

Investing in Nova Scotia Active Transportation Infrastructure with Federal Gas Tax Fund

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The federal Gas Tax Fund (GTF) has made a significant contribution to the development of active transportation infrastructure in Nova Scotia. The funding has helped connect our communities through walking, cycling and other modes of human-powered transportation. In 2013-14, municipalities spent approximately \$3,217,514 in gas tax funds on 36 eligible active transportation projects. This amount accounts for close to 5 per cent of the total gas tax money invested in the province within the fiscal year. From 2005-2014, municipalities have created close to 248 kilometres of new active transportation routes (including trails, bike lanes and sidewalks) in Nova Scotia with support from the GTF, according to the Canada-Nova Scotia Infrastructure Secretariat's 2005-14 Outcomes Report.

The following two projects provide excellent examples of how municipalities are using the GTF to support the development of active transportation projects. These projects are leading to numerous economic, social, and environmental benefits while making a significant contribution to the vibrancy of their communities.

The Municipality of the County of Colchester's Truro Heights Pedestrian Overpass Project

Federal Gas Tax Fund Contribution to the Project:

\$620,000

Total Project Cost: \$1.24 million

The County of Colchester is developing the Truro Heights Pedestrian Overpass as an integral component of a multi-use trail project to link the communities of Truro Heights and the Millbrook First Nation to the new Rath Eastlink Community Centre (RECC). As a state-of-the-art facility that includes a skating surface, indoor track, two pools, a climbing wall and fitness centre, the RECC is truly a community focal point. However, Highway 102 separates Truro Heights and the Millbrook First Nation residents from the RECC, and the available connector roads and original overpass do not accommodate pedestrian or bicycle traffic.

With the aim of improving community access to the RECC and encouraging healthy living, Colchester County Council made access to this recreational facility a priority by investing in the Truro Heights Pedestrian Overpass. For this project, the Municipality is developing a 1.2 kilometre paved-surface trail for pedestrian and bicycle traffic to provide safe and accessible access to the RECC. In addition, this connection will also encourage more people to use active modes of transportation to access retail shopping, the hospital, and the Town of Truro.

The construction of the Truro Heights Pedestrian Overpass is near completion, with only asphalt surfacing work remaining. Construction of the land-based portion of the trail is expected to proceed this summer.

The Municipality of the County of Annapolis' Nictaux Scotney Pathway Project

Federal Gas Tax Fund Contribution to the Project:

\$22,624 Total Project Cost: \$30,837

Active transportation has been a priority for the County of Annapolis prior to Council approval of their Active Transportation Plan in April 2015. They have made great strides to improve the connectivity of its communities. The Nictaux Scotney Pathway Project is a shining example of how Annapolis County is increasing its connectivity project by project, making its communities more active transportation friendly.

The County of Annapolis created a 430metre-long pathway (built on land owned by the Municipality, the Department of Transportation & Infrastructure Renewal, and a local developer) that links two residential areas in the community of Nictaux. With support from the federal GTF and through these provincial and local partnerships, this connector trail not only provides easier access to the residential areas but also greatly increases pedestrian and cyclist safety. The pathway's 5-metre width makes it accessible to a range of users, including those in wheelchairs, with strollers, and on scooters, bicycles, and foot. The Nictaux Scotney Pathway also improves access to the Town of Middleton, providing better and safer walking and biking routes.

Due to the popularity of the Nictaux Scotney Pathway, the County of Annapolis has plans to develop a trail-head which will provide a local map to direct users to its other pathways. The municipality has also acquired two additional parcels of land through purchase and donation, looking to expand the area in the future to provide new connector trails and access to a small pocket of wilderness.