



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RE: Amherst's Active Transportation Plan praised by provincial health officials

AMHERST, Nova Scotia – The Town of Amherst's recently adopted Active Transportation Plan has been lauded by provincial health officials.

"The leadership from your municipal government to demonstrate your commitment to improving the health of the community should be applauded," Dr. Ryan Sommers, medical officer of health for the Northern Zone of the Nova Scotia Health Authority, and Gary O'Toole, the director of public health for the Northern Zone, wrote in a letter the town received on June 20.

"On behalf of the Northern Zone Public Health Healthy Communities team, Nova Scotia Health Authority, we would like to extend our congratulations and support to the Town of Amherst on their recent approval of the Active Transportation Plan.

"The benefits of an Active Transportation Plan - especially increasing physical activity, reducing barriers, citizen safety and social inclusion – positively influence the health and wellness of the community."

Amherst town council adopted the five-year plan in May. It includes developing a cycling network that will see shared bike lanes become part of the town's overall transportation fabric. It also includes a pedestrian network that will see the building of new sidewalks, the enhancement of existing trails and the creation of a new off-street asphalt trail.



Amherst's recently approved Active Transportation Plan has been praised by provincial health officials. (Town of Amherst photo)



“Public Health priorities align greatly with the objectives of the (town’s) Active Transportation Plan,” the two public health officials wrote. “Strategically focusing on built environments to create a community that encourages active transportation in the form of walking, cycling and using public transit, ultimately builds communities that make being active an easier choice for residents. When considering a population health approach, active transportation has great potential to increase peoples’ activity levels and improve their overall health.”

Sommers and O’Toole also said the town’s commitment to “become the most healthy, active community in Nova Scotia also demonstrates progressive leadership in support of the health of the community. The town’s recognition of the positive benefits of physical activity is noteworthy and will have long lasting positive effects on the entire community.”

“We greatly appreciate the support and praise we have received from Dr. Sommers and Mr. O’Toole for our Active Transportation Plan,” Mayor David Kogon said. “It helps to confirm our belief that the plan and our investment in it will help us become a more active and healthy community.

“As I’ve said before, the benefits of being physically active are extensive and well documented. They include improved health by fighting heart disease and Type 2 diabetes.”

In its 2018-19 budget, the town approved an investment of \$334,780 in the first phase of the plan, which includes placing bike symbols on streets to mark the cycling network, an off-street asphalt trail on South Albion Street between Robert Angus Drive and the Canadian Tire store and gravel trails next to Robert Angus Drive, between Church and Willow streets, and Willow Street between Robert Angus Drive and East Pleasant Street. Section of the Willow Street sidewalk will also be replaced.

The investment is being funded by \$224,030 in provincial and federal funding, \$44,720 from reserves and \$24,780 from general operations and \$21,250 in long-term debt.

Details of the Active Transportation Plan will be outlined during a public meeting that will be held on June 26 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Community Credit Union Business Innovation Centre on Ratchford Street. Recreation, planning and operations staff will be on hand to share the plan and answer questions.

A copy of the plan can be found at amherst.ca/recreation-department.html.

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