongoing basis. His background also includes significant experience and expertise in investigations and investigative techniques.

Next Steps

If council chooses to proceed with Burchell MacDougall as recommended by staff, the following steps will follow.

1. Define the scope of services with Burchell MacDougall
2. Conduct a review to identify and address any potential conflicts of interest.
3. Proceed with engagement and contract negotiations as required.

MEMO FOR INFORMATION

From: TAMMY FELTMATE, DIRECTOR OF SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES
To: **Committee Of the Whole**
Subject: **Local Leadership for Climate Adaptation Program Follow Up**
Date: 17/04/2025

Community Climate Resilience Project Overview

Local Leadership for Climate Adaptation Program is aimed at improving climate resilience in municipalities along the Atlantic coast of Canada through training and community engagement and developing a practical action plan. Community climate resilience through data-driven assessments and collaboration with community, staff and Council, subject matter experts and data. Resources developed through this work will identify and complete risk assessments that can be defined to 30m areas.

- The project aligns with Canada's National Adaptation Strategy and aims to improve community climate resilience over 24 months.
- It will involve three provinces: Newfoundland & Labrador, Prince Edward Island, and Nova Scotia, focusing on coastal communities.
- Phase 1 will last four months, include a gap analysis and a regional community engagement plan. Engagement is a vital component of the program, and valuable opportunity for the County, we can bring on local partners include Councillors and add engage on related County priorities.
- Phase 2 will take five months, delivering assessments in three initial partner communities, generating Hazard, Risk, and Vulnerability reports.

- Phase 3 will span 15 months, facilitating workshops for adaptation prioritization.
- The project emphasizes transparency, accountability, and community control over resilience data for informed decision-making.
- Key outputs include assessment reports, engagement plans, and a project closeout report to summarize findings, innovations and actions.
- The initiative aims to protect infrastructure, secure economies, and save lives through measurable climate adaptation actions.
- The program will provide municipalities with actionable intelligence and planning tools to improve local climate resilience, including workshops to prioritize risk reduction activities and foster public-private opportunities.
- Final submissions are due May 23, 2025 to FCM.

Summary

The project aims to enhance municipal climate resilience through targeted training and collaboration over two years and ultimately improve municipal readiness for climate change impacts. The project will support climate risk integration into municipal plans and enhance economic recovery from climate-driven emergencies. Provides an opportunity for County to develop community driven, owned action plans specific to risks and geography. Opportunity to discuss areas for partnership with Coady, St. FX and others to ensure sustainability of project.

Next Steps

- Discussion and decision regarding participation.
- Follow up with FCM and Adam McAllister.

UPDATE ON HAF PROGRAM

TO: Committee of the Whole
FROM: Denise Dunn, Housing Accelerator Fund Coordinator
SUBJECT: HOUSING ACCELERATOR FUND (HAF) & PROJECT FUNDING CONTRIBUTIONS
DATE: 22/04/2025

UPDATE:

Through aligned commitments under the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) awarded to the Municipality of the County of Antigonish in January 2024:

- HAF is supporting Antigonish Community Transit Service (ACTS) - Operational Review in the contribution amount of \$22,800 including HST. The ACTS Operational Review is cost shared with the Town of Antigonish as per the Inter-Municipal Agreement for the Housing Accelerator Fund.
- HAF is supporting Antigonish Community Transit Service (ACTS) – Redesign and Rebrand in the contribution amount of \$15,000 including HST. The ACTS Redesign and Rebrand is cost shared with the Town of Antigonish as per the Inter-Municipal Agreement for the Housing Accelerator Fund.

BACKGROUND:

ACTS Operational Review

The Municipality of the County of Antigonish, Town of Antigonish, and the Antigonish Community Transit Society (ACTS) contracted WSP, via Request for Proposal process, for the review of community transit services in Antigonish in early 2024.

The goal of this project was to assess the needs of the community related to community / public transportation services, determine the most effective means of addressing those needs, and developing a strategy with a governance and service delivery model that is accessible and fiscally responsible.

Simultaneously, Antigonish was selected to be included in a provincial pilot project for a similar review of the fixed route service. The contract with WSP was discontinued in favour of the provincial pilot project to avoid duplicate expenses for similar work.

Happy Cities consulting firm was retained by Nova Scotia Community Transit Network (NSCTN; the non-profit organization in charge of managing the provincial pilot study). The County, Town and ACTS participated fully as key stakeholders in the project. The “Recommendations Report: Fixed route transit service expansion pilot study” has been completed and submitted to the ACTS Board. The funding contributions above reflect the Year 1 Recommended Actions in the final report.

Housing Accelerator Fund

The Federal Housing Accelerator Fund has been awarded to The Municipality of the County of Antigonish in the amount of \$1,919,753. The funds will be received in 4 equal installments to pursue milestones under the initiatives below:

1. Asset Management Planning

The objective of this initiative will be to complete a detailed Asset Management Plan, which will provide a full inventory of all municipal assets and their conditions. The Plan will assist the County in developing a strategic maintenance and replacement system for these assets. The Plan will also provide up-to-date financial data to help the County plan for the costs of upgrades and maintenance. By providing a comprehensive overview of both infrastructure shortfalls and areas with additional capacity, the Asset Management Plan will support housing growth by revealing opportunities for strategic asset development and by highlighting regions that can support additional housing development.

2. Modernization of the Permitting Process

With the Eastern District Planning Commission (EDPC), the intention is to replace the existing permitting process with an online portal, which the EDPC will maintain. Ultimately, this new process will reduce redundancies, provide efficiencies, and streamline the process for both developers and public departments. The initiative will support housing growth by minimizing delays in processing permits and signaling modernization of our community.

3. Source Water Planning & Protection

The objective of this initiative will be to integrate additional water sources into existing infrastructure to supplement the water supply of the James River Dam. This is a high-priority project that is required to remove barriers to future increases in housing supply in the County. To complete this project, County will work directly with the Town of Antigonish.

4. Active Transportation Connector

The Mount Cameron subdivision is experiencing rapid growth in housing supply, which the County has supported by upgrading infrastructure and providing increased access to services for new developments. However, transportation remains a barrier to additional growth in this region due to few options for alternative transportation. Specifically, there are no sidewalks or trail systems to support community needs, which limits interest from new residents who place a priority on recreation and active transportation. The County is proposing a connection that would provide a designated trail system suitable for alternative forms of transportation, including walking and bicycling, with connections to local services and amenities and the regional Active Transportation network.

5. Residential Improvements Bylaw

This initiative provides flexibility to developers completing property improvements subject to fees, such as those covered by our existing Local Improvement Bylaw. Under current regulations, developers must provide payment for certain property improvements. These

charges support municipal expenses such as increased servicing for new developments. Under this initiative, alternative payment options are being explored. This alternative payment approach aims to remove barriers to construction by freeing up funds for future housing investments.

6. Accessory Dwellings

County regulations currently permit Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in some, but not all areas of the County, which limits opportunities to add additional housing on existing lots. ADUs are sometimes referred to as garage suites, backyard suites and garden suites. The initiative will involve the completion of a review of local planning documents, which will determine areas that could benefit from regulatory changes to permit accessory dwelling units. After completion of the review, we will make appropriate amendments to planning documents to permit these units in strategic residential zones. This initiative will increase housing density in these targeted areas, increasing the overall housing inventory without requiring the development of existing green space.

7. Community Transit

In partnership with Antigonish Community Transit and the Town of Antigonish, the County will hire a consultant to review and evaluate current public transit offerings to determine the most effective transit service strategy to meet the needs of the region. The consultant will also produce recommendations for strategies the local government can enact to improve public transit services in the coming years. Following the review and evaluation, the County will make appropriate changes to the current system to support service growth and ensure equitable access to public transportation. These improvements to community transit will make the County more attractive to developers by providing new residents with reliable options to commute to work, school, social services, recreation, and other amenities.

8. Non-Profit Affordable Housing Grant Program

This initiative will be the creation of a grant program for non-profit organizations to create affordable housing in the County.

NEXT STEPS INITIATIVE 7: COMMUNITY TRANSIT

1. A Request for Proposal (RFP) will be jointly issued and contracted by the Municipality of the County of Antigonish, the Town of Antigonish and Antigonish Community Transit Society for an Operational, Human Resources and Governance Review of ACTS.
2. Redesign and Rebrand project will commence April 2025 with cost shared funds dispersed to NSCTN incrementally as per their agreement with Happy Cities.



April 14, 2025

Warden Nicholas MacInnis and Council
Municipality of the County of Antigonish
285 Beech Hill Road
Beech Hill, Nova Scotia B2G 0B4

Dear Warden MacInnis,

At the April 10th, 2025 Board meeting of the Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library, a motion was approved to request a grant increase from the eight municipalities in the region. The Board acknowledges and regrets the lateness of this request, however we wished to explain the situation to the province and seek clarity around the funding formula.

The board is requesting an overall increase of \$25,000 to the municipal grant, which represents \$5632.00 for the Municipality of the County of Antigonish. The amount is based on population as per the last funding formula (calculations attached). As in the past, we would only proceed with the requested increase if all municipalities agree. The rationale for this increase is explained below.

Without a new funding formula, and no increase to the provincial grant, the board is faced with a \$188,640 shortfall.

- The increase to minimum wage will cost PARL \$62,393.
- Providing a reasonable cost of living increase to non-minimum wage staff \$76,247.
- We cannot cut the collections budget further and should add \$50,000.
- Inflation on remaining items is a problem, but we can manage.

To cope with this shortfall, the board was presented with two scenarios.

1. If the province provides the requested bridge funding of \$1.6 million province-wide.
 - PARL would receive approximately \$135,000.
 - A request of \$25,000 (total) from the 8 municipalities.
 - PARL would increase board generated income (fundraising) by \$25,000.
 - Total = \$185,000.

2. If there is no further funding from the province.

- Lay off the equivalent of 3.5 full time staff. This would be a mix of layoffs and reduced staff hours and be spread across the region. We would have to, at minimum, close Sundays in Antigonish and New Glasgow, and close Saturdays in River John, Stellarton, Trenton, and Westville. We would discontinue the Adopt-a-Library Literacy Program. We would not be able to support community partners in a range of projects. Program offerings will be reduced. This would amount to about \$100,000.
- We could make a request of \$25,000 (total) from the 8 municipalities.
- PARL would increase board generated income (fundraising) by \$25,000.
- Total = \$150,000.
- This would cover the minimum wage increase, provide a smaller cost of living increase to the other staff, and provide a smaller increase to the collections budget.

The board must approve a budget at its meeting of June 12th. In the meantime, the Board can maintain a restricted budget based on the previous year (except for mandatory minimum wage increases).

The board greatly appreciates the support from all eight municipalities as we work with the province to rectify this situation.

Sincerely,



Eric Stackhouse
Chief Librarian and Board Secretary

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Town/Municipality 2025-26

Requested increase

Increased by:

New Glasgow	\$83,405	\$86,989	\$3,584
Pictou	\$33,841	\$35,294	\$1,453
Pictou County	\$195,112	\$203,498	\$8,386
Stellarton	\$41,680	\$43,471	\$1,791
Trenton	\$24,257	\$25,299	\$1,042
Westville	\$33,494	\$34,933	\$1,439
Antigonish	\$38,821	\$40,489	\$1,668
Antigonish County	\$131,053	\$136,685	\$5,632
	\$581,663	\$606,660	\$24,997
Totals	\$581,663	\$606,663	\$25,000

This equates to an 4.3% increase for each municipality.