August 2025

Rural Municipality of Souris West

Active Transportation Plan

Active Transportation Plan

COLES + MRSB

PROJECT MANAGEMENT SERVICE

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Executive Summary

The Rural Municipality of Souris West's Active Transportation Plan is a foundational document for implementing active transportation infrastructure in the community. This plan has been developed by consultants based upon a preliminary needs assessment, site evaluation, and community feedback.

Throughout the development of this plan, the municipal government and community members communicated that Souris West residents value active living and that there is community desire for more active living infrastructure. The 2022 Souris West Community Survey identified "walking paths" as a way to make the community a better place to live, and subsequent to the survey and Council discussions, the municipality applied to the Province of PEI's Active Transportation Fund to explore options for creating new paths in the community. That funding led to the development of this plan. The goal of this report is to present information about active transportation, what is possible for developing active transportation in the community, and what community members want for active transportation in Souris West.

The Rural Municipality of Souris West has unique needs as a small, rural community that differ from the needs of larger municipalities when it comes to active transportation. Its population is a mix of families and seniors, and so physical accessibility and safety for partaking in recreational active transportation were top-of-mind issues for the community. Recreation/exercise and enjoyment of nature were higher priorities to community members than car-free commuting. Connectivity to the Town of Souris and to Sheep Pond Beach were also important to community members. Souris West residents rely on Souris for many amenities, services, and community experiences, and so improving the safe connection to the Town of Souris was valuable to those we heard from.

Through listening to this community feedback via key informant interviews, a public survey, and a public meeting, key priorities and concerns were incorporated into the plan and balanced against the limitations of cost, environmental regulations, and land availability. Preliminary site evaluations and regulatory considerations helped determine the possibilities and limitations for routes and path types in Souris West. This work provided firm answers to questions some community members had. For instance, many community members desired access to the Souris Boardwalk and asked if the municipality could build a boardwalk that connects directly to it. Research and preliminary consultation showed that this option would be a challenge and perhaps even fully prohibited because of current environmental protection measures. Community members also shared a preference for having multi-use separate pathways in the community. Research and regulatory considerations showed that, due to the land available in the community, this type of pathway would be costly and face environmental issues that could prohibit its development.

After considering all the findings of the research, preliminary assessments and consultations, and community feedback, a route of widened paved shoulders following along the Lower Rollo Bay Road and Sheep Pond Road to provide access to Sheep Pond Beach was selected as the most viable option for the community to pursue. Paved shoulders will allow for safer active transportation in the community, and ensuring that the paved shoulders in the community are maintained to provide an even surface will make active living a little more accessible for residents. This will help residents and visitors feel safer participating in active transportation in the community.

1. Understanding Active Transportation

Benefits of Active Transportation and Active Transportation Infrastructure

The Government of Prince Edward Island defines active transportation as "any self-propelled human form of transportation such as walking, running and cycling."[1] Active transportation is all about getting from point A to point B by your own power, and it holds many benefits for the people and communities participating in it.

Active transportation is an environmentally friendly way to travel and helps reduce the carbon footprint of individuals and municipalities. It helps promote community cohesion and accessibility, as it provides convenient and free ways for community members to get around and to socialize. Active transportation infrastructure can further impact quality of life by providing a safe opportunity for active living.

There are also many health benefits to active transportation. Active living is important for everyone's health and well-being, and research has proven that physical activity reduces cancer and helps prevent chronic diseases.[2] Adults are recommended to have a minimum of 22 minutes a day of physical activity, and youth are recommended a minimum of 60 minutes per day.[3] However, only one in five Canadians meet the recommended physical activity targets.[4] Encouraging active transportation in communities is an excellent way to promote the incorporation of physical activity into community members everyday routines.

Active Transportation in a Rural Context

Municipalities across Canada are investing in active transportation (AT) infrastructure. AT is most commonly promoted and developed for dense population areas, making active transportation seem like an urban amenity. However, active transportation is for everyone no matter where they live. In a rural context, active transportation has less emphasis on commuting to employment, as it might in a city, and more emphasis on getting to places within the community for exercise and recreation, enjoyment of nature, and socialization. Active transportation is important for rural communities as they can face greater dangers in participating in active transportation than urban communities do, particularly when bad weather events occur.[5] The built environment (i.e., roads, active transportation paths, and other physical infrastructure) has long been considered as a contributing factor to community members' activity. Studies have shown that rural residents report lower activity than urban residents and hypothesize that this is due to limited built environment and limited destinations. As one study explains, "The physical environment has been shown to have an effect on the promotion of PA [physical activity] specifically by

[1] Government of Prince Edward Island. (2024, December 2). *Active Transportation*. https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/environment-energy-and-climate-action/active-transportation
[2] Canadian Partnership against Cancer. (nd). Physical Activity Policies. https://www.partnershipagainstcancer.ca/topics/physical-activity-policies/background-key-statistics/
[3] Ibid
[4] McCulloch, C., Koopmans, A., Allison, S., and Pelletier, C. (2023, July). "Building awareness of barriers to exercise in rural and remote areas." https://bcmj.org/premise/building-awareness-barriers-exercise-rural-and-remote-areas
[5] Ottawa Safety Council. (2021, June 17). "How to walk safely on rural roads." https://www.ottawasafetycouncil.ca/how-to-walk-safely-on-rural-roads/#:~:text=At%20other%20times%20of%20the%20year%2C%20rain,on%20rural%20roads%20in%20bad%20weather%20conditions.

increasing walkability, or the capacity of a neighborhood to support individuals' lifestyle behaviors such as walking and physical activity."[6] Doctors and researchers have also noted that there are barriers for physical activity in rural populations with fears of icy roads, lack of sidewalks, and daylight limitations.[7] These barriers can be lessened by built environment with the addition of walking spaces and lighting, for example. Investing in active transportation infrastructure in rural areas holds value for community members' quality of life and active living.

About Active Transportation Infrastructure

An active transportation network normally uses a number of different path types within its development such as:

- Paved shoulders
- Sidewalks (pedestrians only)
- Separate multi-use paths
- Dedicated bike lanes
- Existing trails

Path types are determined by available land and active transportation needs in an area. While on PEI, separate multi-use paths have grown in popularity, they are not always practical or feasible for an area. Active transportation paths separated from the road need a base land width of approximately 15 ft. for construction. This is not always available and altering land to accommodate this requirement is not always environmentally or economically responsible.

Active transportation development can be costly no matter the type of pathway used, but separate pathways are the most expensive option. On PEI, AT corridors tend to be developed in phases due to the costliness of these projects. The expense factors in active transportation pathways are something that must be considered in planning.

Other important considerations in AT path development are destination priorities and complementary infrastructure. AT paths should lead to a destination so having clear start and end points is vital in route selection. In developing this plan, consideration was given to how many people would benefit from accessing the destinations accommodated by different proposed routes in Souris West. Complementary infrastructure, like lighting, rest areas, signage, and bike racks are also valuable components to AT networks and should be prioritized in planning. Both destination priorities and complementary infrastructure were considered for this plan.

[6] Klann, A., Vu, L., Ewing, M., Fenton, M., & Pojednic, R. (2019). Translating Urban Walkability Initiatives for Older Adults in Rural and Under-Resourced Communities. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *16*(17), 3041. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16173041

[7] McCulloch, C., Koopmans, A., Allison, S., and Pelletier, C. (2023, July). "Building awareness of barriers to exercise in rural and remote areas." https://bcmj.org/premise/building-awareness-barriers-exercise-rural-and-remote-areas

2. Active Transportation in Souris West

Overview of Souris West Community

Figure 1. Google Earth April 19, 2024 satellite imagery of Souris West.

Demographics

Population

The Rural Municipality of Souris West (RMSW) has a population of approximately 380 people. Based on 2021 census data, there are 160 private dwellings occupied by usual residents in RMSW, and 68 dwellings not occupied by usual residents.[8] Using the average household size from the 2021 census and the assumption that private dwellings not occupied by usual residents are mainly seasonal residents, we estimate up to an additional 163 persons live in Souris West at certain times of the year. This may be higher or lower than actual population of seasonal residents and does not take into account tourists occupying short-term rentals or motel units.

Without completing comprehensive population projections, we estimate that Souris West's population will fall somewhere between 394-463 in 2030 and 413-503 by 2035. These numbers were estimated based upon the 2016-2021 population change for Souris West (5.0%) according to Statistics Canada, the overall provincial growth rate calculated by Statistics Canada for PEI population projections (2025), and the provincial growth rate calculated by the Province of PEI for its population projections (2023).[9]

[8] Statistics Canada. 2023. (table). Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Ottawa. Released November 15, 2023. https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E

[9] Government of Prince Edward Island. (2023, May). *Prince Edward Island Population Projections 2023 – 2062.* https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/publications/pt_pop_proj.pdf

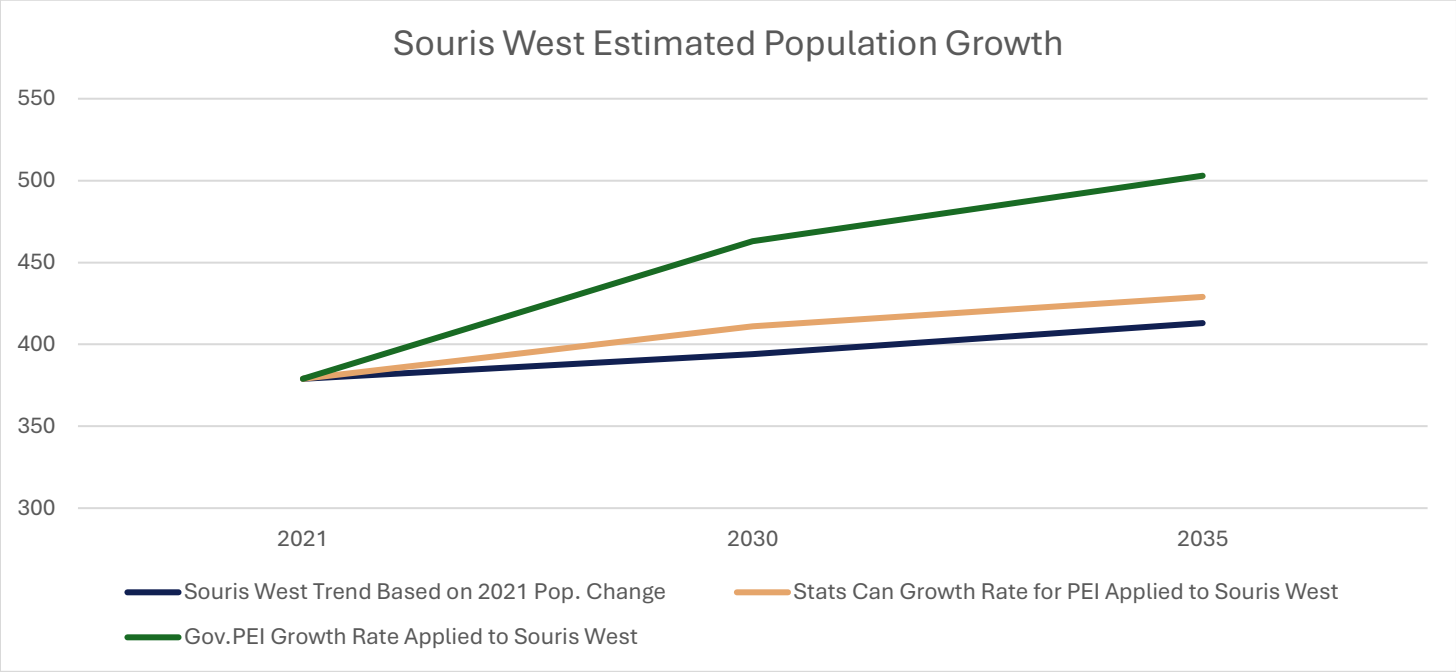


Figure 2. Chart of estimated Souris West population growth from 2021-2035.

Age and Household Demographics

The average age of Souris West residents is 46.6 years old, and the median age is 52. 48% of residents in Souris West are over 55. 16% are under 19; 15% are between 20 and 34 years of age; and 21% are between 35-54 years. The average household size is 2.4 people, and in all these demographics, the vast majority of residents speak English as their first and primary language.

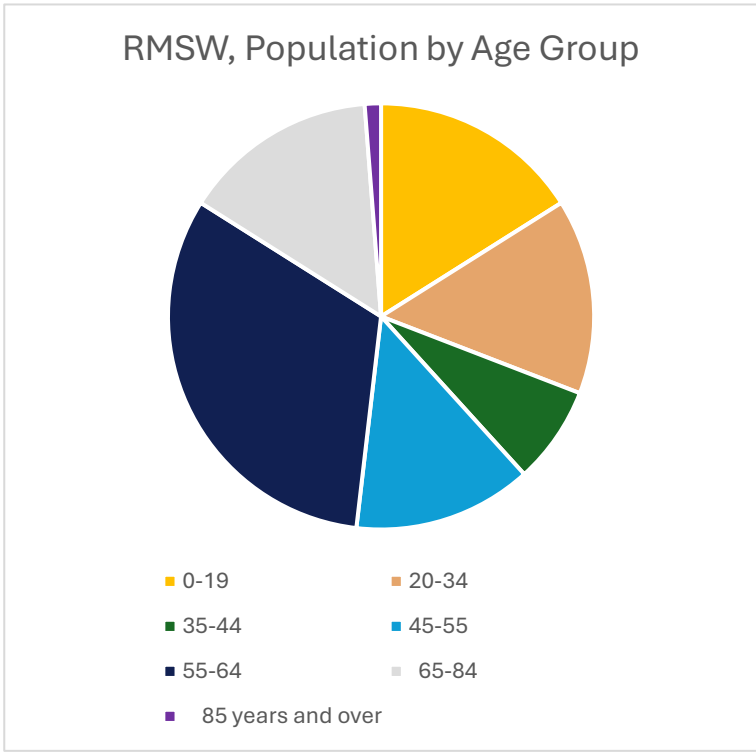


Figure 3. Distribution of ages for Souris West based on 2021 census data.

Employment and Commuting Demographics

In the 2021 census, 160 Souris West residents reported current employment. 9.0% reported working from home; 19% reported no fixed workplace; and 69% reported having a usual place of work. Of those commuting to workplaces, 10% commuted within Souris West, and 90% commuted outside of Souris West to another location in PEI. 55% of reported commuting times were less than 15 minutes, 28% were between 15-29 minutes, and 10% were 30-44 minutes. This suggests the majority of those commuting are travelling within Kings County and in the Souris area. 86% of commuters reported using a

car, truck, or van to travel to their workplace with only 7% reporting using another unspecified method of transportation.[10]

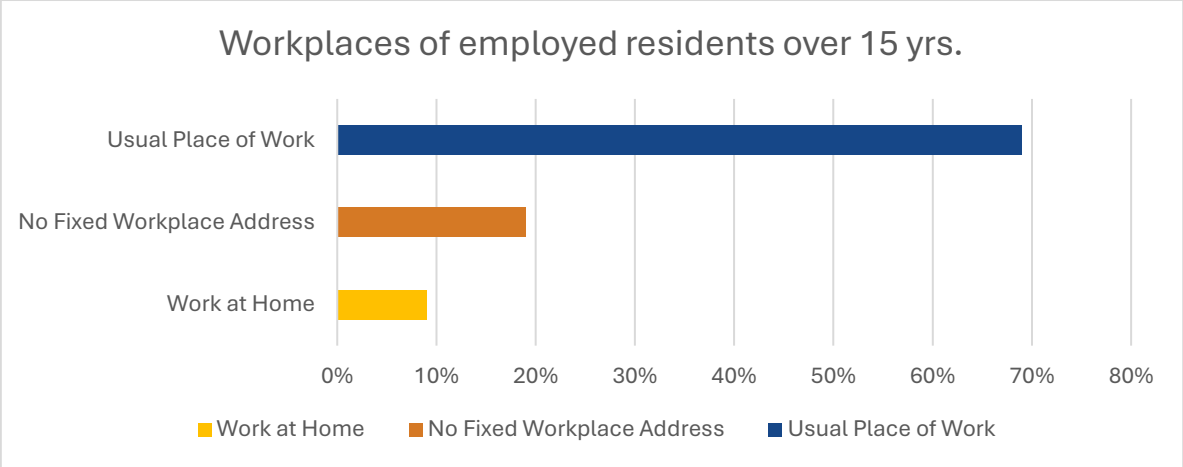


Figure 4. Types of workplaces for employed residents based on 2021 census data.

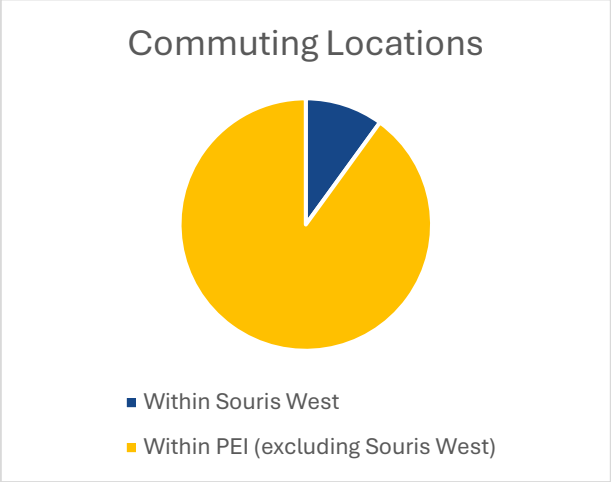


Figure 6. Commuting locations for employed residents based on 2021 census data.

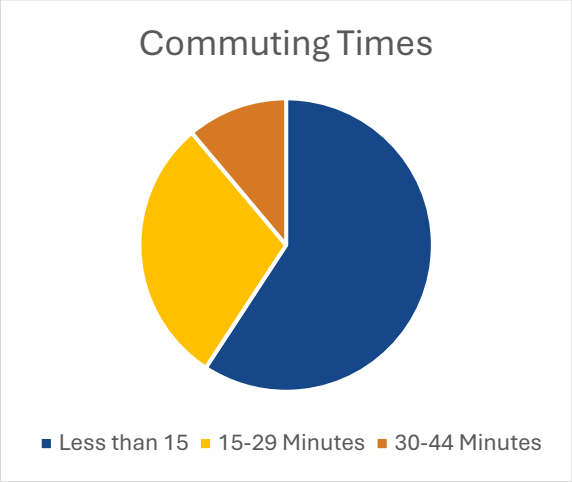
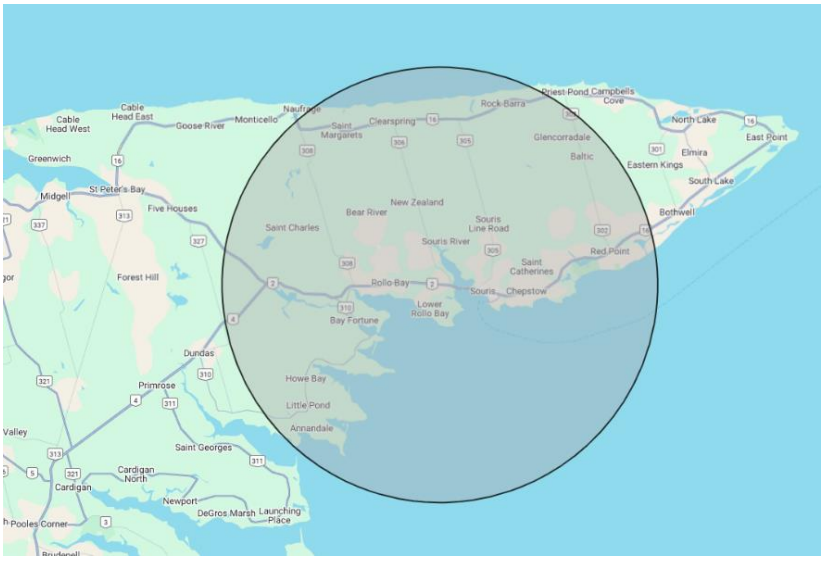


Figure 5. Commute duration for employed residents based on 2021 census data.

Using the 15 minutes or less commuting time that 55% of residents reported in the 2021 census, we can create maps showing the estimated distance radius for different modes of transportation. Within 15 minutes from a central point in Souris West, residents can walk to various locations in Souris West and bike throughout Souris West and Souris. The maps on the following page show the areas that can theoretically be covered by walking, biking, or driving 15 minutes from the corner of Lower Rollo Bay Road and the All Weather Highway in Souris West. For biking, the map shows that the average person is likely able to bike to any location in Souris West within fifteen minutes. They can also bike to most locations in Souris within this time frame. For walking, the maps show that, depending on your location in Souris West, the average person will likely require more than fifteen minutes to

[10] Note: The census recorded 140 individuals over 15 years who have a usual place of work or no fixed place of work. The census record 145 individuals reporting that they commute to work, but the only values for commuting methods are 125 people using car, truck, or van and 10 people reporting "other method." It is unclear what method the other 10 individuals use.

reach certain destinations in the community and the destinations they can reach within the time frame depend on their starting location.



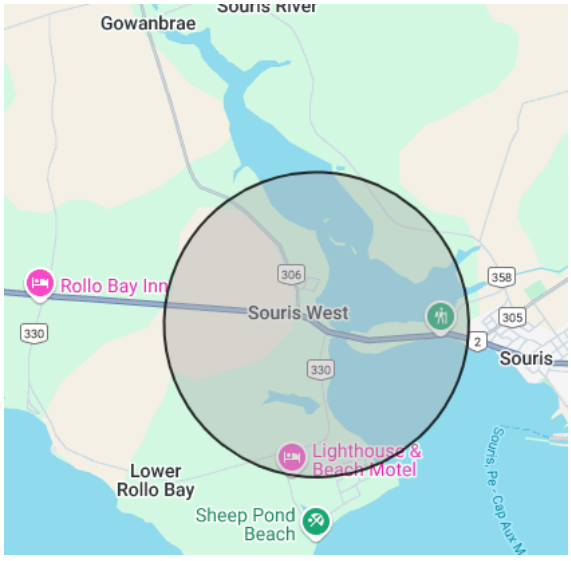


Figure 7. (top left) Locations that are approximately a 15-minute drive from Souris West (15 km radius).[11]`

Figure 8. (top right) Locations approximately a 15-minute walk from the corner of Lower Rollo Bay Road and All Weather Highway (1.5 km radius).

Figure 9. (bottom left) Locations approximately 15-minutes by bike from corner of All Weather Highway and Lower Rollo Bay Road.

Climate and Geography

Souris West is a municipality on the coast on PEI's Eastern shore. Its geography features wetlands, dunes, ponds, and farmland. It is located beside the Town of Souris, connected by a causeway. It is approximately a 1-hour drive from Charlottetown which is about 76 km southwest of Souris West. Due to its coastal location, erosion and flooding are concerns for the area. For the purpose of developing this Active Transportation Plan, the consultants divided the Souris West municipality into four key areas: New Zealand Road area, All Weather Highway area, Lower Rollo Bay Road area, and Deagles Lane/Sheep Pond Beach area.

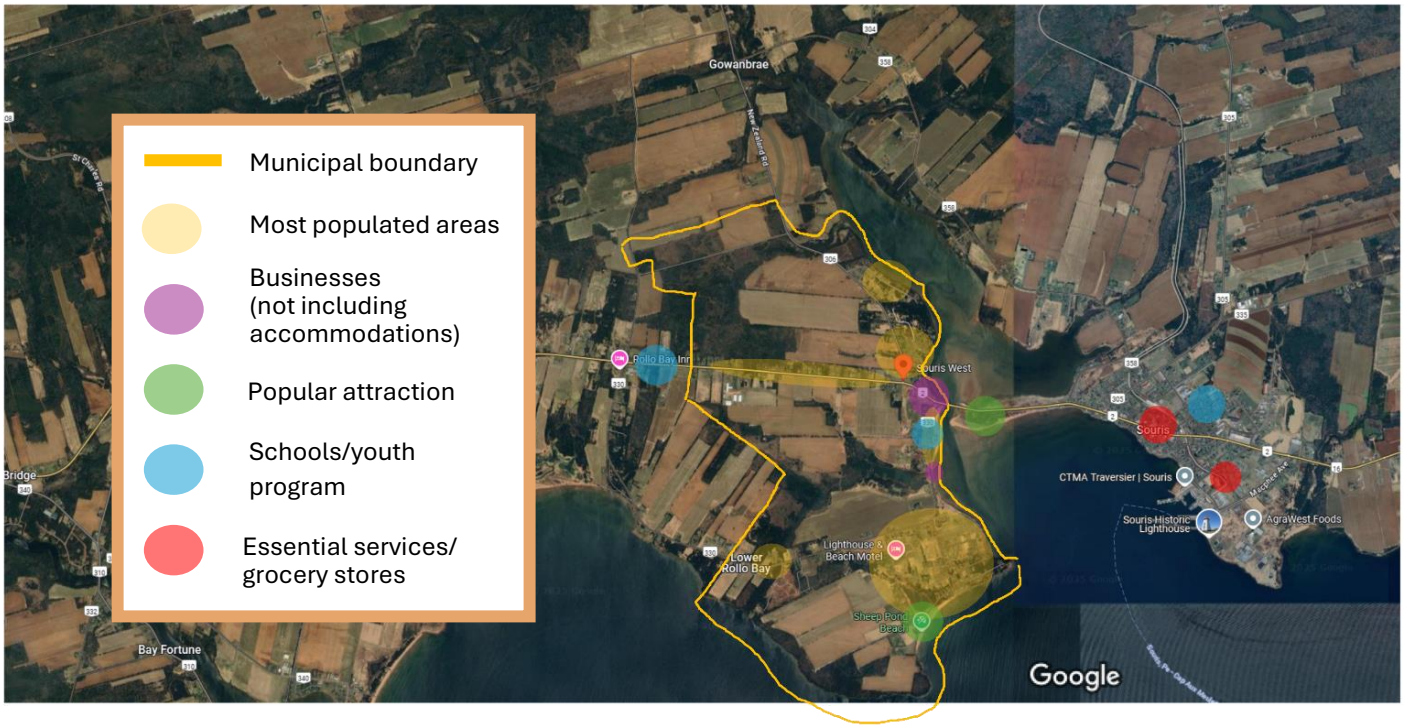
Figure 10. Google Earth April 19, 2024 satellite imagery of Harrison Road between Sheep Pond Road and Deagle Lane; sand and debris can be seen covering parts of the road.

The New Zealand Road area contains farmland, wetlands, and residential properties. Its road has many curves, no paved shoulders, and has steep slopes on one side of the road. The All Weather Highway area is a busy throughway for vehicles travelling to and from Souris. Its roadway features paved shoulders currently. The Lower Rollo Bay Road area features some commercial and community buildings, residential areas, wetland areas, and farmland. The area includes Leslie Pond Bridge which was recently widened to allow a shoulder for walkers and cyclers and the road extends from Souris West to Rollo Bay. The part of Souris West that is most densely populated is the Deagle Lane area branching off of Lower Rollo Bay Road. It was originally a cottage area but has a large percentage of year-round residents today. The area has direct beach access, and residents have faced increasingly common challenges when it comes to flooding and roads being covered by sand and debris. Many of the roads in the subdivision are privately owned dirt roads so those travelling in the area can face additional challenges due to weather conditions impacting the drivability of the roads.

Key Locations and Existing Infrastructure

Souris West's existing active transportation infrastructure consists of paved shoulders along the highway running through the community and a paved shoulder on Leslie Pond Bridge. According to information shared by community members, residents in the area value active living, and visitors to the area enjoy walking from Lower Rollo Bay Road to Sheep Pond Beach.

The following map shows key locations in the community with areas highlighted in yellow to show the most populated areas of Souris West and other markers showing the placement of key attractions, businesses, and services.



Key businesses in the community include Seaside Bakery, Over the Top Outdoor Restaurant and Dairy Bar, Fiddling Fisherman Lookout, Souris Sauces, Grama K's, and Colville Bay Oyster Company. Accommodation providers in the area include Lighthouse & Beach Motel and some privately-owned vacation rentals. For other services, the Families East Resource Centre in Souris West operates programming and events for families with young children. Children in the area may attend either Souris Regional School in Souris or École La-Belle-Cloche in Rollo Bay. Health services are located in Souris, and besides the Families East Resource Centre, government services are also located in Souris.

Souris West is often travelled through by ferry passengers for services to and from the Magdalene Islands and Souris. In the summer, ferries operate two-to-four trips per day with arrivals/departures in Souris at 1 PM and 1 AM, depending on the day. The rest of the year, ferries operate two trips a day with arrival/departure in Souris at 1 PM.[12]

Sheep Pond Beach currently has a single public access point at the end of Sheep Pond Road. The shoulders of Sheep Pond Road are used for parking. The Rural Municipality of Souris West provides seasonal amenities in a designated area at the end of Sheep Pond Road. This includes a port-a-potty and enclosure, a 3-tier garbage system with weekly pick-up, deck, bench and bike rack for visitors and locals. Amenities are available seasonally from the July 1st holiday to the September Labour Day weekend. It is a beach spotlighted by the Points East Coastal Drive's 50 Beaches list.

[12] Traversier CTMA. (n.d.). *Plan Your Trip*. https://www.traversierctma.ca/en/plan-your-trip/schedule

Connection to Town of Souris

The Souris West community is closely tied to the Town of Souris. The Souris West Municipal Council conduct their Council sessions and complete their administrative duties in a Souris location. Essential services and grocery stores are located in Souris as are places of worship and community centers. Souris West is directly connected to Souris by the Souris Causeway. Key informants and public input reported that Souris West community members want active transportation paths to connect to Souris.

Current Active Transportation Behaviours

Key informants emphasized that it is common to see community members and visitors out walking, running, or cycling, and while there are some people who walk or cycle to work from or within Souris West, most commute using vehicles. This point is confirmed by Souris West's 2021 census data where the majority of employed residents who commute reported they use a car, truck, or van to travel.

Key informants shared that visitors looking to access Sheep Pond Beach often park on a lot at the corner of All Weather Highway and Lower Rollo Bay Road in Souris West and walk down to the beach, or they park on Lower Rollo Bay Road near Deagle Lane and walk through the subdivision to access the beach.

Figure 11. Souris Causeway leaving Souris West heading towards Souris (Google Maps - November 2024).

Current Active Transportation Concerns

Safety is key for active transportation, and perception of safety has a large influence on active transportation activities. Key informants and public feedback revealed that due to speeding traffic in the area, many individuals do not feel safe walking, running, or cycling on the side of the road in Souris West. Key informants shared that while the PEI Department of Transportation has said the Souris Causeway's shoulders are wide enough for safe pedestrian or cycling traffic on the bridge, Souris West residents feel that due to high-speed traffic there is not enough room to cross on foot or by bike safely. On secondary roads in the community, the high speeds and lack of paved shoulders cause residents to feel unsafe participating in active transportation activities too.

Throughout engagements with community, we heard that Souris West residents desire accessible infrastructure for active transportation. At a minimum, they would like maintained paved shoulders that can provide a level surface for walking. Engagement participants for this project shared that Souris West residents have to be incredibly vigilant to move off the road when traffic comes and that families do not feel safe letting their children ride their bikes on the road with the current infrastructure and traffic behaviours.

Public Feedback

To learn about the values and perspectives of community members, MRSB engaged the public through a survey, public meeting, and interviews with key informants. A *What We Heard Report* detailing the engagements and findings is attached to this report as Appendix A.

Key Themes from Key Informant Interviews

Key informants shared that the primary use of these paths would be for recreation and physical activity. These interviews uncovered that walking and running are popular activities among community members and that, anecdotally, they are more popular than cycling. While the primary method of transportation for residents is using motorized vehicles, an interviewee shared that at least one community member bikes between Souris and Souris West to travel to and from work.

The key informants felt that having dedicated paths would make active transportation feel and be safer for community members. Active transportation is heavily impacted by the close proximity of speeding traffic. Even if a shoulder is deemed wide enough to comply with regulations, it may not feel safe, impacting residents' ability, or willingness to use that space. The community has experienced active transportation tragedy in the past caused by dangerous driving, making this matter crucially important to address.

Active transportation paths provide significant benefits to the community, allowing residents to enjoy nature and appreciate the land, which should be taken into consideration when designing the route. The path can help residents and visitors visit key spots within the community and connect them with local businesses. Throughout the interviews, it was noted that the community receives a diverse range of visitors, ranging from those spending multiple days in the area, and others who are just passing through.

Key informants highlighted the importance of installing supporting infrastructure including lighting, rest areas, and signage. This infrastructure will increase the path's use, such as lights allowing morning and evening use, especially when the days are shorter. Signage will allow those unfamiliar with the area to better navigate and learn about the community. Rest areas will help users better appreciate their surroundings, provide a place to take a break from activity, and foster feelings of community connection.

As part of the interviews, the consultants spoke to representatives from the Town of Souris for their feedback and advice based on their work establishing active transportation pathways. The Town of Souris shared that environmental constraints and costs will be limiting factors for the scope of this project. Environmental concerns may prevent the path from being permitted to expand to certain areas and may make construction more difficult when building. The environment can also drastically affect the cost to build, with the Town of Souris noting how expensive it was to build over water.

Finally, interviewees expressed their desire to connect the active transportation systems of Souris and Souris West. While this would be a valuable feature, based upon the Town of Souris' experience and a discussion with the Department of Environment, this direct connection is unfeasible due to the environmentally sensitive water area dividing the two communities.

Findings from the Public Survey

To collect feedback from a greater number of community members, MRSB administered a public survey, which gained a total of 76 responses. The survey found that community members are most commonly seeking to use this path for exercise and recreation, to access key attractions or businesses, and to socialize. Respondents reported

that having paved shoulders, dedicated paths separate from the road, and, to a lesser extent, having a community walking club, would all make them more likely to participate in active transportation. Survey respondents also reported that the proximity of the path to their house and the path being connected to Souris were two other determinants of their likelihood of using it.

Respondents most frequently listed lighting, rest areas or seating, and bike racks as being important components to include. When asked about concerns, the most frequently recorded response was high speeds in the area, followed by dog-related issues.

Overall, survey respondents were supportive of the project, with comments including: "I think this is a great initiative, and anything you are able to implement will be of benefit. Limited mobility is a problem for me, but paved shoulders would make a big difference."

Public Meeting

Souris West hosted a public meeting, led by MRSB, which had approximately ten attendees, including Alex MacBain, a Senior Consultant with MRSB, Douglas Coles from Coles Associates, and Souris West CAO Sonya Martin and Mayor Pat O'Connor. Questions raised during the public meeting primarily centered around the practical aspects of the project, including whether the path would be on public or private land, if ditch filling would be required, where users would park, and what the maintenance burden would be for the path. Concerns were also raised regarding how trail users would access businesses, as the path would be on the opposite side of the road from some businesses.

Government Regulation and Strategies

In the development of this Active Transportation Plan, numerous laws, regulations, and government strategies were consulted for incorporation into decision making. The following legislation and reporting have been included in decision-making for the recommendations for Souris West's Active Transportation Network:

The PEI *Environmental Protections Act*, the *Wetlands Conservation Policy*, and the *Planning Act* place limits on what development can occur on ecologically sensitive areas. The *Wetlands Conservation Policy* places a permit fee for approved development on wetlands or in buffer zones.[13] Environmental considerations have a major impact on what can be built in Souris West for active transportation infrastructure, so the Department of Environment was consulted in the development of this plan.

The *Trails Act* provides legislation for active transportation pathways and legally recognizes "the contributions the Confederation Trail and other trails make to the health and well-being and quality of life of the citizens of the province."[14] The *Trails Act* gives the authority to government, through the Lieutenant Governor by recommendation of the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, to designate Crown land for trails, and the legislation's general regulations outline the legal requirements for use of the trails by the public including requiring helmets for cyclists and prohibiting motorized vehicle use beyond use of a motorized mobility aid, a power-assisted bicycle/scooter, or an emergency vehicle.

[13] *Wetlands Conservation Policy*. (Modified 2016). https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/publication/wetlands-conservation-policy
[14] *Trails Act* 2.0.1.f. (2022). https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/legislation/t-04-1-trails_act.pdf

The *Roads Act* and the *Highway Traffic Act* outline the legal obligations for road size, public right of way, and legal requirements for certain behaviours and uses of Island roads. The requirements of these laws were considered in development of this plan.

The Government of PEI's *Sustainable Transportation Plan* and *Active Transportation Strategy* identifies the government's priorities for active transportation on Prince Edwards. The *Sustainable Transportation Plan,* published in 2019, recognized the important role of active transportation in making transportation on PEI more sustainable and environmentally friendly. It led to the development of the *Active Transportation Strategy*. In 2021, the PEI government published its *Active Transportation Strategy*. It set the following priorities relevant to Souris West:

- Establish a provincial AT network that incorporates community active transportation plans and publish a map showing current and proposed AT routes.
- Develop and administer a Provincial Active Transportation Fund.
- Create a shoulder width policy for public roads specific to roads' original designs, traffic levels, and speed limits.[15]

Some of these priorities have already been achieved or are in the process of being achieved by the Government of Prince Edward Island. For instance, the PEI Active Transportation Fund was accessed by Souris West to fund this active transportation planning process.

3. Souris West Active Transportation Network

Plan Objective

This Souris West Active Transportation Plan is a significant first step in developing AT infrastructure for the enjoyment and use of residents and visitors of the Souris West community. The objective of this plan was to determine a feasible route for an AT network based upon community input, government regulations, and preliminary engineering evaluations. Community feedback for establishing AT paths in the municipality placed high value on safety, connectivity, and recreational use of the infrastructure year-round, and so the route selection and AT path type design were chosen in an attempt to best meet community needs and preferences while also ensuring the practicalities of cost and environmental limitations were incorporated.

Route and Path Type Selection

After discussions with representatives of the municipality and from community feedback, the following routes were suggested for consideration:

- Option 1: Lower Rollo Bay Road to Sheep Pond Road
- Option 2: New Zealand Road
- Option 3: Lower Rollo Bay Road to Deagle Lane to Lobster Road
- Option 4: Coastal Route

[15] *Active Transportation Strategy*. (2021). https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/publications/active_transportation_strategy.pdf

These routes prioritized, at varying levels, scenic views, access from residential areas, access to key attractions like businesses and the beach, and access to the highway leading to Souris. A site visit to Souris determined next steps for route selection with consultants considering the land available, environmental concerns, and the expense of developing certain areas.

Recommended Route for Phase One

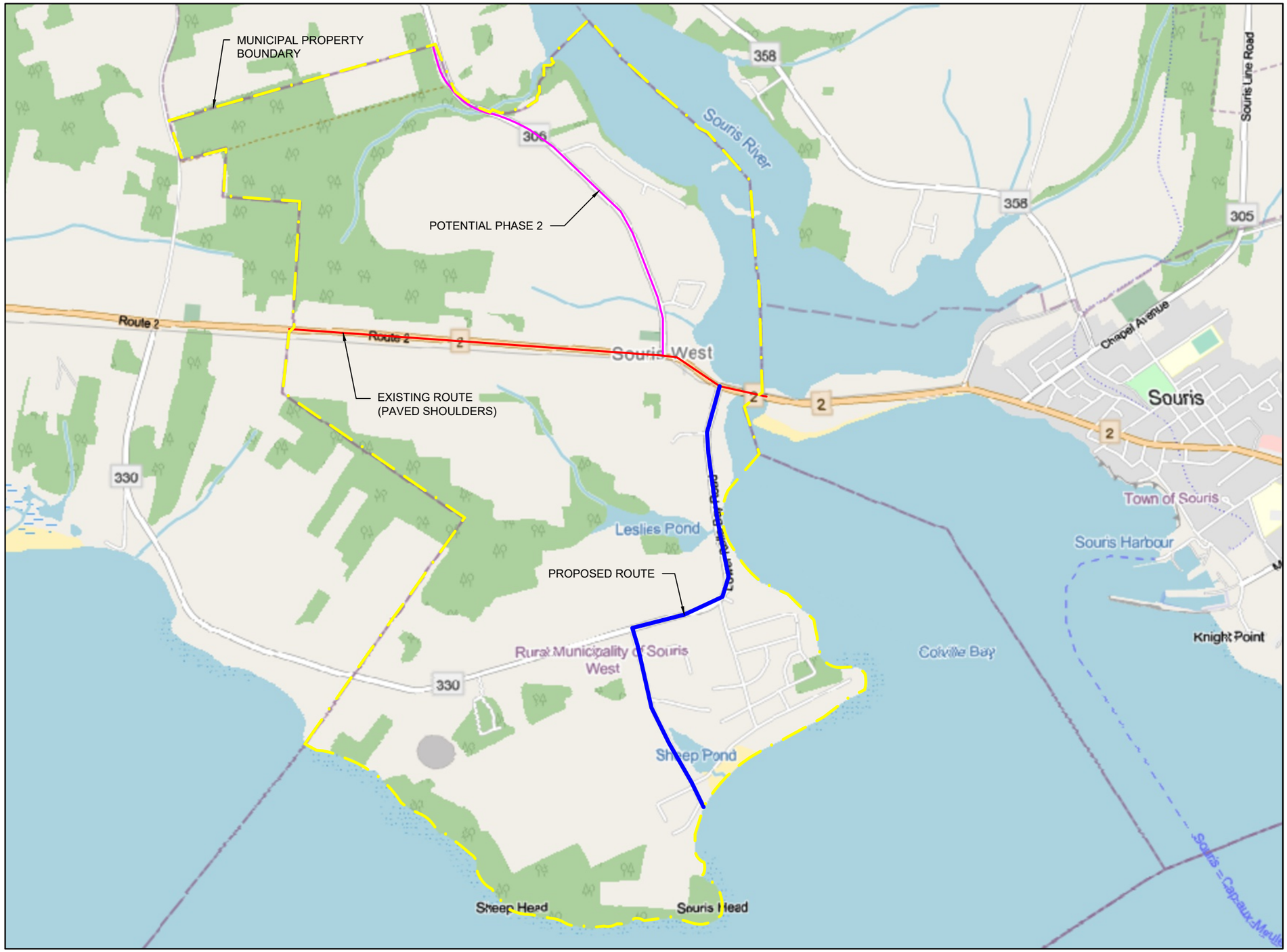
As a result of the research and evaluations completed for planning, consultants determined that option one is the most suitable and beneficial route for the community to pursue. The route of Lower Rollo Bay Road to Sheep Pond Road was selected based on a comprehensive visual evaluation of network connectivity, environmental compatibility, safety, and constructability. This corridor is already a well-defined public roadway with an established right-of-way, minimizing the need for land acquisition or legal adjustments. The roadway's proximity to residential areas, community destinations, and existing travel patterns makes it a natural candidate for integrating a trail. The road's relatively gentle curves and grades support safe trail alignment, while minimizing impact on natural ecosystems, as it avoids any sensitive coastal and forested zones. While it does present some challenges with environmentally sensitive areas, the preliminary discussions with the PEI Department of Environment confirm the route selection should not present immense challenges when moving to a construction phase if land is not encroached on too much.

This means limitations for the path type exist. Based on the work completed for the route selection, widened paved shoulders were concluded to be the best option for path type. While a separate multi-use path is preferrable and was the top choice of community, the cost is unfortunately too prohibitive. Currently, not enough space exists for this type of path along the full route, and it would, therefore, be incredibly expensive to alter the land to accommodate the base required for a separate pathway. Wetlands exist on the route, and altering these areas to allow for a multi-use path would accumulate costly permitting fees and would risk permits being refused completely.

In terms of accessibility and implementation, option one of the Lower Rollo Bay Road provides consistent elevation and direct connection to the Town of Souris, a major objective of the Active Transportation Map. This alignment is expected to serve the largest user base immediately upon implementation. Furthermore, the route is aligned with the existing municipality's transportation planning goals and will require less intensive new construction compared to alternative routes, increasing the potential for a successful and timely rollout.

In addition to the proposed new route, the existing paved shoulder on the highway running through Souris West should be maintained as part of the Souris West Active Transportation Network. Consultants recognize, however, that high traffic volumes and speeds make the highway's paved shoulder seem unsafe and inadequate for many residents. The proposed new route for active transportation is likely to feel safer for residents due to it being on a secondary road with lower volumes of traffic. High speeds are still a concern, however, and speed deterrents should be considered for the area.

The following map shows the proposed Souris West Active Transportation Network with the existing route, recommended route, and potential phase two route option. The recommended new route consists of a 2.0 metre widened shoulder on one side of the roads it traverses.



LEGEND

	MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY LINE
	EXISTING ROUTE
	PROPOSED ROUTE
	POTENTIAL PHASE 2 ROUTE

Considerations for Future Phases

The alternative options hold different opportunities and challenges for future phases for the Active Transportation Network. The three alternate routes have more complications and barriers to their development than the proposed route above. For instance, option two (New Zealand Road) is characterized by hilly terrain, inconsistent shoulders, and moderate traffic speeds, all of which contribute to lower user safety and increased construction costs. While scenic, option three (Deagle Lane to Lobster Road) involves crossing several side roads and a variable right-of-way that would need negotiation with private landowners. This adds complexity to design, permitting, and construction. Option four (Coastal Route) offers high aesthetic value but traverses environmentally sensitive coastal dune systems and low-lying shoreline, introducing long-term risks related to erosion, flooding, and habitat disruption. It also requires a high level of safety measures to overcome access/egress and traversing the route around the point presenting further challenges to the adoption of this option.

Of the three alternatives, option two (New Zealand Road) is the most suitable for future development. It presents a viable rural corridor with some existing transportation infrastructure and moderate topography. With a significant investment in shoulder widening, vegetation trimming, and signage, this option could become a valuable secondary connection for east-west travel and local access. Its development would also distribute trail usage across the network and reduce pressure on the Lower Rollo Bay alignment, supporting long-term accessibility and resilience planning.

Infrastructure Development

Cost Estimates for Proposed Route

Coles Associates Ltd. compiled a Class C cost estimate for the proposed AT path in Souris West from the All Weather Highway (Route 2) on Lower Rollo Bay Road (Route 330) and onto Sheep Pond Road ending at the entrance to Sheep Pond Beach. The cost estimate includes pricing for a new viewing platform at the end of Sheep Pond Road and overlooking the scenic Sheep Pond Beach. The total estimated cost for the project excluding tax is $899,828.00. The itemized estimate and summary of assumptions and components is available as an appendix to this report.

Types of Complementary Active Transportation Infrastructure

The inclusion of complementary AT infrastructure was important to both the municipality and community members who provided input for the development of this plan. Components advocated for included:

Rest areas for accessibility and times of reflection: Having benches or even a picnic table at certain points along the route would encourage people who cannot walk long distances without breaks to still use the pathways. Rest areas in particularly scenic areas along the route could allow people to enjoy the area's quiet nature and encourage moments of reflection to further support resident well-being. Opportunities for rest areas may be limited by the availability of public land along the route, but this component is worthy of further consideration when entering the construction phase.

Signage along the route providing distance markers, information about the area, and information about the value of active living: Distance markers are helpful inclusions for residents and visitors alike who want to track how far they have traversed; informational signage about the area adds value to the network particularly for tourists in the area navigating the community and interested in learning more about the area's history and ecology.

Lighting: Lighting along the route would allow for year-round use of the infrastructure. This is especially important for times of year like late fall, winter, and early spring when daylight hours are limited.

Bike racks: Bike racks at destinations are valuable inclusions to promote cycling throughout the area.

Public washrooms: Community members identified the need for public washroom access to encourage use of the active transportation pathway. Currently, the municipality has a port-a-potty set up at the entrance of Sheep Pond Beach during the summer months.

Garbage Cans: Garbage cans for disposing of garbage, particularly dog excrement, are recommended to keep the area clean and discourage littering.

Speeding Deterrents: Community members reported that speeding traffic on community roads is a major deterrent to many community members interested in active transportation activities. Investing in speed bumps, speed radar feedback signs, or signs warning drivers to slow for pedestrians and cyclists in the area could be valuable additions to Souris West's roadways and make active transportation activities feel safer.

Implementation Recommendations

Funding

Various funding opportunities may allow the municipality to work with the provincial and federal governments to establish active transportation paths in the community.

The Government of Canada's Active Transportation Fund, while currently closed may reopen for future intakes, and it provides up to $50 million per project with a maximum contribution rate of 60-100% depending on recipient and location.[16]

The Canada Community Building Fund provides funding for recreation projects that may allow for support of active transportation related initiatives for Souris West such as installation of rest areas and bike racks.[17]

The PEI Active Transportation Fund, that the municipality accessed for this Plan, may an opportunity for funding for the construction of the active transportation network as well.[18] Applicable funding opportunities can be better determined when the project enters its construction phase.

Promoting Active Transportation

Residents & Seasonal Residents

Use of the active transportation infrastructure in Souris West can be promoted through a number of ways. Community member input suggested interest in a community walking or cycling group for socialization and

[16] Government of Canada. (2025, April 7). *Active Transportation Fund*. https://housing-infrastructure.canada.ca/trans/index-eng.html
[17] Government of Prince Edward Island. (2025, January 24). *Canada Community Building Fun (CCBF)*. https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/transportation-and-infrastructure/canada-community-building-fund-ccbf
[18] Government of Prince Edward Island. (2024, November 20). *Apply to the Active Transportation Fund*. https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/service/apply-to-the-active-transportation-fund

encouragement of active living. This could be a simple way of encouraging community and use of the active transportation network in Souris West.

The community could also partner with non-profit organizations related to active living or environmental protection to promote use of the active transportation network. For instance, the Eastern Region Sport and Recreation Council may be a group to partner with to promote active living in the community; and Souris West already has a partnership with the Souris and Area Branch of the PEI Wildlife Federation that could potentially be leveraged to promote the use of the pathways for environmentally friendly travel in the community.

Visitors

Figure 12. Cycling tour stop at Lighthouse and Beach Motel in Souris West (Photo Courtesy of Great Canadian Trails).

Active transportation infrastructure can draw visitors to the area which can help support local businesses. There has been increasing interest in recent years for cycling and walking trips and experiences on PEI. Tourism PEI currently provides some itineraries for self-guided bike tours of PEI. Souris West is not included in any of the itineraries, but with the establishment of active transportation infrastructure, the scenic nature of the community, and its connection to Souris, it could become a desired location for individuals looking to cycle through the Eastern Kings region. Working with PEI and Kings Country tourism promoters to spread awareness of Souris West being a safe and beautiful place to walk, cycle, or participate in other forms of active transportation, could bring more visitors to the area.

Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy

RMSW may implement periodic surveys to track the effectiveness of active transportation over time. Tracking community use and feedback through a survey can help the municipality understand who is using the paths, what needs community members have for active transportation, and how the infrastructure can be improved. The surveys should be published on a regular schedule of every three to five years to ensure that active transportation needs are being met effectively and to understand where improvements can be made.

Conclusion

Investing in active transportation infrastructure in Souris West holds immense potential to benefit the community. Providing safer and more accessible infrastructure in the community for residents and visitors to use for active living will support residents in partaking in healthy habits, feeling more connected, and enjoying the beauty of the area. The environmental benefits of enabling and promoting more active transportation through the built environment are also incredibly valuable. This infrastructure has the potential to encourage more residents to choose the far more sustainable travelling option of active transportation over vehicle use. Further, as the nearby Town of Souris has also been investing more in active transportation, Souris West's infrastructure will complement the regional efforts for promoting active living and carless transportation that can be used to the benefit of PEI's Eastern Kings region.

Appendix A. What We Heard Report

Rural Municipality of Souris West
Active Transportation Plan

Feedback Review Report

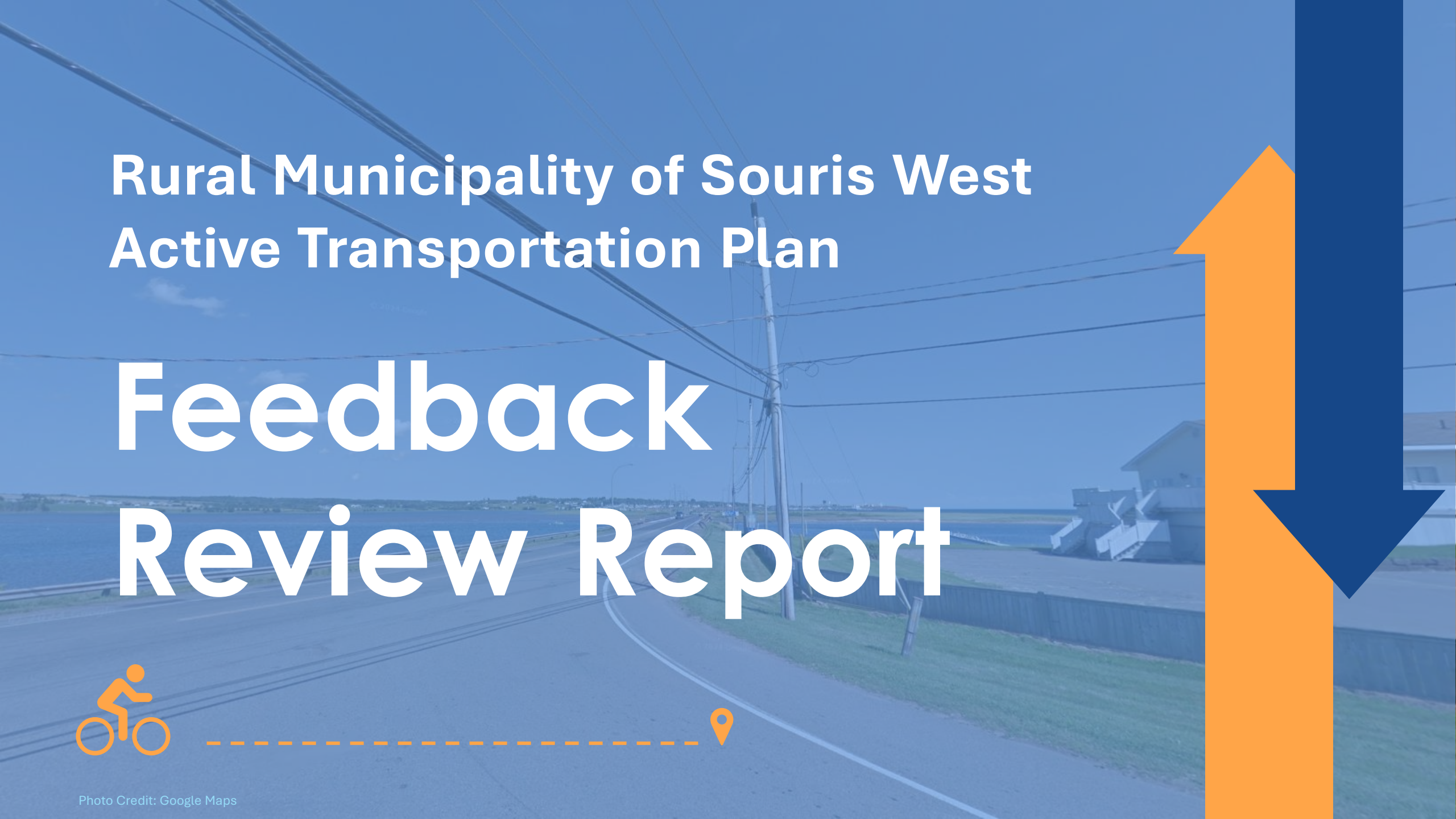


Photo Credit: Google Maps

Contents

Overview of Project

Purpose of the Plan:

- Crafting an Active Transportation Plan is a **key first step** in developing active transportation infrastructure.
- The Plan allows the community to **determine priority routes** through community input and engineering expertise.
- The goal of the Plan is to **identify the needs of the community** for active transportation and to recommend the components and phases for active transportation infrastructure to meet those needs.
- The Plan becomes a **roadmap for implementing active transportation development** in the community.

Engagement Summary

MRSB completed the following engagements to enhance the development of the Souris West Active Transportation Plan:

- Project Steering Committee Meetings
- Key Informant Interviews
- Site Visit
- Public Survey
- Public Meeting

What We Heard: Key Informant Interviews

- **Key themes participants communicated:**

Active living is valued in the area, and the primary use of the paths would be recreational.	All three community-based interviews shared that there are a lot of recreational walkers and runners in the Souris West/Souris area. Anecdotally, cycling is currently less popular than walking or running, but still an activity occurring in the area. The interviews included a report of at least one person cycling between Souris and Souris West to travel to their place of employment from their home.
Dedicated paths would make active transportation feel safer and be safer.	Traffic and speeding in the area mean that individuals walking on the roadside need to be hyper-vigilant. The community has experienced active transportation tragedy in the past due to dangerous traffic which makes their safety concerns extra heartfelt. Some areas of the road do not have sufficient shoulder space or have blind turns, and others, even if they have government-determined sufficient shoulder space, do not *feel* safe to residents as they feel too close to speeding traffic.

Key themes participants communicated: (cont.)

Paths can help residents and visitors enjoy nature and appreciate the land.	One interview emphasized the value of active transportation paths to allow residents and visitors to find moments of reflection and enjoyment in nature. It was suggested that route design take this into account.
Paths can help visitors access key spots in the community.	One interview emphasized how visitors are likely to use paths that connect them to businesses in the community like Fiddling Fisherman Lookout.
Visitor profile	Visitors to Souris West tend to be a mix of individuals coming for long-term stays to enjoy the area, for three-night minimum stays for beach or fishing trips, or for one-night stays for people travelling to the Magdalen Islands. Visitors participating in the Island Walk are also becoming more common in the area in recent years.
Complementary infrastructure like lighting, rest areas, and signage are important components to include in plans.	The interviews all mentioned the importance of complementary infrastructure to the active transportation route. Souris uses solar lights to keep the boardwalk lit at night. Having lighting on the paths in Souris West was mentioned as a priority specifically for the times of years where the sun sets early. Signage for wayfaring and potentially for information sharing about the community/environment was also mentioned. One interview emphasized the value of rest areas for moments of reflection/rest and the importance of making the network as accessible as possible.

Key themes participants communicated: (cont.)

Cost and environmental factors have huge impact on what can actually be built.	The Town of Souris emphasized the impact of cost and environmental considerations on what is possible to build. They also shared their difficulty in getting permits for the Boardwalk projects because of environmental concerns. The Department of Environment would not let them build their boardwalk farther than where it currently is, and they shared that it was very expensive to build over water. The Department of Environment mandated what kinds of poles could be used and a limited 1-foot buffer area for the construction company building the boardwalk.
Connection to Souris is desired by community members and visitors, but due to sensitive area, between Souris West and Souris Boardwalk, it is not an option to build a new path.	Both Souris and Souris West have a desire to connect active transportation networks, and as one key informant mentioned, “Borders shouldn’t exist as active transportation exists.” Connectivity between Souris and Souris West for residents looking to commute or for tourists looking to visit both areas is valuable.

What We Learned: Site Visit

Our considerations for the visit:

- Active transportation paths should **lead to a destination.**
- Multi-use separate paths need approximately **15 ft. wide** stretches of land for construction.
- Crown land (public land) is typically between the road and the utility pole.
- We traveled along the highway, Lower Rollo Bay Road, Sheep Pond Road, Deagle Lane, Harrison Road, and New Zealand Road. We also viewed the publicly-used beach access points at the end of Sheep Pond Road and off Harrison Road.

What We Learned: Site Visit

What we heard from RMSW Councillor Lane Mingo:

- People park at the old garage lot across from the Fiddling Fisherman Lookout and walk down to the beach, or they park at the start of the Deagle subdivision.
- Area of contention is by the post boxes near the Families East Resource Centre on Lower Rollo Bay Road. It is a blind, narrow turn.
- Coastal protection is required. Lower Rollo Bay Rd from the highway to Leslie's Pond used to be protected by concrete, but this needs to be addressed for continued protection.
- Shipbuilding history: Culvert on Harrison Road is where they used to build schooners. No water flow now.
- Popularity of fishing in the area (accessed via New Zealand Road area)
- Private roads versus public roads in the Sheep Pond Beach area: Deagle Lane is private and the community has approached government about this area because there are real safety concerns when the roads are inaccessible.
- Public access to the beach still requires better infrastructure, but community has installed a garbage can and port-a-potty.
- The economic development potential of this project for businesses and tourism are worthy of consideration.

What We Learned: Site Visit

What we saw and determined with Coles Associated Ltd:

- The right sides of Lower Rollo Bay Road/Sheep Pond Road (when turning left onto the road from the highway from Souris) is the best option for cost effectiveness and environmental considerations.
    - There is adequate space for a widened paved shoulder and in some places there is adequate space for a separate pathway.
    - There are fewer driveways on that side of the road and its further from water than the left side.
    - It has clear destinations: Sheep Pond Beach and the main area for Souris West businesses.
    - It has proximity to some key community locations, to the densest residential area in the community, and it features scenic views.
    - This route would see development occurring on crown land not private property.
- New Zealand Road features wetlands on one side that make it an environmental no-go, and it has steep slopes and treed areas on the other side that would need to be cleared and filled in to construct widened shoulders or separate paths. This undertaking would be incredibly expensive.

What We Learned: Site Visit

What we saw and determined with Coles Associated Ltd:

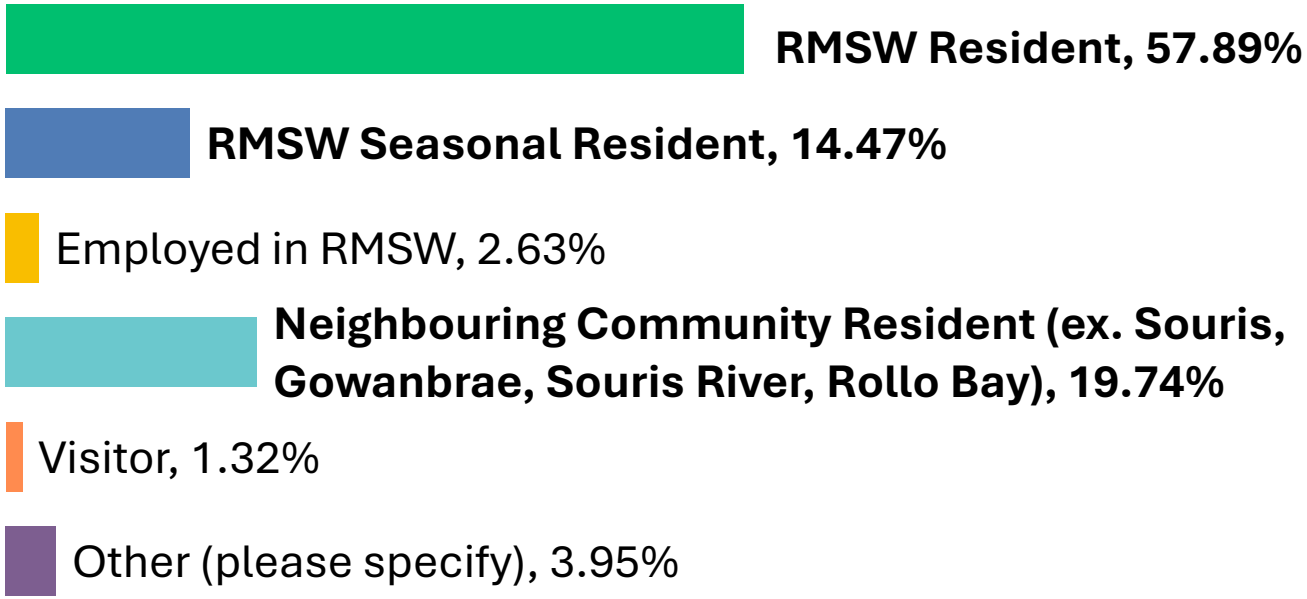
- The Deagle Lane subdivision, where the community has an unofficial parking lot for Sheep Pond Beach, is composed of private roads which would lead to extra complications for building active transportation paths. The private roads are also dirt roads that require raising and are too narrow for building additional pathways.
- Dunes on Harrison Road cannot be built over, and they cause sand and debris to cover the existing road.
- Connecting to the Town of Souris Boardwalk would be incredibly costly and is unlikely to get the Department of Environment's approval.
    - *(Note: This matches what the Town of Souris shared with us when they said that the Department of Environment would let them build no further than where the boardwalk is now. Considerations about this will be explored in the Department of Environment interview.)*

What We Heard: Survey Results

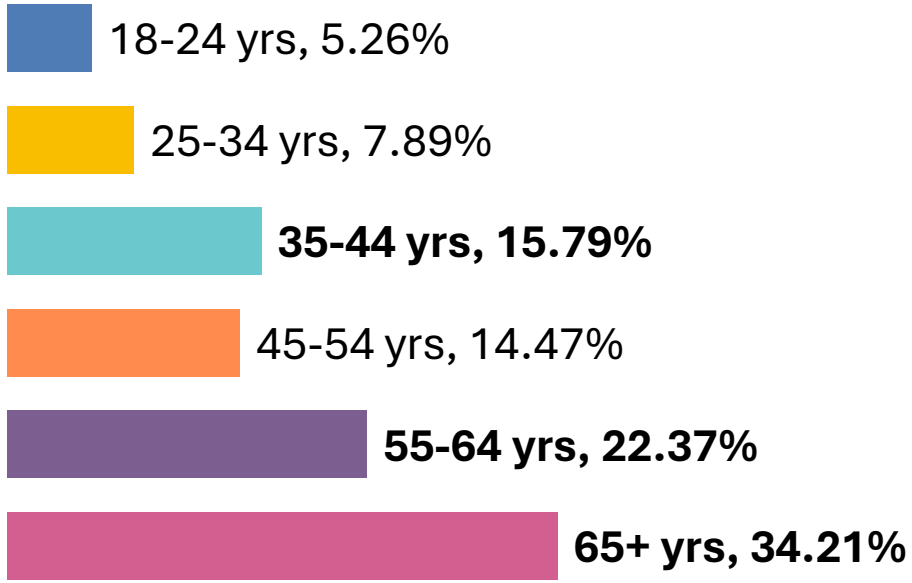
- **76 responses during intake period**
- **Overall, respondents communicated their value of:**
  - **Increased safety** by having paved shoulders or paths separate from the road (separate paths are preferred)
  - **Enjoyment of nature**
  - **Connectivity to Souris**
  - **Activity/exercise** for themselves and for children
  - **Lighting** for paths
  - **Complementary active transportation infrastructure** such as bike racks and rest areas

What We Heard: Profile of Respondents

Respondent's Relationship to Souris West:
(Top Three Bolded)



Respondent's Age Group:
(Top Three Bolded)



What We Heard: Current Activity

Activity completed in Souris West	Total % of Respondents (all levels of activity frequency*)	Top Users (Several Times a Week)
Walk/run/use a mobility aid	**80%**	**28%**
Cycle	**45%**	**3%**
Use other form of self-propelled transportation (rollerblades, skateboards, scooters, etc.)	**14%**	**0%**

**Frequency levels included several times a week, several times a month, sometimes, seasonally*

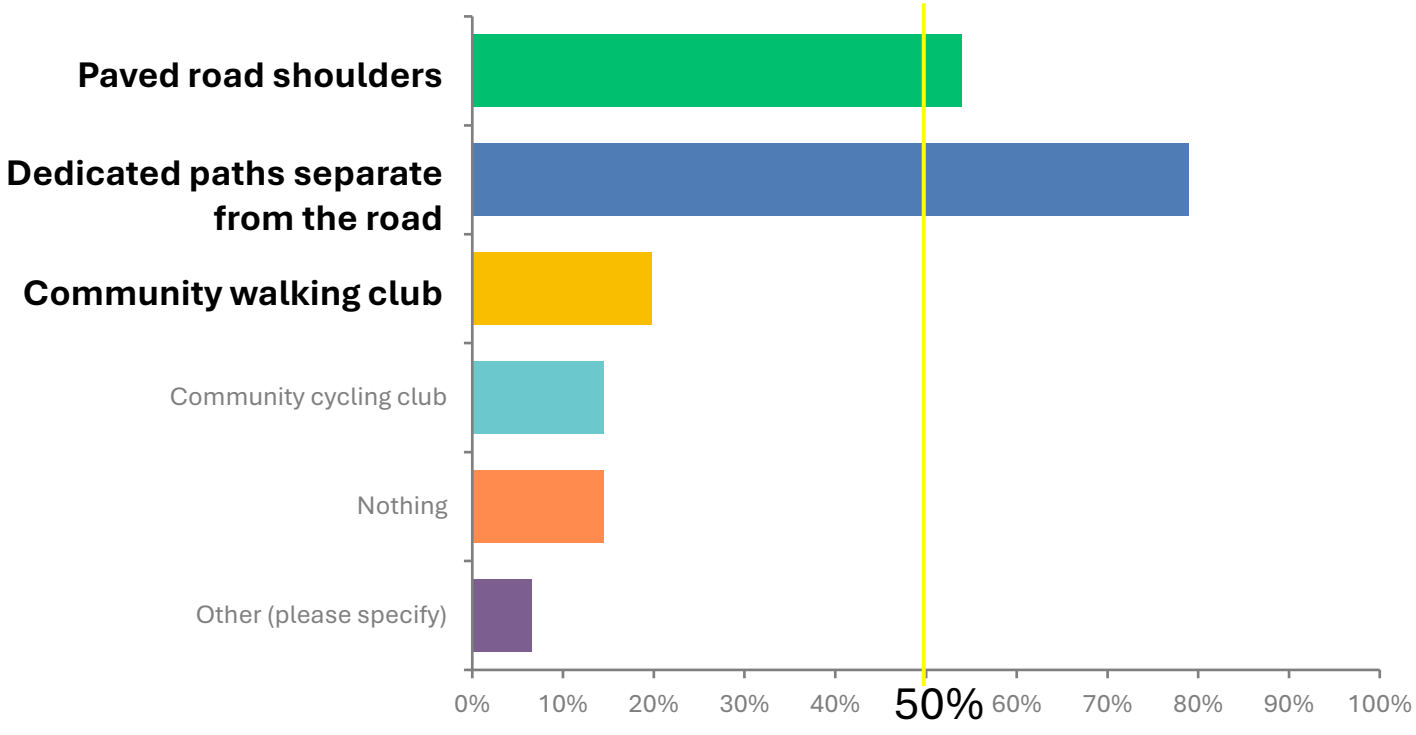
What We Heard: Anticipated Use

Activity *(Top Three Answers Bolded)*	**Total (all levels of frequency)**	**Top Users (Several Times a Week)**
Exercise/recreation	**94%***	**36%***
Commuting to work/school	**28%**	**6%**
Going to local businesses	**74%**	**15%**
Accessing key attractions (ex. Sheep Pond Beach, Souris Beach)	**89%***	**18%**
Socializing (ex. spending time with friends, travelling to friends' houses or social events)	**82%***	**12%**
Travelling for work reasons or for civic engagement activities (ex. running work errands, going to Council meetings, volunteering)	**46%**	**8%**

Percentages higher than highest reported current activity for walking/running/using a mobility aid)

What We Heard: Anticipated Use

What, if anything, would cause you to participate in [active transportation] more in Souris West?
Respondents could select multiple options.
(Top Three Answers Bolded)

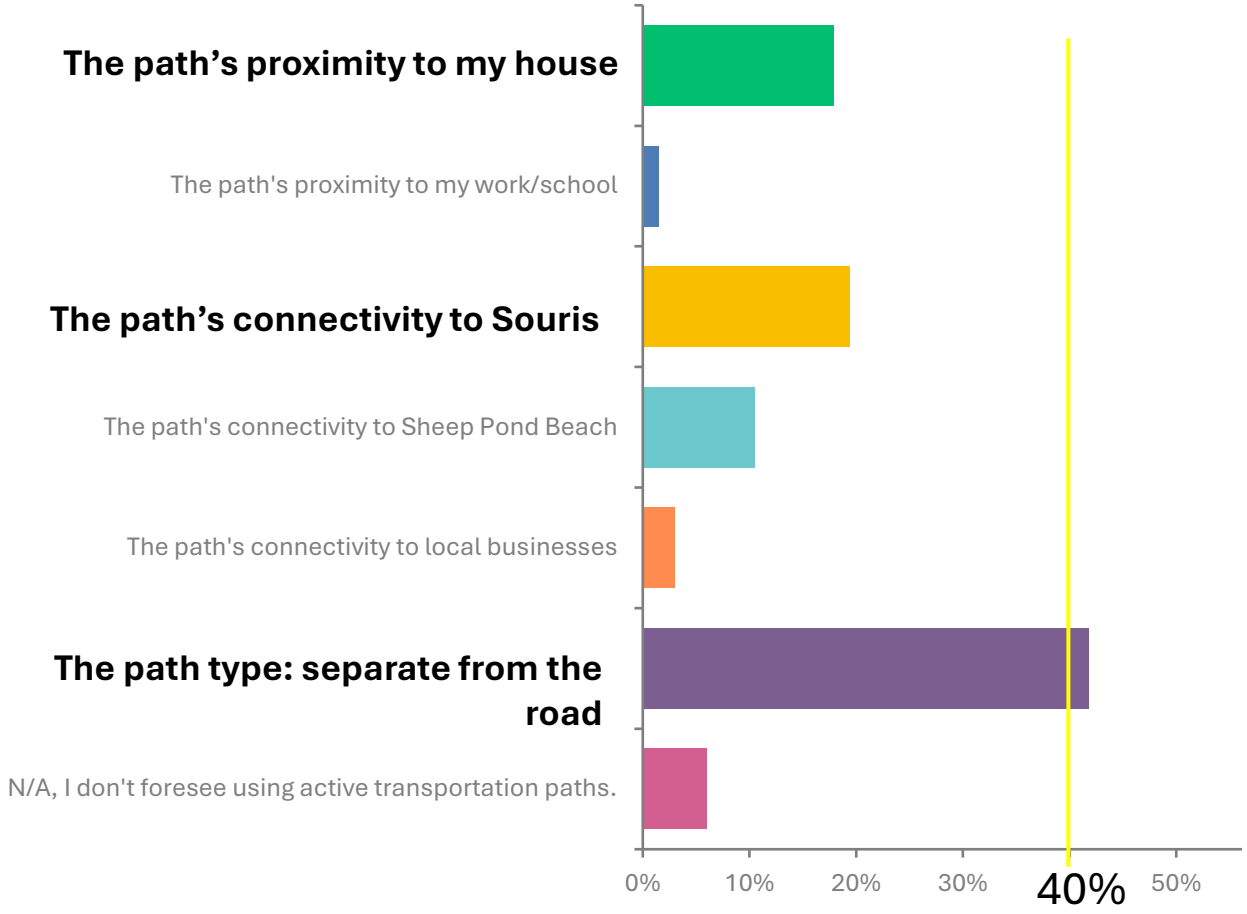


Respondent placed high value on:
Respondents could select multiple options.
(Top Five Answers Listed Below)

1. Enjoyment of nature/beach access (81%)
2. Connecting to Souris (63%)
3. My physical activity/exercise (48%)
4. Drawing tourists to the area (46%)
5. Children's activity/exercise (45%)

What We Heard: Anticipated Use

What would your use depend on most? *(Top Three Answers Bolded)*

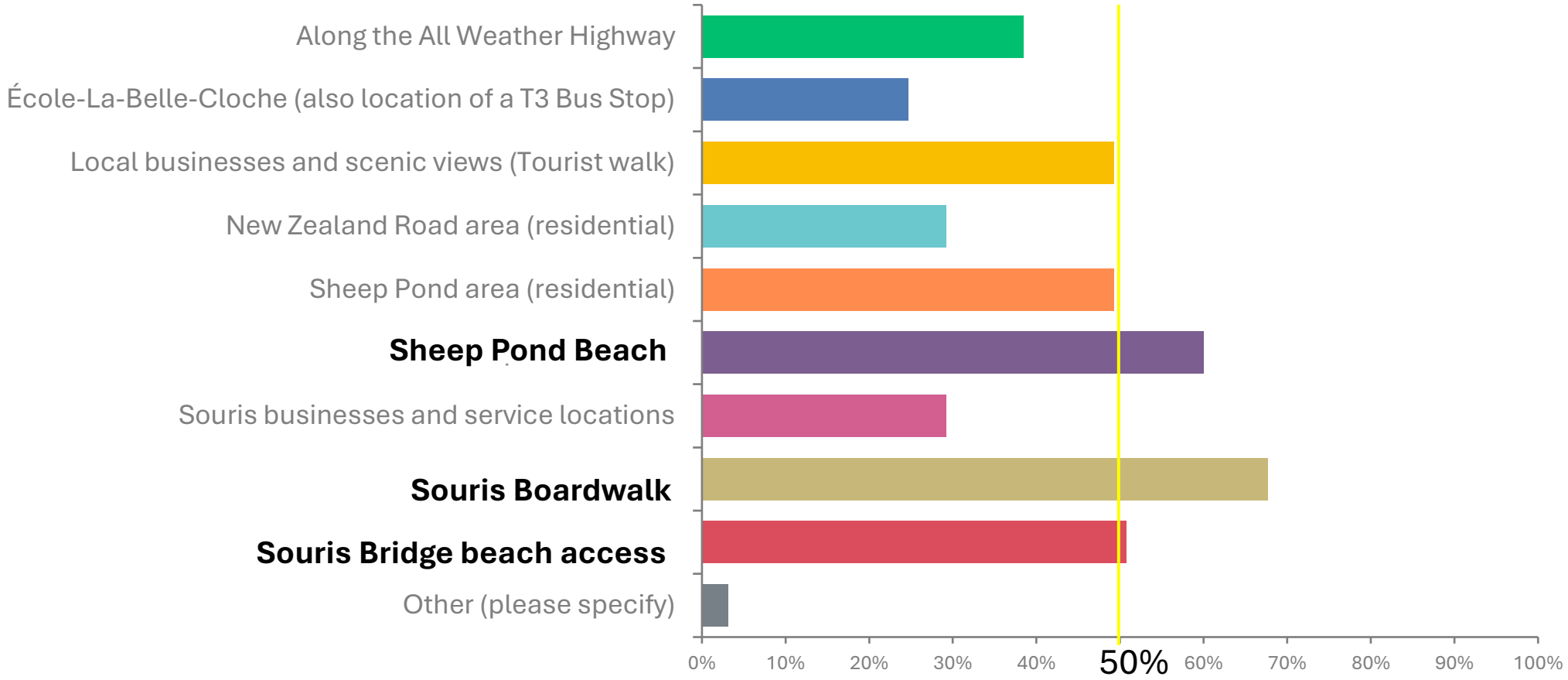


> If you build it, they will come.
>
> Survey Respondent

> Dedicated paths would make me feel safer, as would paved shoulders.
>
> Survey Respondent

What We Heard: Preferred Locations

Respondents could select multiple options. (Top Three Bolded)



What We Heard: Other Components and Considerations for Planning

Other components identified by respondents:
(Top three components listed below)

1. Lighting (40%)
2. Rest areas/seating (30%)
3. Bike racks (20%)

Other considerations/concerns raised by respondents:

- **High speeds in the area (19 responses)**
- **Dogs: garbage for cleaning up after dogs/permissibility of dogs on paths/unleashed dogs that do not stay on their property (5 responses)**
- Affordability of project (1 response)
- Surface that is easy on joints (1 response)
- All-year public washroom (1 response)
- Motorized recreational vehicles (1 response)
- Winter use (1 response)
- Bilingual signage (1 response)
- Possibility for events (1 response)
- Biodiversity plan (1 response)

What We Heard: A Few Comments

> **I think this is a great initiative,** and anything you are able to implement will be of benefit. Limited mobility is a problem for me, but paved shoulders would make a big difference.
>
> Survey Respondent

> I would occasionally **bike to work** if I wasn't limited to the shoulder of the road.
>
> Survey Respondent

> With so much traffic going at such high speeds, I don't feel comfortable using the shoulder of the road (which is also in rough shape). **If there was a dedicated walkway, separated from the road, then we would be much more likely to go for walks as a family."**
>
> Survey Respondent

What We Heard: Public Meeting

Approximately 10 attendees including Alex MacBain from MRSB, Douglas Coles from Coles Associates, CAO Sonya Martin, and Mayor Pat O'Connor.

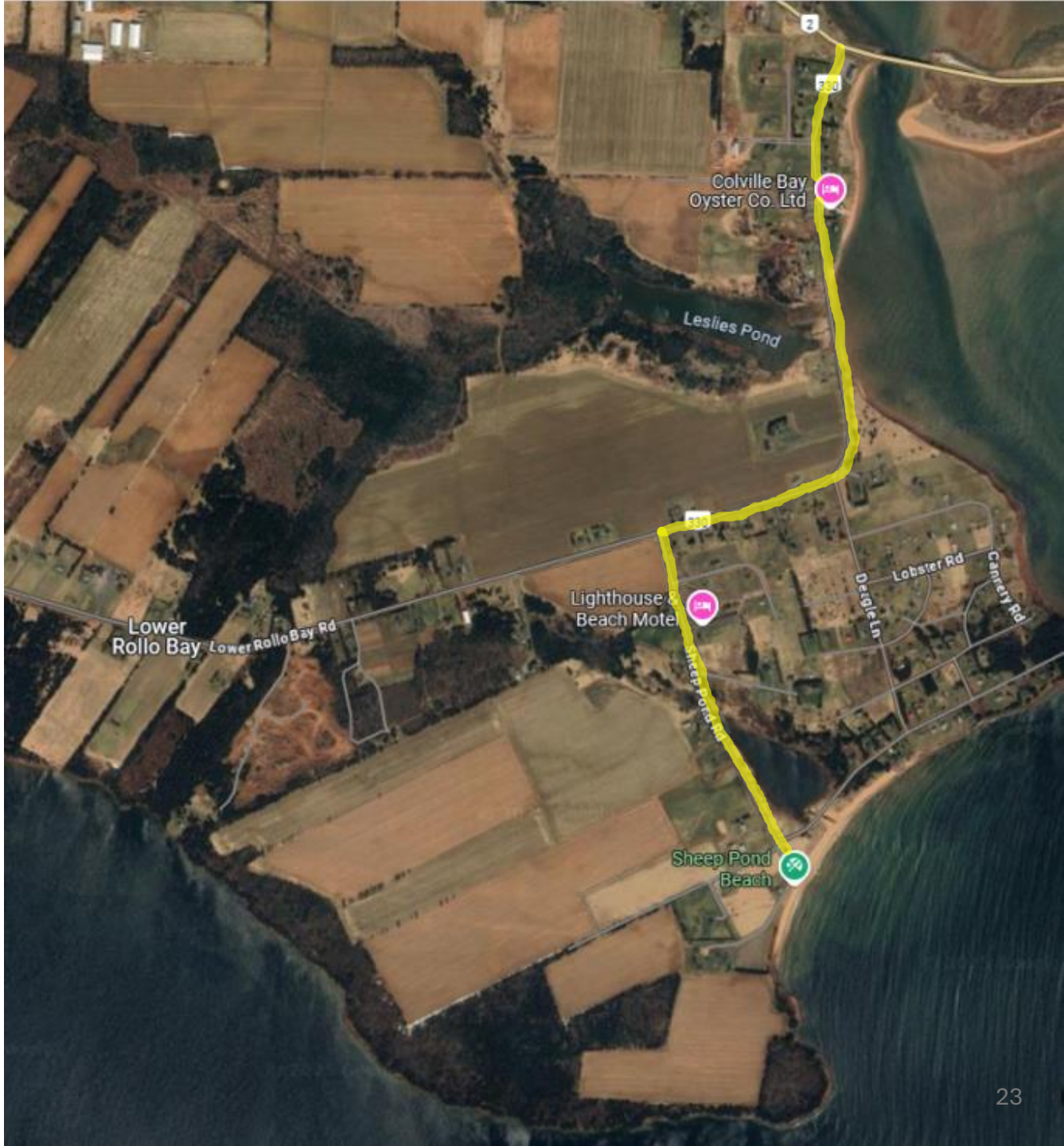
- Questions were mainly about public versus private land, if ditch-filling will be required, parking considerations, and what the maintenance responsibilities will be for the paths.
- The meeting included a large discussion of the Municipality's dealings with government concerning Deagle Lane and Harrison Road.
- Concerns were also raised about the path's separation from businesses (as it will be on the other side of the road from some businesses).
- Key takeaways:
  - Attendees were interested in the practical considerations of the project such as access to businesses, ownership of land, maintenance, parking, and reasonings for the proposed route over other routes.

Proposed Route:

Lower Rollo Bay Road to Sheep Pond Road to Sheep Pond Beach

Pro Points for this Route:

- ✓ Clear destination of Sheep Pond Beach
- ✓ Proximity to residential areas
- ✓ Proximity to businesses
- ✓ Proximity to Family Resource Centre
- ✓ Roadsides more suitable for development than some other routes in the community.



Appendix B. Cost Estimate

COLES ARCHITECTURE
ENGINEERING
PROJECT MANAGEMENT

201-85 Fitzroy Street
Charlottetown, PE C1A 1R6
(902) 368-2300
www.colesassociates.com

August 18, 2025

MRSB Consulting Group
P.O. Box 2679,
Charlottetown, PE C1A 8C3, Canada

Attention: Tim Curley, CEO.

Dear Mr. Curley:

Re: Souris West Active Transportation Path

Coles Associates Ltd. is pleased to submit the Class C cost estimate for the installation of a proposed Active Transportation Path (ATP) from Route 2 along Rte 330 to where it intersects the Sheep Pond Road and ends at Sheep Pond Beach. Generally, this ATP runs on the western side of Route 330 and Sheep Pond Road and culminates with a viewing feature platform at the beach.

Assumptions

The assumptions utilized included:

- 2.0 m paved widening on one side only, over 2.5 km
- 80 mm asphalt (2 lifts), density ~2.4 t/m³
- 150 mm Granular A base
- Subgrade shaping and geotextile separator
- Includes line painting, traffic control, driveway tie-ins, culvert extensions, drainage, signage, survey/QA
- Mobilization: 10%, Contingency: 20%, Engineering: 12% (excl. tax)

Itemized Estimate

Item	Qty	Unit	Unit Cost ($)	Cost ($)
Subgrade prep & shaping	5000.0	m2	12.0	60,000.00
Geotextile separator	5000.0	m2	3.0	15,000.00
Granular A base (150 mm)	750.0	m3	50.0	37,500.00
Asphalt (80 mm total)	960.0	tonnes	240.0	230,400.00
Line painting (edge line)	2500.0	m	2.0	3,750.00
Traffic control	1	lump		25,000.00
Driveway tie-ins	12.0	ea	4000.0	48,000.00
Culvert extensions	12.0	ea	6000.0	72,000.00
Drainage/ditch grading	1	lump		50,000.00
Gazebo/Viewing Platform	1	lump		30,000.00
Signage & bollards	1	lump		15,000.00
Survey & QA testing	1	lump		12,000.00
Wetland Development	1	lump		10,000.00

Summary

Component	Amount ($)
Construction Subtotal	608,650.00
Mobilization (10%)	60,865.00
Contingency (20%)	133,903.00
Engineering (12%)	96,410.00
Total Project (excl. tax)	899,828.00

These values are considered in 2025 dollars.

August 18, 2025
MRSB Consulting Group
Attention: Tim Curley, CEO.
Re: Souris West Active Transportation Path

Should you have any questions or require further information, please feel free to contact the undersigned at your earliest convenience.

Yours very truly,

Coles Associates Ltd.

Per: Douglas A. Coles, P.Eng., P.E., F.E.C.
Principal

DAC/lnm

Attachment
Encl.