

Establishing a Baseline: Active Transportation & Health Findings in the Halifax Region



About the Project

Active Transportation (AT) has significant health benefits to both people and populations. The NSHA, Public Health - Central Zone, in partnership with a multidisciplinary team of stakeholders, initiated this project to:

- Raise awareness about the link between AT and health;
- Address information gaps and support evidence informed decisions; and,
- Build capacity locally and in other NS communities and health zones.

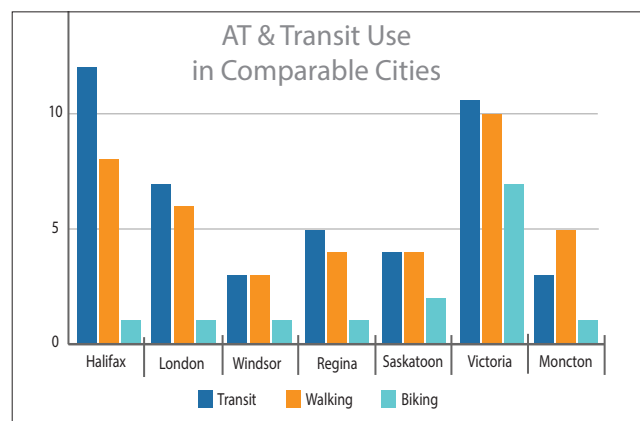
Health, Well-Being & Physical Activity Findings

- Obesity and chronic disease rates are lower than the N.S. average but higher than the national average.
- Over 1/3 of Halifax region youth (12-17) and almost 60% of adults have overweight or obesity.
- Diabetes rates have increased locally from 6% to 8% in recent years.
- Residents self report high levels of overall life satisfaction and a strong sense of belonging. Over 2/3 report very good or excellent mental health but this rate is declining.
- The Halifax region has a high rate of self-reported physical activity when compared with other similar sized Canadian cities. It also rates above the provincial and national level. While self-reported physical activity is greatly overestimated, it is useful for monitoring trends over time.

Transportation Trends



- Approximately 80% of commuter walking trips are less than 3km and than 5 km for cycling trips.
- Transit is often linked with walking/cycling.
- More people are using vehicles to get to work.
- Over 50% would like to bike more, while over two-thirds would like to walk more often.
- Few women choose cycling as a form of transportation.
- Almost half of Regional Centre residents walk, bike or take transit to work.



Safety Matters

- 45% do not feel safe biking while 21% do not feel safe walking
- Road fatalities disproportionately impact walkers and bikers
- Two-thirds of collisions occur during daylight
- Half of people injured biking are under 30
- Three-quarters of reported biking accidents involved males
- Over 60% of vehicle-pedestrian collisions involved a crosswalk and 1/3 involved a left-turn

Investment

Investing in AT includes funding projects and staff, showing political leadership, and adopting supportive plans, policies and initiatives. Leadership can come from within government or outside.

- 1 AT is gaining increasing focus in HRM strategic plans and operational decisions
- 2 8 adopted HRM strategic plans
3 in progress address AT issues
9 make a link between AT and health
- 3 HRM has 7 full-time staff dedicated to AT projects
- 4 AT spending is projected to more than double over ten years from 2012/13 levels
- 5 Projected AT capital spending over five years is greater than \$54 million

Information

Promoting the benefits of active transportation and engaging with people through special events and training and education is an essential component of getting more people to choose AT.

- 1 The Halifax region has an active civil society serving as educators and advocates
- 2 In 2 years, Making Tracks, Try a Ride, and Welcoming Wheels programs reached 5000+ people, including 160 new Canadians
- 3 Halifax has 9 Sustainable Transportation Champions, 2 with links to health
- 4 Bike Week has grown significantly with 60 events and 7000+ participants in 2016
- 5 International Walk to School and Winter Walk days had 5600+ participants in 2017

Did You Know?

Community design impacts whether people choose AT. People need to feel safe and have convenient options to move around without a car. Infrastructure factors include: sidewalks, crosswalks, transit stops, connectivity, designated bike lanes, street traffic, lighting and signage.

Infrastructure

- 1271km** AT Infrastructure including 158 km of multi-use pathways, 112 km of painted bike lanes, 1.4 km of protected bike lanes, and 967 km of sidewalks
- 100%** Accessible transit buses, buses with bike racks, & transit terminals with bike lockers
- 2480** Total crosswalks including 320 uncontrolled marked crosswalks, 181 pedestrian controlled illuminated crossings, 268 signalized intersections, and 83 Accessible Pedestrian Signals providing audible cues
- 964,000** Transit annual service hours in 2016/2017. Transit trips are often linked with cycling and walking. People who use transit are more physically active in their commute and overall lifestyle.