‘Walk and Wheel’ Oxford

A Scoping Assessment: Findings Report

Created for: Town of Oxford, Nova Scotia

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Supported by: PEACH Research Unit, Dalhousie University

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Pictured: Residents of Oxford, Al and Maxine Clarke, along Trans Canada Trail.

Acknowledgement

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Contents

About

The Town of Oxford is a small-sized community with a long history connected to its waterways, farming, and industry. It is now located along the Trans-Canada Highway which brings travelers to the edge of town as 'a stop along the way'. However, the Town wishes to be become more of an active, vibrant destination for everyone.

Oxford is known for being the Wild Blueberry Capital of Canada. It is surrounded by a network of well-used recreational trails, including those used for hiking, snowshoeing, cycling, mountain biking, and more. It also offers direct access to the Trans Canada Trail. These recreational routes can attract more people to the community and encourage more active lifestyles for community members.

According to the Town's *Physical Activity and Recreation Strategic Plan (2019-2024),* while walking is the top activity that residents wish to do more, the condition and maintenance of roadside and cycling infrastructure is considered to be a significant challenge to achieving physical activity goals for residents (Town of Oxford, p. 4). Therefore, the Town is seeking to make strategic investments in walking and wheeling infrastructure (e.g., sidewalks, bike lanes, safe pedestrian crossings, etc.) that enrich social and physical activity in and around the Town.

To meet the needs of current and future generations, targeted infrastructure improvements and plan-making that considers the accessibility and age-friendliness of active transportation routes will be necessary.

Purpose of this Report

To inform this work, this report details the results of a scoping assessment of walk-and-wheelability assets and challenges in the Town and makes recommendations to inform future initiatives towards healthy and inclusive active transportation. This report can be considered as a 'first step' to achieving the Town's goals by generating and documenting key information that can support future investment, maintenance, and strategic decision-making.

The activities of this study were overseen by a committee of representatives from the Town, and Nova Scotia's Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism, and Heritage.

Objectives

Building a walkable and wheelable community goes hand in hand with the objectives of creating an active, accessible, and safe communty.

The term “walkability” refers to the idea that a place is designed in a way that supports someone to walk to daily destinations without needing a car, transit, or other mode of transportation (Forsyth, 2015). The term “wheelability” recognizes that many pedestrians use wheeled mobility devices, and that their needs must be considered with the needs of all pedestrians.

Walk-and-wheelable communities aim to enhance the connectivity of pedestrian and active transportation routes, and improve the quality of those routes, including making them safer and more user-friendly. By doing so, they aim to encourage more active transportation, passive exercise, and, therefore, healthier lifestyles (Leyden, 2003).

This report documents key information to inform ongoing efforts towards the following three objectives supported by the Town:

Walk-and-wheelability

To enhance connectivity to important destinations across town through well designed and well laid out pedestrian and active transportation routes.

Accessibility

To build, update, and maintain public infrastructure that removes barriers to access and that are considerate of the needs of people living with disabilities.

Safe and Active Living

To promote healthy, active lifestyles through activities such as walking, running, and cycling, by creating safe and attractive community space for these activities.

Method

This section describes the activities that were undertaken to produce this report.

Data Collection

Two types of assessment were performed for the Town of Oxford to inform the state of active transportation infrastructure in the town and its suitability for persons who experience a range of (dis)abilities. These were:

- Spatial analyses using road network data, topographical data, and geolocations of everyday destinations to assess potential assets and challenges to pedestrian connectivity; and

- Sidewalk assessment to identify and score the quality of pedestrian infrastructure. This assessment used both in-person and remote sampling methods to audit the quality of streets, sidewalks, and select trails.

Criteria for these assessments is informed by federal and provincial accessibility standards for the built environment and environmental indicators of age-friendly and accessible physical activity spaces compiled from tested neighbourhood assessment tools such as the Rural Active Living Assessment Toolkit (RALA), Senior Walking Environmental Assessment Tool (SWEAT-R), Stakeholder Walkability/ Wheelability Audit in Neighbourhoods (SWAN), and the World Health Organization's Checklist of Essential Features for Age-Friendly Cities. Existing spatial data was obtained from the Nova Scotia Government's Open Data Portal (e.g., road networks) and used where possible.

The interpretation of the data collected and detailed within this report was also informed by local stakeholders and residents of the Town of Oxford, consulted through a public event held in April 2024.

Public Consultation

A public consultation session was held on a weekday evening in April 2024 at the Town of Oxford's Fire Hall. Residents of Oxford gathered with the research team to discuss accessibility barriers they experience when traveling as pedestrians around the town, as well as to offer experiential perspective on the direction of future projects that improve accessiblity, connectivity, and active transportation.

A short presentation explained the scope of the consultation and was followed by a facilitated roundtable discussion with attendees. Approximately four Town officials were in attendance at the session, one representative from the Province of Nova Scotia, and six members of the public. Individuals spoke to their own perspectives as well as those belonging to their friends and family who experience accessibility barriers including mobility, sensory, and intellectual disability. The knowledge gathered from this session informs the outcomes of this report. Appendix 2 provides a summary of the consultation's themes.

Figure 1. Oxford Public Consultation. Picture taken during the consultation session's discussion period. Photo credit: L.Cloney

Deliverables

The results of the data collection and public consultation led to this report's following four deliverables:

- Mapping of spatial connectivity for pedestrian routes;
- Assessment of quality of pedestrian infrastructure;
- Overview of assets and challenges to active transportation;
- Recommendations for future steps; and,
- An inventory of potential funding sources.

Background

This section provides geographic, demographic, and policy context relevant to the development of this report.

Geography and Land Use

Oxford is a town in Cumberland County, Nova Scotia, approximately 32 km east of the Town of Amherst. It exists at the junction of three rivers: Black River, River Philip, and Little River. Much of the town is located on flood plain, supporting watershed ecosystems, coniferous and decidous forests. The landscape is mostly flat. Agricultural and low density residential are predominant land uses around the town. Along the main corridors of the Town -- Main St. and Water St. -- a greater diversity of uses are supported including local commercial, multi-unit residential, and industrial properties.

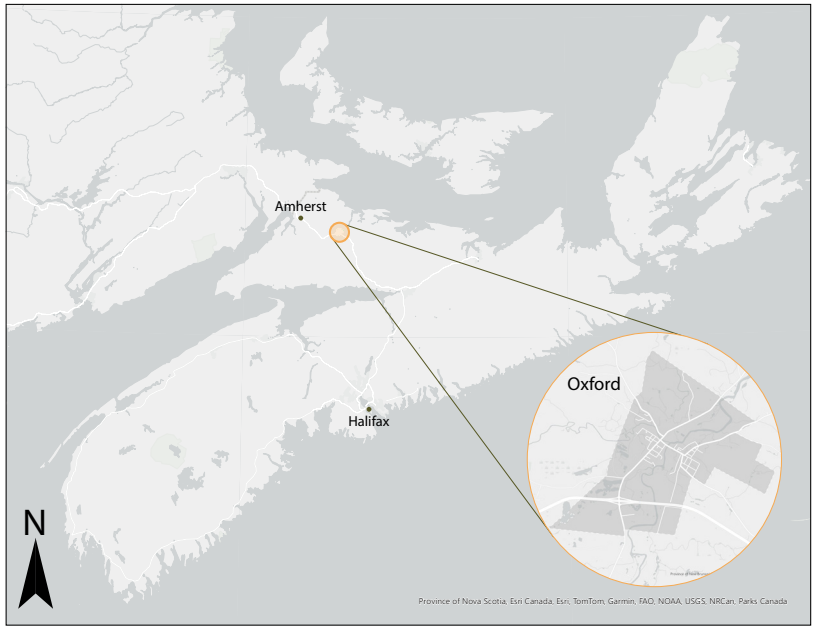


Figure 2. Location of Oxford. Map showing where Oxford is in the context of Nova Scotia

Demographic Context

The Town of Oxford's total population has grown compared to 10 years ago. It's population, as of 2021, was 1,170. As employment opportunities come to the area, the number of new residents is expected to have increased and to continue to do so.

Over 22% of the population is aged 65 years or older (Statistics Canada, 2021), which is higher than the national average. The needs of an aging population are different than a younger population. Older adults are more likely to experience mobility, sensory, and cognitive impairments as part of aging. Decisions about public services and infrastructure should consider the accessibility needs of this growing population.

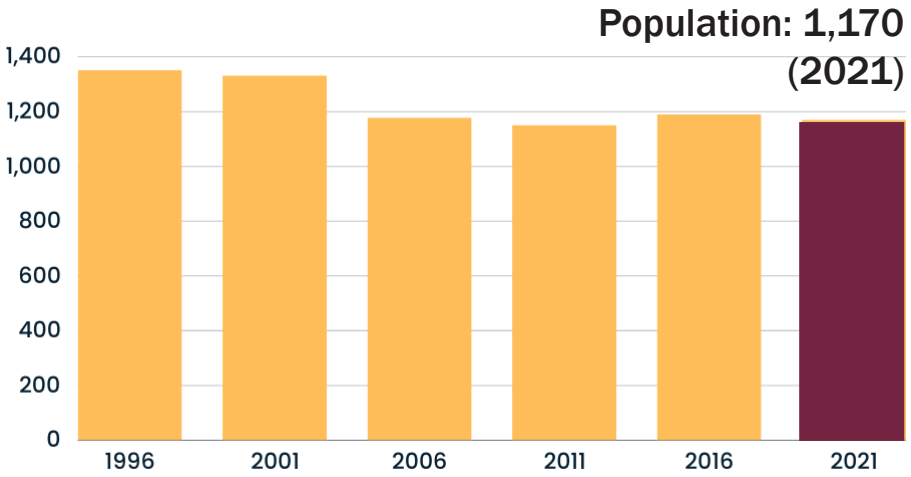


Figure 3. Oxford population. Graph of each census year's population.

Policy Context

It is within this policy context that the Town of Oxford initiated this report.

Municipal Planning for Walk-and-Wheelability

In its Municipal Planning Strategy (2009), the Town of Oxford states its goal to develop the downtown as "the heart of Oxford in 2029" with "an interconnected system of pathways and trails [to] provide for alternative transportation choices" (Section 3.1, Town of Oxford, 2009). Specific objectives for the Town also include "To foster and support a pedestrian-oriented built environment where differing land uses are within walking distance" and "to establish an interconnected street system, which provides a safe and enjoyable environment for vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists" (Section 3.3). The Town's *Physical Activity and Recreation Strategic Plan (2019-2024)* similarly outlines resident's desire to walk more frequently around town (Town of Oxford, 2019, p. 4).

Town of Oxford council also recently adopted their first Accessibility Plan, 2023-2026. In this document, the Town commits to creating an inclusive community and removing barriers to people living with disabilities. Common areas for improvement identified through this plan were a need for more accessible parking spaces, access into the Oxford Area, cracked or uneven pavement as a barrier for people with visual impairment and people using mobility devices, poor drainage and snow and ice build up along pedestrain routes, and poor street lighting.

The abovementioned policies and goals show that pedestrian infrastructure, including sidewalks and trails, are priority areas for future investment. The Town's goal to develop the downtown as a mixed use centre further demonstrates a need to consider the connectivity of active transportation routes with access to services and amenities, and the availability of accessible parking.

Nova Scotia Accessibility Act and Accessibility Standards in the Built Environment

In 2017, Nova Scotia adopted its first provincial legislation to formally recognize the rights of people living with disabilities and to commit to becoming a fully accessible province by 2030. This legislation prompted the development of municipal accessibility plans like Oxford's. To achieve the province's goal, a set of provincial standards for accessibility in the areas of Built Environment, Transportation, Education, Technology and Services, and Employment are currently under development.

Recent additions and updates to the Nova Scotia Building Code currently regulate infrastructure development projects with select accessibility requirements appearing in the Canadian Standards Association's B651 model standard. The Provinces's *Recommendations for an Accessibility Standard in the Built Environment: Phase 2* (2021) are also an important resource to consider when making plans for municipal infrastructure upgrades, as well as any future versions of the same document.

Nova Scotia Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act

Finally, Nova Scotia has set a goal "to complete core active transportation networks that are accessible for all ages and all abilities in 65% of the province's communities by 2030" (Nova Scotia, 2021). Municipalities can contribute to this goal by planning for and improving active transportation infrastructure and connections in their own jurisdictions.

Assessment of Indicators of Walk-and-Wheelability

This section compiles the data and observations resulting from the assessment of walking-and-wheeling infrastructure.

Connectivity to Services and Amenities (Assessment 1)

A top consideration of walk-and-wheelability is how well a community facilitates spatial access to services and amenities from the home. Measures include:

- Proximity to key destinations like: supermarket, pharmacy, parks, and community centres, from residential addresses (RALA, SWAN, WHO)
- Ratio of businesses with sidewalk access vs. without (RALA, SWAN, SWEAT-R)
- Presence of public parking spots (SWEAT-R, WHO)
- Proximity of public parking spots to key destinations (SWEAT-R)

Pedestrian Infrastructure (Assessment 2)

Distance and proximity to services is significantly impacted by the quality of the pedestrian journey. Measures include:

- Presence of sidewalks, i.e., one side of street, both sides of street, no sidewalk (RALA, SWEAT-R, WHO)
- Sidewalk/road condition and quality of paving (RALA, SWEAT-R)
- Frequency, quality, and type of marked crossings (RALA, SWEAT-R, SWAN)
- Presence of lighting, washrooms, shelter, and seating along pedestrian routes (RALA, SWEAT-R, WHO)

Additional Considerations

There are numerous factors that influence walk and wheelability. Not all are addressed within the scope of this report. Some additional factors considered include:

- Topography and street slope (RALA, SWEAT-R)

RALA = Rural Active Living Assessment Toolkit [Source: Hartley et al., (2009).]

SWEAT-R = Senior Walking Environmental Assessment Tool. [Source: Active Aging Research Team. University of British Columbia.]

SWAN = Stakeholders Walkability/Wheelability Audit in Neighbourhoods [Source: Mahmood et al. (2019).]

WHO = World Health Organization's Checklist of Essential Features for Age-Friendly Cities [Source: WHO. (2007). Checklist of Essential Features for Age-Friendly Cities]

The 15-Minute Neighbourhood

To assess spatial connectivity, it is a common best practice to use the 15-minute journey metric to represent a typical walkable and wheelable journey (Moreno, et al. 2021).

Despite recent misunderstanding, the 15-minute neighbourhood concept does not intend to keep people isolated within the boundaries of their communities. What it actually supports is that all people should have the option to access their daily needs and essential services close to their home. This is especially important for people whose primary mode of travel is walking, or who have limited access to vehicle transportation (Forsyth, 2015). The 15-minute walking or wheeling distance is a popular benchmark to guage what is an acceptable, walkable journey for the most people.

Because we don't all walk at the same pace, or use the same mobility tools, the 15-minute pedestrian journey looks different for different people. Studies on walking pace suggest that older adults experiencing frailty and very young children may travel an average of 400 metres in a 15-minute interval, while adults without disabilities on average may walk up to 1200 metres. Pedestrians using mobility aids like canes or crutches may be expected to travel a distance in between, and 800 metres on average (Muller et al., 2013; Dumbaugh, 2008).

When measuring walk-and-wheelable access to community services, this report's assessment used both 800 metre and 1200 metre benchmarks to show a more inclusive picture of pedestrian connectivity in Oxford.

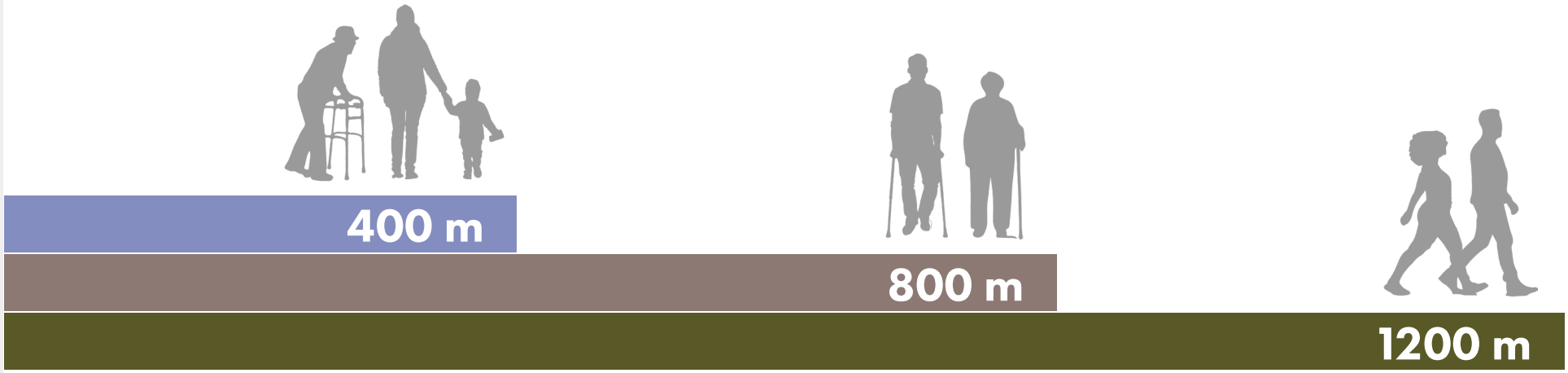


Figure 4: Varying 15-minute Walking Distance. Infographic showing relative average distance travelled in 15-minutes by people of different ages and abilities.

Assessment 1: Factors of Connectivity

Access to Everyday Destinations

To assess the spatial connectivity available to pedestrians in Oxford, 61 potential destinations were inventoried that included recreation and entertainment spaces such as the arena and future community centre, leisure spaces like restaurants and cafes, and essential services and amenities, as well as a large employer in the Town.

This analysis found that Oxford performs well in terms of spatial accessibility, which is explained further in the following subsections of Proximity to Key Services, and Proximity of Street Parking to Key Destinations.

A Note on Topography:

This report found Oxford's topography to be very consistent, with street slopes under a 5% grade. This means that hilly terrain is not a barrier to pedestrian journeys around town. Figure 5 shows that most streets (shown in green) comply with an accessible grade, with only a few (shown in red) that exceed the minimum recommended 8% slope. Oxford's flat topography is already to its advantage when working towards greater walk-and-wheelability.

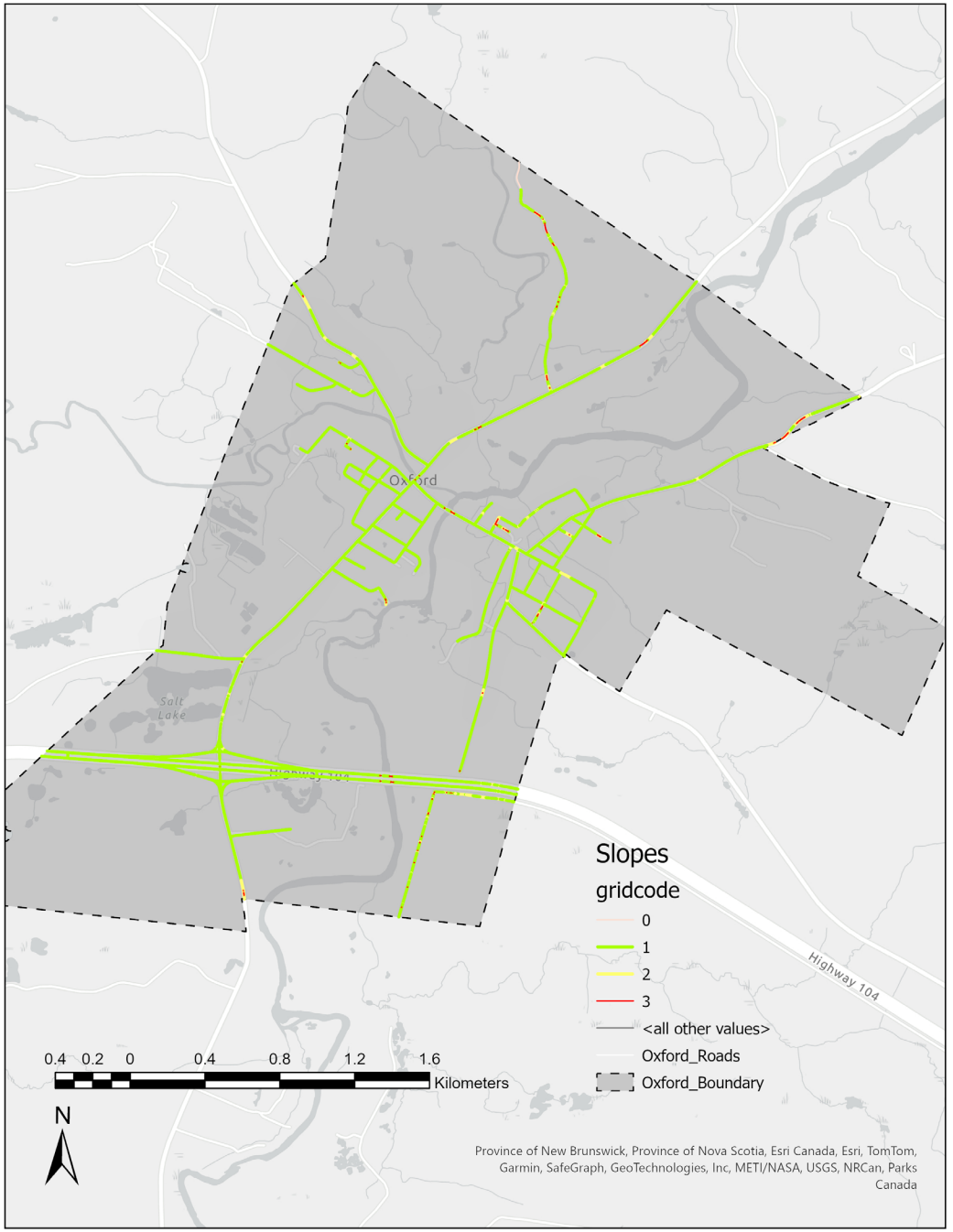


Figure 5: Map of Topography

Proximity to Key Services

The majority of services are centralized in the core of the town and this report found that a majority of residences are within a walk-and-wheelable distance to these centralized key services. For instance, this report found that 74.2% (380/512) of residential addresses in Oxford are within a 1200 metre walk or wheel to both a grocery store and a pharmacy, and 42.2% (216/512) are within 800 metres.

Therefore, for many people living in the town, these everyday services are within only a 15 minute active journey, achieving the 15-minute neighbourhood principle. Residents living on the southeast side of the Black River, however, are located further from services and amenities and are typically either outside of the 15-minute journey bubble or at least a 1200 m walking and wheeling travel distance.

On the following two pages are a selection of six key services sampled to show spatial accessibility in the Town. These are: grocery, pharmacy, school, arena, large employer, and community centre.

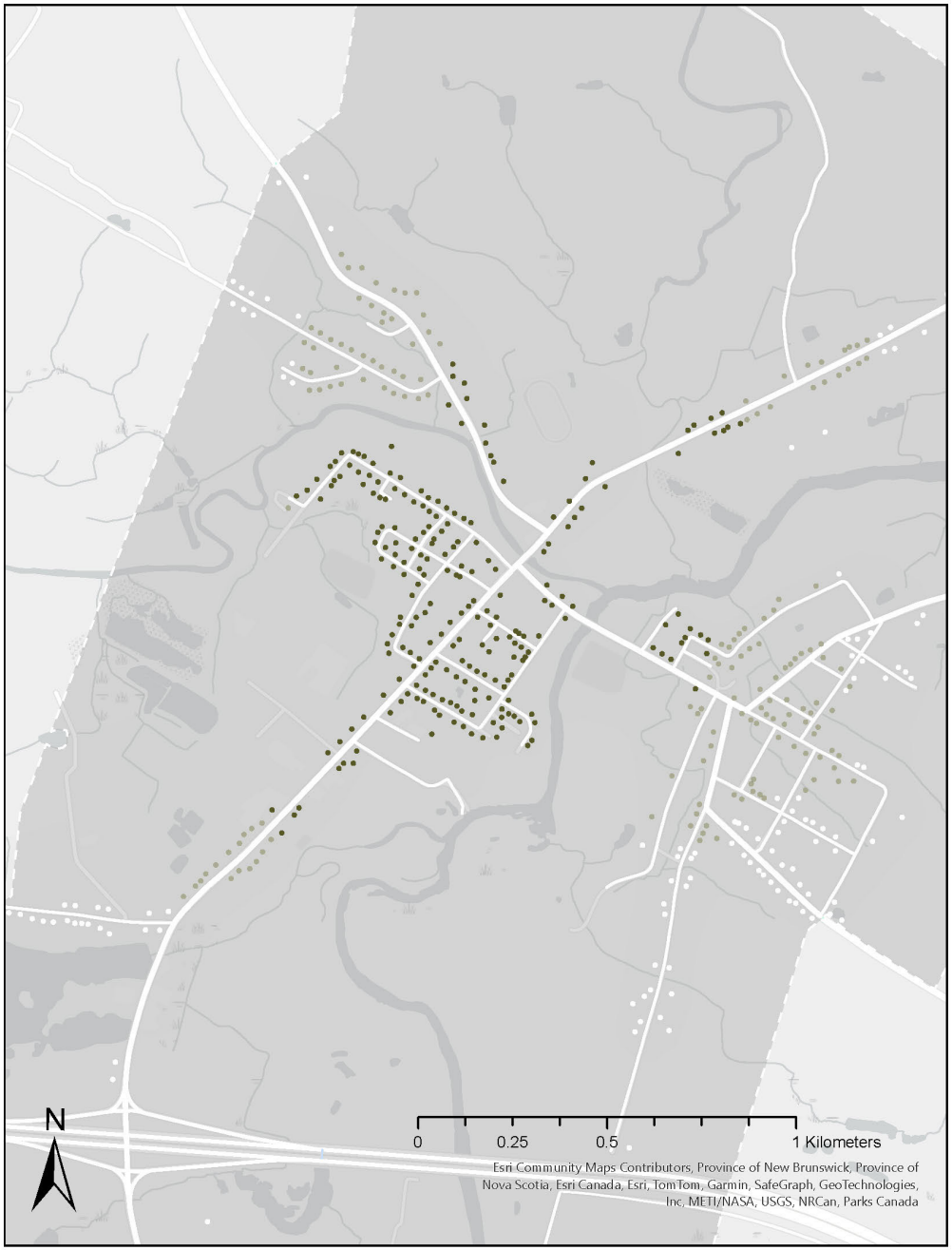
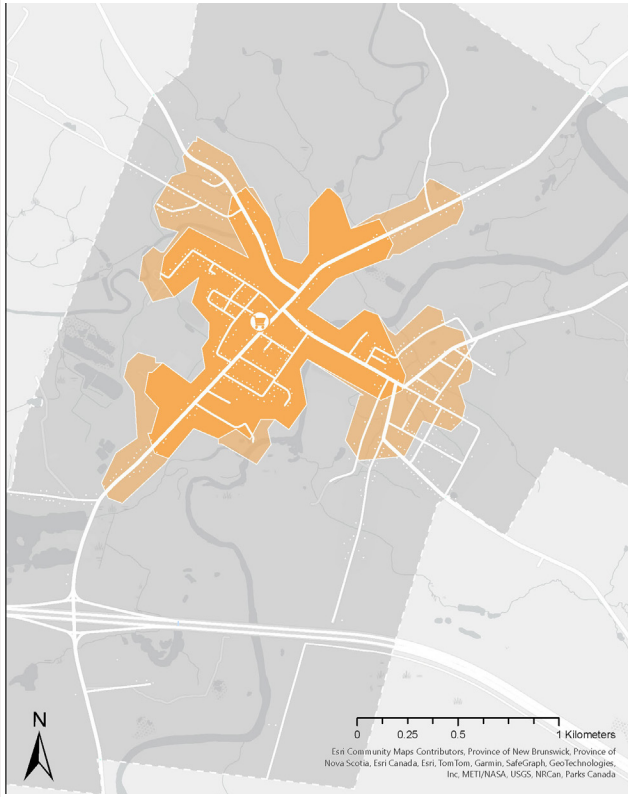


Figure 6: Access to Grocery and Pharmacy. Map of residenial addresses within different levels of spatial access to both a grocery store and a pharmacy.

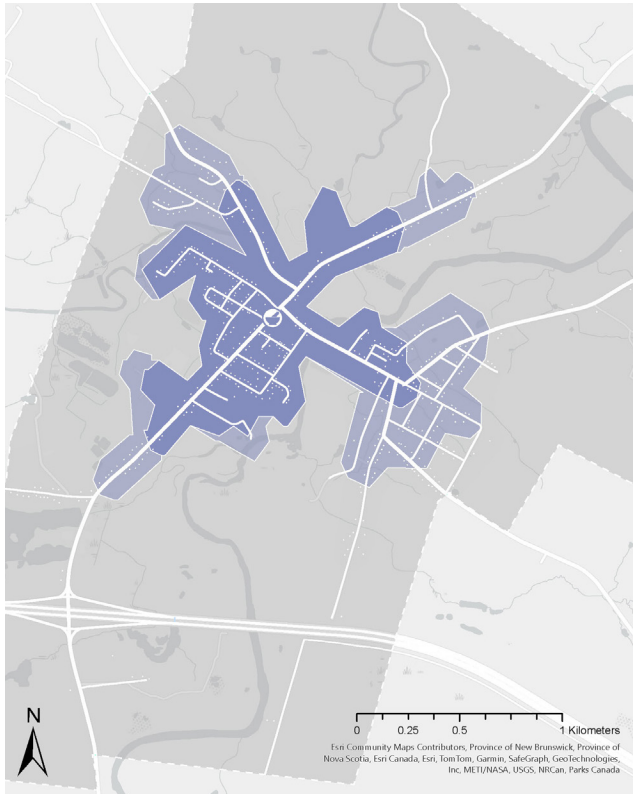


Grocery

There is a single supermarket located in the centre of the town. As the primary source of fresh produce in town (some packaged food is available from other vendors) it is a key service for health and wellbeing of residents. A majority of residences (75%) are within 1200 m of it.

75% (384/512) | **46.1%** (236/512)

1200 m | 800 m

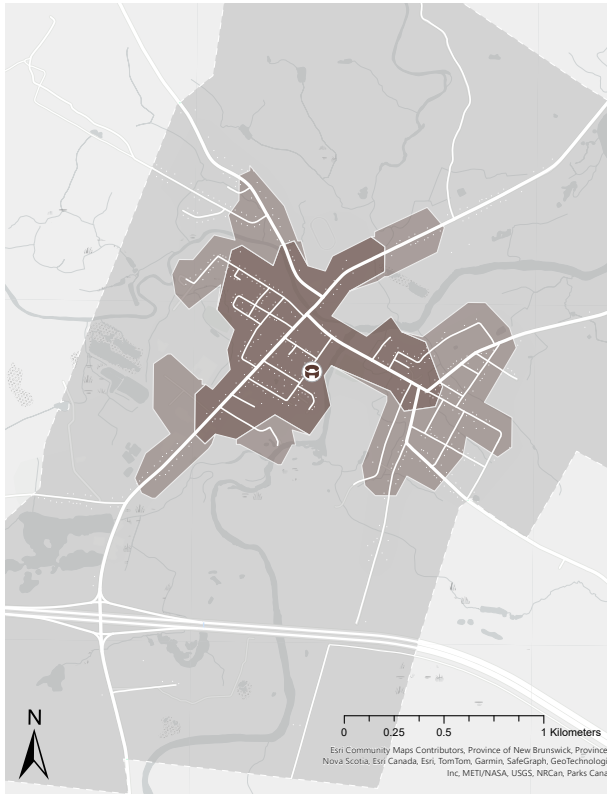


Pharmacy

The pharmacy is located across the street from the supermarket, which can be beneficial for trip-chaining between these two services. Even more residences (49 - 85%) are within walking-and-wheeling distance of the pharmacy than the supermarket.

81.6% (418/512) | **49%** (251/512)

1200 m | 800 m

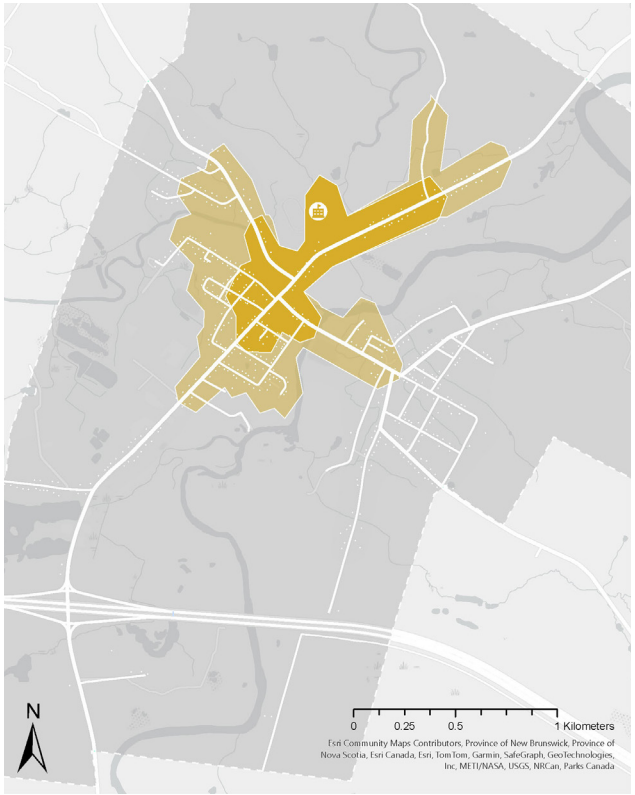


Arena

The Oxford Arena is a hub for local sports and events and nearly three-quarters of Oxford residents are within a 1200 m walk or wheel. Notably, the arena is within 800 m of the school, which is convenient for children who participate in after-school activities at the arena.

73.8% (378/512) | **41.8%** (214/512)

1200 m | 800 m



School

Children tend to walk more slowly than adults, so an 800 m journey or shorter is likely. Only 15.6% of residences are within this walking or wheeling distance. Therefore, it is unlikely families are walking children to and from school. Cycling may be an active option available to more residences.

52.7% (270/512) | **15.6%** (80/512)

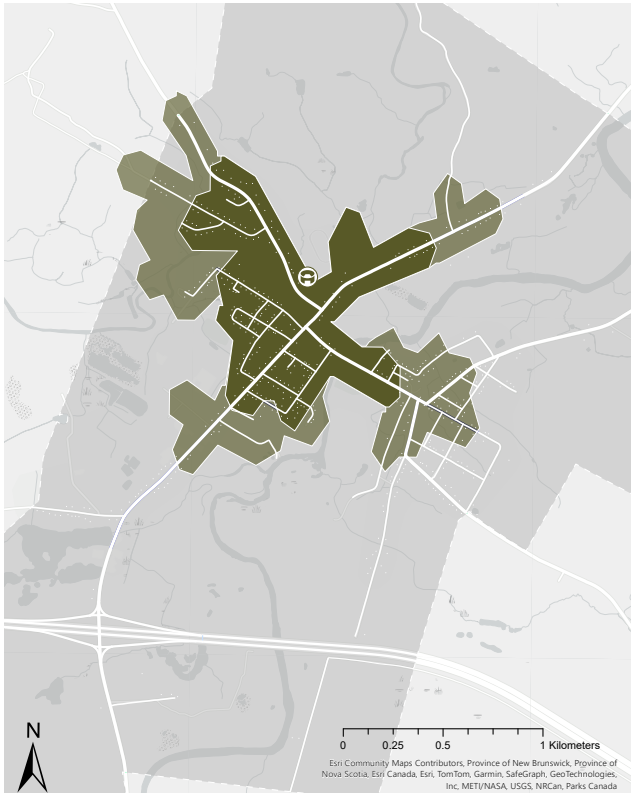
1200 m | 800 m

Large Employer

Over a quarter of residents are within a 800 m walk or wheel to Oxford Frozen Foods, and 87 more are within 1200 m. Commuting by active transportation may be encouraged through improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure.

42.6% (218/512) | **25.6%** (131/512)

1200 m | 800 m



Community Centre (planned)

The future community centre is strategically located near the regional education centre and town centre. A majority of residences in Oxford (70.7%) are within an average walking-and-wheeling distance, and under half are within an 800 m journey.

70.7% (362/512) | **45.3%** (232/512)

1200 m | 800 m

About Storefront Businesses

The Town of Oxford is home to a range of local businesses. Storefronts are located primarily along Main St. and Water St, with a density of services located in the core of the town. Approximately **74% (25/34)** of businesses are located on streets with sidewalk access to their entrances. However, many of the businesses operate out of converted residential buildings or historic buildings with stepped entrances that are at least a single step up from sidewalk level. This makes them inaccessible to people using wheeled mobility devices and is a common challenge in towns and rural areas with older infrastructure.

Storefront businesses along Water St. in Oxford's Town Centre.

Presence of Public Parking

Public parking is an important factor of network connectivity from an accessibility perspective, especially when considering multimodal travel that can often go overlooked. A multimodal journey may begin by driving in a private vehicle from home to a shopping or recreation space, where one can park and then walk or wheel to multiple destinations from there. This is especially common in rural areas where there may be a main street or town core where services are located. For residents with different levels of personal mobility, it is important to have accessible parking options present that enable short walking and wheeling journeys for more people.

In Oxford, there are two (2) marked accessible street parking spots on Main St. At the time of the assessment, they were well-marked with blue and white painted symbols of accessibility on the pavement and posted signage. However, both accessible street parking stalls are in need of upgrades to be fully accessible.

Accessible street parking spot outside of post office. Pavement is marked with horizontal signage (i.e., blue and white international symbol of accessibility). Side aisle is painted but uses existing driveway as curb ramp.

Accessible street parking spot on Main St. near pharmacy located on same side of street. No curb cut onto sidewalk from marked side aisle.

Proximity of Street Parking to Key Destinations

There is accessible parking available in the downtown within a 400 m walk-and-wheelable distance to 54% of the 61 potential destinations that were accounted for by this assessment (33/61). Restaurants, retail, postal service, and pharmacy are some of the closest destinations to the available street parking. Designated accessible spots are also located in the parking lots of certain destinations such as the Fire Hall, Arena, and Town Hall, which are also located in or near the Town's centre. Attendees of the Walk and Wheel public consultation identified that additional accessible street parking may still be needed in front of services targeted at populations with disabilities (Please see Appendix 2).

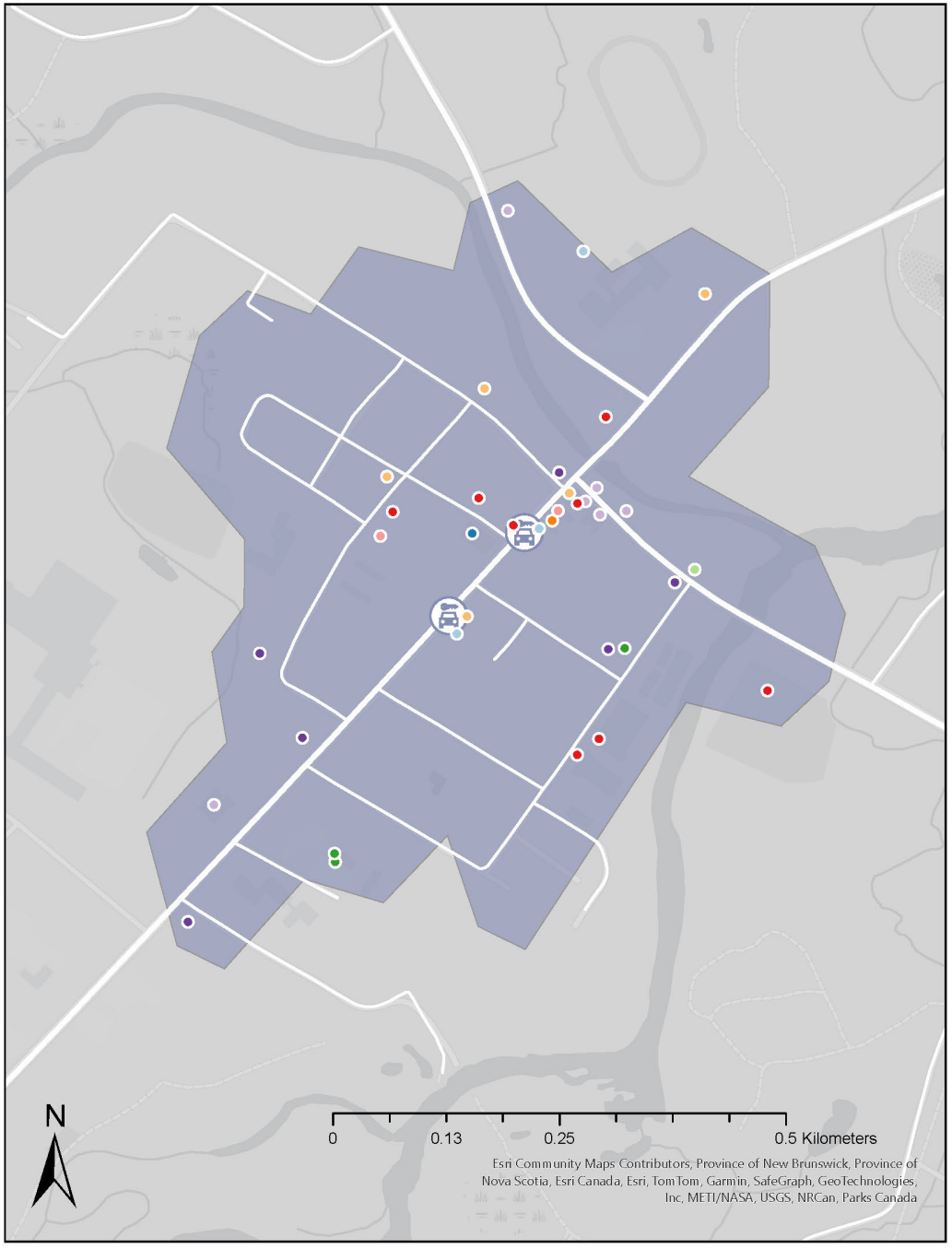


Figure 7: Proximity to services from accessible street parking within 400 m

Assessment 2: Quality of Pedestrian Infrastructure

Presence of Sidewalk

Sidewalks are located along approximately 7.6 km of the Town of Oxford's roadways.

For the most part, sidewalks are only located on one side of the road and not both sides. 80% of the streets with sidewalks had them on only a single side, and 20% had sidewalks on both sides of the street. There is 13 km of road in Oxford where no sidewalks are present.

By the numbers...

40%

Approximately 40% of roads in Oxford have a sidewalk present.

80%

Of the roads with sidewalks, 80% of them only offer sidewalks on a single side of the street.

20%

Therefore, of the roads with sidewalks, 20% offer sidewalk on both sides of the street.

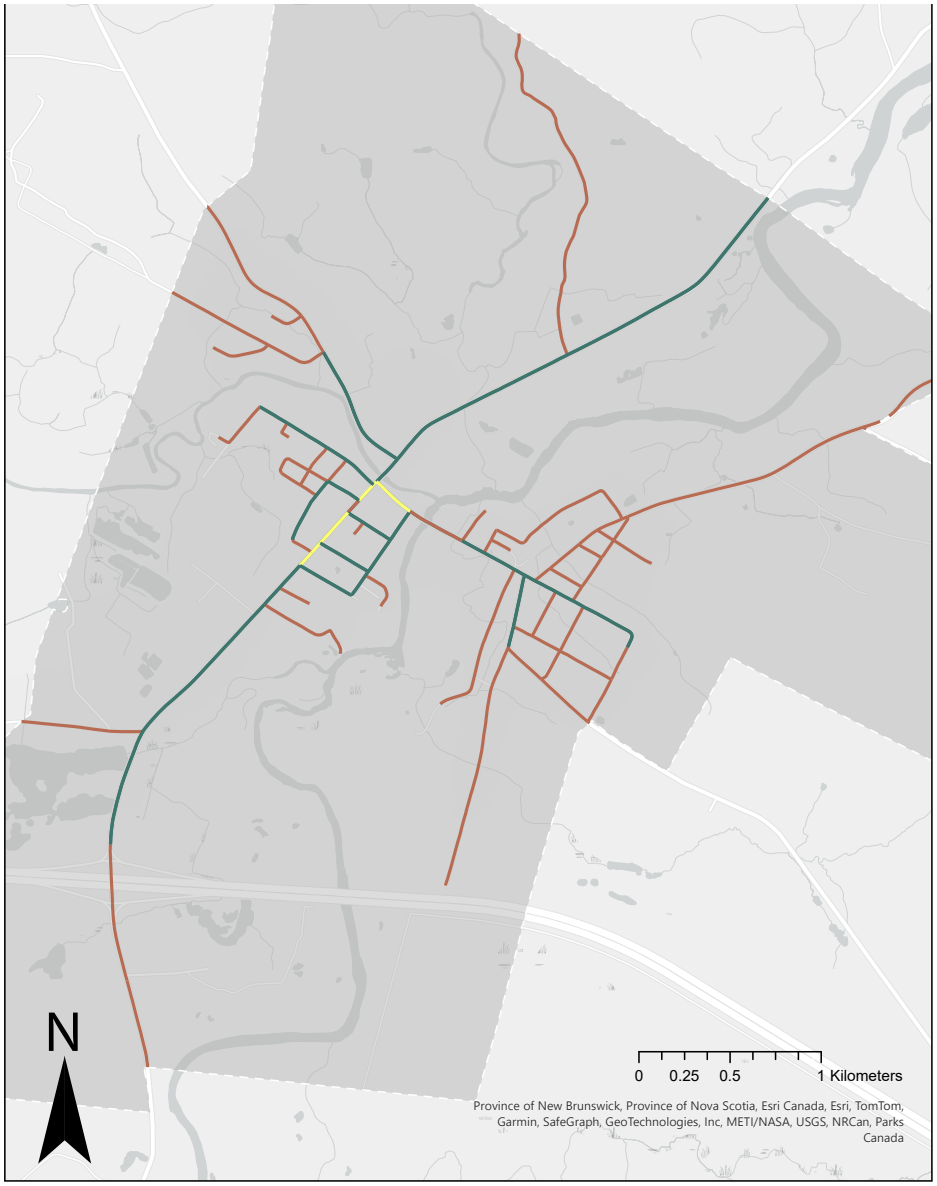


Figure 8: Sidewalk Coverage. Map showing which roads have sidewalks on one side, both sides, or no sides of the road.

Sidewalk Quality Scores

Scoring of sidewalk quality was based off of four qualities, with one point awarded for each fulfilled quality:

- a maintained surface (i.e., the absence of cracks);
- the absence of obstructions;
- the levelness of the route (i.e., minimal slope); and,
- the smoothness of transitions between concrete paving stones.

First, the road network of Oxford was divided into into components called *segments,* which typically span between intersections. Each segment was assessed individually for the above criteria. For example, if the sidewalks in a segment met 3 of the 4 criteria listed, that segment received a score of "3". If a segment had no sidewalks, it was not given a score.

Because Oxford's streets do not follow a grid pattern, segments vary by length. The quality of sidewalk along the length of a segment was assessed as a whole, regardless of length.

To the right is a summary of observations per each factor of quality that were assessed.

Maintained Surface

Cracks were observed in numerous locations, or varying widths. A lack of drainage also appeared to be an issue, especially at corner crossings where pooling water was observed.


Sidewalk along Main St.

Levelness

Typically, the streets and sidewalks of Oxford are within a 5% slope or less. However, pedestrian connections to bridges occasionally were not graded to have consistent, accessible slope.


Drop-off at Water St. bridge.

Smoothness

The smoothness of the pedestrian route varied significantly. Some sidewalk pavers were laid without significant variation, while others appeared to have moved quite a bit over time. The latter were typically not in the downtown, but in outer residential neighbourhoods.


Sidewalk along Main St.

Obstructions

Obstructions were not overly observed. Those that were, were typically protruding vegetation or signage.


Sidewalk along Main St.

Sidewalks rated 4/4

This sidewalk is smooth, level, and free of cracks and obstructions. Therefore, it received a score of 4/4.

Sidewalks rated 1/4

This sidewalk has no direct obstructions, but it is heavily cracked and not level or smooth. Therefore, it received a score of 1/4.

- ☑ *Is the sidewalk surface well maintained with few cracks? (1 point)*
- ☑ *Is the sidewalk surface mostly level, with a consistent slope? (1 point)*
- ☑ *Is the sidewalk surface smooth, with pavers mostly aligned? (1 point)*
- ☑ *Is the sidewalk mostly free from obstructions? (1 point)*

Average Quality Score:

2.3/4

Overall, sidewalk segments scored well on their levelness and the absence of obstructions. The width of sidewalks was not accounted for in the scoring of the sidewalks. However, many were found to be insufficient (too narrow) with several measuring between 1295 and 1400 mm when the best practice minimum width for accessible pedestrian routes is 1500-1600 mm (CSA B651-23; NS Building Code, 3.8.3.2.).

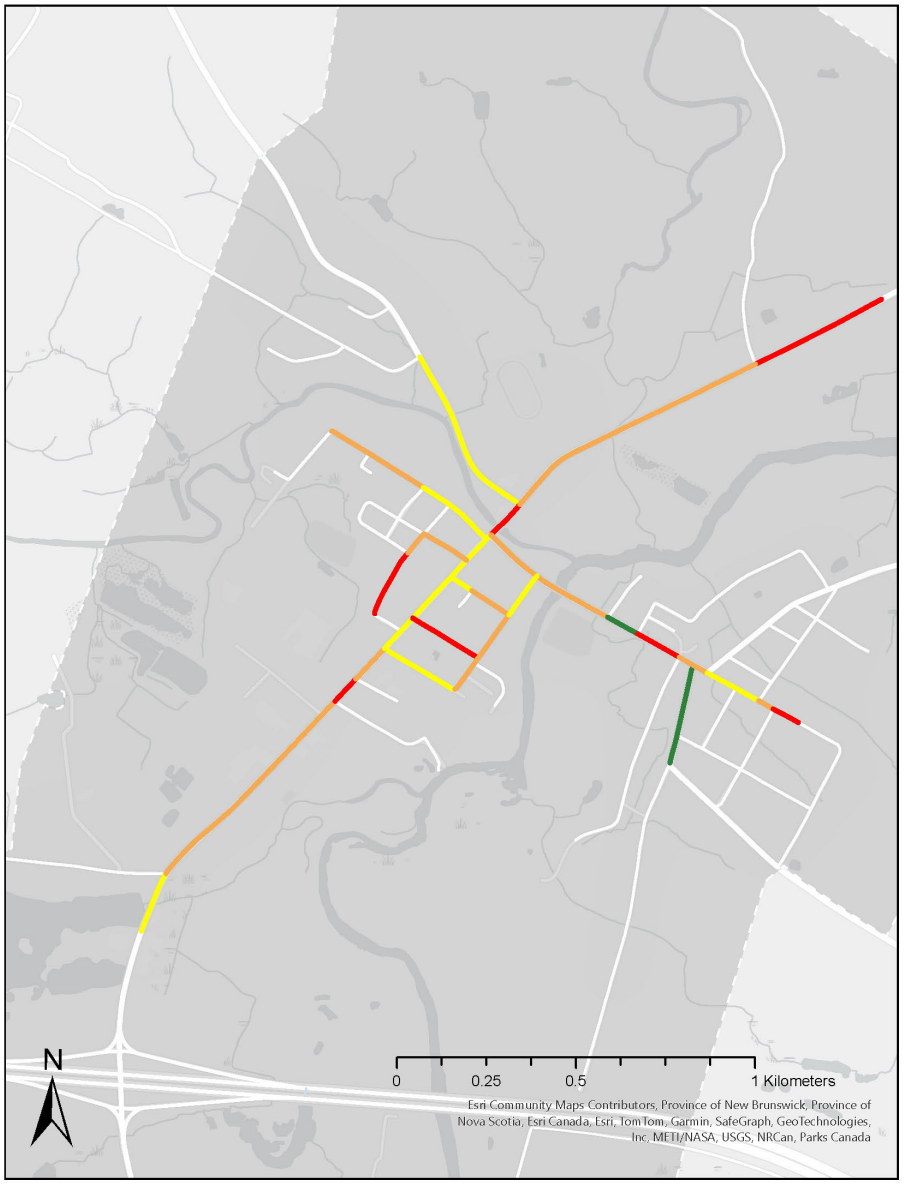


Figure 9: Sidewalk Scores.
Sidewalk scores out of 4.

Highest Scoring Street Segments (Scores of 3 and 4)

The following segments scored the highest:

- Foundry St.
- Duke St.
- Ellis St. before Sandy's Ln.
- Main St. after Black River Rd.
- Main St. between Duke St. & Water St.
- Waverley St. between Water St. & Ellis St.
- James St. between Main St. & Elm St.
- Little River Rd. between Main St. & Sunset Ave.
- Water St. between Copps Ln. & Pleasant St.

Lowest Scoring Street Segments (Scores of 1 and 2)

The following segments of sidewalk may be prioritized for repairs:

- Prince William St.
- Water St. after Dufferin St.
- Jackson St. after Henderson St.
- Main St. between Water St. & Little River Rd.
- Lower Main St. after Mill Rd. (heading out of town)
- Main St. between Meadow Ln. & Medawell St.

Pedestrian Crossings

There are pedestrian crosswalks periodically located across Oxford's Main St. -- one of two main corridors of the town -- from the other side of Black River Rd to Mill Rd. Many of these are mid-block crossings, where they are not associated with a traffic intersection. Marked pedestrian crossings were located at 27% of intersections (14 intersections), and the average density of crossings is 1.67 per km of road. Pedestrian crossings at intersections were inconsistently marked. Some were painted with standard, transverse white lines, while others were not painted at all. Observations include:

- Crosswalks were typically marked with yellow, reflective signage on both sides of the road. These are helpful for improving visibility;
- Many are painted with white diagonal stripes. Some show signs of being solidly painted yellow, which does not follow typical standards;
- Curb ramps were observed as either missing, in disrepair, or without key accessibility features such as tactile attention indicators; and,
- The width of crosswalks was inconsistent. Some measured as small as 1400 mm wide, with others as large as 2000 mm. The best practice minimum accessible width is 1800 mm (CSA B651-23, 8.3.4.1).

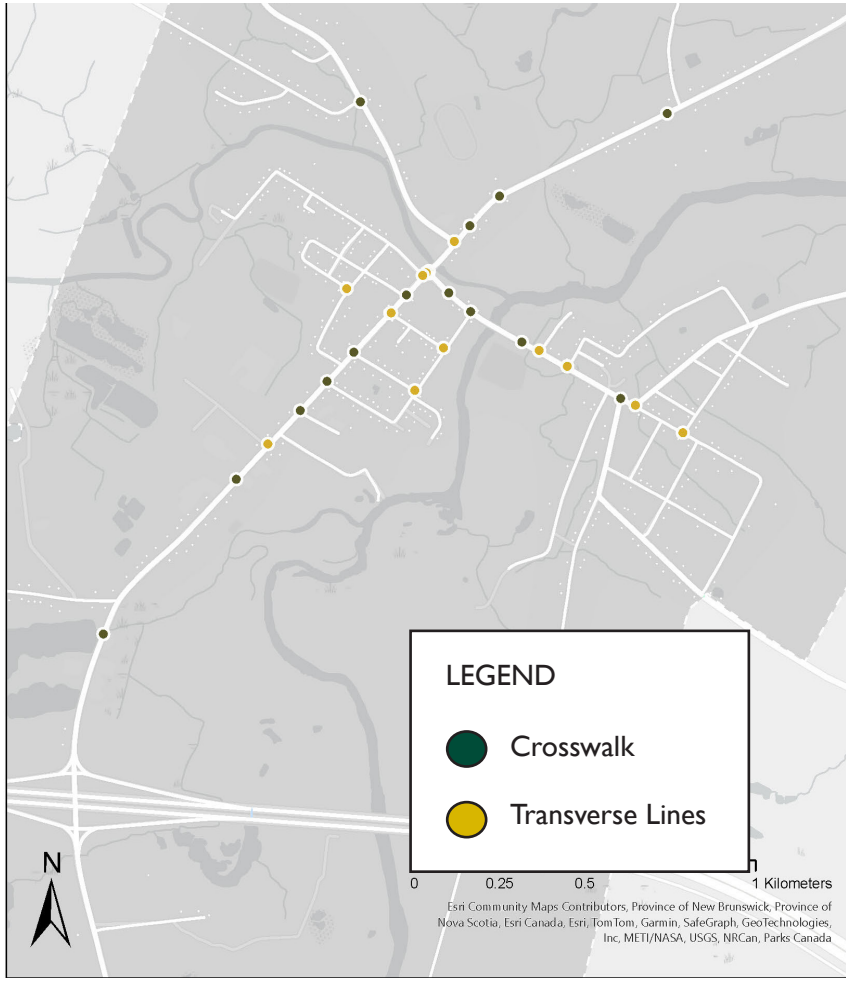


Figure 10: Marked Crosswalks

Yellow reflective signage on either end of Main St. crosswalk.

Painted crosswalk across Main St. with white lines and faded yellow.

Crosswalk connected to sidewalk curb (no curb ramp).

Narrow crosswalk shown with a measuring tape across it.

Trails and Pathways

Oxford is surrounded by numerous rough and multi-use trails that are a key asset that can be leveraged to increase physical activity, active transportation, and tourism. The map to the right combines exisiting trails identified within the town boundary with desired connections heard from the public consultation and proposed connections to provincial networks. This report presents these trail connections as opportunities that may be explored by future infrastructure projects and plans.

Multiuse Trans Canada Trail

The portion of the Trans Canada Trail that intersects with the Town is a wide, compressed dirt and gravel trail suitable for many types of active uses. Walkers, runners, cyclists, and drivers of recreational vehicles use the trail. At the time of this assessment, the vegetation was cut back and did not infringe on the boundaries of the trail. A few puddles and pot holes were observed.

Foot Paths and Snow Shoe Trails (Rough)

Several trails, such as the Bunny Trail -- named for being shaped like a crouching rabbit -- are rough, narrow, nature-based trails suitable for foot traffic or snowshoeing in the winter months. Some uneven ground and boardwalk crossings over ditches or creeks are present. Alterations would be required to make these accessible.

Desired Connections

Consultation session attendees expressed potential connections for walking and cycling trail connections between the Northumberland Nature Trails and Cove Rd, which connects to trails outside of Town limits. Such a connection, however, would require the incorporation of what is currently private property.

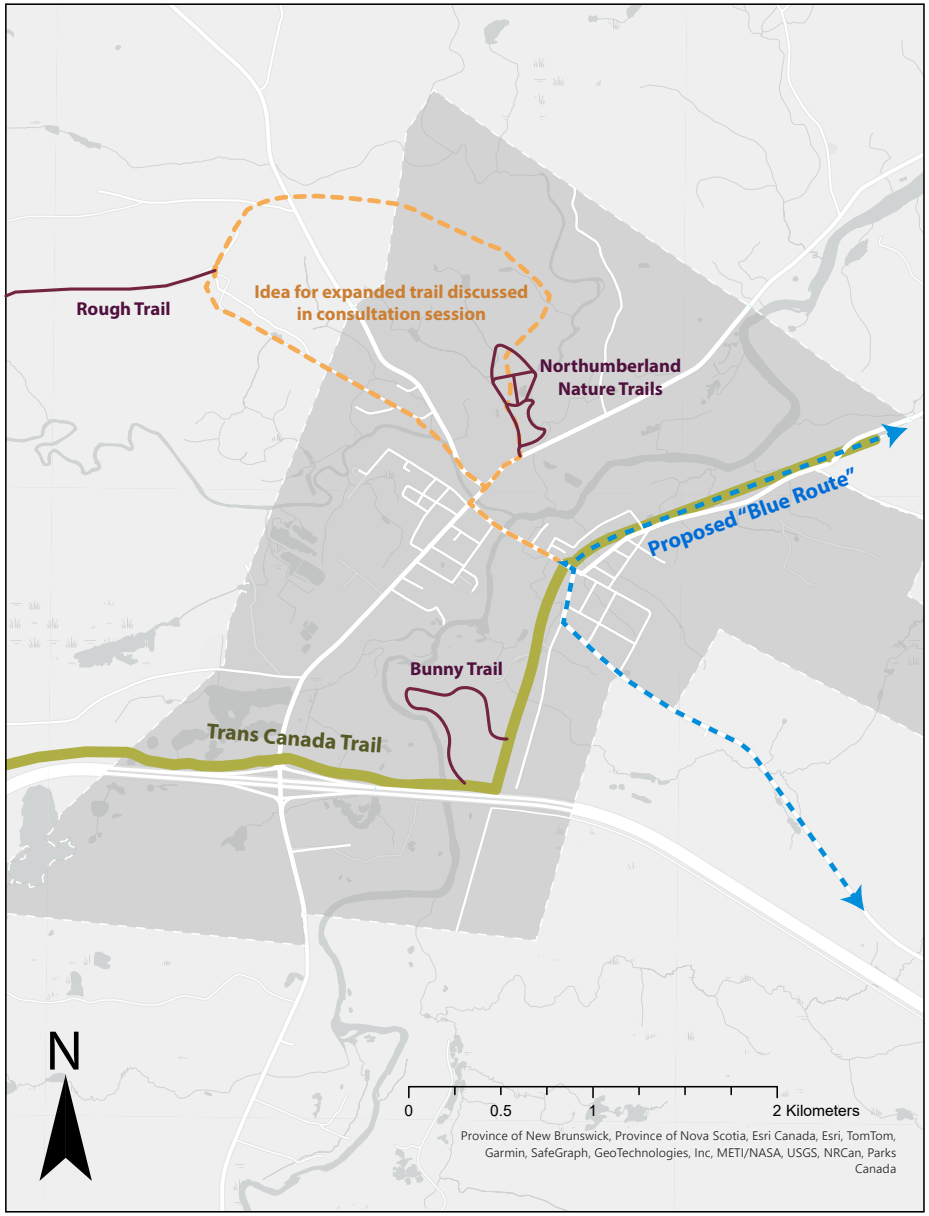


Figure 11. Map of Existing, Potential, and Desired Trail Connections

The trails depicted here reflect interests expressed through community consultation and previously identified trails by the Town, as well as potential connections to a province-wide network.

Proposed 'Blue Route' Connections

There is an initiative supported by Nova Scotia Public Works to develop a core active transportation network spanning across the province, called the 'Blue Route' This province-wide cycling network includes multi-use trails, rural roads with low traffic volumes, roads with paved shoulders, and painted bike lanes. There are two connections to Oxford proposed by this initiative; one along the Trans Canada Trail and continuing along Hwy 321, and another along Hwy 204. These connections could be enhanced through the addition of painted bike lanes, signage, or paved shoulder extensions.

Photo of a cyclist taken at Water St., Oxford.

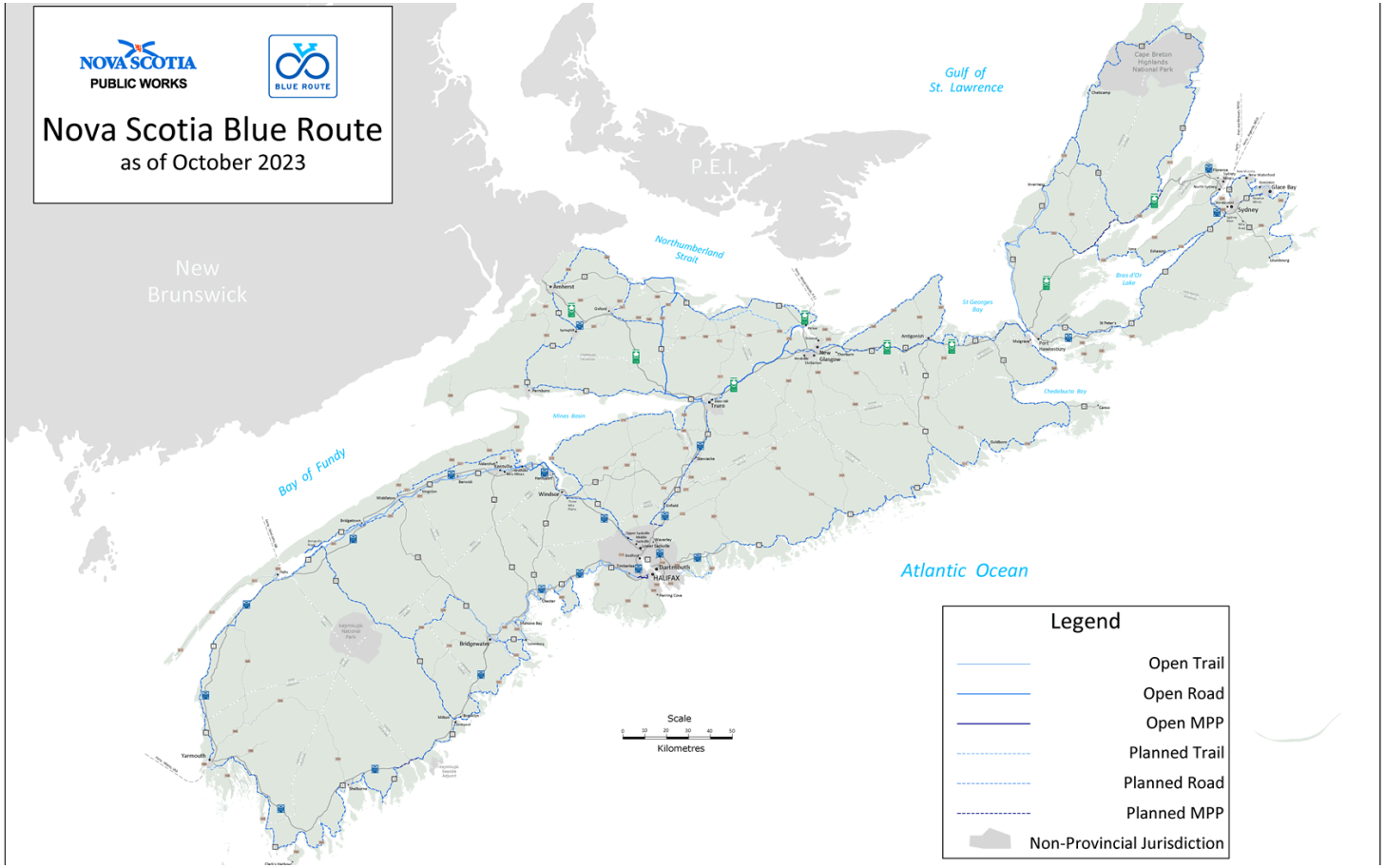


Figure 12. Map of the Nova Scotia Blue Route

The map to the left shows the province-wide network of trails, roads with paved shoulders, and proposed trails and roads to create a continuous cycling route between municipalities. Core AT Strategies are in-progress in many muncipalities to add to this network.

Source: blueroute.ca.

Summary of Assets and Challenges

Below is a summary of assets and challenges to the walk-and-wheelability of the Town of Oxford, as identified through the spatial and sidewalk assessments.

Assets

- Flat topography, a density of services in the core of the Town, and a relatively small municipal footprint are favourable in the Town of Oxford for facilitating spatial walk-and- wheelability;
- A majority of residences are within average walking and wheeling distance (1200 m) of a grocery store and pharmacy;
- Public green space including parks, sports fields, and trails are widely located across the town;
- Accessible parking is available and located within walk-and-wheelable distance to a wide range of services and amenities;
- There is potential for active transportation connections between trail networks that would improve overall connectivity around and outside of the Town.
- There is evidence of public interest to support accessibility and active transportation projects as shown through the public engagement.

Challenges

- Disrepair of existing pedestrian and parking infrastructure poses challenges to their usability and accessibility. Existing infrastructure in need of upgrades: The quality of existing sidewalks along Town streets and trails will require improvements to welcome people of diverse ages and abilities, and at least 56% require significant maintenance (scored 1 or 2). Sidewalk coverage can be increased from the current 40% of streets to encourage more walking and wheeling by pedestrians;
- The three major waterways that connect in Oxford necessitate the presence of bridges for vehicle and foot traffic. However, they show limited potential for pedestrian upgrades;
- Industrial and farming uses in and around the town can lead to heavy traffic and competing uses for major through-way streets. Creative solutions may be needed to create safe road-sharing with cyclists.

In the image to the left, a pair of walking sticks are hung on a tree at the entrance of a the Bunny Trail, a rough trail. A sign invites people to use the sticks as mobility supports. This is a small example of a community intervention that shows awareness and interest in the community of Oxford for making accessibility improvements.

Example of sidewalk across Water St. bridge. Due to the structural limitations of existing bridges, expanding pedestrian or cycling access may be best achieved by the contruction of an active transportation-only bridge.

Recommendations

This section details six recommendations for ways that the Town of Oxford may improve its walk-and-wheelability. These recommendations represent a breadth of improvements and are not meant to cover every possibility, but instead, show what this report found to be key areas for opportunity.

- Make upgrades to destinations, including encouraging local businesses to become more accessible, and making accessible additions to park and recreation facilities;
- Upgrade accessible street parking stalls with paint, side aisles, and curb ramps;
- Repair and upgrade sidewalks and pedestrian crossing infrastructure, following NS Building Code and best practices in accessible design;
- Plan to strengthen existing active transportation assets, expand cycling infrastructure, and connect available trail networks;
- Enhance access to trail network by introducing nearby facilities such as washrooms, parking, garbage cans, and seating.;
- Continue to enhance snow management initiatives and policies to build on goals for priority clearing of sidewalks and accessible parking.

Potential funding sources are listed to the top-right of each recommendation title page. See Appendix 1 for additional information about the funder, eligible projects, amount of grant-funded contributions, and the approximate timing of intake for applications. Wherever design measurements are referenced in this document, it is recommended that users of this report refer to the source materials and monitor provincial regulations and policy to ensure future projects follow the most up-to-date standards.

Make upgrades to destinations, including encouraging local businesses to become more accessible, and making accessible additions to parks and recreation facilities.

Community Recreation Capital Grant
Business ACCESS-Ability Grant
Kal's RePlay Fund
Canada Post Community-based Project Grant

The accessibility of indoor and outdoor services and amenities, including parks, sports centres, stores, and restaurants, is an important consideration for walk-and-wheelability because without usable and welcoming destinations, it is unlikely that people with accessibility needs will choose to take active journeys around town.

Many of the historic storefronts in Oxford's downtown can be enhanced through physical renovations to eliminate barriers like front door steps. Upgrades to storefront accessibility are eligble to be supplemented through Nova Scotia's Business ACCESS-Ability Grant Program. The Town cannot access this funding source itself, but this report recommends that the Town encourage business owners to seek out this provincial funding to make accessibility improvements to the exteriors and interiors of their commercial buildings, fund staff training, or purchase assistive equipment.

Quotes from Public Consultation:

"More accessible doors. [...] Mostly, the accessible doors are at some of the newly renovated places like the liquor store, the bank. There's a lot of places in town that don't have accessible doors, and of course, talking with people who have walkers, they were talking about, for instance, getting into some local stores. Or trying to set your walker aside so you can scoot down an aisle because you can't get through."

This report also recommends that the Town work towards accessibility improvements in municipal parks and recreation centres. Several provincial and community organization funding sources will contribute to the costs of material purchase and installation for the following potential short-term and long-term public space improvement projects:

- Paving of a barrier-free path from the Water St. ball field parking lot to a paved seating and picnic area overlooking the Black River;
- Addition of an accessible picnic table for the abovementioned overlook;
- Addition of bench seating to more trail routes near trail heads, placed at 50 metre intervals;
- Creation of designated accessible spectator seating at the Oxford arena and ballfield;
- Installation of elevator at the Oxford arena to enable access to heated seating area;
- Construction of a pedestrian/multi-use bridge over the Black River parallel to Water St.
- Accessibility upgrades to existing trail structures.

The list above is not exhaustive as it was not within the scope of this project to assess facilities beyond Oxford's pedestrian network. To develop a comprehensive list of interior improvements, this report suggests the Town undertake accessibility audits, using a system such as the Rick Hansen Foundation's Accessibility Certification assessment or equivalent of municipal facilities.

Figure 13. Example of an accessibility upgrade project. Ramp added to trails structure on Water St. at entrance to the Trans Canada Trail.

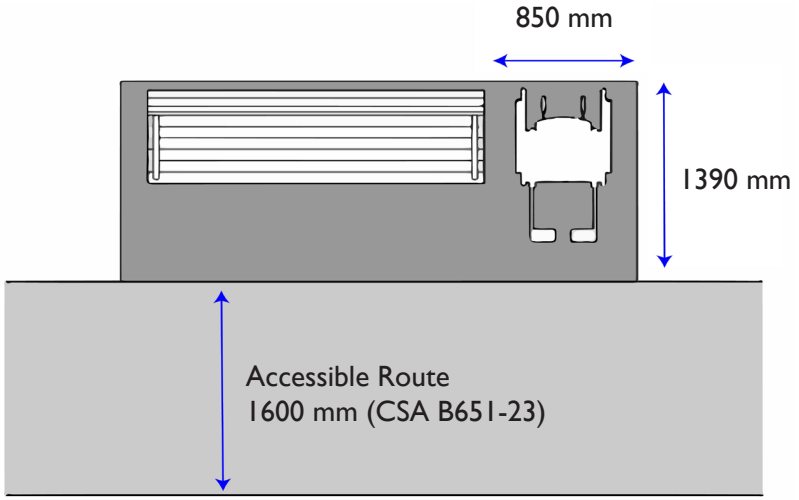


Figure 14. Minimum construction measurements for accessible bench seating along a barrier-free path referencing *Recommendations on Accessibility Standard in the Built Environment: Phase 2 (Nova Scotia, 2021).*

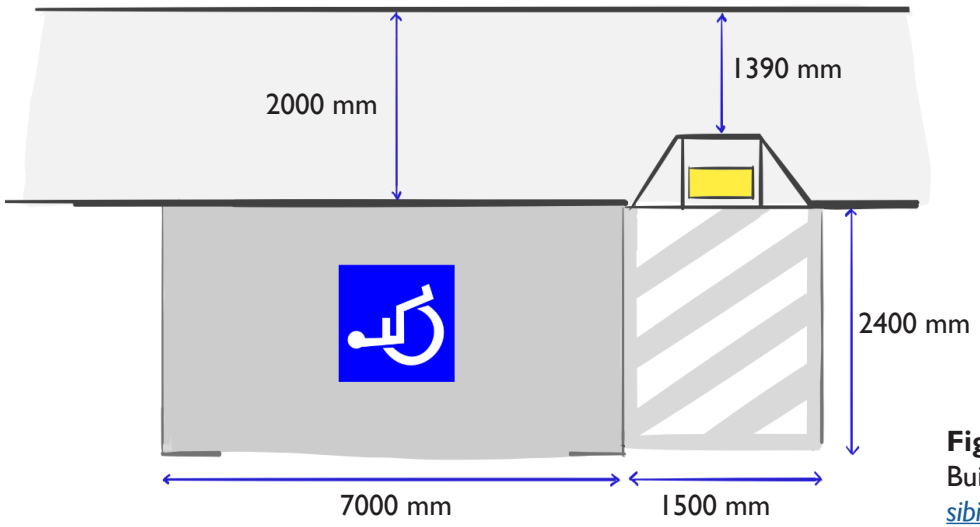
Upgrade accessible street parking stalls with paint, side aisles, and curb ramps.

Enabling Accessibility Fund
Community ACCESS-Ability Program

Oxford's existing accessible street parking is within a walk-and-wheelable distance to many services and destinations in town. Approximately 54% of commercial, recreational, and institutional destinations are within a 400 m journey of the two accessible street parking spaces. There are also designated accessible spots in several of the town operated parking lots.

Additional accessible parking spots can be designated within close proximity to certain services and recreation spaces which may be common destinations for residents living with disabilities. In the public consultation session, one such additional accessible spot was requested for Water St., outside of the Sunset Community's Oxford laundromat, cafe, and thrift store.

Existing accessible street parking is in need of upgrades to meet accessibility standards, such as those in the NS Building Code.



Accessible street parking spots can be made more accessible through the following upgrades:

- adjust parking stall to be not less than 2400 mm wide and provided with an access aisle not less than 1500 mm wide and 7000 mm long adjacent and parallel to the vehicle pull-up space;
- paint the access aisle with white parallel, diagonal stripes to indicate a no-parking area;
- install a curb ramp to sidewalk from designated access aisle;
- install the curb ramp with a minimum width of 1200 mm, a maximum slope of 1 in 12, flared sides with a maximum slope of 1 in 10, with a yellow tactile attention indicator that spans the width of the ramp;
- widen parallel sidewalk to comply with requirements for an accessible route, including a width of 1500 - 2000 mm;
- Ensure posted signage is a visible height and size so it is visible when vehicles are occupying the space (recommended that the center of the sign is 2000 mm above the ground).

Figure 15. Specifications for accessible street parking referencing NS Building Code, NS-3.8.3.1., CSA B651-23 (9.4.1), and *Recommendations on Accessibility Standard in the Built Environment: Phase 2 (Nova Scotia, 2021).*

Repair and upgrade sidewalks and pedestrian crossing infrastructure, following NS Building Code and best practices in accessible design.

Enabling Accessibility Fund
Active Communities Fund

Sidewalks are available along approximately 40% of the roads within the Town of Oxford municipal limits. There is a greater density of sidewalk in the town core, along Main St. and Water St., where there is also a density of storefront services and destinations. To further improve walk-and-wheelability, the Town can plan to:

- Repair and upgrade existing sidewalks; and,
- Extend sidewalks onto streets that are not yet serviced by sidewalk (Please see Figure 8. Sidewalk Coverage)

The Town can plan to expand its sidewalk infrastructure over time. The locations for new sidewalks may be prioritized to create connections to trail heads to encourage recreational walking and wheeling.

Repairs to sidewalk surfacing and width can be made strategically when other infrastructure is also being upgraded (e.g., sewer), or, future investments may choose to prioritize the segments that were found to score the lowest through this report's assessment (i.e., 1 or 2 out of 4). These segments are shown on the map to the right.

Regarding crosswalks, the crossings across Main St. are generally well-marked with reflective signage and pavement painting. However, the width of these crosswalks and the quality of their curb ramps can be enhanced to improve accessibility. Future painting of the crosswalks should follow specifications for Contiental or Zebra style lines with white paint.

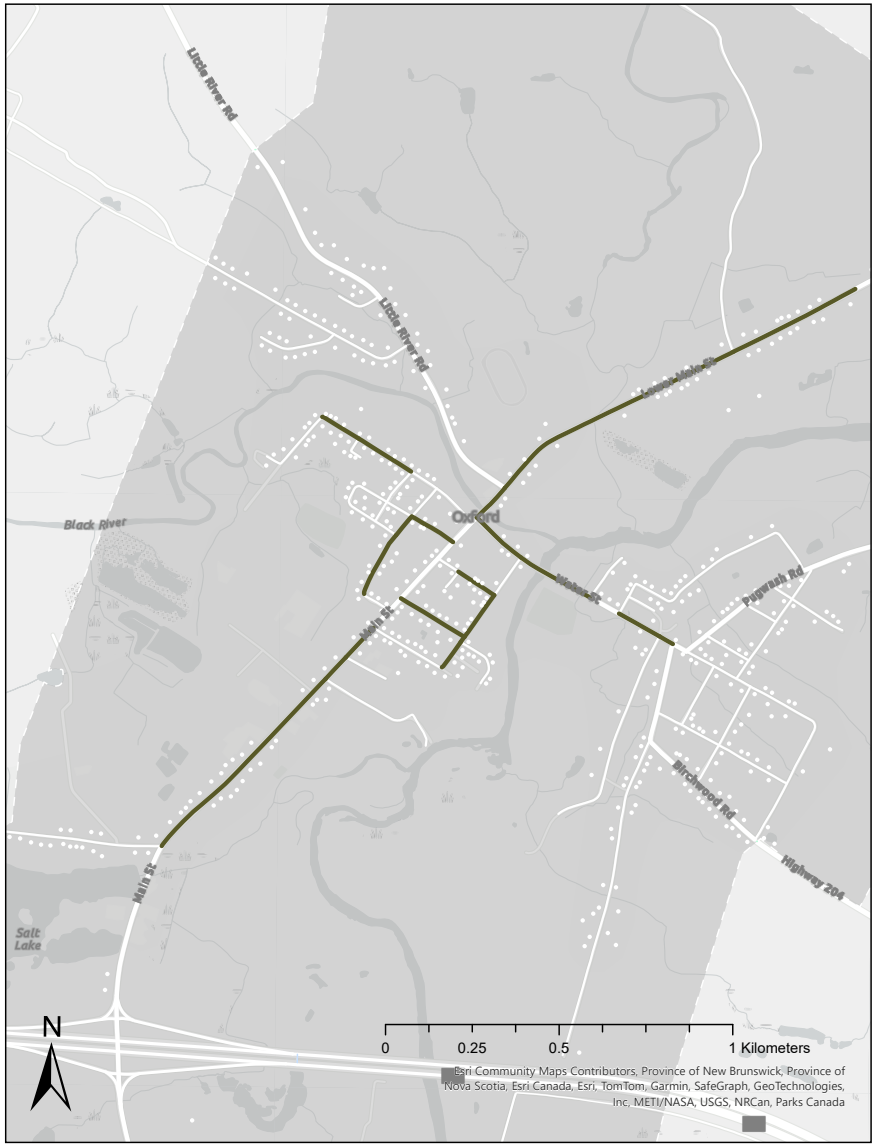


Figure 16. Sidewalk segments that scored a 1 or 2 out of 4.

Sidewalks and crossings can be made safer and more accessible by making the following upgrades for barrier-free paths of travel:

- widen sidewalks to a minimum width of 1600 mm (CSA B651-23); or, provide paved sections of sidewalk measuring 1500 x 1500 mm (this is to provide a turn-around space for wheelchair users) at intervals not exceeding 30 m (NS Building Code, 3.8.3.2);

- install curb ramps at crosswalks and intersections that are at least 1200 mm wide (preferably 1500 mm) with a maximum slope of 1:12, have flared sides with a maximum slope of 1:10, and a yellow tactile attention indicator;

- widen crosswalks to be at least 1800 mm wide between painted lines;

- paint crosswalks with a high-contrast, non-slip, white paint in continental/zebra pattern when a mid-block crossing, or trancept lines when at intersections.

Further upgrades to crosswalks can include adding flashing beacons with push-button mechanisms. When activated, these enhance safety and visibility by alerting vehicles to a crossing pedestrian. These may be priortised in school zones and along arterial roads where there is likely to be speeding traffic and night-time traffic (e.g., Main St.).

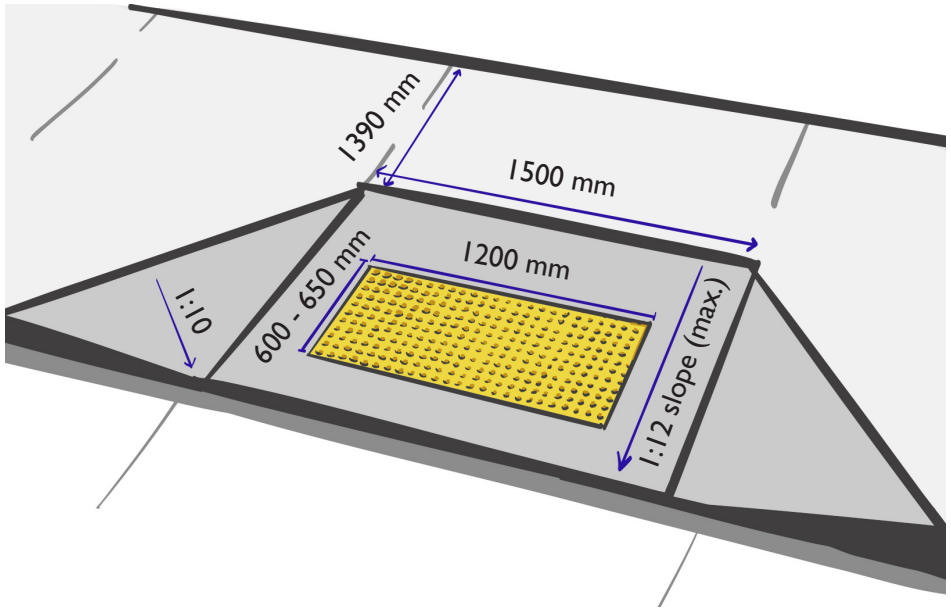


Figure 17. Specifications for curb ramps referencing NS Building Code, NS-3.8.3.4., NSBCR and CSA B651-23.

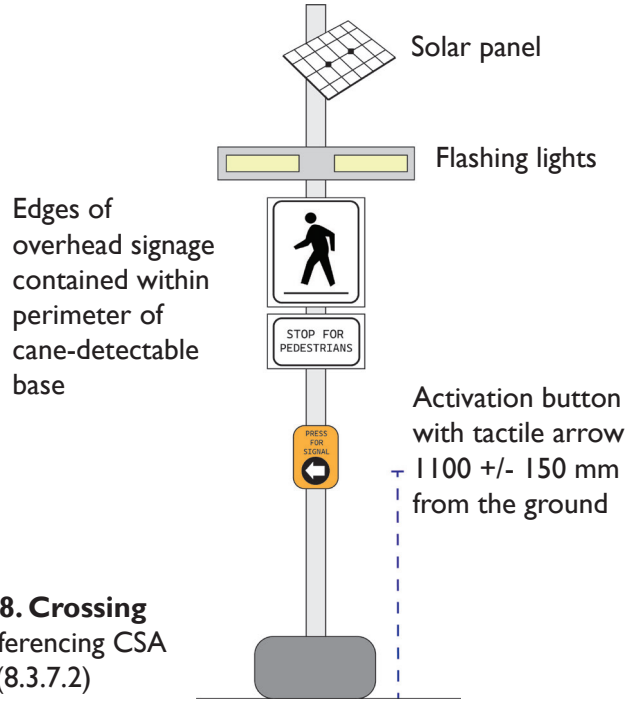


Figure 18. Crossing signal referencing CSA B651-23 (8.3.7.2)

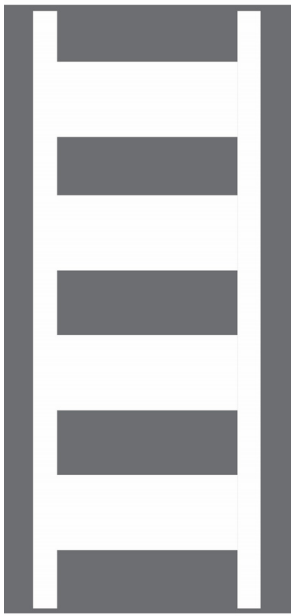


Figure 19. Zebra crossing

Plan to strengthen existing active transportation assets, expand cycling infrastructure, and connect available trail networks.

Connect2 Program
Trail Expansion Grant Program
Active Communities Fund
Permanent Public Tranit Fund
Planning Assistance Program

The Town of Oxford is located with direct access to the Trans Canada Trail, and has proposed connections to the Nova Scotia Blue Route. In May 2024, a new section of the Blue Route was opened between the communities of Pugwash and and Wallace completed with the involvement of the Municipality of Cumberland and the Provincial Department of Public Works.

It is recommended that the Town seek potential collaboration opportunities with the Blue Route team to plan connections to this spoke of the 3,000 km province-wide network. Expanding cycling and active transportation infrastructure to connect between existing and/or proposed trails will also align with the goals of the Shared Strategy for Trails in Nova Scotia.

Residences on the southeast side of the Black River were found by this report's spatial analysis to be less-connected to services, which are centralized on the other side of the river, than other residential areas. Prioritzing cycling infrastructure along Water St. can be a solution to strengthen connectivity between these areas, as well as enhance cycling connection between the Trans Canada Trail and the town centre.

Residents who attended this project's public consultation also highlighted the connection to the Regional Education Centre, as many children like to bike to and from school.

Funding sources are available through provincial and federal governments to support the installation of bike lanes or multi-use pathways. The following projects may be explored:

- Formalizing a cycling connection along Water St. to connect between Oxford's town centre and the Trans Canada Trail;
- Paving and painting of cycling lanes along sections of Hwy 321 and Hwy 204 within town boundary (Note: Requires provincial cooperation);
- Planning for cycling connections to the Regional Education Centre and future Community Centre, as well as other future expansions.

When beginning projects that install cycling infrastructure, please consider the following:

- Bike lanes should be at least 1.5 -2.75 m wide and can be on either side of the street or can be bi-directional;
- Multi-use paths can be valuable space-savers for active transportation. However, for them to be accessible to everyone, there must be a physical means of separation between users who are traveling as pedestrians and users who are using faster, human-powered transportation (e.g., cycling, skateboarding, hoverboarding);
- Protected bike lanes, using bollards or other physical means of separation, can enhance safety for cyclists sharing the road with vehicles. However, these will need special provisions for snow clearing.

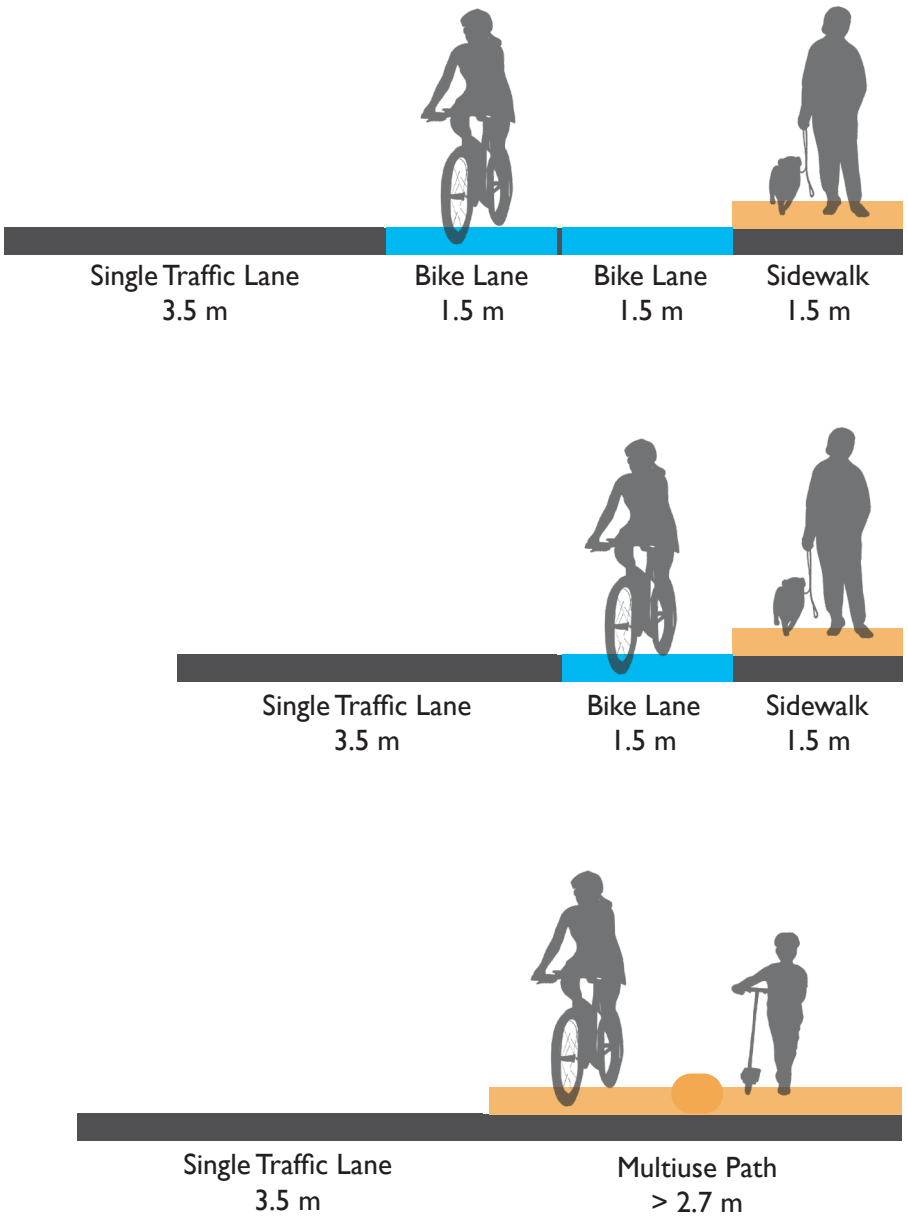


Figure 20. Spatial comparison of minimum widths for active transportation lanes along a roadway.

Enhance access to trail network by introducing nearby facilities such as parking, public washrooms, garbage cans and seating.

Enabling Accessibility Fund
Permanent Public Transit Fund

One way to increase use of the trails is to introduce public facilities nearby. The Trans Canada Trail head off of Water St. has a lot of potential for improvements. Amenities like benches for seating, garbage cans, and designated accessible parking at trail heads are recommended improvements that can make use of the Town's trail systems, pedestrian routes, and outdoor recreation spaces more accessible to more people, especially to children and older adults. Best practice suggests placing seating options every 50 metres along an accessible route.

This report also recommends that the Town explore opportunities to invest in the construction of a public washroom structure, built to accessibility standards. Including water fountains in the design, at least one family/universal washroom, and bike racks, would be ideal additions to the typical gendered washrooms with accessible stalls. A short-term solution can be to introduce accessible portable washrooms (i.e., port-a-potties) in place of a permanent structure, until funds are available to enable longer-term investment.

Any future project to introduce public washroom facilities would be best achieved in collaboration with members of the Town's Accessibility Committee and relevant community groups. Collaborating with members the Oxford & Area Trails Association, for instance, could be a resource for maintaining and protecting these facilities (Vancouver Park Board, 2020).

Quotes from Public Consultation:

"[It's] a long shoot without a bathroom or without a bench or a break with a walker or something."

"It's true. Even little kids, like, if you take a little kid on the Bunny Trail, there's no way they're getting all the way without squatting somewhere."

Continue to enhance snow management initiatives and policies to build on goals for priority clearing of sidewalks and accessible parking.

The clearing of snow from sidewalks and pedestrian paths is an important consideration for accessibility and age-friendliness in communities. The accumulation of snow and ice on the surface of pedestrian paths and transitions between sidewalk and street not only limits the freedom of people using mobility aids (e.g., wheelchairs and mobility scooters) but it also increases the risk of slip and falls by all pedestrians. This is why adequate plowing and salting/sanding is something to strive for in Oxford.

To ensure the safe and effective clearing of snow and ice from sidewalks, this report recommends that the Public Works department of the Town of Oxford continue to conduct and oversee snow management. The Town's recently adopted *Snow and Ice Management Policy* (2023-01-17) includes clear goals for the priority clearing of streets and sidewalks which show important initiative for the maintenance of public space in winter months.

To further enhance this document, the Town may consider including time commitments in which to commence snow clearing. For instance, a collection of case studies, including Montreal, Calgary, and others (Fournier, Huang, & Skabardonis, 2021), found the following goals to represent some of the best practices in snow clearance:

- Snow plowing is complete within 4 hours of 1 inch (2.54 cm) of snow accumulation;
- De-icing of priority sidewalks complete before 7:00 am;
- If snow accumulates overnight, snow plowing is complete by 7:00 am.

Many communities have found it most effective to employ a combined strategy for snow and ice removal, by encouraging property owners to clear sidewalks abutting their properties through awareness campaigns, especially on non-priority streets. However, it is not recommended to make this a requirement for property owners in policy (Corning-Padilla & Rowangould, 2020).

Additionally, the Town does not yet have stated policies for the snow clearance priorities and practices of parking spaces. The Town's *Winter Snow and Ice Removal and Winter Parking Bylaw* (2023-01-17) may be enhanced to through the development of a policy that clearly states that no person shall clear or cause to have cleared snow into an accessible parking space in municipal lots or street parking.

Quotes from Public Consultation:

"Now, [the policies] prioritize road over sidewalk. [But] it's about safety. Safety and equity. And if you don't own a car and you're not privileged? You gotta walk to get to the grocery store."

"The only thing I'm looking forward to is to be able to walk. That keeps my mental health and well-being living in rural Nova Scotia."

"One thing we're getting better at is clearing that pile of snow from the sidewalk to the road so people can cross the crosswalk. It takes time to get there. It takes time [to improve]."

Conclusion

The intent of this report was to provide supportive data that may strengthen proposals for future design interventions along public roads and trails. By initiating these assessments of its walk-and-wheelability infrastructure, the Town of Oxford has already shown a commitment to the three objectives stated previously:

- To enhance connectivity to important destinations across town through well designed and well laid out pedestrian and active transportation routes.
- To build, update, and maintain public infrastructure that removes barriers to access and that are considerate of the needs of people living with disabilities.
- To promote healthy, active lifestyles through activities such as walking, running, and cycling, by creating safe and attractive community space for these activities.

As the Town moves forward with walk-and-wheel initiatives, it is important to recognize that the setting of a goal is an important first step towards achieving it, and then any and all action that supports that bigger goal is a step in the right direction.

The infrastructure projects and initiatives suggested by this report to achieve these objectives will require both short-term and long-term implementation strategies. With the help of available funding sources and the collaboration of residents, the Town of Oxford shows great potential to employ creative solutions to improve its public infrastructure and grow to be more accessible, age-friendly, and active.

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Appendix 1: Funding Resources

The following are funding resources arranged in the order in which they accept applications through the fiscal year. Therefore, funding sources that become available in the Spring are listed first, followed by Summer, Fall, then Winter (up to March). These funding sources are those that appeared to be available as of May 2024 or set to be renewed in 2025.

The following symbols are used to indicate types of projects that each grant may be a resource to fund:

Upgrade
Renovations or adaptations of existing buildings or infrastructure (e.g., paving of park path, installation of public furniture)

Build
Construction of new facilities, including bike lanes or other capital projects (e.g., paving or painting of bike lanes, building public washrooms, parking facilities).

Plan
Enhancing policy, training, or building capacity, such as through the development of an Active Transportation Plan.

Community Recreation Capital Grant

Agency: Province of Nova Scotia Department of CCTH

Amount: Maximum of $8,000 for projects with a total cost of no more than $30,000

Deadline: Accepted on an ongoing basis between April 1 - December 1

Eligible Projects

The Community Recreation Capital Grant assists in the development of indoor and outdoor capital recreation projects of public facilities and assets that respond to the recreation goals of communities through the renovation or expansion of existing community recreation facilities, the development of new small-scale facilities, installation of permanent equipment, or investment in operational or structural integrity of the facility (e.g., replacing roof, furnace).

Learn more at: https://cch.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/inline/community-recreation-capital-grant-guidelines.pdf

Planning Assistance Program

Agency: Province of Nova Scotia
Department of CCTH

Amount: Up to 50% of total project costs to a maximum of $10,000

Deadline: Accepted on an ongoing basis between April 1 - December 1

Eligible Projects

The Planning Assitance Program supports the development of needs assessments, feasibility studies, master plans, facilities operation plans, and schematic designs for projects that support the recreation goals and priorities of communities.

Learn more at: https://cch.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/inline/planning-assistant-grant-guidelines.pdf

Trail Expansion Grant Program

Agency: Province of Nova Scotia
Department of CCTH

Amount: Up to 2/3 of total project costs to a maximum of $150,000

Deadline: Applications open in September

Eligible Projects

The Trail Expansion Grant Program can assist municipalities with the creation of new recreational trails and making capital upgrades to existing trails. Proposals must align with the goals of the Shared Strategy for Trails in Nova Scotia. Please note, the cost to purchase lands is not an eligible use of funds, and the permission of the current land owner is a required component of the application.

Learn more at: https://cch.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/inline/documents/tegp-eoi.pdf

Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund: Mitigation Stream

Agency: Province of Nova Scotia

Amount: $75,000 - $1,000,000
Funds cover up to 80% total cost

Deadline: Intake in Fall months (October)

Eligible Projects:

The Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund (also called NS Challenge Fund) provides non-repayable grants for construction projects that support sustainable response in communities to climate change. Eligible projects include the installation of active transportation pathways and networks, which serve to mitigate carbon emissions by supporting active transportation as an alternative to carbon-emitting personal vehicles. Applicants must make a financial contribution of at lease 20%, which can be a combination of both cash and in-kind.

Learn more at: https://nschallengefund.ca/funding-opportunities/#MitigationProjectExamples

Enabling Accessibility Fund

Agency: Government of Canada

Amount: Up to $3 million per project

Deadline: October - December

Eligible Projects

Available to small municipalitieis (under 50,000 in popuation), the Enabling Accessibility Fund offers funds for small and mid-sized construction projects that improve accessibility in communities using a flat rate cost system. Eligible projects include building accessible washrooms and accessible parking. The intent of the program is to create more opportunitie for people living with disabilities to participate in community events, activities, and services.

Learn more at: https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/funding/enabling-accessibility-fund-mid-size.html

Active Communities Fund

Agency: Province of Nova Scotia
Department of CCTH

Amount: $5,000 - $10,000+

Deadline: December (for project under $10,000)
June (for projects over $10,000)

Eligible Projects

The Active Communities Fund is available to municipalities to help support community-wide initiatives that encourage movement. The funding can be used to help

- plan, develop, or evaluate policy;
- plan, create, improve, or evaluate physical environments;
- or plan, create, improve social environments.

Learn more at: https://beta.novascotia.ca/apply-funding-help-communities-move-more-active-communities-fund#:~:text=The%20Active%20Communities%20Fund%20helps,Moving%20Nova%20Scotia%20action%20plan.

Kal's RePlay Fund

Agency: Kal Tires

Amount: Up to $20,000

Deadline: Application open in January 2025

Eligible Projects

Kal's RePlay Fund offers funds to purchase and install recycled rubber-based products such as paving and landscaping tiles in public spaces. The program welcomes small municipalities to apply to make public infrastructure upgrades using recycled rubber products. A list of recycled rubber product suppliers in Nova Scotia is provided on their website.

Learn more at: https://www.kaltire.com/en/replay/


Business ACCESS-Ability Grant

(Note: Not available to municipalities)

Agency: Province of Nova Scotia

Amount: Up to $100,000

Deadline: Applications in February

Eligible Projects

The Business ACCESS-Ability Grants are available to businesses throughout Nova Scotia, and some streams are available to education institutions and organizations that deliver training or education aimed at the business community. This cost-sharing grant is available to businesses wanting to make accessibility-related improvements to their stores, training procedures and capacity, communications technology, or transportation services.

Learn more at: https://cch.novascotia.ca/business-access-ability-grant-program

Community ACCESS-Ability Program

Agency: Province of Nova Scotia
Department of CCTH

Amount: Up to 2/3 of total project costs to a maximum of $50,000

Deadline: Applications in February

Eligible Projects

Municipalities are eligible to apply to the Community ACCESS-Ability Program to make improvements to public buildings, landscapes, and facilities for universal accessibility (e.g., accessible parking). Eligible facilities must be available for use by all community members. Please note, new construction is not eligible under this grant, only upgrades to existing facilities.

Learn more at: https://cch.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/inline/community-access-ability-program-guidelines.pdf

Connect2 Program

Agency: Province of Nova Scotia Department of CCTH

Amount: Up to 75% of project costs to a maximum of $100,000 per project.

Deadline: March 1

Eligible Projects

The Connect2 Programs's Active Transportation Infrastructure and Design stream offers funds for the temporary or permanent installation of bike lanes, public spaces, and active transportation routes, as well as core active transportation network infrastructure or design. Sidewalks are not eligible projects. Routes must connect at least two key destinations/services.

For more information: https://novascotia.ca/connect2/

Canada Post Community-based Project Grant

Agency: Canada Post Community Foundation

Amount: Up to $25,000 for project grants

Deadline: March 1 (application available in February)

Eligible Projects

The Canada Post Community Foundation's Community-based project grants are available to small municipalities. They can be used to introduce new park furniture or facilities that are inclusive of people of all ages and abilities.This may include the purchase of accessible picnic tables and the paving of a path and picnic area to enable access to the view of the Black River to people using wheeled mobility devices. Project grants are also available up to $25,000 for upgrades to community centres and sports centres.

Learn more at: https://www.canadapost-postescanada.ca/cpc/en/our-company/community-foundation/community-foundation-application.page

Permanent Public Transit Funding: Active Transportation Fund

Agency: Infrastructure Canada

Amount: Up to $50,000 for planning;
Up to $50 million for capital projects

Deadline: Expected intake in 2026

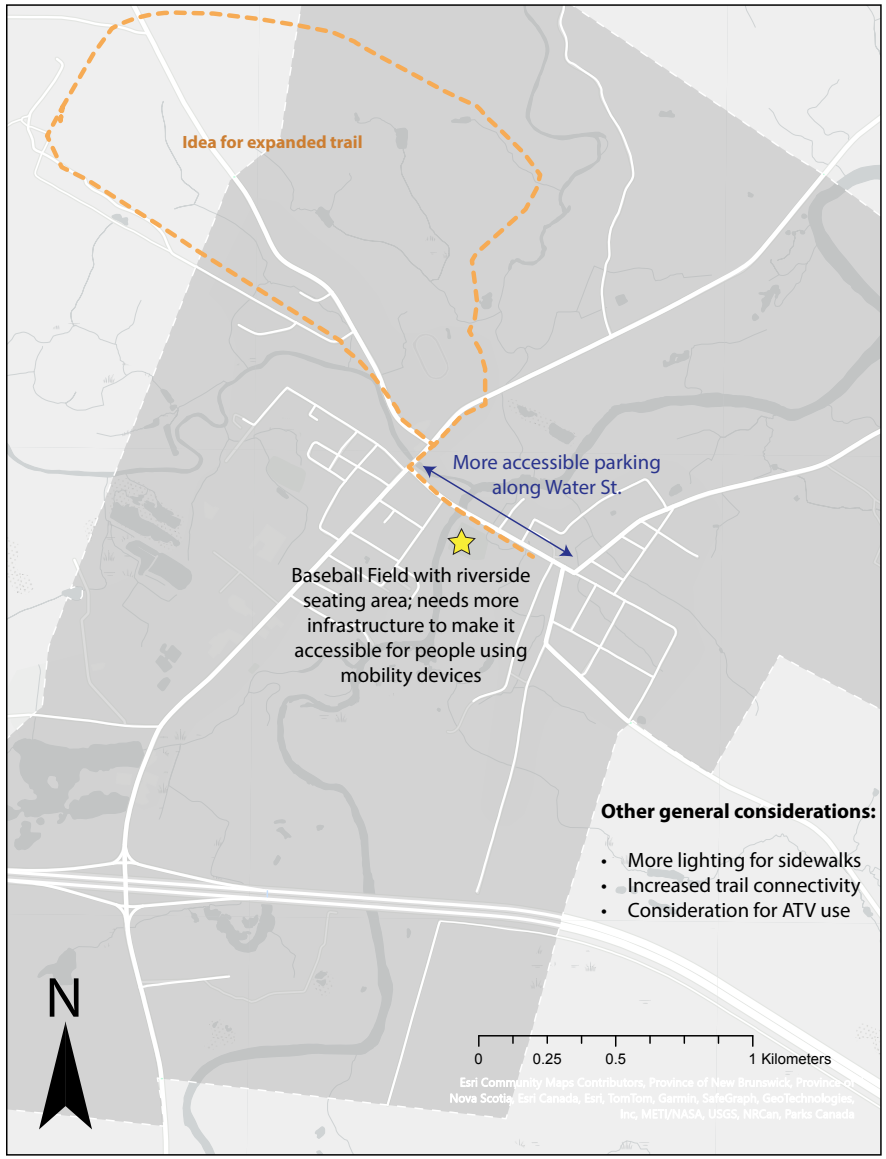
Eligible Projects

The Permanent Public Transit Funding: Active Transportation Fund is available to municipalities to invest in capital projects for active transportation, including building new or expanding pedestrian pathways, bike lanes, trails, and pedestrian bridges. It can also be used towards funding Town planning and stakeholder engagement activities.

Learn more at: https://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/trans/index-eng.html

Appendix 2: Summary of Public Consultation

Figure 21. Map of key areas of interest from public consultation



Identified Themes

The following summarizes themes identified from the Walk and Wheel public consultation:

Safety: Pedestrian safety from physical hazards (e.g., slip and falls, tripping hazards) was a top priority for residents. Better street lighting that benefits pedestrians was suggested to improve conditions at night (Current LED lighting is too dim), as well as more signage to help direct people along safe routes.

Getting to (and into) Facilities: Enhanced accessibility to the baseball field and the adjacent riverside seating area is desired, particularly as it is in such close proximity to the Shady Rest Residential Care Facility Desire for more accessible entrances, indoor seating, elevators, etc., in rink.

Building AT Network: An expanded trail connecting the centre of the Town (a "cross-town connection") to the school and to other rough trails in the area could provide more connectivity and opportunities for active travel by walking, wheeling, or cycling.

Sharing Streets and Trails: Cycling with children is something people want to do more, so long as there are safe routes (often using sidewalks or slow streets). Access to trails should consider needs of older adults and people using mobility devices. The prevalence of ATV usage should also be taken into account when considering infrastructure for active travel so that everyone can feel safe.

Cost and Available Resources: Competing needs for the annual budget, the ongoing costs to maintain infrastructure, and keep it usable in winter, is a reality and will require understanding that improvements take time.