



# HCC Crosstown Connector Proposal



# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	3
<b>Quick Overview of Active Transportation Plan: What is all the panic about?</b>	
History of Halifax's Active Transportation Plans	4
HRM's current Active Transportation Plan	4
Current completion of AT Plan by HRM	7
What is there to panic about?	7
<b>HCC Vision: Crosstown-Connector</b>	
The Crosstown-Connector	9
Route Selection Criteria	9
Barriers to the Crosstown-Connector	11
Overall conclusion of the Crosstown-Connector	13



## **Introduction**

This document is a summary of a possible focus for the Halifax Cycling Coalition as we enter the year 2010. The information within this document is a combination of material from HRM's AT Plan, material available on the HRM website, anecdotal accounts from cycling advocates and the content of a Strategy Committee Meeting held on December 4th, 2009.



# Overview of Active Transportation Plan: What is there to panic about?

## History of Halifax's AT Plan

Halifax's AT plan was adopted in principle in 2006, much of it derived from plans of the previous bicycle planning document entitled "Blueprint for a Bike Friendly HRM" (the Blueprint) which was approved by city council in 2002. The Blueprint itself was an accumulation of cycling and Active Transportation plans from as early as 1989 and the 1990's<sup>1</sup>. In the Blueprint, there existed specific goals and projects based on a three phase system:

Phase 1: Near term goals which could be accomplished in 5 years.

Phase 2: Medium term goals which could be implemented in 5-10 years.

Phase 3: Long term goals which could be completed in 10 years.

Unfortunately, after being adopted by council, the Bikeways Advisory Committee merged into the Active Transportation Advisory Committee in 2008/09. The Blueprint seemed to have lost a great deal of its status as the committee that produced this document no longer existed. In 2006, the Active Transportation Plan --a more diverse plan including forms of AT such as walking and rollerblading-- was developed and approved by HRM Regional Council in November of 2006<sup>2</sup> (Halifax Regional Municipality, 2007).

## HRM's Current Active Transportation Plan

The present Active Transportation Plan (AT Plan), was created in August of 2006 and approved in principle in November of the same year<sup>2</sup>. Although this plan has a 20 year vision for installing cycling infrastructure --a "life-span" that would represent five terms in HRM council-- the plan itself still has a great deal of strengths. Not only does it define the scope of the AT Plan's impact on improving active transportation, but as indicated in Table 1, it lists the potential positive impact active transportation has on population health, transportation, and environment. Aside from this, the AT Plan also indicates the potential benefits behind catering to "eco-tourism", indicating that 50% of HRM visitors are coming to Halifax for general pleasure/recreational services. Further benefits to network users, government, neighborhoods and even non-users are also included in this plan. Evidence is also provided in this plan that indicates willingness of the general

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<sup>1</sup>Halifax Regional Municipality. (2002). Blueprint for a Bicycle Friendly HRM. Retrieved on December 4th, 2009 from <http://www.halifax.ca/cycling/bikeplan.html>

<sup>2</sup> Halifax Regional Municipality. (2006). Active transportation. Retrieved on December 4th, 2009 from <http://www.halifax.ca/TDM/activetransportation/index.html>

**Table 1 - Benefits of Cycling**

Health	Transportation	Environment
Less obesity	Less congestion: Roadways can transport cyclists more efficiently than automobiles.	Less Air Pollution: National environmental costs of vehicle use can be up to \$36 billion annually. Encouraging cycling can reduce this annual burden on our economy and environment.
More physical activity, potentially saving Halifax a portion of the \$112 million that we lose annually related to physical inactivity.	Lower road construction and maintenance costs: Conversion of motorists to cycling can reduce the needs of hefty road expansions that can cost up to \$1.3 million per kilometer. Conversion also reduces wear and tear on existing roadway system.	Less noise pollution: Noise pollution from cars experiences in communities through which a high volume road passes through can be detrimental to community health and property values.
Less disease, especially those such as Diabetes Type 2, cardiovascular disease and stroke, osteoporosis, colon and breast cancers. It is estimated that 200 people in the HRM die annually due to physical inactivity.	Improved road safety: Roads with bike lanes are safer for both pedestrians and cyclists. Bike lanes, have a traffic calming effect independent of use by cyclists*.	More efficient land use: Automobile dependent development patterns can take up to 3 times more land space than pedestrian oriented development projects.
Decreased mortality: Approximately 200 people die annually due to complications relating to physical inactivity.	Less demand for parking spaces as we encourage more people to switch to usage of the bicycle.	

Data gathered directly from the AT Plan.



public towards investing tax dollars into active transportation infrastructure (specifically bike lanes). Truly the benefits of investing in cycling as a form of active transportation are profound and numerous.

On top of this, the AT Plan clearly defines what roads are candidates to receive bike lanes based on six criteria (Risk Factors, Connectivity/Access, Convenience, Attractiveness, Cost, and Route Alignment). A detailed list of routes meeting eligibility criteria is illustrated in a map (Exhibit 4.4: Proposed AT routes/cycling trails) that is included in the AT Plan.

The Plan itself --much like the Blueprint that preceded it-- is divided into time based phases:

Phase 1: Implementation of specific cycling facilities in 1-5 years.

Phase 2: Implementation of specific cycling facilities in 5-10 years.

Each phase of this plan has specific targets in both the implementation of on-road/off-road infrastructure (as evidenced on Exhibit 5.4, between pages 5-12 and 5-13 of this plan, and shown in Table 2) and establishes goals pertaining to technical and operational recommendations over the active life-span of this document (as listed on Exhibit 5.2, on page 5-5 of the AT Plan).

<b>Table 2 - Phase 1 targets of AT Plan</b>	
<b>Infrastructure Types</b>	<b>Targets</b>
On-Road Bike Facilities (Both Sides) - Pavement Marking Treatment	149.0 km
Bike Lanes associated with new road construction	5 km
Paved Shoulders Resurfacing - Urban and Suburban Spine Network (1.5m)	15 km
Paved Shoulders - Rural Highway (2.0m)	5 km
On-Road Signed Only Routes (Average 8 per km)	85 km
Off-Road Multi-Use Hard Surface Trail	38 km
Multi-Use Soft Surface to Hard Surface Trail Conversion	15 km
Multi-Use Soft Surface Trail	39 km

Data gathered directly from AT Plan



### **Current completion of AT Plan by HRM**

Unfortunately since this document was approved by HRM Council in 2006, commitment to meeting the targets and recommendations listed in the AT Plan has been lackluster. As far as the HCC is able to ascertain, the responsibility of planning for and implementing projects and meeting targets contained in the AT Plan is divided among four city staffers. Aside from working on cycling matters, these staffers also have a responsibility to plan and improve conditions for motorized road users as well. It is unclear if these staffers meet regularly to discuss planning and/or implementation of projects or goals contained within the AT Plan. In reality, the lack of progress of the Active Transportation Plan is likely the result of a combination of factors and not just due to staffing issues within Transportation Demand Management. Regardless, recommended targets of Phase 1 of the AT Plan have not been met to date.

HRM staff have done a lot to bolster cycling culture in Halifax. The creation of three safety oriented commercials by HRM is an example of HRM's focus on improving the profile of cyclists and cycling. The acquisition of the Chester Spur line is also an incredible step forward in creating an active transportation corridor between rural and urban HRM. Unfortunately, HRM has been unsuccessful in creating many continuous on road routes within the peninsula. Furthermore, on road infrastructure that does exist performs poorly in connecting the economic sectors of Halifax with residential areas. Businesses in the area are thus negatively impacted as the city has shown a lack of commitment in increasing the cycling population --a powerful consumer aggregate that is now proven to spend more than motorists, especially when touring or on vacation, according to recent studies based in Toronto, New York and even in Nova Scotia<sup>3</sup>. HRM Neighborhoods and the Halifax Regional Police could potentially benefit from increased cycling as well, as crime is noted to decrease in areas with a higher volume of cyclists due to the application of CPTED principals<sup>4</sup> --providing more eyes on streets and trails.

### **What is there to panic about?**

In the year 2011, the Active Transportation Plan will be reviewed by "HRM and partners". At this time, the review process could result in route changes, route additions or route deletions. It is unclear what will happen to the unreached goals of Phase 1 of the AT plan, however the possibility that routes identified in Phase 1 will be deleted from the overall plan is a real threat. This accounts to a loss of large portion of on street cycling infrastructure.

With only one year remaining in Phase 1 of the AT Plan, and approximately 69 km of bike lanes short of Phase 1 targets, it seems very unlikely that HRM will meet the goals of this portion of the AT Plan. Furthermore, although HRM --and especially TDM-- has

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<sup>3</sup> Eastwind Cycle. (2009). Nova Scotia Bikeways: Scoping the Blue Route. Retrieved on January 5, 2009 from [http://www.eastwindcycle.com/consultants/online-files/cat\\_view/38-ns-bikeways](http://www.eastwindcycle.com/consultants/online-files/cat_view/38-ns-bikeways)

<sup>4</sup> City of Mesa, Arizona. (2009). Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design. Retrieved on January 19, 2009 from [http://www.mesaaz.gov/POLICE/literature/pdf/CPTED\\_long.pdf](http://www.mesaaz.gov/POLICE/literature/pdf/CPTED_long.pdf)



provided cyclists with a great deal of on road cycling infrastructure, only a very small proportion of this infrastructure has been developed on the Halifax Peninsula --an area where this sort of infrastructure would have the highest impact. The purpose of this proposal is to encourage HRM to invest in the production of a single, connected bike lane that connects the North and South ends of Halifax to the Bedford highway. By doing so, we will be creating a transportation corridor for cyclists in peninsular Halifax and sub-urban cyclists using the Bedford Highway Bike Lane during their commutes to downtown.

# Halifax Cycling Coalition’s Vision: The Crosstown-Connector

## The Crosstown Connector

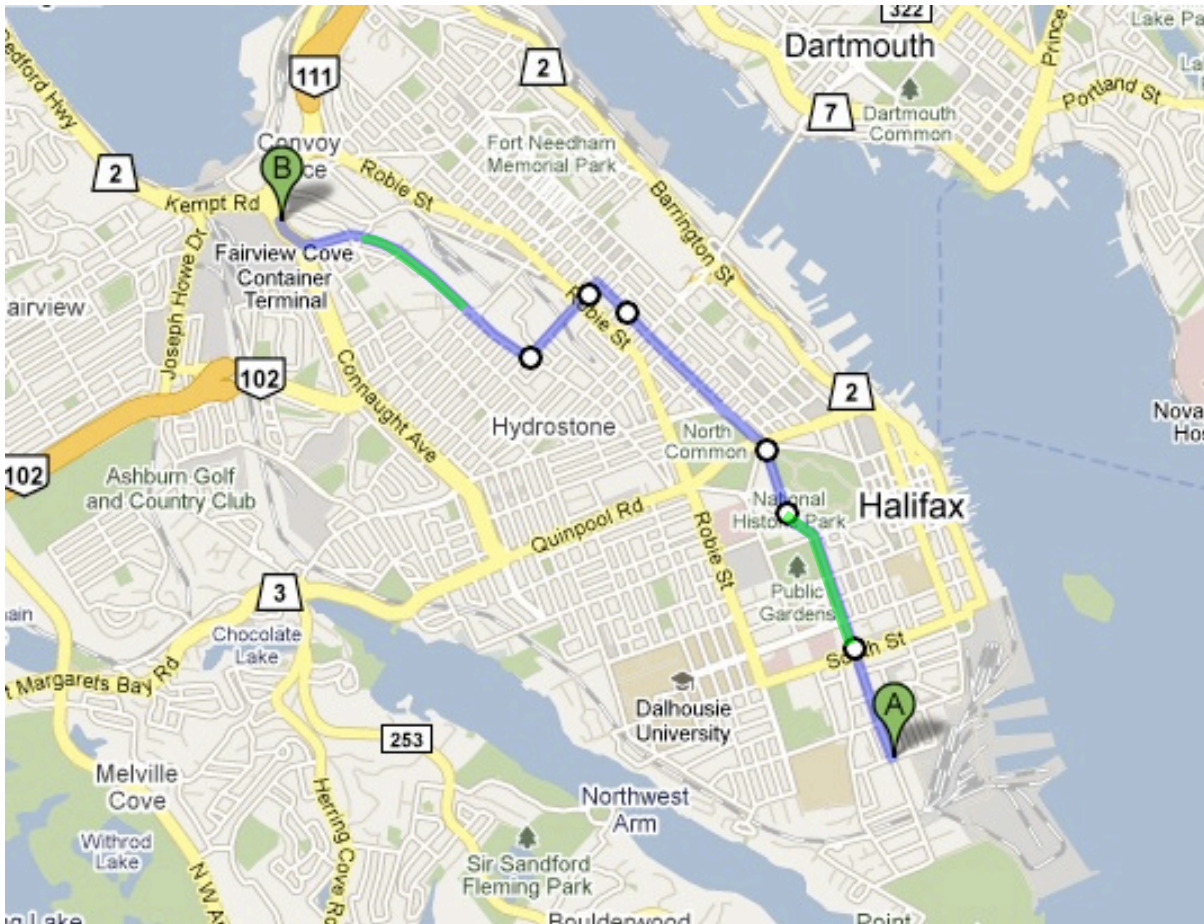


Figure 1 - The route configuration of the Crosstown Connector. Green areas indicate sections of the route that already have existing on-road cycling facilities. Blue indicates areas that require further development.

Simply put, the Crosstown-Connector is a single, connected bike lane that unites the South-end of Halifax to the North-end, and further heads in the direction of the Bedford highway, where it will eventually connect with the Bedford Highway Bike Lane.

### Route Selection Criteria

The selection of this route was based on the following criteria:

- **Street Candidacy and Phasing:** All of the streets identified in the present configuration of the Crosstown-Connector are identified in the AT Plan as being primary candidate routes for cycling infrastructure according to Exhibit 4.4 of the AT Plan. Thus, they meet the criteria of requirements outlined in the AT Plan. Furthermore, all streets part



of this configuration are part of Phase 1 plans, as indicated on Exhibit 5.1 of the AT Plan.

- Usage of existing infrastructure: This route incorporates the Bell Rd. and Windsor St. bike lanes, making the overall task of producing the Crosstown Connector cheaper and easier in fiscal year 2010/2011.
- Topography: In order to encourage more people of skill levels from beginner to intermediate to cycle, the present configuration of the Crosstown-Connector was chosen with topography in mind. According to topographical maps included in the AT Plan (Exhibit 2.4), slopes of the streets included do not exceed 12%-20%. In fact, over 95% of the length of the Crosstown-Connector have slopes of less than 8%, again according to the topographical map included in the AT Plan.
- Proximity to schools and recreation facilities: We are fostering a culture of inactivity in our youth. The most recent PACY study<sup>5</sup> --highlighted in the HRM Active Living Strategy-- indicates that less than 1% of young women in grade 11 meet recommended weekly goals for physical activity. Furthermore, nearly 1 in 4 Canadian youth are either overweight or obese<sup>6</sup>. Nova Scotia in particular has the third highest proportion of people with Type 2 Diabetes in Canada<sup>7</sup> --a condition that is directly related to a chronic lack of physical activity. Although it is easy to assign blame to individuals who are simply not physically active; by not investing in active transportation we are enforcing a lifestyle where physical activity is not paramount to an individuals physical well-being.

In an effort to encourage more youth to take up cycling in a commuter capacity, we selected a route that would come within walking distance (defined as 550 meter by the Active Transportation Plan) to as many elementary schools and high schools as possible. The present configuration of the Crosstown Connector brings cycling infrastructure within walking distance (and thus well within cycling distance) to five elementary schools and one high school. Nine recreational facilities are also within walking distance from the present configuration of the Crosstown-Connector.

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<sup>5</sup> Nova Scotia Health Protection and Promotion. (2005). Physical activity levels and dietary intake of children and youth in the province of Nova Scotia 2005. Retrieved on January 20, 2009 from [http://www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/publications/PACY\\_2005\\_presentation.pdf](http://www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/publications/PACY_2005_presentation.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Adult Obesity in Canada: Measured Height and Weight and Overweight Canadian Children and Youth. (2005). Statistic Canada Online Catalogue 82-620-MWE200501.

<sup>7</sup> Statistics Canada. (2009). Population by Year, Province and Territory. Retrieved on December 8, 2009 from <http://www40.statcan.gc.ca/l01/cst01/demo02a-eng.htm?searchstrdisabled=2008%20population&filename=demo02a.htm&lan=eng>

Statistics Canada. (2009). Diabetes, by Sex, Province and Territories. Retrieved on December 8th, 2009 from <http://www40.statcan.ca/l01/cst01/health54a-eng.htm>



- Access to important economic geography: A large portion of the HRM workforce is employed by healthcare, and defense sectors. Based on Exhibit 2.1 of the AT Plan, the present configuration of the Crosstown-Connector comes within walking distance of Stadacona, as well as the QEII Health Sciences Center (Camp-Hill, Halifax Infirmary and Victoria General sites). So not only will HRM youth benefit from the proximity of the Crosstown-Connector to schools, the HRM workforce will benefit via better physical and mental health and increased productivity due to the close proximity of the Crosstown Connector to these important economies areas.
- Landmarks, parks and commercial districts: Based on a 2004 profile of visitors to Halifax, 40% indicated they came to visit historical sites, while 31% indicated visiting parks was a priority during their visit to Halifax. As a result, priority was set to bringing the Crosstown-Connector as close to parks and historical sites as possible. Under it's present configuration, the Crosstown Connector skirts Halifax's most famous landmark: The Halifax Citadel. The South-End terminus of this route also leads into our most famous, and largest park on the peninsula: Point Pleasant Park. This route also skirts the Spring Garden business area, one of Halifax's most vibrant commercial districts. This configuration also travels through a portion of the Agricola Business District, and is within walking distance (again defined by the AT Plan) to several businesses along Robie St.

By including so much of Halifax's historic and natural landmarks, it is nearly impossible for eco-tourists (or native Haligonians on a "staycation") not to be satisfied with everything Halifax has to offer!

### **Barriers to the Crosstown-Connector**

During this meeting, a variety of positive and negative issues were raised regarding the current configuration of the Crosstown-Connector. Some of the most important issues are listed below:

- Potential Issue - Parking: One of the most significant issues revolving around Halifax's transportation infrastructure is a lack of parking on the peninsula. If this bike route were to be implemented, half if not all on-street parking on Agricola between Almon st., and North Park would be eliminated to accommodate the installation of bike lanes along its length. One important factor revolves around this issue however, and that factor is related to HRM's Winter Parking Ban.

Although on street parking is well used in the spring, summer and fall seasons, residents along Agricola are able to successfully find parking during the winter parking ban. It can be argued that these residents are thus able to adapt to the loss of on street parking on the northbound direction of Agricola, if not north and southbound directions.

Potential Solution: If the community does not support the removal of bi-directional on-



street parking to accommodate the installation of 1.5 meter north and south bike lanes, a compromise could be reached involving the removal of one lane of parking and the installation of 1.2 meter bike lanes still running north- and southbound, but potentially on different streets.

- Potential Barrier - Intersections: North Park street is notorious for its confusing, star-shaped intersections at North Park and Cunard and North Park and Cogswell. According to police data, a fair deal of accidents occur at these intersections<sup>8</sup>, which is not surprising considering over 50% of all cyclist accidents occur at intersections regardless of their configurations. It is difficult to determine if these accidents are caused by drivers making right-hand turns directly in front of cyclists (the “right-hook”) or if these accidents are the result of poor lane positioning on the cyclist’s part leading up to a left turn at these intersections. It could potentially be --as indicated above-- simply due to the confusing nature of these intersections.

Potential Solution: Possible solutions involve directing the Crosstown Connector through the North Commons where multi-use trails already exist. The HCC or CAN-Bike could also play a role in educating cyclists about proper left turning techniques at these intersections, or implore beginner and intermediate cyclists to dismount and walk their bikes through this intersection. Installing signage encouraging motorists to lookout and yield to cyclists could also be beneficial. Finally, these intersections could potentially benefit from the application and study of intersection treatments outlined in the “Technical Appendix: Facility Planning and Design Guidelines” of the AT Plan. Such intersection treatments could include the installation of Bike Signals pending their assessment by the Transportation Association of Canada. An intervention that would require less infrastructure placement would be implementing a Pedestrian Scramble at this intersection that could be used by, and thus benefit, cyclists and pedestrians alike.

- Miscellaneous Issue - Effect on the cycling population: This is primarily a commuter trail, and is not designed to attract people who cycle for sport or fitness. It is also unlikely that expert commuters will identify this route as key to their daily commutes, as they are already used to riding in high volume, high risk areas of Halifax.

Regardless, the cycling industry, as well as studies on the implementation of on-street bike facilities indicates that as bike lanes are implemented and connect residential areas to economic centers, the riderships of cities increases. In essence, we are making this for people who are interested in cycling but concerned about a lack of infrastructure as much as we are making this for present cyclists who simply want to enjoy cycling on designated, on-road facilities.

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<sup>8</sup> Unknown Author. (2009). Halifax crimes and Accidents. Retrieved online on December 4th, 2009 from <http://halifax.searchns.com/PoliceReports/Report?preset=bicycle&showmap=1&limit=100>



**Overall conclusion regarding the Crosstown-Connector**

Members in attendance of the HCC's Strategy Committee Meeting on December 4th, 2009 agreed with the concept of the creation of a Crosstown-Connector on the condition that we address issues of the North Park Street intersections in future meetings.