

Image adapted from Amy Chen

# Making the Case for Connections to Main Street

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## Introduction

The Village on Main is a commercial hub in the centre of Dartmouth, encompassing an area approximately 1 km in diameter. Apart from the variety of retail and restaurant uses present in the area, there are also many amenities such as health facilities, schools, churches, and parks either within or immediately adjacent to the district. The area is most easily accessible by motor vehicle since the current built form, streetscape, and position adjacent to Highway 111 pose challenges to active transportation and transit use. Since its incorporation in 2008, the Community Improvement District has been advocating for improved connectivity within the Main Street Dartmouth area and to surrounding communities.

The majority of Halifax's recent planning policy values the integration of transportation and land use. The recently created "Main Street Designation" within the Dartmouth Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) and Land Use By-Law (LUB) lays the groundwork for a major shift in development in the area, encouraging a mixed-use town centre. Given that the land use changes (which are arguably the more challenging to accomplish) have already been set in motion in this area, accompanying transportation changes should logically take place.

This report argues that Main Street Dartmouth should be a priority for improved active transportation and transit infrastructure and service by citing current policy documents and reports.

## Policy Documents

This section summarizes important ideas from each of the policy documents; please see the appendices for supporting quotations.

### Halifax Regional Municipal Planning Strategy (2014)

One of the targets in the Halifax Regional MPS (as set out in policy T-11) is that no more than 70% of trips be made by private vehicle by 2031 (at least 14% by active transportation and at least 16% by transit). In order to achieve this, the plan focuses largely on encouraging growth centres and providing good active transportation and transit connections to key amenities and destinations. Main Street has been designated in this plan as an “Urban Local Growth Centre”, making it one of the candidates for this increased growth and connection.

### Dartmouth Municipal Planning Strategy (2015)

The “Main Street Designation” section of the Dartmouth MPS sets out the vision for this area as “a well-defined, dense, mixed use town centre with great pedestrian spaces and landscaping, goods and services, and buildings that invite residents to walk or bicycle to obtain daily needs and, in so doing, informally interact with their neighbours” (p. 90). The MPS and associated LUB set up the parameters for this land use change.

### Making Connections: 2014-19 Halifax Active Transportation Priorities Plan (2014)

The Active Transportation Priorities Plan focuses on creating a region-wide active transportation network by connecting the fragments that currently exist. The Main Street area is a missing link in the network as it could connect the bike lanes further up Main Street and on Waverley Road, and the greenway around Lake Banook. It is identified in this plan as “Bikeway Desired - Type TBD” and proposed projects include the “Lakecrest Connection” as well as another connection across a 100-series highway. The plan also recommends land use changes to complement active transportation use; changes which are already present as part of the “Main Street Designation”.


### Moving Forward Together Plan (2015)

The Moving Forward Together Plan outlines the changes that will be implemented by Halifax Transit over the next several years. The bus stop on Hartlen Street (Tacoma Centre) has been identified in this plan as a candidate for “Level 4 amenities” or status as a “Transit Hub”. “In addition to Level 3 amenities, these locations could be candidates to be fitted with electronic message boards, bike racks, and payphones, where space permits. Halifax Transit will also investigate the potential for heated shelters at these locations” (p. 67).

Something that is missing from the Moving Forward Together Plan, however, is a direct connection between the Main Street area and communities that lie to the east along Highway 7, such as Cole Harbour, Cherrybrook, and the Prestons. This issue has already been explored at length in the Transit Vision for the Main Street Dartmouth Area (see page 6 of this document), but recommendations were rejected in the final plan based on the results of a survey conducted by Halifax Transit. While there are many challenges in evaluating which connections people require from their transit system, it should be acknowledged that only surveying the people who already use certain routes to ask where they are going while they travel on those routes could create a biased response.

### Integrated Mobility Plan (2017)

The Integrated Mobility Plan (IMP) places great emphasis on the integration of transportation and land use. This plan seeks to prioritize alternative modes to the single-occupant vehicle by focusing on the growth of complete communities with walkable streetscapes in places which are connected to transit and active transportation routes. The amendments to the MPS and LUB which this plan recommends have already taken place in Main Street Dartmouth, but are unaccompanied by the transportation connections. The Main Street area is not part of the proposed bicycle or greenway networks despite it being a central area with various destinations and amenities which has already undergone MPS and LUB amendments. Main Street is designated as a Transit Priority Corridor up to Caledonia Road, but currently no bus routes (except one Regional Express bus) travels up Main Street this far and the corridor has only one minimal Transit Priority Measure (TPM).



Another key element of the IMP is the Complete Streets approach. When determining the mode priorities for Complete Streets, the plan implies that streets which fall under a Business Improvement District, have a community plan, and/or are designated as a Transit Priority Corridor (all of which apply to the Main Street area) should prioritize active transportation and transit.

Main Street Dartmouth should also be a candidate for one of the “Getting Ahead of the Pavers Projects” as it meets several of the criteria for incomplete streets: missing active transportation infrastructure, identified as a Transit Priority Corridor but does not have Transit Priority Measures (or in the case of Main Street has only one minimal TPM), and streets that are planned to serve a “place” function (as a result of the MPS and LUB amendments).

### **Draft Regional Centre Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy: Package A (2018)**

While Main Street Dartmouth falls just outside the boundaries of the area covered by the Centre Plan, this document does value active transportation and transit connections to communities outside the Regional Centre (particularly with regard to parks and open space).

## Local Reports

Over the past decade, a number of studies have been conducted in the Main Street area which have led to plans relating to transportation and streetscaping. These reports provide deep insight into potential improvements and should be taken into account when planning for this area in the future.

### Main Street Dartmouth Streetscape Design Project (2007)

This initial study by Ekistics Planning & Design was the catalyst of the MPS and LUB changes that were adopted in 2013 and the formation of the Main Street Dartmouth Business Improvement Association in 2008.

### Transportation Study - Main Street Area, Dartmouth, NS (2011)

Genivar conducted a transportation study in 2011 which includes traffic information and recommendations for active transportation, transit, and street network improvements.

### Transit Vision for the Main Street Dartmouth Area (2015)

Paul Dec (Urban Planning Consultant) delivered this response to the draft Moving Forward Together Plan outlining how resources could be re-allocated to better serve the Main Street area.

### Village on Main Public Infrastructure Plan (2016)

This report developed by a team of Masters of Planning students from Dalhousie University evaluated the design recommendations of the Ekistics (2007) and Genivar (2011) studies and proposed a series of public infrastructure improvements.

### Recommended Adjustments to Halifax Transit Revision (2016)

Andrew Scanlan Dickie (Village on Main's Planning Officer at the time) prepared this document on behalf of the Main Street Dartmouth Business Improvement District, the Downtown Dartmouth Business Commission, the Association for Business in Cole Harbour, and the Greater Burnside Business Association, to address transit concerns in Dartmouth.



## Conclusion

Main Street Dartmouth is currently a hub for retail establishments, restaurants, health services, schools, parks, and places of worship. This area has been designated as a “Growth Centre” in the Regional Plan, and amendments to the Dartmouth MPS and LUB (like those recommended in the Active Transportation Priorities Plan and the Integrated Mobility Plan) have already taken place. The form-based code for the “Main Street Designation” will cultivate built form and density which are supportive of active transportation and transit use.

While the Active Transportation Priorities Plan designates the Main Street area as “Bikeway Desired” and proposes the “Lakecrest Connection” project, the more recent Integrated Mobility Plan excludes the area from bicycle and greenway networks. In terms of transit, the Moving Forward Together Plan considers Tacoma Centre to be a “Transit Hub” and the IMP designates Main Street itself as a “Transit Priority Corridor” and the area as an “Existing/Potential Transit Oriented Community”. However, the current level of transit service and connection in the area is inadequate.

Overall, Main Street Dartmouth should have priority for improved active transportation and transit connections due to its lack of infrastructure, its current status as a major hub, and its huge development potential brought about by the MPS and LUB amendments. In order to attain the vision set out in the Dartmouth MPS, the existing development plan should be supported by the necessary transportation service and infrastructure.



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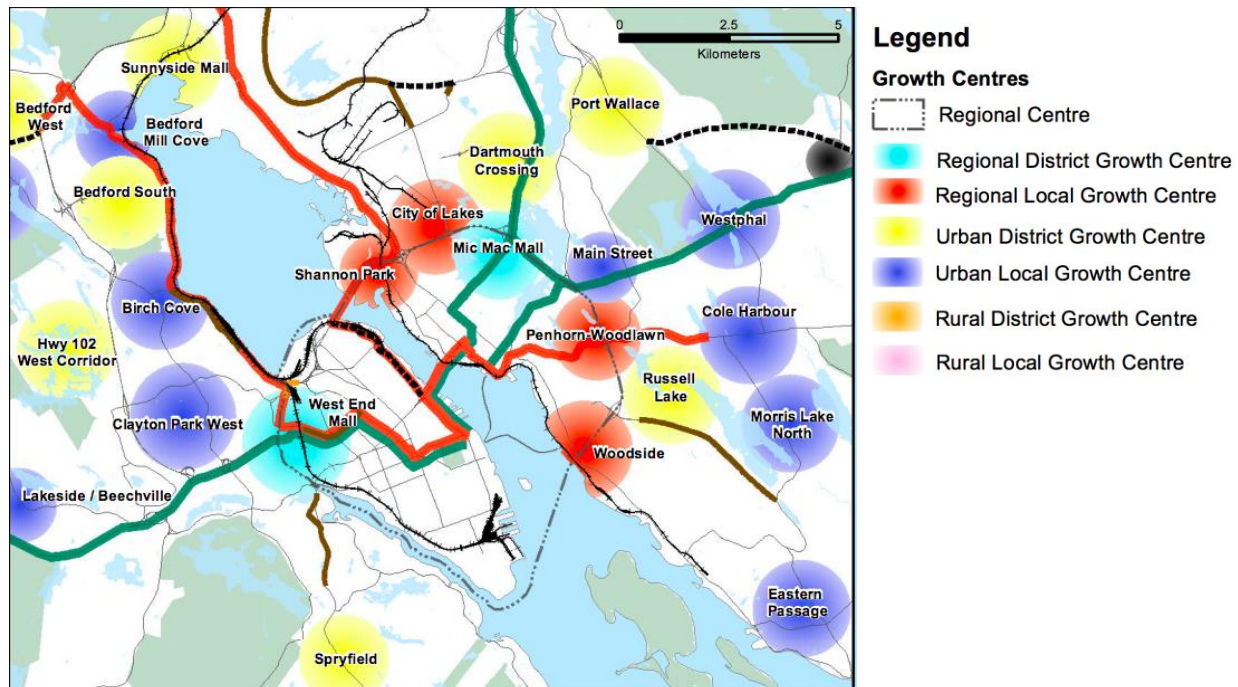
Scanlan Dickie, A. (2016). *Recommended Adjustments to Halifax Transit Revision*. Dartmouth: The Village on Main.

## Appendices

This section outlines supporting evidence from each of the policy documents in the form of relevant maps and quotations; emphasis added to quotations in **boldface**.

### Halifax Regional Municipal Planning Strategy (2014)

Part of Map 1 - Settlement and Transportation



“Make Land Use and Transportation Planning Mutually Supportive:

**Direct growth to designated growth areas** based on available infrastructure and services (i.e. growth centres and corridors).

**Support and reinforce growth areas** by an appropriately designed **transit service** and **active transportation network**.

Improve the experience of transit users, **enhance transit service** in appropriate areas, and increase ridership, while reducing single-occupant vehicle commuting. **Investment in active transportation** and car-sharing options will be supported wherever possible to help provide alternatives to vehicle ownership.” (p. 8)

Settlement and Housing Objectives

“**Focus new growth in centres** where supporting services and infrastructure are already available” (p. 41)

“Design communities that:

- (a) are attractive, healthy places to live and have **access** to the goods, services and facilities needed by residents and support **complete neighbourhoods** as described in 6.2.2 (v) of this Plan;
- (b) are accessible to all mobility needs and are **well connected with other communities**” (p. 41)

#### Urban Local Growth Centres

“**Transit to connect to other centres and Regional Centre**

Pedestrian oriented transit stops

**Enhanced pedestrian linkages**

Street, or rear yard parking wherever possible

**Access to AT routes**

Short interconnected blocks for ease of **walkability**” (p. 47)

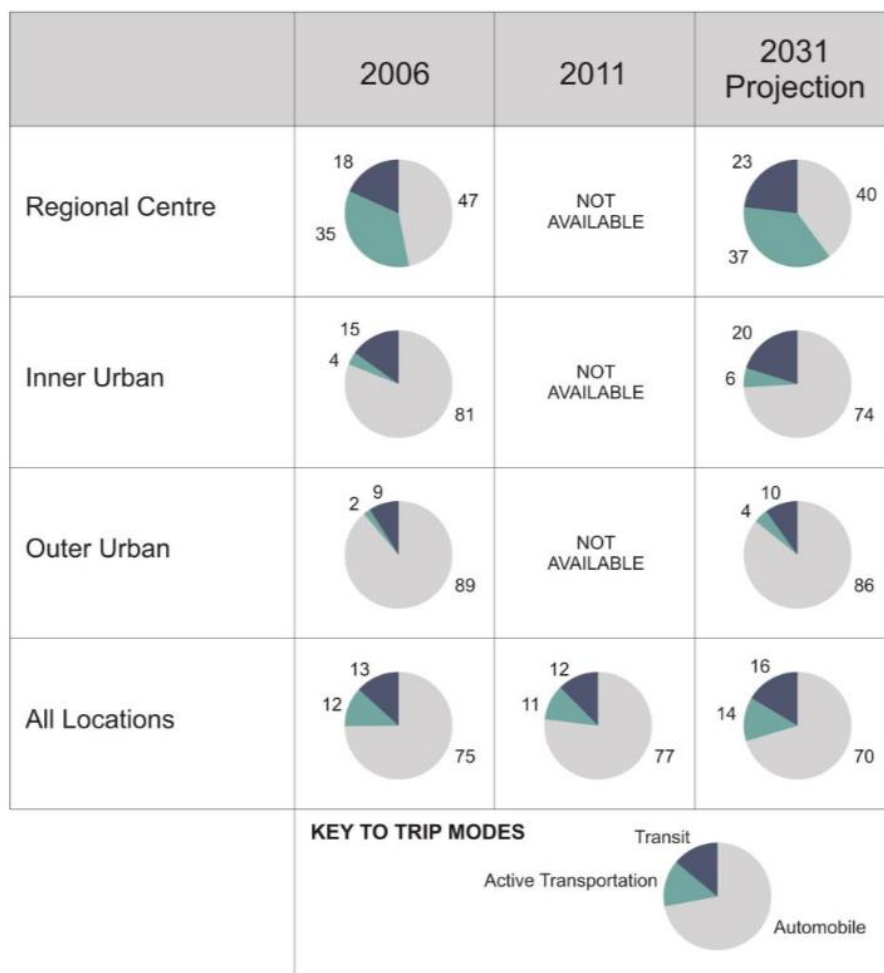
#### Transportation and Mobility Objectives

- “1. Implement a sustainable transportation strategy by providing a **choice of integrated and connected travel modes** emphasizing public and community based **transit, active transportation**, carpooling and other viable alternatives to the single occupant vehicle;
2. Promote **land settlement** patterns and **urban design** approaches that support fiscally and environmentally **sustainable transportation modes**;
3. Forecast HRM’s need for mobility and **provide service and infrastructure to meet this demand** while influencing choices **towards transportation sustainability**; and
4. Design complete streets for **all** ages, abilities, and **modes of travel.**” (p. 59)

“**Transit** facilities and services are to be **planned in collaboration with land use planning** and community design with **emphasis on serving** the Regional Centre, Regional District, **Urban District and Local Growth Centres.**” (p. 61)

“T-9 HRM shall require mixed use residential and commercial areas designed to **maximize access to public transit** (Transit Oriented Development) within the Urban Transit Service Boundary through secondary planning strategies, and shall strive to achieve the intent of this policy through land use by-law amendments, development agreements and capital investments.” (p. 62)

“T-11 HRM shall strive to achieve or exceed the 2031 projections for the percentage of trips to work by transit and active transportation set out as follows:” (p. 62)



### Dartmouth Municipal Planning Strategy (2015)

“The Main Street area between Highway 111 and Caledonia Road will focus on a well-defined, dense, mixed use town centre with great **pedestrian** spaces and landscaping, goods and services, and buildings that invite residents to **walk or**

**bicycle** to obtain daily needs and, in so doing, informally interact with their neighbours.” (p. 90)

#### Main Street Designation Objectives

“Foster incremental development of a mixed-use town centre;  
Focus housing close to shops, services, employment and **transit**; and  
Encourage **walkable streetscapes**.” (p. 90)

Transportation and Parking Objective: “Facilitate **safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle access**” (p. 99).

“C-62 Council shall, when planning and budgeting for transportation infrastructure improvements within the Main Street Designation, **consider the recommendations of the Transportation Study – Main Street Area, Dartmouth, NS (Genivar, 2011)** together with innovative best practices in commercial thoroughfare design and transit oriented development.” (p. 99)

#### Making Connections: 2014-19 Halifax Active Transportation Priorities Plan (2014)

“Develop a **region-wide**, visible and **connected Active Transportation network**” (p. 7)

“Establish a complete, integrated and readily accessible **region-wide AT network** serving urban, **suburban** and rural areas“ (p. 7)

“**Zoning changes** which facilitate mixed use, compact development, already supported by the Regional Plan, may be one of the keys to increasing the number of people who use active transportation.” (p. 9)

“Walking can also be encouraged by **improving the walking environment** (e.g. streetscaping).” (p. 31)

“Recommendation #12: Halifax should consider **MPS and LUB amendments** that support the retrofitting of existing communities to create walkable characteristics (i.e. mixed land use) where they did not previously exist.” (p. 32)

“Recommendation #16: Focus the AT Plan bicycle program on **making connections to create a network.**” (p. 37)

“Recommendation #25: Bicycle facility development in urban areas outside the regional centre should focus on:

**Improved connections** to local destinations, such as **schools, recreation centres, libraries, retail centres** and transit hubs.” (p. 43)

“Recommendation #31: The municipality should focus on making connections in the greenway network in general, and specifically tackling those connections into and through the regional centre. Halifax should also continue to **improve connections between existing communities and nearby greenways.**” (p. 50)

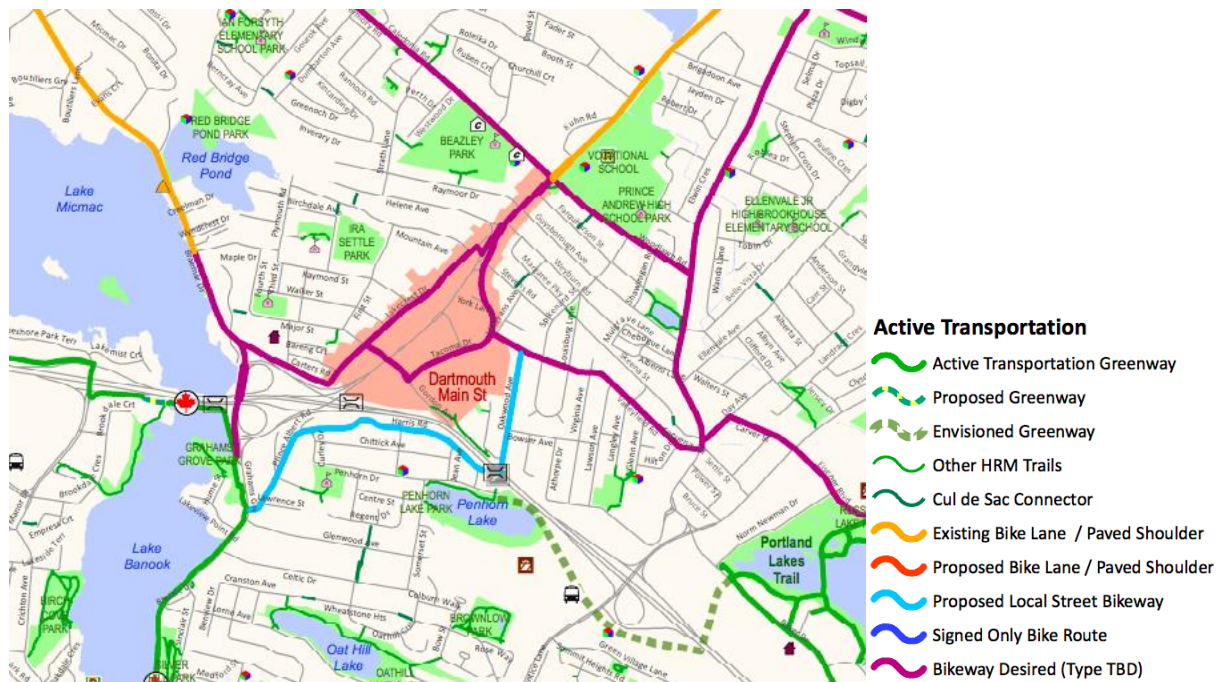
“Recommendation #38: Halifax should consider building **AT Bridges or crossings** to overcome barriers in the AT network particularly between high density residential areas and business/ commercial areas. Areas where such connections are absent include, but are not limited to:

1. Between Olivet Street apartments and West End Mall (needs at-grade railway crossing);
2. Between Chisholm Ave. apartments and Bayers Centre (AT bridge over the CN rail cut);
3. Over CN rail cut at Saint Mary’s University (a link in the Halifax Urban Greenway);
4. At least one more **pedestrian/ bicycle crossing of a 100 series highway.**” (p. 54)

Proposed Project to Support Bicycling, Details and Targets: “**Lakecrest Drive** (Dartmouth) is evaluated for bike lanes or a local street bikeway and a design is completed to make the connection between it and the Waverley Road bike lanes.” (p. 69)



## Part of Map 2B: Candidate Bicycle Routes and Greenway Network Dartmouth and Area




### Moving Forward Together Plan (2015)

“Examples of locations that could be considered for **Level 4 amenities** include Highfield Terminal, Cobequid Terminal, Penhorn Terminal, Bayers Road Centre, **Tacoma Centre**, and major stops adjacent to one of the colleges or universities.” (p. 67)

Main Street @ Hartlen Street (NB): “This TPM involves an exemption from regulation to permit northbound transit vehicles to turn left onto Main Street from the curb lane on Hartlen Street. As there is already a second receiving lane for the left-turn movement, a transit only phase is not required to accommodate this TPM.” (p. 85)

### Integrated Mobility Plan (2017)

“Land Use plans, policies, and initiatives: Investment in integrated mobility should be used as a tool to help shape the region and its communities. The aim is to



**strengthen strategic Growth Centres**, respect established neighbourhoods, and complement the open-space system.” (p. 3)

“In **suburban** areas, a key goal is to provide **safe and enjoyable active transportation connections to important destinations** such as transit stops and terminals, employment districts, shopping, schools, service centres and other community amenities.” (p. 12)

“Clustering employment with shops, services and housing in strategically located **compact, walkable suburban communities** will make it feasible to provide commuters with higher-quality transit service.” (p. 13)

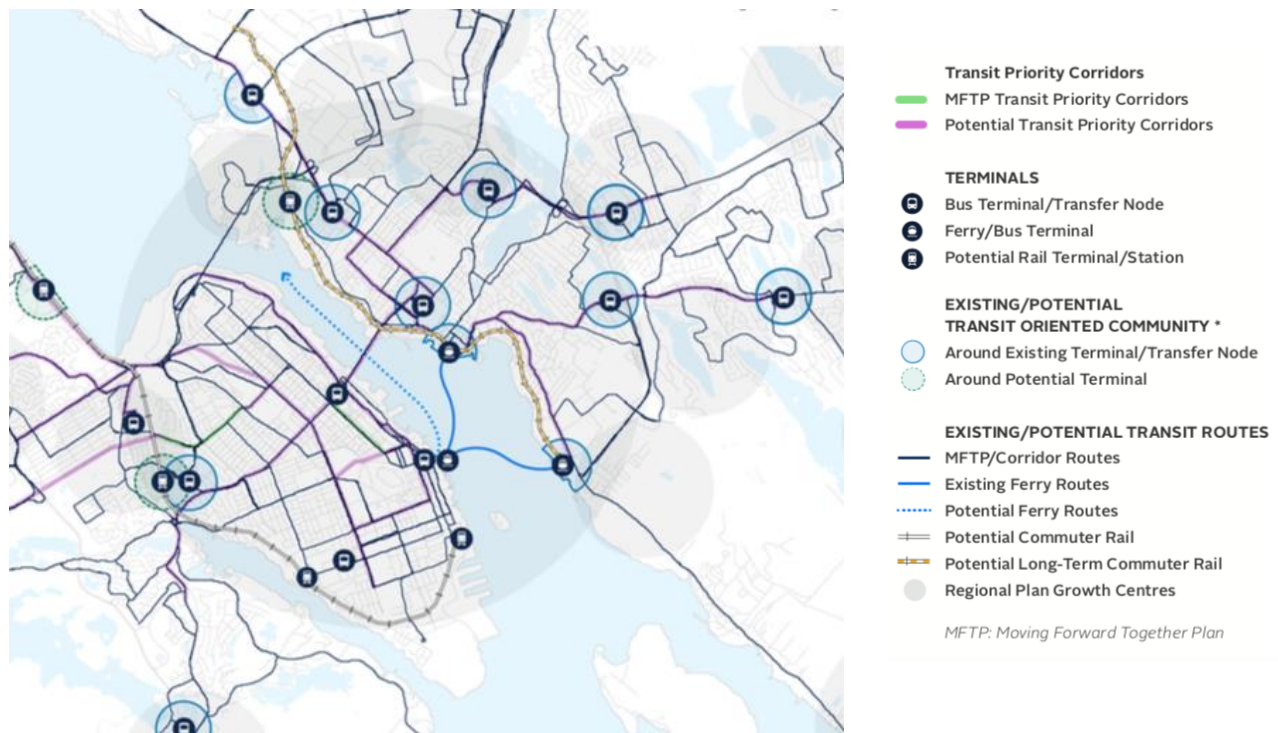
“An integrated network supports straightforward, flexible, barrier-free and pleasant journeys between destinations and across the Regional Centre, suburban and rural areas of the region.” (p. 28)

“An integrated mobility system needs to allocate funding to the locations, services and people that require it most and **prioritize investments** that lead to **compact, mixed-use communities that facilitate walking, bicycling and taking transit.**” (p. 29)

“Transportation investments should catalyze cost-effective development by **improving service levels in high-growth areas**, while managing congestion and the need for road investments.” (p. 29)

“Demand for new suburban development remains strong and is shifting to increased residential and commercial densities. Simultaneously, employment growth is also expected to continue in these suburban areas. This provides an opportunity to facilitate “**satellite**” **growth centres linked to the Regional Centre** through **high-quality transit services.**” (p. 48)

Part of Figure 10: Potential Transit Oriented Communities (p. 50)



Suburban Growth Centres: “**density** will be integrated with supportive uses and **focused around transit terminals and along strategic corridors** to create satellite growth centres” (p. 49)

“**Growth Centres must be aligned with transit.**” (p. 49)

“**Designate areas for high residential and employment density** only where there is an **existing or proposed high level of transit service** to support the development of walkable, affordable transit oriented communities.” (p. 53)

“When reviewing the Regional Plan and Secondary Municipal Planning Strategies or considering Plan Amendments, designate and **zone for transit oriented communities** (see Figure 10) around **proposed Transit Priority Corridors**, existing and planned bus terminals, ferry terminals and potential Bus Rapid Transit and commuter rail stops, wherever there is potential for redevelopment.” (p. 53)

“**Amend the municipal planning strategies and land use by-laws** as needed to include requirements for **pedestrian-oriented** and human-scale design.” (p. 54)

“Historically, **link streets** have been designed to accommodate a higher capacity of vehicles (e.g. Windmill Road, through Burnside). The Complete Streets approach will promote **multi-modal people moving capacity** and strategically **prioritize transit and active transportation links.**” (p. 60)

“In the Halifax Region, there are additional staff assigned to look after eight **"enhanced maintenance areas"** (corresponding to each of the region’s **Business Improvement Districts** or BIDs)” (p. 62)

“Streets support their intended functions & **complement adjacent land uses**” (p. 63)

“While it may not be practical to accommodate every need on every street, it is critical that good **networks are available for all modes**, especially when linking major destinations, such as **employment districts, shopping, schools, service centres** and other community amenities”. (p. 63)

## Complete Streets Step-by-Step Approach

### Identify Mode Priorities:

“How does the street function as a “place” (e.g. review whether there is a sidewalk cafe, **Business Improvement District, Municipal Planning Strategy vision, Community Vision or a Streetscaping Plan**). How does the street operate as a “link” (e.g. does it provide an important network function as defined in the Active Transportation Plan, **Transit Priority Corridor** or Truck Route).” (p. 64)

### Identify Street Type:

“How is the **zoning** likely to affect the **existing uses**? What uses does the **Municipal Planning Strategy envisage?**” (p. 64)

## “Getting Ahead of the Pavers”

“Key streets would be identified as incomplete if they are:



**Missing pedestrian or bicycle infrastructure** (as per the Active Transportation Plan and the identification of key pedestrian routes). Identified as **Transit Priority Corridors** in the IMP but do not have Transit Priority Measures.

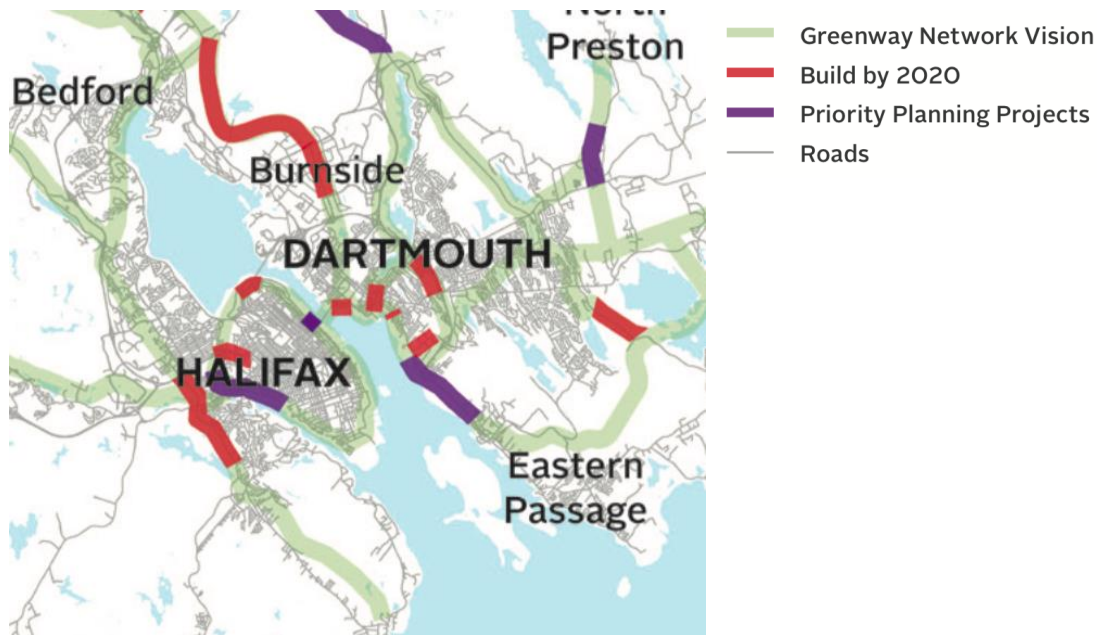
Streets that function as “places” but do not have their “place” function reflected in the street cross section. This category includes streets that **might not function as “places” today, but are planned to serve this function in the future** (e.g. Young Street in north-end Halifax is currently vehicle-oriented, but the draft Centre Plan identifies this corridor for mixed use, higher density, street-oriented development). Streets that are strategic corridors for movement, but have no long-range plan in place (refer to Road Network section).” (p. 68)

**“Integrate active transportation networks with transit routes and land-use changes.”** (p. 86)

Part of Figure 17: Proposed All Ages and Abilities Bicycle Network (2022) (p. 92)



Part of Figure 18: Priority Connections for Multi-Use Pathways (p. 92)



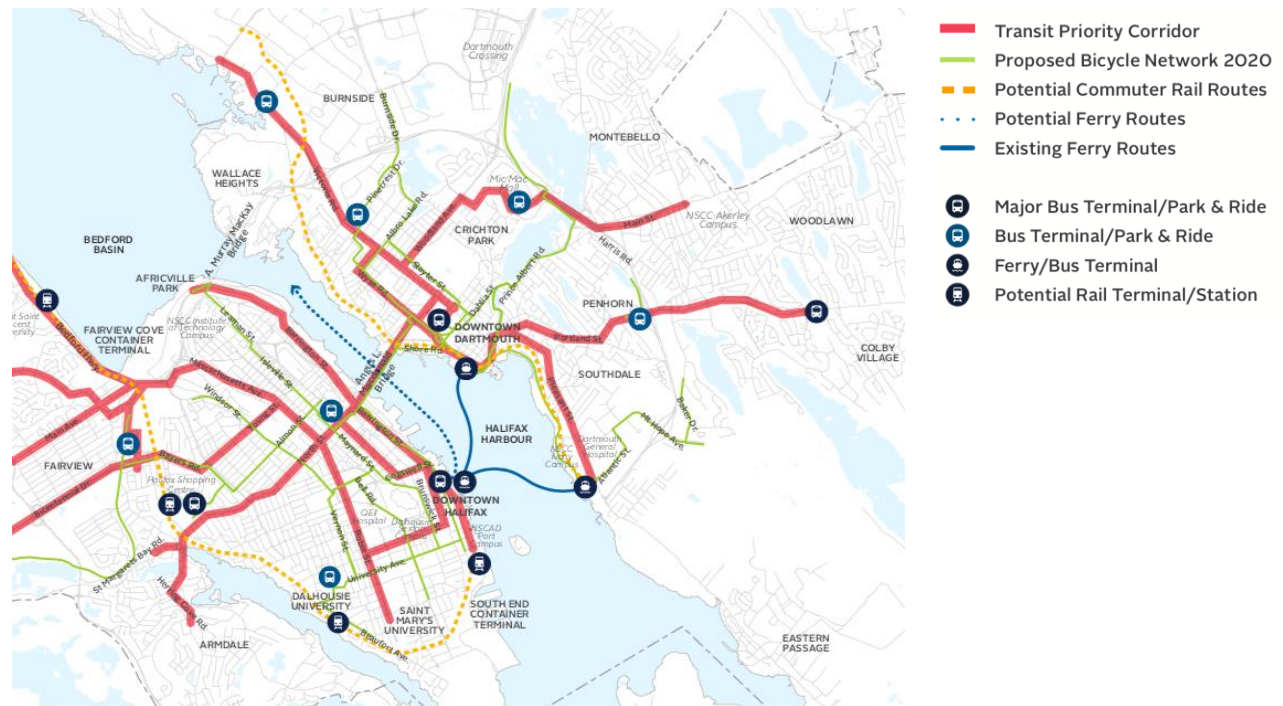
“In **suburban** areas, the goal is to provide **connections to transit stops and terminals, employment districts, shopping, schools, service centres** and other amenities within the community” (p. 93)

“Highway 111 has some crossings that are not suitable for all ages and abilities and would benefit from improvements.” (p. 95)

“Action 83: Identify and implement solutions to **facilitate active transportation links across railways, highways and watercourses**, consistent with the Active Transportation Priorities Plan.” (p. 97)

“Transit Priority Corridors are streets that have been strategically chosen to include measures to improve the efficiency of buses along the entire corridor. **Along Transit Priority Corridors, Transit Priority Measures will be implemented in a cohesive manner along the length of the corridor**, in order to provide the best advantage possible.” (p. 102)

Part of Figure 20: Proposed Transit Priority Corridors Map (p. 103)



“Investments in new infrastructure, most notably along **Transit Priority Corridors**, should be **integrated with meaningful policies** to promote and facilitate **transit oriented development**” (p. 104)

### Draft Regional Centre Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy: Package A (2018)

“Enhance and extend pedestrian corridors and pathways to provide safe and convenient **connectivity** within, to, and from the **Regional Centre**.” (p. 100)

Policy 105: “The Municipality shall consider, during priority plan review and master planning exercises pertaining to parks, trails, facilities and amenities within parks in the Regional Centre, the following:

**improvement to connections to parks and open spaces** that are located outside of the Regional Centre through **transit and active transportation routes**” (p. 113)