

STAGE II

ROUTE SELECTION

PORT HAWKESBURY

FEBRUARY 2021

Blue Route Hub Bikeway Study

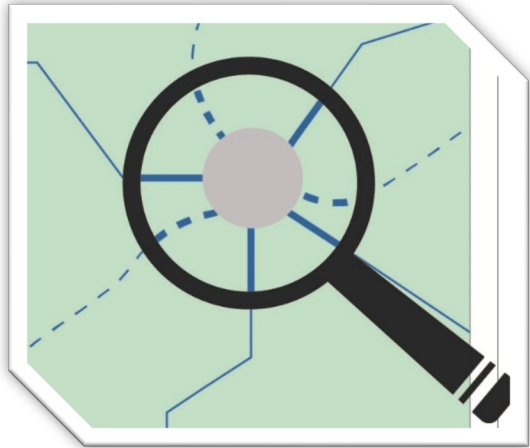


Prepared by:



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THE HUB STUDY

The Blue Route Hub Bikeway Study is a Bicycle Nova Scotia (BNS) initiative to assist municipalities throughout Nova Scotia to advance bicycle culture in their region. Locations selected for this study are situated at junctions, referred to as “hubs,” along the proposed, province-wide bikeway network known as the Blue Route. The purpose of this study is to develop community-based plans that identify a minimum grid of bicycle-friendly routes for the area that can be implemented in the near future.

Goals of the Hubs Study are as follow:

- » Develop a proposed network of safe and bicycle-friendly routes throughout Port Hawkesbury to promote alternative commuting options to users of all ages and abilities that are healthy, sustainable, and environmentally friendly,
- » Engage residents of the region to help guide the planning process to ensure that the network adds value to the community,
- » Establish routes that connect the Blue Route to local attractions (parks, historic sites, etc.) and commercial/retail areas to provide easy access to cycling tourists.

Objective of the Report

The objective of the Stage II report is to present the results of the route evaluation process, and to recommend one of the three routes proposed in Stage I to bring forth into the conceptual design phase of the study.

STAGE I RESULTS

At the conclusion of Stage I, three routes were proposed to form the framework of a bicycle-friendly network of routes in the town of Port Hawkesbury. These routes were devised with consideration of several specific variables related to the Port Hawkesbury context, as well as internationally recognized best practices for network planning. A more detailed review of the planning process can be found in the Stage I *Network Planning* report.

The Proposed Network

The following map shows the three routes being proposed to form a cycling network in Port Hawkesbury.

ROUTE #1

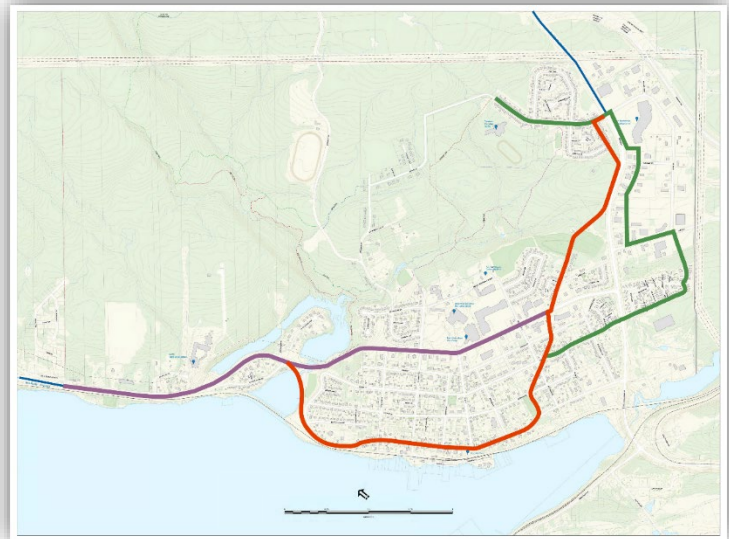
This route extends along Granville Street, Sydney Road, the walking path connecting (Old) Sydney Road to Pinecrest Drive, and Pinecrest Drive.

ROUTE #2

Route 2 spans approximately the entire length of Reeves Street, stopping short of the intersection on the east end, at Sydney Road.

ROUTE #3

Route 3 combines Queen Street, Queen Street Extension, a proposed path connecting to Unity Drive, Paint Street, MacIntosh Avenue, the Port Hawkesbury Centre parking lot, and Tamarac Drive.



It should be noted that Route 3 presented above is a modified version of the design that was presented to the public in Survey #2. Therefore, the results and comments received from the public, presented in a later section of this report, are based on the first Route 3 design that incorporated Paint Street rather than MacIntosh Avenue. However, BNS believes that the public’s response to the layout of the route would remain the same when presented with the modified version; exceptions to this are the comments that spoke directly to the inadequate road conditions and safety of Paint Street.

STAGE II

The purpose of Stage II was to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each of the three proposed routes and to determine which of the routes is closest to “construction ready” and will have the greatest impact on improving bicycle use in Port Hawkesbury; and therefore, should be brought forth into the concept design stage of the Hub Study. Two evaluation methods were used in this stage of the project. First, the project team created an evaluation matrix to assess and compare the strength of each route. Second was to create a survey used to gather feedback from the residents of Port Hawkesbury on how likely they would be to use each individual route, and to explicitly ask which route they felt should be the focus of a concept design. This section is an overview of the route evaluation completed by the BNS project team, as well as the consultation with the public and the feedback BNS received from the engagement.

To rank the three proposed routes, with respect to impact and priority of implementation, the project team developed an evaluation matrix to assess each route based on the following five criteria.

| | |
|--|--|
| Connectivity | The route will improve the connectedness of the town by bike. |
| Readiness | The route (1) currently has ample space within the existing Right-of-Way (ROW), (2) has political support, and/or (3) has already been selected for upgrades and improvements. |
| Inspirational (Motivational) | The route will excite residents about cycling and encourage its use by a broad range of people. |
| Equity & Accessibility | The route will increase transportation options where there are currently limitations. |
| Current Conditions (Infrastructure) | The current state of the infrastructure along the route is not acceptable for cycling and therefore has the greatest opportunities for improvements. |

These five criteria were evaluated using a 1 to 5 ranking system, where 1 represented the lowest satisfaction of the criteria, and 5 the greatest satisfaction.

After carefully considering how well each of the three routes satisfies the five different criteria, Route 1 (Granville Street/Sydney Road/Tamarac Drive) achieved the highest score (19). This route ranked highest in terms of: Readiness, Inspiration, and Current Conditions. Table 1 shows the numerical ranking given to all three routes.

Table 1 – Route Evaluation Matrix

| | Route #1 | Route #2 | Route #3 | Description |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---|
| Connectivity | 4 | 4 | 4 | The route would greatly improve the connectedness of the town by bike. |
| Readiness | 4 | 3 | 3 | The route is more likely to be completed in the near future. |
| Inspirational (Motivational) | 4 | 3 | 3 | The routes would encourage and excite people about cycling, both recreationally and for everyday use. |
| Equity & Accessibility | 3 | 4 | 4 | The route would increase transportation options where there are currently limitations. |
| Current Conditions (Infrastructure) | 4 | 3 | 3 | The current conditions of the route are not acceptable for cycling and need significant improvements. |
| Total Score | 19 | 17 | 17 | |

For a complete breakdown of the reasoning of each score, refer to Appendix A.

Public Engagement

WEBINAR

Initially, a consultation session with the public was scheduled to take place the evening of December 15, via an online webinar (Zoom video conference). Those interested in participating were asked to register online prior to the event. However, due to a low number of registrations, the project team made the decision to cancel the event and direct focus to the promotion of an online survey.

Those who did register were contacted by the project team to personally inform them of the cancellation, and to allow the registrants to voice their opinions in a private, one-on-one discussion.

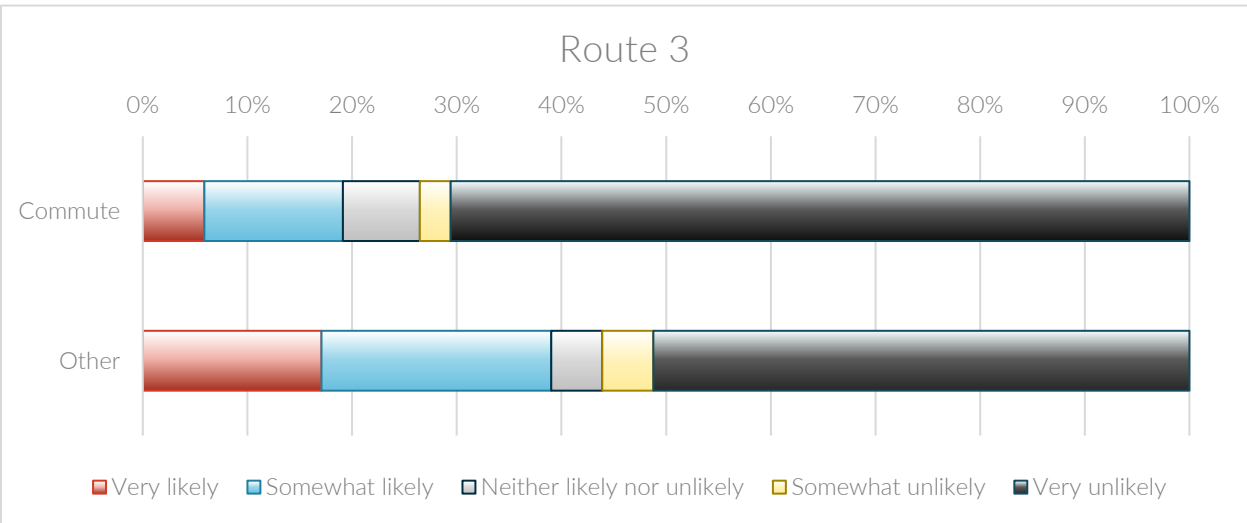
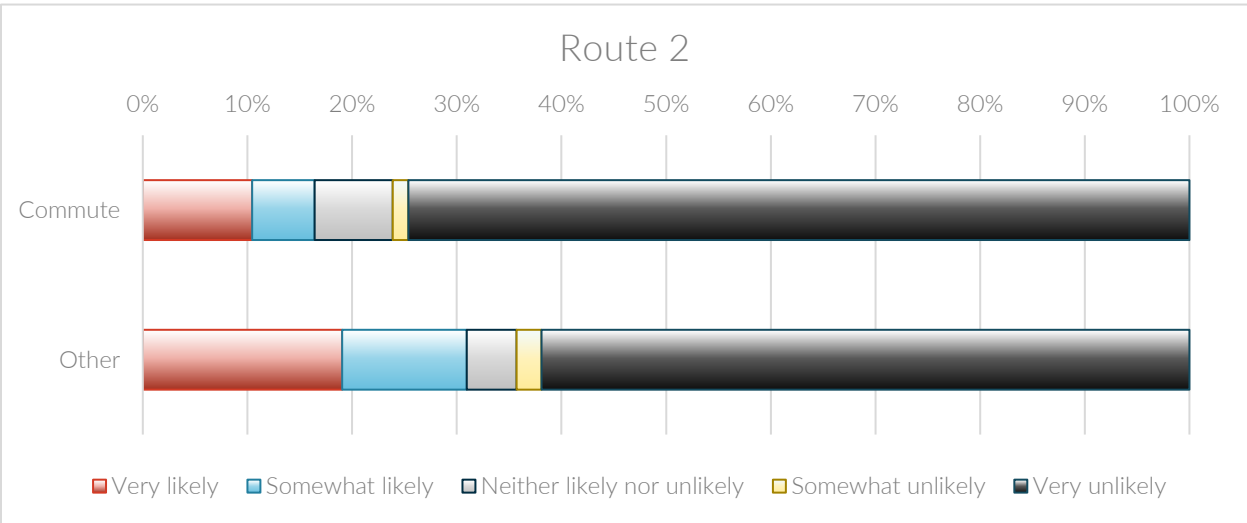
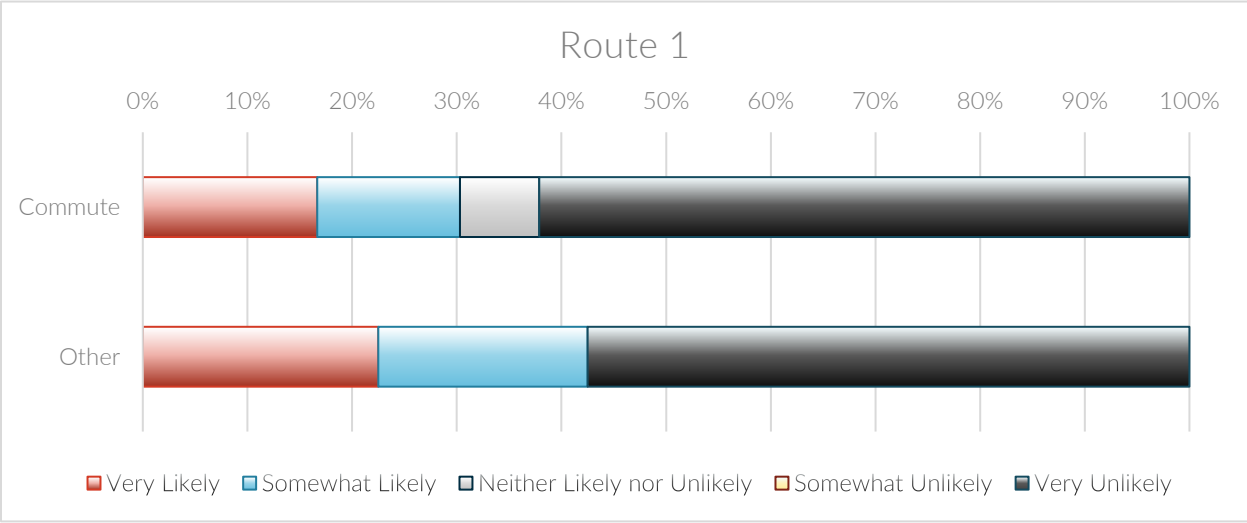
ONLINE SURVEY

BNS created an online survey that was released on December 15 and remained open until January 11. The survey presented the proposed network and its three routes. Participants were asked to indicate how likely (*Very likely* to *Very unlikely*) they were to use the route for (1) commuting to work or school and (2) for other trips (e.g., restaurants, groceries, shopping, etc.). Additionally, survey respondents were asked which of the three routes they felt should be given priority for further design.

A copy of the survey is available in Appendix B.

THE FEEDBACK

Upon closing of the survey on January 12, feedback was heard from 71 people. Responses to the question *How likely would you be to use this route for the following purposes?* are shown in the following graphs. It should be noted that not all participants responded to each question.



The responses provided show that Route 1 is the most well received of the three routes, with 30% of survey participants indicating that they would be *Very likely* or *Somewhat Likely* to use the route for commuting to work or school, and 42% likely to use it for other commutes. Route 3 has good potential for utility trips other than work and school (39% positive response). Route 2, as viewed by participants, is the least favorable route. Only 16% of respondents indicated they would be likely to use it for commuting to work or school, and 31% would use it for other commutes.

Question 7 of the survey asked participants to select which route they believed should have priority for further design and near future construction. Figure 1 shows how survey participants answered. Participants were also asked to provide the reasoning behind their selection. The following are examples of responses that best highlight the common attitude toward each route.

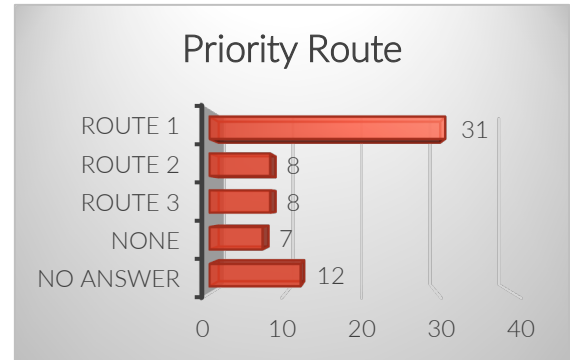


Figure 1 - Route Priority Based on Survey Responses

ROUTE 1

Safe, scenic.

Not a main artery. Least dangerous.

That would be one of the best routes as there is little traffic and very slight grade.

ROUTE 2

Leads more to the center of town and out to NSCC where more students would use it.

ROUTE 3

I feel that since Route 3 goes by the elementary school, it will be the one with the potential for the most use. The addition of the bike path that leads towards Paint St will also give a safer alternative for cyclist and pedestrians who wish to go to the mall or grocery store instead of walking along the side of the highway.

Access to the complete collection of comments is available upon request.

ROUTE SELECTION

Upon review of the feedback from the online survey and pairing it with the evaluation performed by the project team, it is recommended that Route 1 (Granville Street, Sydney Road and Pinecrest Drive) should be the focus of the conceptual design stage of the study (Stage III). Route 1 was both the highest ranked route during BNS's evaluation, receiving a score of 19 (19/25), and it was the route most selected on the online survey (31 of 71 votes).



In the next stage of the Hub Study, Stage III, BNS will investigate three concept designs for Route 1 using different types of bicycle infrastructure and cross-sectional configurations for the different roadways and paths. Additionally, Stage II will include a Class D cost estimate for each concept design and a comparative evaluation of each route's strengths and weaknesses.

APPENDIX A

ROUTE RANKINGS

ROUTE 1 – SCORE: 19

CONNECTIVITY (4)

- a. Connects the largest residential area to three of the major destination hubs (Downtown, Waterfront and Port Hawkesbury Centre) and is currently being used as a major route for cycling.
- b. Does not connect to existing bicycle specific infrastructure.
- c. Provides a lower volume connection of the western and northern segments of the Blue Route entering and exiting Port Hawkesbury.

READINESS (4)

- a. Right-of-Way is sufficient to include new infrastructure.
- b. Political and community support is present.
- c. There is interest in potential upgrades to areas along the route.

INSPIRATIONAL (4)

- a. Existing traffic conditions are favorable to bicycle traffic (i.e., low speed/ low volume).
- b. Elevation changes along the route are conducive to accommodate AAA users.
- c. Multiple locations along the route are desirable for placemaking opportunities.

EQUITY & ACCESSIBILITY (3)

- a. Does not have a high or direct impact on vulnerable populations within the community.
- b. Borders essential services and does not act as a direct connection to multiple services.

CURRENT CONDITIONS (4)

- a. Lower volume of traffic along route, however uncomfortable due to curbside parking and lack of bicycle infrastructure.
- b. Roadways are in need of repair (cracked surfaces, eroding shoulders/curbs, etc.).

ROUTE 2 – SCORE: 17

CONNECTIVITY (4)

- a. Connects two destination hubs (Downtown Core & NSCC) and would lead the (proposed) Blue Route into town.
- b. Is the main artery.
- c. Current AT infrastructure along route (new AT path & bike lanes along main portion of Reeves Street).

READINESS (3)

- a. Right-of-Way is wide enough to accommodate bicycle infrastructure.
- b. Political and community support is low.
- c. Plans for development have been proposed (see Destination Reeves St.) and were passed over due to lack of support.

INSPIRATIONAL (3)

- a. Traffic speed and volumes along Reeves Street are currently not conducive to encouraging bicycle use.
- b. The hill entering the Downtown Core from the west is a major deterrent and does not meet AAA standards.
- c. Placemaking is minimal due to Trunk 4, high volumes of traffic.

EQUITY & ACCESSIBILITY (4)

- a. Connects the neighbourhoods at the west end of town (Embree Island and Charles MacLean Road) to the business core.
- b. Runs along the major business core of Port Hawkesbury.

CURRENT CONDITIONS (3)

- a. High traffic volumes and speeds.
- b. Road surface is in decent condition.

ROUTE 3 – SCORE: 17

CONNECTIVITY (4)

- a. Connects the largest residential area to a major commercial and retail area (Port Hawkesbury Centre) and to institutional destination (Tamarac EC).
- b. No existing bicycle infrastructure along this route.
- c. Connects to the (proposed) north segment of the Blue Route.

READINESS (3)

- a. Ample space within Right-of-Way along existing roadways. New paths required to connect segments of the route, as well as improved intersections.
- b. Political and community support is largely unknown.
- c. There is already talk of the creation of a path linking Cairdeil Estates to Paint Street industrial/commercial area.

INSPIRATIONAL (3)

- a. The route would provide a low volume option to access work and amenities located along Paint Street. Also provides children a low volume route to commute to Tamarac EC.
- b. Route is primarily flat.

EQUITY & ACCESSIBILITY (4)

- a. Provides safer access for residents of Cairdeil Estates to the main part of town (west side of Trunk 4) as well as the commercial area north of the neighbourhood.
- b. Connects to a major commercial/retail area (Superstore, Walmart, etc.).

CURRENT CONDITIONS (3)

- a. Low traffic volumes along much of the route. Crosses roadways with Heavy Vehicle (HV) traffic.
- b. Existing roadway surfaces are in need of repair, not critical.

APPENDIX B

THE (PROPOSED) BIKEWAY NETWORK SURVEY

BLUE ROUTE BIKEWAY HUB STUDY

Port Hawkesbury

Proposed Bikeway Network Survey

The (Proposed) Network

Bicycle Nova Scotia (BNS) has been developing a network plan of routes that we believe, with proper infrastructure, would create a safer and well-connected system of routes to allow you, the residents of Port Hawkesbury, to move about your community by bicycle. We are looking for your opinions about the routes we are proposing.

Route #1 – Granville/Sydney/Pinecrest

This route runs along Granville Street, turns up Sydney Road, cross Reeves Street, continue along the second half of Sydney Road, takes the paved path up to Pinecrest Drive, continues along Pinecrest Drive and ends at the intersection of Tamarac Drive & Trunk 4.

1. How likely are you to use this route for the following purposes? (Very likely, Somewhat likely, Neither likely nor unlikely, Somewhat unlikely, Very unlikely)
 - a. Commuting to work/school.
 - b. Other trips (restaurants, groceries, shopping, etc.)
2. Please tell us what you think of Route #1.

Route #2 – Reeves

This route spans Reeves Street, from the west boundary of Port Hawkesbury to (nearly) the intersection of Reeves Street and Trunk 4/Industrial Park Road.

3. How likely are you to use this route for the following purposes? (Very likely, Somewhat likely, Neither likely nor unlikely, Somewhat unlikely, Very unlikely)
 - a. Commuting to work/school.
 - b. Other trips (restaurants, groceries, shopping, etc.)
4. Please tell us what you think of Route #2.

Route #3 – Queen/Paint/Tamarac

This route would begin at the intersection of Sydney Road and Queen Street and head east, crossing Industrial Park Road and continuing to the end of Queen Street Extension. A new path or trail would allow users to connect up to Paint Street. Bicycle facilities would travel along Paint Street until the intersection with Trunk 4 and Tamarac Drive. The route would then cross Trunk 4 and extend along Tamarac Drive to Tamarac EC's driveway.

5. How likely are you to use this route for the following purposes? (Very likely, Somewhat likely, Neither likely nor unlikely, Somewhat unlikely, Very unlikely)
 - a. Commuting to work/school.
 - b. Other trips (restaurants, groceries, shopping, etc.)
6. Please tell us what you think of Route #3.

Route Hierarchy

7. Which of the three routes do you think should be the main priority, with respect to design & construction?
 - a. Route 1
 - b. Route 2
 - c. Route 3

BLUE ROUTE BIKEWAY HUB STUDY

8. Please tell us why.

Before you go...

9. Any further comments?
10. If you would like to have a further discussion with our team, feel free to send a message to neill.spencer@bicycle.ns.ca, or leave your email address in the answer box below.