



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MR# 2022040

DATE: 22 July 2022

RE: Active Transportation Plan reaching its goals, effort hindered by some

AMHERST, Nova Scotia – The Town of Amherst’s Active Transportation Plan is meeting its goal of getting more folks out walking and cycling.

“When council approved the plan in 2018, we wanted to promote cycling and walking by providing an efficient and effective network of interconnected and continuous cycling and pedestrian routes that linked neighbourhoods and major destinations,” Mayor David Kogon said. “We’ve done that and from my own personal observations, I see way more folks using these routes than I did four years ago.”



MEMBERS OF THE AMHERST STRIDERS RUNNING CLUB RUN OVER A NEW CONCRETE SIDEWALK ON LAPLANCHE STREET IN THIS FILE PHOTO FROM 2021. THE ORGANIZATION HAS PRAISED THE TOWN’S EFFORTS TO BUILD A CONNECTIVE TRAIL SYSTEM. (TOM McCOAG / TOWN OF AMHERST)

As examples of some of the investments made to create the interconnected routes, the mayor pointed to work done in recent years by town crews to create a gravel trail along Willow Street and Robert Angus Drive, the widening of the asphalt trail on Robert Angus Drive and the creation of an off-street trail on South Albion Street between Robert Angus Drive and the Canadian Tire Store, as well as improvements to the Dickey Brook Trail between Willow Street and Abbey Lane and the installation of a new sidewalk on Laplanche Street.



TOWN OF Amherst NOVA SCOTIA

When it was introduced, the plan was praised by provincial health officials, who said the leadership demonstrated by the council to improve the health of the community “should be applauded.”

They also noted the benefits of the plan – especially the increased physical activity – “positively influence the health and wellness of the community.”

The praise continued last year, when Amherst Striders Running Club spokesman Ken MacKenzie said the town had made great strides in providing an efficient and effective network of interconnected and continuous cycling and pedestrian routes.

“The members of the club appreciate the work ... being done to upgrade the existing trails,” he said at the time. “Ten years ago, there were trails within the community, but because they weren’t connected, we didn’t do much trail running.”

That has changed thanks to the Active Transportation Plan and the vast majority of the running the club does now is on the trails, “which are much safer because we’re off the roads and away from cars,” he added.

In recent weeks, council learned that safety on the trails is being jeopardized by motorized all-terrain vehicles that are using a local walking trail to gain access to the marsh located just outside of the town.

In a report presented to council in June, Police Chief Dwayne Pike said his department has received several complaints from the pedestrian and cycling communities who state their safety is being jeopardized by the machines. Those two communities and owners of private property adjacent to the trail have also complained about damage being done



TIRE TRACKS FROM ATVs ARE WORN INTO THIS SECTION OF THE TOWN OF AMHERST'S MARSH TRAIL. TOWN OFFICIALS ARE RESPECTFULLY ASKING ATV OPERATORS TO REFRAIN FROM USING THE WALKING AND CYCLING TRAIL. (TOM McCOAG / TOWN OF AMHERST)





to the trail and private property by the off-road vehicles.

Pike outlined steps taken to prevent the use of the walking/cycling trails by motorized vehicles, such as putting up gates and other types of barricades, but noted these have been ignored by the operators of those vehicles.

Council directed staff to develop a plan to improve signage and add additional barricades, if necessary, or develop other measures that will deter access to the walking/cycling trails by motorized vehicles.

They also directed staff to carry out a discussion with the local ATV association to develop a strategy that would allow operators to access Amherst via alternative routes.

“We want to ensure the safety of those using our walking and cycling trails while assisting ATV operators in accessing the town,” Kogon said. “Meanwhile, we’d respectfully like to ask the operators of motorized vehicles to refrain from using the trails that were designed for walkers and cyclists.”

Should anyone see an ATV operator driving on the walking/cycling trails, please contact the Amherst Police Department at 902-667-8600.

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