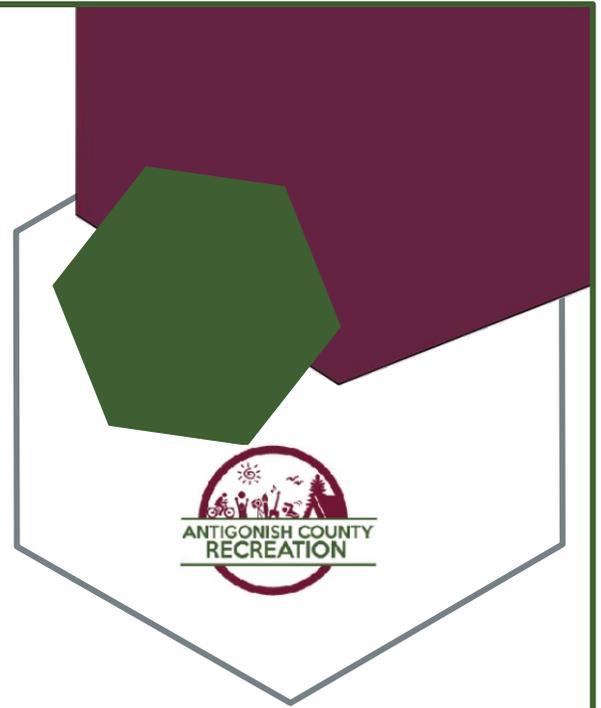


MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF
ANTIGONISH



Communities in Movement

A recreation and physical activity plan for Antigonish County



FEBRUARY 2019

**Take care of the body [mind & spirit].
It is the only place you have to live.
-Jim Rohn**

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Message from Warden

On behalf of Municipal Council I would like to express my congratulations to the Recreation Department for creating this document - *Communities in Movement: A Recreation and Physical Activity Plan for Antigonish County*. A lot of work and community consultation went into the development of this plan and we hope it enables all residents of Antigonish County to participate in recreational opportunities.

Recreation and active lifestyles play such a large role in our health and well-being. Aside from the obvious physical benefits of being active there are so many other benefits such as social and supportive environments, emotional and mental health benefits, stress reduction, and overall improved quality of life.

We are very lucky in Antigonish County to have so many wonderful natural environments that allow us to be active. Go out, explore a new trail, snowshoe in your backyard, swim into the waves, join a new society, your body and mind will thank you!

I believe this plan sets us on the right path to becoming a healthier community.



We're in, let's get moving!

Warden McLauron



Message from Antigonish County Recreation



Hello Antigonish County!

On behalf of the Municipality of the County of Antigonish, we are so excited to present to you *Communities in Movement: A Recreation and Physical Activity Plan for Antigonish County*.

Communities in Movement reflects our continued passion to support and provide recreation and physical activity opportunities for all residents of Antigonish County. This plan will bring to life the Municipality's vision for recreation:

To support individual and community wellbeing through participation in a full range of community supported, equitable and safe recreational opportunities.

We would like to send a big thank you to everyone who gave their time and thoughts in sharing what recreational and active living opportunities are important to them and their community. It was a delight to meet with the hundreds of residents throughout our community meetings. While exploring the possibilities at our kitchen table chats, we gathered some great information which has been a strong focus in the direction of our plan.

Our work and passion is guided by the *Shared Strategy for Advancing Recreation in Nova Scotia*, which defines recreation as:

The experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing.

We are facing significant social and environmental challenges; recreation and physical activity have proven to play an integral role in addressing these challenges. Engagement in recreation and physical activity is helping reduce diabetes, anti-social behaviour, social isolation, negative impacts on the environment and obesity. (*Shared Strategy, 2015*)

We need to continue this engagement in recreation and physical activity, which will continue to strengthen the individual and community wellbeing. ***Communities in Movement*** aligns its five goals with the *Shared Strategy*. The objectives and actions supporting each goal are a result of our citizen input, local knowledge and external expertise that provided us with a unique and exciting *Recreation and Physical Activity Plan for Antigonish County*.

We are looking forward to taking this plan and reconnecting with Antigonish County residents and all the communities that reside within. Continuing collaborations with our community partners will be an essential focus in reaching our goals. *Communities in Movement* will support individual wellbeing and community wellbeing and ultimately enhance the quality of life within Antigonish County.

Your Recreation Team,

- Marlene Melanson, Recreation Director**
- Denise Fougere, Administrative Assistant**
- Meaghan MacNeil, Physical Activity Coordinator**
- Amy Leigh George, Recreation Programmer**



An Invitation to join “Communities in Movement”

Recreation is often more enjoyable when people have an opportunity to connect with friends, family or other members of the community. During our community consultation process we heard time and time again that people were more interested in being active within their own community or a neighbouring community than driving to town to go to the gym or an organized event. Having recreational and physical activity opportunities close to home allows people to better use their time, stay connected to people within their community and enjoy the natural resources of their local area, including walking along the road side, at the beach on or a local trail; biking along the roadside; or getting together with community members in an informal knitting or cooking group.

We believe in the strength of recreational participation within local communities and therefore we invite you to get active with a neighbour or friend or to help coordinate community recreational activities. We all have skills and interests that others would enjoy and it can be rewarding to connect with old and new friends within the community. Once that initial connection is made it is often easier for everyone to be motivated to get out and participate in the activity again a second and third time.

Working in small groups can be an effective way to organize recreation and physical activity at the community level. So if you are able and motivated to do so, we invite you to gather friends together and invite your neighbours that don't get out often, are new to the community or are seasonal residents to a community recreation program or event. When citizens reach out to others to get engaged in an activity, the bonds within the community are strengthened and all participants have an opportunity to feel healthier in mind, body and spirit.

Communities in Movement, through enhanced recreation and physical activity opportunities, is a goal we aspire to achieve over the next few years. We hope you, your friends and neighbours will be enthused about helping people in your community get connected and involved. We can help provide resources, strengthen access to networks and help you connect to others within your community and others within the County of Antigonish.

Here is your invitation...let's get moving!



Executive Summary

Initiated by the County of Antigonish and Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation in February 2018, this project is the latest in a series of recreation, physical activity and active transportation plans and strategies that have guided decision making in Antigonish County for almost a decade. During that time the Municipality and Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation have responded to the public health imperative of increasing the physical activity levels of their citizens and residents in schools, communities and at home. As a combination of an Operational Plan for the Recreation Department and Physical Activity Strategy for the Municipality as a whole, *Communities in Movement* continues that commitment for the Municipality of Antigonish County. A physical activity strategy for Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation has been written as an additional document.

KEY FOCUS AREAS IDENTIFIED BY RESIDENTS

- communities and communications
- community connections (social and physical)
- community transportation
- improving connections with Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation
- combating isolation
- multigenerational and youth programming
- connection to nature
- unstructured and spontaneous play opportunities
- various aspects of safety.

The planning process included a review of existing, relevant documents such as the *Shared Strategy for Advancing Recreation in Nova Scotia* (2015) and the results of the *County of Antigonish, Physical Activity Community Survey* (2014); regular meetings with a Steering Committee that included representatives of the Municipality, Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation, and the NS Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage; and seven stakeholder meetings and three school based meetings that engaged approximately 200+ interested community members, students and representatives of key service providing organizations.

The series of community meetings and school consultations generated a range of diverse findings that focussed on a relatively small number of key areas. A particularly noticeable focus was on concepts related to communities and communications – community connections (social and physical), community transportation, improving connections with Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation, and combating isolation – that were raised over and over during the meetings.

The most significant response to this community focus is the Community Hub approach which builds on existing strengths and is described in more detail throughout this document. Other important areas of focus from the meetings included both multigenerational and youth programming, connection to nature, unstructured and spontaneous play opportunities, and various aspects of safety.

The *Communities in Movement Plan* plots a course for moving forward towards more engaged, more active/less sedentary population and communities that are connected better within themselves and with other communities. It contains the high level elements of definitions, vision, mission and values that provide a framework for the goals, objectives and actions outlined in the plan.

As per the *Shared Strategy for Advancing Recreation in Nova Scotia*, recreation is defined as:

The experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing.¹

The definition of physical activity comes from the World Health Organization:

Physical activity is defined as any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure.²

The definition of Community Hub was developed by the Steering Committee:

A community hub is a focal point for community engagement and development, based on cultural patterns of living and gathering, for purposes of work, play, and education. Each hub is as unique as the community it serves.

Objectives and action-oriented work has been identified that need to be completed in order to meet the five goals of:



The planning process resulted in objectives supporting each goal and forty-four actions identified to work towards achieving those objectives.

The final part of the plan covers tracking progress through monitoring and evaluation activities. An Implementation Plan will be developed to assist staff to move quickly into implementation as Council decisions on direction and resources are known.

¹ Province of Nova Scotia, *Shared Strategy for Advancing Recreation in Nova Scotia*, Halifax, NS, (2015), page 4.

² World Health Organization, *Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health*, Geneva, Switzerland, (2004)

Background and Overview

The context for this recreation plan includes an established, international awareness of the importance of physical activity, and a growing realization of the importance of reducing sedentary behaviours to the promotion of individual health and wellbeing. The context also includes an unprecedented national understanding of recreation as a major contributor to individual and community wellbeing, as evidenced by the endorsement of **A Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015 Pathways to Wellbeing** by the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association and the Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Ministers responsible for sport, physical activity and recreation in 2015. The national endorsement of *Pathways to Wellbeing* led to the completion and endorsement of the **Shared Strategy for Advancing Recreation in Nova Scotia**, also in 2015. The *Shared Strategy*, which has in turn been endorsed by the Municipality of the County of Antigonish, provides a foundation for this plan.

The following plans and research have helped shape the context of the Communities in Movement Plan:

- *A Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015 Pathways to Wellbeing*
- *Shared Strategy for Advancing Recreation in Nova Scotia*
- *Canadian Sport Policy*
- *Nova Scotia's Culture Action Plan*
- *Shift, Nova Scotia's Action Plan for an Aging Population*
- *Connecting Canadians with Nature. An Investment in the Well-being of our Citizens*
- *Parks for All. An Action Plan for Canada's Parks Community*
- *Let's Get Moving Nova Scotia*
- *Antigonish's Active Transportation Plan*

In considering the context for this recreation plan, there are other important developments that should be acknowledged. One part of this context is the **Canadian Sport Policy** (2012). One of the policy's five goals reads, "Recreational Sport: Canadians have the opportunity to participate in sport for fun, health, social interaction and relaxation." One of the important elements of the Canadian Sport Policy that has continued to develop over the years is physical literacy, and you will see references to physical literacy both in the provincial *Shared Strategy* and in this plan.

At both the municipal and provincial levels, recreation and the arts are inextricably linked and so the adoption of **Nova Scotia's Culture Action Plan** in 2017 was then and continues to be significant. The following direct references to the *Shared Strategy* and a provincial Trails Strategy illustrate the connections between recreation and the arts.

"Work with community partners to implement the Shared Recreation Strategy to foster active healthy living, and increase inclusion and access to recreation for all Nova Scotians.

Work on the development of a Trails Strategy for Nova Scotia, aligning with growing use of trails." (Culture Action Plan, page 16)

Another important contextual piece is the Province's release, in the spring of 2017 of **Shift, Nova Scotia's Action Plan for an Aging Population**. The interconnections between this plan and *Shift* are evident in all three of the *Shift* goals:

- Value the social and economic contributions of older adults;
- Promote healthy, active living; and
- Support aging in place, connected to community life.

Two national documents in support of parks and open spaces are also part of the context for this plan. As *Pathways to Wellbeing* was being completed, the Canadian Parks Council released a report they had developed for the Federal/Provincial/Territorial ministers responsible for parks called **Connecting Canadians with Nature. An Investment in the Well-being of our Citizens** (2014). Even more recently, a joint effort by the Canadian Parks Council and the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association resulted in the release of **Parks for All. An Action Plan for Canada's Parks Community** (2017).

“Parks offer natural solutions to many of our current environmental and societal problems. They sustain animals and make room for healthy ecosystems that self regulate and help control the climate, supplying plentiful, clean water and food to all species. They provide spaces that can inspire creativity and energize us through play and recreation. Parks act as a shelter for Nature, and we are all part of Nature. We can connect with ourselves there.”
(Parks for All, page 2)

And most recently, a policy document entitled *A Common Vision for Increasing Physical Activity and Reducing Sedentary Living in Canada: **Let's Get Moving Nova Scotia*** was released by the Government of Canada in 2018. As stated in the Executive Summary, “Never before has Canada had a singular policy focus on physical activity and its relationship to sport, recreation, health, and other relevant policy areas.” A provincial response to *Let's Get Moving* is being prepared at the time of writing this plan.

A final contextual piece for *Communities in Movement* is the County of **Antigonish's Active Transportation Plan**. This comprehensive plan includes commitments related to public education, engineering, encouragement, enforcement and evaluation. **Communities in Movement** contains a continued commitment to implementation of the Active Transportation Plan.

The context described above illustrates the integrated nature of the recreation and physical activity fields and underscores the importance of partnerships and collaboration to the achievement of goals and objectives and the implementation of actions.

Recreation Mandate and Priorities 2011-2018

The Municipality of the County of Antigonish Recreation Department has a broad mandate to enhance the quality of life for the people of the municipality by working together to: provide, facilitate and create opportunities for a variety of recreation, leisure and sport activities; increase physical activity levels in the municipality; and create new and support existing social and physical environments that encourage residents and visitors to be physically active. The current priorities for the department organized under the five goals of the *Shared Strategy for Advancing Recreation in Nova Scotia* are summarized below.



Goal 1 – Active Living ***Foster active healthy living through recreation***

- Provide grants to minor sport groups and organizations to support active lifestyles
- Provide information through a Community Directory and Highland Connect.ca
- Promote community events on through multiple mediums
- Provide summer and after school programs
- Provide swim instructional and water safety programs
- Co-coordinate Active Start and multi-sport programs
- Assist with 55+ programming



Goal 2 – Inclusion and Access ***Increase inclusion and access to recreation to populations that face constraints to participation***

- Support direct participation through coordination of the Jumpstart and KidSport programs and by providing inclusion support for participants
- Gary Boone Leadership Development Fund
- Facility Access and Equipment Accessibility programs
- Community Use of Schools



Goal 3 – Connecting People With Nature ***Help people connect to natural environments through recreation***

- Provide outdoor recreation programming
- Go Afterschool Program (Go = Get Outside)
- Provide the Outdoor Pavilion at SAJS



Goal 4 – Supportive Environments

Provision of supportive physical and social environments that encourage participation and build strong communities

- Provide grant programs to support facility development and maintenance
- Support volunteer recognition initiatives
- Support active transportation
- Collaborate with other sectors
- Partner with community organizations
- Support the Recreation Management Website



Goal 5 – Recreation Capacity

Ensure the growth and sustainability of services and programs

- Support community based initiatives
- Alignment of funding criteria with Shared Strategy goals
- Coordinate leadership training
- Support the Community Grant Partnership Program
- Keep part-time staff policies and procedures up-to-date

Project History

Request for Proposals – The Municipality of the County of Antigonish and Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation jointly issued a request for proposals (RFP) in February 2018 to seek proposals “from qualified individuals and organizations to facilitate the development of a recreation operational plan as well physical activity plans.” In March 2018 the RFP was awarded to Frank Gallant of Peak Experiences Consulting of Antigonish County and Rick Gilbert of Rick Gilbert Consulting of Halifax. The initial meeting of the project Steering Committee with the consultants was held in April 2018.

Municipal Physical Activity Leadership Program – The Municipality of the County of Antigonish and Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation are both participants in the Municipal/Mi'kmaq Physical Activity Leadership Program (MPAL) of the Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage (CCH). In essence, CCH provides funds to cover half the cost of professional leadership to enable the municipality/Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation to plan policies, programs and other initiatives targeted to achieving a more active and less sedentary population. One of the key elements of the funding agreement is that the municipality/Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation is required to prepare a physical activity strategy once every five years. In addition to the leadership grant, the Province also covers the cost of monitoring progress through periodic Nova Insights Physical Activity Community Surveys, coordinates professional development opportunities for MPAL staff and supports evaluation initiatives. For the Municipality, this will be its third physical activity strategy, the second having been written and integrated into the Antigonish County Recreation Active Community Recreation plan (2011).

Shared Strategy for Advancing Recreation in Nova Scotia – In November, 2017, the Municipality of the County of Antigonish adopted the *Shared Strategy for Advancing Recreation in Nova Scotia (2015)* as the Municipality's guiding framework for municipal recreation in the County. As stated in the RFP, this operational plan utilizes the *Shared Strategy* as a foundation for planning.

Planning Process

As per the RFP and the consultants' proposal, the planning process consisted of 12 steps that included:

- a review of existing, related plans and other documents;
- meetings, workshops and written communication with the Steering Committee to guide the process, provide input and review draft plans;
- ten meetings with stakeholder groups, community members, students and representatives of service providers with an interest in recreation and physical activity as a means of health promotion; and
- meetings with municipal and Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation staff to review the draft plans and provide feedback to the Steering Committee.

Analysis and synthesis of the findings from all of these meetings resulted in a new recreation and physical activity plan for Antigonish County.



What we have learned

Community Profile – Municipality of the County of Antigonish

The Municipality has a population of approximately 15,500 and experienced a +3.2% population growth rate in 2015/16 which was higher than provincial of average of -1.9%.

The Municipality's population includes people and communities of Mi'kmaw, Acadian, Dutch, Scottish, and African decent, in addition to a growing immigrant population. This make-up contributes to a rich cultural history and a strong sense of community.

Approximately 25% of the population are under the age of 20, and 17% are 65 or older.

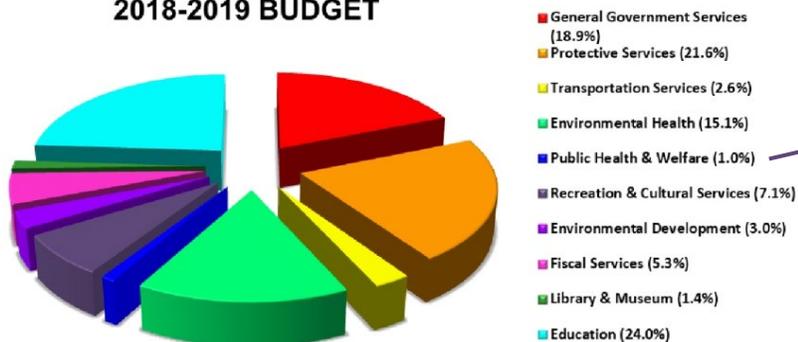
The Municipality has a passionate culture in recreation and sport with endless resources encouraging the community to live healthy and active lifestyles. In 2014, the Physical Activity Community Survey (Nova Insights) was conducted to further the development, implementation and continued evaluation of the recreation departmental plan, in particular the physical activity strategies. In addition, the survey provided local data to inform the plans on physical activity and the extent to which these align with physical activity opportunities in the area. Several of the survey findings include:

PROFILE AT A GLANCE

- Population: 15,500
- 2015/16 population growth was +3.2%, which is higher than provincial average of -1.9%
- 25% of the population are under the age of 20, and 17% are 65 or older
- 7.1% of the Municipality's annual budget is allocated to recreation and culture
- 69% of the people who live in the Municipality have lived here for at least 20 years
- 58% of residents have a college diploma or university degree (approximately 10% higher than the provincial average)
- 82% of residents earn greater than \$35,000 annually.

- 69% of the people who live in the Municipality have lived here for at least 20 years;
- 58% of residents have a college diploma or university degree (approximately 10% higher than the provincial average); and
- 82% of residents earn greater than \$35,000 annually.

Municipality of the County of Antigonish 2018-2019 BUDGET



3.6% Recreation Department Operating Budget

3.5% Recreation & Cultural Grants, Arena Commission, Heritage Museum, PARL, People's Place Library

Health Indicators & Barriers

Nova Scotia Health Profile 2015

- In 2011 approximately 64,000 (7 %) of people in Nova Scotia were living in low income.
- 58 % of Nova Scotians report their health status as excellent or very good.
- In Nova Scotia 72 % of the population report their mental health status as excellent or very good.
- 18 % of Nova Scotians perceive that most days are quite a bit or extremely stressful.
- 61 % of the Nova Scotia population is overweight or obese.
- 1 out of 3 Nova Scotians (34 %) consume fruit and vegetables five or more times per day.
- 71 % of Nova Scotians report a sense of belonging to their local community as somewhat or very strong.
- 54 % of Nova Scotians are categorized as active or moderately active based on their self-reported participation in leisure –time physical activity.

Nova Scotia Minister's Report on Accessibility- 2017

- Almost one in five (19 %) Nova Scotians age 15 years and older identifies as having a disability.
- The 19 % equates to approximately 144,000 Nova Scotians and it is the largest percentage of any Canadian province.

Report Card on Child Poverty in Nova Scotia 2017

- Nova Scotia has the highest child poverty rate of the Atlantic provinces.
- Sample child poverty rates by postal areas
 - Have Boucher: 14.3%, Afton Station: 43.8%, Monastery: 15.4%, St Andrews: 11.5%, Antigonish: 14.3%
 - NS immigrant children 40.3%.

Nova Insights Study (Selected Findings)

This section will provide a sampling of the key findings of the Nova Insights study for the Municipality of the County of Antigonish. One of the early questions, after defining physical activity, asked respondents which activities, from a list, they would like to participate in more frequently than they do currently. The top three were:

- Walking
- Swimming (distant second)
- Skiing/snowboarding (for 18-39 year olds)

KEY FINDINGS BY 2014 NOVA INSIGHTS STUDY

Respondents indicated :

- They would like to participate more frequently in walking, swimming (distant second) and skiing/snowboarding (for 18-39 year olds)
- The major challenges to participation were related to infrastructure and social barriers and that there is a need for safer places to walk and cycling.
- They would like to have more opportunities to participate in drop-in sport and recreation activities, family-friendly “programs for children with or nearby to parent activities, appropriate spaces” and “non-competitive (recreational) activities

To address the question of challenges (to being more physically active) that people face, respondents were asked if they agreed that certain challenges applied to them. The top listed challenges were related to infrastructure and social barriers. More specifically, respondents mentioned that “bicycle lanes or spaces at the side of the road are not well enough maintained for cycling”, lacking “someone to go with” and “Sidewalks or spaces at the side of the road are not well enough maintained for walking” as the three top.

Respondents were also asked about the opportunities that would encourage greater participation in physical activity. Key responses included opportunities to participate in drop-in sport and recreation activities, family-friendly “programs for children with or nearby to parent activities, appropriate spaces” and “non-competitive (recreational) activities (especially among females, who rank this at the top)”.

In the section on active transportation, respondents were asked about their current patterns of participation, what they would like to engage in more often, and what factors would influence that aspiration. In brief, the study found that “one third of adults walk at least weekly but cycling is almost non-existent among adults.” Also, three quarters would like to walk more often, a decision most affected by “sidewalk maintenance, trails, condition of roads, and lighting.”

Community Engagement Meetings (Key Themes)

The community meetings mentioned previously were a prime source of qualitative data for assessing recreational and physical activity opinions and interests. Seven community consultations and three school consultations were held across the county in May and June 2018.

The key themes identified by residents align nicely with the province’s “Let’s Get Moving Nova Scotia” action plan for increasing physical activity in our communities. The plan aims to help Nova Scotians be more active in their everyday lives by increasing opportunities for them to be more active in their communities, workplaces, and schools.

The following represent a sampling of themes that were repeated most often at the meetings, often regardless of location. It should be noted that these themes are often interrelated and should not be considered to be stand-alone ideas.

KEY FOCUS AREAS IDENTIFIED BY RESIDENTS

- **Communication**
- **Community Connection**
- **Multigenerational Programs**
- **Encouraging Social Connection/Combating Loneliness and Isolation**
- **Connection to Nature**
- **Unstructured Opportunities/Spontaneous Play**
- **Safety**
- **Community Transportation**
- **Connections to Paqtnekek**
- **Youth Engagement**

COMMUNICATION:

Many participants cited aspects of communication as an area that required attention, including: public information about existing resources and opportunities; use of media/social media as a means to better communication; connections with and among community groups; public education about topics such as the value of risky play; and access to high speed internet. The idea of navigators or other recreation staff was also cited as means to improve communication between the municipality and community members.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION:

The importance of communities as focal points for concentration of social and built infrastructure was raised often and in varied ways. In particular, the idea of Community Hubs as centres of local activity, utilizing existing community resources and energy was of particular interest, as was interest in building stronger connections between communities through connecting trails and community exchanges. Ideas such as communication, voluntarism, community pride, and improved use of community resources were integral with the theme of community connection.



MULTIGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS:



Another theme that was mentioned numerous times and at many community meetings was multigenerational programming. Getting everyone involved, encouraging mixed skill levels, “multi-sports” for all ages, encouraging youth-seniors interaction, offering programming for parents when their children are active, building new partnerships for intergenerational opportunities, walking clubs and gaming days for youth and adults – there were no shortages of variations on this popular theme. In addition to many calls for multigenerational initiatives, opportunities designed specifically with the 55+ in mind were also mentioned numerous times across the community.

ENCOURAGING SOCIAL CONNECTION/COMBATING LONELINESS AND ISOLATION:

Participants in the community meetings seemed strongly aware of social connection as a benefit of recreation and a motivator for participation in physical activity. The importance of people coming together within and across communities was mentioned many times. However, the flip side of the coin – loneliness, isolation and their impacts on mental health – were also recurring sub-themes. There were many calls for targeted initiatives that would bridge the gap between community members living isolated lives and other members of their communities.

CONNECTION TO NATURE:

Connecting to nature was another theme that was repeated often and had many variations at community meetings across the municipality. Some participants focussed on the need for more outdoor opportunities at beaches, on trails, in the woods, and on waterways. Other sub-themes included participation outdoors in all seasons, building multi-purpose connector trails and greenbelts, organizing clinics and excursions, youth experiencing the outdoors, protecting the natural integrity of natural areas, taking advantage of opportunities at Keppoch Mountain, and creating walking clubs. Two closely related sub-themes that were mentioned at several meetings were the need for mapping, signage and way finding to help people navigate to and within natural areas, and the need for accessible equipment loan programs to ease participation through reducing or eliminating costs.



UNSTRUCTURED OPPORTUNITIES/SPONTANEOUS PLAY:



This is yet another multi-faceted theme that, in general, calls for greater spontaneity and less structure in the provision of opportunities for recreation and physical activity. Specific calls were for more drop-in and pick-up activities; the creation of community gardens, skate parks, risky play areas, off-leash dog areas, safe infrastructure for walking and cycling and skating oval or figure 8; and offering more free play related activities such as natural playgrounds, tree houses, and rope courses. There was also a more

subdued call for a balanced approach between the provision of less structured activities and more structured activities such as organized sport.

SAFETY:

Various aspects of safety were mentioned in community meetings, ranging from too much safety (e.g. children needing more exposure to risky play for healthy development) to the need for additional safety (e.g. upgraded walking and cycling infrastructure). Additional safety-related matters included adventurous and nature based play opportunities; helping people to manage perceived and real risks that may prevent them from going outdoors (e.g. coyotes, hunters, ticks, weather, tides); the need for qualified leadership; safe areas for families to be active; and way finding/signage initiatives. Cultural safety, or the need for everyone to feel welcome and safe in all community places and spaces was also an element of this theme.



COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION:

The need for community transportation to provide low cost or free transportation to opportunities for recreational and physical activity opportunities was mentioned often during the community meetings. The range of suggestions included providing free transportation to key recreation facilities such as Keppoch, Beaver Mountain, beaches, Community Hubs and trail heads; and providing transportation to community events.

CONNECTIONS TO PAQTNKEK MI'KMAW NATION:

Another theme that was raised several times, and in several communities, was the need for greater connection to and partnership with Paqtnekek Mi'kmaw Nation. Specific suggestions included engagement in Paqtnekek Mi'kmaw Nation festivals and visiting the Paqtnekek Mi'kmaw Nation community. At the community meeting held in Paqtnekek Mi'kmaw Nation, sentiments were expressed that support the idea of greater contact with non-native communities, including inviting members of the broader community to participate in the annual pow-wows.



YOUTH ENGAGEMENT:



The three sessions dedicated entirely to youth engagement covered much territory but recurring themes were not always evident. Some of the priorities for youth would be met through greater access to indoor spaces where a variety of activities could take place, ranging from study halls and science clubs to music, talent shows and card nights. There was also a call for mental health supports, opportunities for leadership development and experience; and access to a wide variety of indoor/outdoor, structured/non-structured and active/ passive programs and indoor and outdoor facility opportunities.

Where we want to be

Our vision: To support individual and community wellbeing through participation in a full range of community supported, equitable, and safe recreational opportunities.



Our Mission: Providing recreation/physical activity services which support the provision of social and physical infrastructure that enables the full participation of residents in recreational activities that promote individual and community wellbeing. We will carry out this mission through:

- Promoting and enabling healthy lifestyle choices
- Focussing on changing knowledge to behaviour
- Providing excellent communication and navigation services
- Coordinating and supporting the work of Community Hubs
- Targeting populations who are currently inactive and/or not engaged:
 - Youth 12-18
 - Females across the lifespan
 - Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation
 - Seniors
 - New Canadians.

Core Values

Safe Space: An environment that is physically and emotionally safe where people can participate, meet new people, try new things, explore different possibilities, reach beyond constructed boundaries, and build confidence.

Connection with Nature: Diverse outdoor settings; including forests, hills and valleys, lakes and beaches; to explore and enjoy through a system of parks, trails, and other infrastructure.

Freedom, Playful and Fun: Opportunities for unorganized and unstructured play activity that is spontaneous, meaningful, enjoyable and internally motivating for the participant.

Social Connections and Relationships: Engage in recreational activities with families, friends, neighbours and other communities to enjoy social connections and relationships.

Equity and Accessibility: Inclusive and accessible recreational services are welcoming to all, and supports are in place to assist accessibility.

Volunteer Capacity: Individual volunteers and community organizations are supported to provide recreational opportunities.

Diverse Community Partnerships: An interconnected set of government, nongovernment and private partners provide, and assist citizens to provide recreation, sport and physical activity services and opportunities.

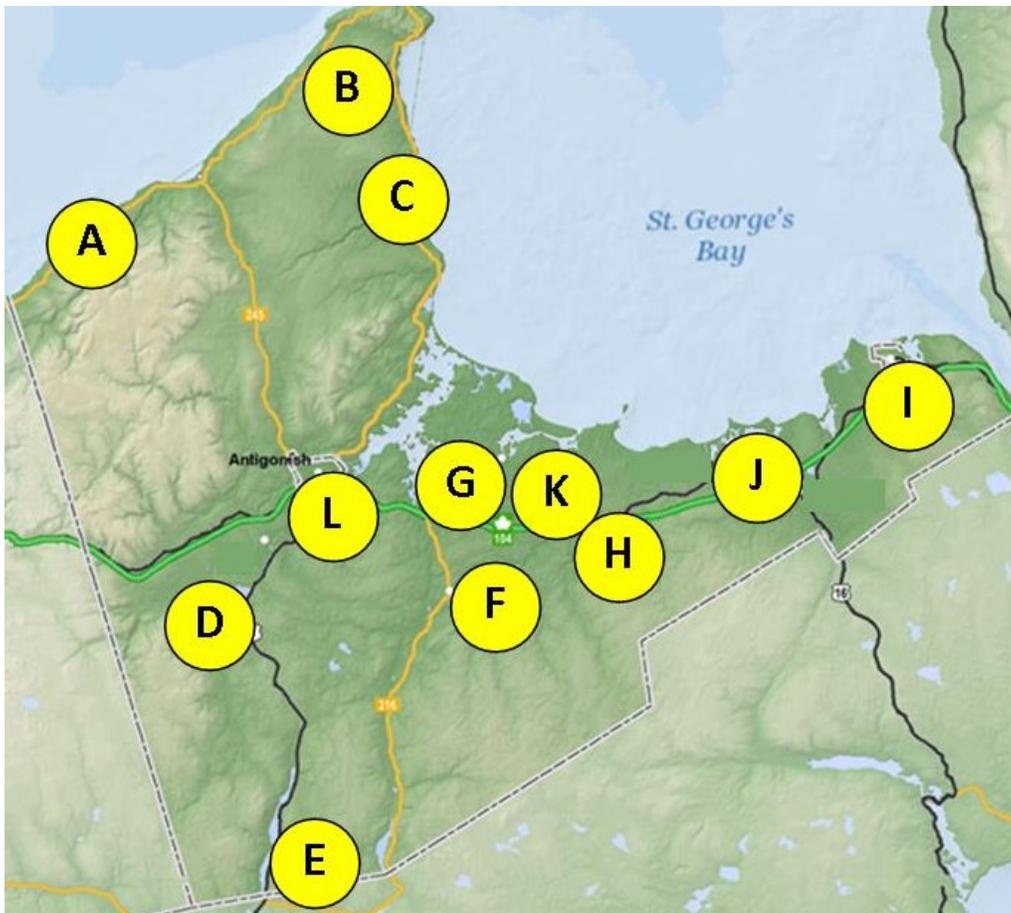
Community Hubs

A community hub is a focal point for community engagement and development, based on cultural patterns of living and gathering, for purposes of work, play, and education. Each hub is as unique as the community it serves.

Support for Community Hubs is an essential element of this plan. Recognizing that rural Community Hubs contribute to overall community wellbeing and can become even more vital to community vitality and citizen health and happiness, this plan proposes to build on and their existing strengths, increase their capacity through volunteer development and support them to be an even greater focal point for community activity as well as share information across communities.

The Antigonish County Recreation Department has identified the following communities as potential areas for a Community Hub. Specific community hubs will be defined in collaboration with local leadership in each community.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| A. Arisaig and surrounding areas | G. Pomquet and surrounding areas |
| B. Cape George and surrounding areas | H. Heatherton and surrounding areas |
| C. Lakevale and surrounding areas | I. Havre Boucher/Linwood and surrounding areas |
| D. St. Joseph and surrounding areas | J. Monastary/Tracadie and surrounding areas |
| E. Lochaber and surrounding areas | K. Paqtnekek Mi'kmaw Nation |
| F. St. Andrews and surrounding areas | L. Antigonish Harbour, William's Point, West River, Addington Forks |



How we will get there

Strategic Goals, Objectives and Actions

The goals that follow are taken from the framework within the *Shared Strategy for Advancing Recreation in Nova Scotia*. The objectives and actions that support each of the goals are derived mainly from community meetings and the input of municipal staff and community leaders, supplemented by evidence-based information from provincial and national sources. Together the combination of local knowledge and external expertise enables the development of a comprehensive, relevant and realistic plan for the Municipality.

	<p>Goal # 1: Active Living <i>To foster active, healthy living through recreation</i></p>
<p>Objective 1.1: To support physical literacy as a primary building block to active living across the lifespan.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the benefits of participation through supporting road shows, try-it-out days and equipment loan programs at the community level. Continue to offer physical literacy programs for all ages 	
<p>Objective 1.2: To provide increased support to Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation to increase movement, decrease sedentary living, and promote healthy lifestyles.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form a joint recreation/physical activity task team to explore, plan and implement new collaborative efforts to reach common goals and objectives. Promote walking and cycling; encourage healthy eating through cooking classes; and coordinate active living programs and services thereby decreasing vulnerability to chronic diseases. Support the identification and development of leaders for recreation and culturally relevant programming. 	
<p>Objective 1.3: To encourage greater efficiency and effectiveness by supporting increased connection to and collaboration among MPAL staff in the Strait Region.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue invitations to the other governance units to work together on the development of terms of reference for a collaborative initiative. (Antigonish County, Town of Antigonish, Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation, Mulgrave, Port Hawksbury, Guysborough, and St. Mary's) 	
<p>Objective 1.4: To promote family and community wellbeing through recreation and physical activity.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer multigenerational and family programming. Develop a shuttle system to provide free transportation to selected recreation sites within the County for select activities or events. Build on the popularity of emerging activities (e.g. pickle ball) through co-locating those activities with others that appeal to different generations or people with different interests. 	



Goal # 2: Inclusion and Access

To increase inclusion and access to recreation for populations that face constraints to participation

Objective 2.1: To prepare a policy for consideration by municipal council that will provide affordable recreational and physical activity opportunities for all.

Actions:

- Conduct a national review of initiatives designed to remove financial and other constraints to participation by residents of rural municipalities.
- Develop a proposal to reduce financial and other constraints for consideration by Municipal Council. The policy could include:
 - Subsidies to reduce fees either universally or in a targeted manner;
 - Programs offered to children and youth at no cost;
 - Provision of spaces (parks, trails, playgrounds, skateboard parks) that typically have no fees attached;
 - Continue to support community transit to assist people with transportation to recreation and other community facilities.

Objective 2.2: To develop an initiative to determine a youth engagement strategy for the Municipality.

Actions:

- Develop a youth/adult partnership task team to design a process for achieving a youth engagement strategy built on the interests and aspirations of youth, and tapping the potential for youth as leaders within the community.
- Adhere to the following principles when developing the task team and youth engagement strategies
 - Youth as full partners in the process;
 - Sustainability over time;
 - Built at the community level reflecting community opportunities, challenges and assets;
 - Responsive to a wide range of issues that impact youth wellbeing.

Objective 2.3: To develop community resources to address loneliness as a barrier to participation.

Actions:

- Explore other models to connect individuals to opportunities as a means of reducing social isolation and loneliness.
- Create a multi-sector task team of professionals and volunteers to develop a recommended approach for addressing this barrier.
- Develop opportunities to address loneliness due to social and geographic isolation, poverty, illness, and lack of access to transportation (especially around public housing, nursing homes and other centres that will back up vulnerable people.)

Objective 2.4: To increase support for targeted populations which includes less active youth and females across the lifespan.

Actions:

- Draft a policy that establishes less active (unengaged) youth and females across the lifespan as priority, targeted populations.



Goal # 3: Connecting People and Nature

To help people connect to nature through recreation

Objective 3.1: To encourage unstructured outdoor play during all seasons promoting a “risk tolerant” culture within the municipality.

Actions:

- Support outdoor recreational facilities as venues for year-round outdoor recreation.
- Support the development of weekend free-play programs and encourage the building of natural adventure based playgrounds.
- Support after school free-play programs to strengthen participation and interest in unstructured play.

Objective 3.2: To change the cultural norm to greater experimentation by encouraging more people to “get outdoors” more often and in more places.

Actions:

- Identify and train outdoor mentors from throughout Antigonish County.
- Provide outdoor education and leadership programs to strengthen the safety and comfort for people that engage in outdoor activities.
- Support the development of a signage/way finding system to mark routes and distances at trailheads and along trails.

Objective 3.3: To improve access to the Equipment Accessibility Loan program.

Actions:

- Develop funding proposals that would:
 - support the continued growth of equipment loan programs,
 - provide access to equipment at recreation and physical activity locations across Antigonish County ,
 - include more adaptive equipment and technology to help make outdoor activities more inclusive and accessible to people with disabilities.

Objective 3.4: To align with *The Accessibility Act (Bill 59)* to ensure an environment free of barriers for persons with disabilities.

Actions:

- Promote the Accessible Equipment Loan Program to support participation by persons with disabilities.
- Provide training on the Accessibility Act and its alignment with *Communities in Movement*.



Goal # 4: Supportive Environments

To ensure the provision of supportive physical and social environments that encourage participation in recreation and build strong, caring communities.

Objective 4.1: To continue to support the Municipal Active Transportation Plan, incorporating both utilitarian and recreational objectives in its on-going implementation.

Actions:

- Provide safe places to walk, bike and paddle in and around communities.
- Where appropriate, incorporate the Blue Route on municipal roads.
- Educate cyclists and drivers about the benefits of sharing the road, and educate cyclists about safe cycling on roads and trails.
- Work with Antigonish Community Transit to place bike racks on busses and local transit vehicles.
- Support trails organizations to develop and maintain trails.
- Explore the development of connector trails and green spaces as venues for active recreation and community connection.

Objective 4.2: To support Community Hubs as ongoing vibrant gathering places, centres of recreation and social development, as well as avenues for the development of new ideas.

Actions:

- Building on existing social and built infrastructure, support a network of Community Hubs through enhanced communication, coordination, community exchanges and celebration.
- Provide resources to Community Hubs to increase effectiveness and utility, build non-traditional partnerships (e.g. libraries, arts based organizations, seniors groups).
- Assist Community Hubs with the development of asset maps as a component of their on-going planning process.
- Create a volunteer group of recreation and physical activity community champions based at each Community Hub.
- Invest in developing spring and late fall community engagement recreational weekends in Community Hubs. (e.g. Wake Up Spring and Kick Off Winter)

Objective 4.3: To explore how the Community Hub concept can be extended to communities surrounding the Town of Antigonish.

Actions:

- Work with our partners and residents to create meaningful connections to community hubs.



Goal # 5: Recreation Capacity

To ensure the continued growth and sustainability of the recreation field.

Objective 5.1: To ensure that the Antigonish County Recreation Department has the resources necessary to undertake its key roles.

Actions:

- Consistent with the results of the community meetings, develop a strategy to ensure effective communication and cross-community connections.
- Develop a proposal for creating one or more community navigator positions to assist individuals and community organizations to access resources and opportunities.
- Support recreation and physical activity participation by providing equipment at low or no-cost to participants.
- Strengthen advocacy for enhanced recreation and physical activity opportunities through effective coordination, communication, and collaboration.

Objective 5.2: To continue to explore and develop new partnerships, and strengthen existing partnerships, within the recreation sector and with other sectors.

Actions:

- Use *Communities in Movement* as a resource to reach out to other sectors, inviting their engagement in implementation.

Objective 5.3: To develop a new strategy to identify, train and support volunteers, including youth.

Actions:

- Study the state of volunteerism within the municipality and develop a strategy to recruit, train and support volunteers as appropriate, based on the results of the study.

Tracking the Progress and Results of the Strategic Plan

Implementation of the Recreation Operational Plan and Physical Activity Strategy will require a coordinated effort by the Recreation Department, other internal departments, other levels of government, non-government organizations and citizens. In some cases partnerships will need to be formed, approvals will need to be secured, and resources gathered. Some actions will move quickly while others will be accomplished over a longer period of time. Throughout the process, over the next five years, attention will also need to be paid to questions of progress and success. The next two sections provide brief summaries of required processes that will help the Municipality determine if progress is being made and success achieved.

Monitoring

Monitoring, also known as surveillance, is a systematic tracking of important indicators and milestones that indicate that progress is being made towards achieving a goal or objective. With this initiative, the community physical activity survey conducted by Nova Insights in 2014, provided essential baseline data which can be monitored over time (by repeating the survey periodically) to determine if progress is being made. The essence of monitoring is to pay attention to how things are going.

Evaluation

“Evaluation is a systematic determination of a subject's merit, worth and significance, using criteria governed by a set of standards.”¹ Evaluation can either be *formative*, determining the value or success of the plan during its implementation, or *summative*, determining if a plan or process has achieved its stated goals at its completion. The essence of summative evaluation is to determine if, at the end of a project, you have achieved success.

Limitations during the implementation of this process did not allow for the development of an evaluation framework. It is recommended that resources be provided early in the implementation process to develop a framework for plan evaluation, including both monitoring and evaluation components.

¹ Sarah del Tufo, *What is Evaluation?* The Evaluation Trust (2002), via Wikipedia

Appendices

Appendices

Agenda/Design for Community Meetings

6:30 PM

Welcome from Warden/Councillor

Frame-up of the Recreational and MPAL Operational Plan Process (Recreation Director/MPAL Coordinator)

Introduction of the Consulting Team (Frank Gallant and Rick Gilbert)

6:45 PM

Recreation in Antigonish County - A SWOT Analysis

Vision for the Future - Shared Story Telling

7:00 PM

Needs Assessment Questions/Discussions

1. What Needs to Change?
2. Nature of the Problem/Challenge We Are Trying to Solve
3. Best Windows of Opportunities/Helpful Risk
4. Big Idea's and Innovations
5. Key Barriers to Change
6. What's Important to You?/Core Values with Regards Recreation and Active Living

7:50 PM

Input into Draft - Key Goals or Strategies

Discussion and Reflections

Next Steps in the Process

8:30 PM

Thank you and Evening Closure

Active Transportation Proposed Implementation Plan

MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF ANTIGONISH
Active Transportation
Proposed Implementation Plan
March 2018

Education: Informing and Educating the Antigonish Community about Active Transportation	
1	<p>Maximize reach and impact of equipment loan program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an inventory of equipment loan programs (specific to AT) within County and Town (Keppoch, CACL, library, schools, etc.) • Promote and create awareness of loan program • Identify ways to expand the equipment loan program
2	<p>AT committee commits to ongoing education and professional development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating and/or hosting information sessions, workshops, and conferences. • Topics to include but not limited to AT plans, land use by laws, impact on AT, sustainable transportation, multi modal use
3	<p>Obtain citizen input to inform AT priority setting within Antigonish County.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a survey to obtain feedback from the community to inform the committee on AT community needs. • Review survey/create an evaluation piece • AT Committee will request report on information gathered during the accessibility challenge conducted by staff/council from Town & County
4	<p><i>Increase awareness of various AT supports and resources for groups/organizations already engaging in AT initiatives.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate conversations with groups who can support the incorporation or continuation of AT into the everyday routine of the community. • Share resources
5	<p>Increase public understanding and awareness of AT practices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During community needs assessments and feedback, be sure the public is educated on AT. • Continue public engagement: Get the word out on AT plans and accomplishments.
Engineering: The way in which community transit, walking and cycling infrastructure and amenities are planned, designed, constructed, operated and maintained	
6	<p>Create an inventory of existing County and community owned AT infrastructure; and future community led AT infrastructure projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communicate with community groups to establish inventory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Current community group examples: St. Andrews Community Project, Havre Boucher Community Project, Antigonish Landing • provide opportunities for community groups to complete specific AT audits within their current AT infrastructure (walk ability/bike-ability) to identify positive areas and problem areas for potential future AT projects (bike racks, sidewalks, cross walks, trail upgrades, etc) • map inventory and audit information
7	<p>Create an AT corridor along old Highway 104 now Route 4.</p> <p>Create a County led plan to use old highway 104 as an AT corridor. Plan may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • design • funding • construction plan • contact TIR-timing of lights

8	<p>Develop an approach to work together on town, county, and StFX AT projects which are mutually beneficial to all parties.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify AT projects that benefit and interconnect with all 3 parties • prioritize projects • develop an action plan
9	<p>Develop a standard and/or policy to ensure a universal design approach to new AT projects in Antigonish County.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further educate AT Committee on 8 - 80 principles and universal design • create infrastructure that goes beyond minimum standards
10	<p>Increase safety on popular cycling routes within Antigonish County.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify community used cycling routes for AT and Rec • Design/adopt a signage program • Communicate with local RCMP for community outreach.
<p>Encouragement: Promoting public transportation, walking and cycling as the first choice, the easy choice in all aspects of their lives including commuting to work, school for recreation and leisure and for their health</p>	
11	<p>Promote AT as a means of transportation throughout municipal initiatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Displays, promotional materials, social media posts, county quarterly, etc. in county led events and promotional materials
12	<p>Build partnerships to support cycling culture in Antigonish County.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with Bike Nova Scotia to host an information session in Antigonish on the Blue Route • Join provincial network hosting bike week events (June) • Educate community • Encourage more bike/walk friendly businesses in the Antigonish Community. • Create bike/walk friendly resources (i.e.: bike racks, self-serve bike stops, bike loans, dog friendly, business window signage, brochures, pamphlets) • Create awareness to existing cycling/walking recreation routes and opportunities in the County.
13	<p>Develop a partnership with schools to develop active safe routes to school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure youth representation within partnership and input • Develop design route guidelines through walkability and bike-ability audits to inform Safe Routes to School planning • Communications with SAC/school
14	<p>Build relationships with community trails organizations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventory existing trails and local trails groups • Identify the needs of local trails groups • Identify ways to support local trails groups
15	<p>Provide financial support to community led AT initiatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish parameters for a new municipal grant application to support AT
16	<p>Support the development of Skateparks in Antigonish.</p> <p>Assist with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • securing a location • developing a plan for skate park development (fundraising, design, construction)
17	<p>Increase usage of active recreation destinations located in Antigonish County.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify active recreation destinations in Antigonish County • Create a passport program showcasing each destination

Enforcement: The way in which public transit, walking and cycling facilities and amenities are planned, designed, constructed, operated and maintained	
18	<p>Ensure AT development in Antigonish County complies with Nova Scotia's Accessibility legislation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create Proactive yet regulatory by-laws to encourage and enforce accessibility beyond the provincial Act. -risk assessments -standards -meet/exceed provincial guidelines • Accessible Transportation plan • preferred routes/mapping options for Antigonish
19	<p>Create Municipal by-laws which support AT.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of existing by-laws and make deletions, additions or amendments to encourage AT • AT by-law scan • Trail usage • Motorized use on trails/properties • Motor vehicle act • review what's not there? External review • ongoing
20	<p>Develop a uniform signage system for AT corridors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and implement a signage & communication templates for trail/road etiquette that should be followed by all users/courtesy (*language* culturally respectful) • Insurance standards for AT signs • Event to showcase, explain the templates • Input on what folks need
21	<p>Create an Active Transportation Emergency Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine existing by-laws in other locations. • Create Emergency & Evacuation Plans
Evaluation: Monitoring success of facilities and program and making necessary adjustments and improvements	
22	<p>Increase knowledge of data collection methods and evaluation tools for AT advisory committee members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host a data collection workshop for county staff & community groups interested in AT • Join in on other information sessions
23	<p>Establish an evaluation framework to measure the impact of the AT implementation plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a baseline • Create the framework -qualitative -quantitative
24	<p>Review existing policies using an AT lens.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review existing municipal policies and plans • Identify which policies that can be changed/added that will position County staff and council as champions of AT (examples: infrastructure, incentives, communication of events, accommodations, etc....) • scan/review best practices

References

- *A Common Vision for Increasing Physical Activity and Reducing Sedentary Living in Canada: Let's Get Moving* (2018)
- *Nova Scotia's Culture Action Plan* (2017)
- *Parks for All. An Action Plan for Canada's Parks Community* (2017)
- *An Action Plan for Canada's Parks Community* (2017)
- *SHIFT: Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Positive Aging* (2017)
- *Pathways to Wellbeing A Framework for Recreation in Canada* (2015)
- *Shared Strategy for Advancing Recreation in Nova Scotia* (2015)
- *County of Antigonish, Physical Activity Community Survey; Nova Insights* (2014)
- *Connecting Canadians with Nature. An Investment in the Well-being of our Citizens* (2014).
- *Canadian Sport Policy* (2012)
- *Antigonish County Recreation, Active Community Recreation* (2011)
- *Antigonish County Integrated Community Sustainability Plan* (2009)
- *Nova Scotia Health Profile 2015, Province of Nova Scotia*
- *Minister's Annual Report on Accessibility 2017 -2018, Province of Nova Scotia* 2017
- *World Health Organization, Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, Geneva, Switzerland, (2004)*

