

Huron County Active Transportation: A Call to Action



A Strategy for Moving Forward | 2014

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Introduction	4
County and Municipality Roles	7
The Role of the County in Active Transportation Planning: The Basis for this Strategy	7
The Role for the Municipality	8
Making the Case for Active Transportation	9
Active Transportation Challenges	12
Public Consultation and Research	13
Guiding Principles	15
Ten County Commitments	16
10 Highlights from Call to Action	17
Themes/Call to Action	18
Tourism	19
Economy	20
Trails	21
Safety	22
Schools	23
Connectivity	24
Infrastructure	25
Culture of Active Transportation	26
Land Use Planning	27
Maximizing Existing Resources	28
Measures of Success, Monitoring	29
Appendix 1: Snapshot of Resources	30
Appendix 2: AT Plan – Public Consultation and Research	35
Appendix 3: Suggested Measures of Success	42
Appendix 4: Easy Wins and High Impact Chart from Public Consultations	43

Executive Summary

Background

The County of Huron embraces planning for active transportation because it believes in helping to improve the health of residents increase economic opportunities, and enhance quality of life. The health benefits are well documented and it is widely recognized that an active transportation infrastructure (e.g., sidewalks, trails, cycling routes) and services make a community more attractive to residents, tourists, businesses, and potential employees. Services that contribute to active transportation enhance the quality of life and make it easier for the County to attract businesses and for businesses to attract employees.

Purpose

We developed this call to action in response to the need identified at various levels to encourage a more active population according to health, economic, and environmental perspectives. It builds on previous Huron County initiatives including the County's *Transportation Demand Management Plan* (2011) and the *Take Action for Sustainable Huron* report. The report stated the need for a more active population.

Method

The authors analyzed data provided by respondents to an online survey, facilitated group sessions, and key informant interviews. We then distilled 10 key themes that include challenges, a vision, and call to action.

Transportation infrastructure such as sidewalks, trails, and cycling routes makes a community more attractive to residents, tourists, businesses, and potential employees.





The County will consider active transportation and related safety issues when planning road upgrades.

Recommendations

The key components of this call to action include 10 themes. Each of these themes includes a summary of challenges, a vision, and a call to action (County, municipal, resident, community group, and individual/business). Each theme also includes a County commitment:

1. Tourism

The County will develop and promote active transportation as a means to encourage tourism and related economic activity.

2. Economy

County resources will be used to pursue active transportation initiatives that enhance economic opportunities within the county.

3. Trails

The County will continue to facilitate and support initiatives aimed at enhancing and promoting opportunities to develop trails.

4. Safety

The County will consider active transportation and related safety issues when planning road upgrades.

5. Schools

The Huron County Health Unit will actively work with school boards to promote the lifelong benefits associated with an active lifestyle.

6. Connectivity

The County will consider ways to support municipalities in developing connections between places people could realistically travel using active transportation.

7. Infrastructure

The County will consider active transportation when planning infrastructure improvements and promotional mapping.

8. Culture of Active Transportation

The County will facilitate an awareness campaign oriented towards County staff, the public, and key partners.

9. Land Use Planning

Active transportation will be a priority for the County and staff in planning current and future land uses. The County will encourage local municipalities to adopt a similar strategy.

10. Maximizing Existing Resources

The County will work in partnership with municipalities, community groups, and external bodies to promote, develop, and profile existing active transportation resources.

The health benefits of
active transportation
are well documented.



Introduction

What is active transportation?

Active transportation refers to any method of going from one place to another using your own body such as walking, running, cycling, canoeing, and skiing. It also a means getting around for everyday life such as when you walk to the mailbox at the end of your lane instead of drive.

What does it mean for a community to embrace active transportation?

Active transportation contributes to:

- Healthier residents
- A robust economy
- Better quality of life

The health benefits are well documented and it is widely recognized that active transportation infrastructure (e.g., sidewalks, trails, cycling routes) makes a community more attractive to residents, tourists, and businesses. Services that contribute to active transportation enhance quality of life and make it easier for the County to attract businesses and for businesses to attract employees.

What is the current situation in Huron County?

Huron County also has a wealth of existing facilities. Parks and trails exist in almost every community. Many back roads are paved and have minimal traffic which makes them attractive to cyclists. The towns and villages are well serviced by sidewalks and many of these communities are walkable. Many residents also embrace the outdoors. The opportunity exists to maximize these resources with minimal additional expenditures.

Huron County has definitely made progress. Between 2009 and 2011, Canada Walks worked in 24 communities across Ontario and held walkON events in more than 50 regional Ontario communities. The organization worked with Goderich to redesign the community with a walkability focus after the 2011 tornado. In 2012, Blyth and Exeter completed a Master Streetscape Plan that incorporated many walkable features. Notably, the Municipality of South Huron signed the *International Charter for Walking* in 2012 (www.walk21.com/charters).

In 2011, the County embraced this initiative with the release of the *Take Action for Sustainable Huron* report. This report included the following goal under the theme of “Healthy Active Communities”:

Huron County residents live active, healthy lifestyles with access to wellness services for mind and body. Communities will be compact, pedestrian, and bicycle friendly, and provide a range of services and facilities.



The *Take Action for Sustainable Huron* report included the following goal:
Residents live active, healthy lifestyles with access to wellness services for mind and body. Communities will be compact, pedestrian, and bicycle friendly, and provide a range of services and facilities.



The report also identified these actions:

1. Promote Active and Healthy Lifestyles to Huron County Residents
2. Strongly Support Active Transportation in Our Communities
3. Ensure Huron County Residents Have Access to Excellent Health and Wellness Services to Support Healthy Bodies, Minds, and Communities

International Charter for Walking

Creating healthy, efficient and sustainable communities
where people choose to walk

I/We, the undersigned recognise the benefits of walking as a key indicator of healthy, efficient, socially inclusive and sustainable communities and acknowledge the universal rights of people to be able to walk safely and to enjoy high quality public spaces anywhere and at anytime. We are committed to reducing the physical, social and institutional barriers that limit walking activity. We will work with others to help create a culture where people choose to walk through our commitment to this charter and its strategic principles:

1. Increased inclusive mobility
2. Well designed and managed spaces and places for people
3. Improved integration of networks
4. Supportive land-use and spatial planning
5. Reduced road danger
6. Less crime and fear of crime
7. More supportive authorities
8. A culture of walking

Signed _____
Name _____
Position _____
Date _____

What work still needs to be done?

A number of challenges exist in Huron County regarding active transportation. Many of our towns and villages have limited commercial services. In the winter, the elderly are constrained by the weather and must access facilities in order to be active. Huron County also has a large dispersed rural population. For many people, the only option is to get in the car and drive to services or workplaces. Even agricultural workers—historically, very active — may now sit on equipment for hours or at desks to do paperwork. As well, children are less active than in previous generations. Computers, televisions, and other electronics lead to sedentary behaviours that can have health implications. Even when people are able to walk or use bicycles, they may consider main roads dangerous.

What is the purpose of this document?

There is an increasing recognition of the need for action. This call for action comes from parents, residents, medical professionals, community leaders, and the County of Huron.

Progress has been made, but there is more to be done.

Although progress has been made in these areas, there is more to be done. Direction from County Council can help facilitate the actions of the Health Unit, and the Planning and Development and County Highways departments. The County can also work with municipalities and communities to spur action at the local level, particularly in regard to trails, services, and engagement.

This strategy identifies the County's commitments, and directions to be encouraged by the County, local municipalities, community groups, residents, and businesses. The goal is to create active communities by mobilizing county governments and resources to encourage a healthy, active population. The report also calls for initiatives at provincial, municipal, community, individual, and business levels.

The Role of Local Government

Commitment at all levels is needed in order to develop a more active population. Federal, provincial, and municipal governments, community groups, and service providers all play a role. Ultimately though, uptake relies on the individual.

When more facilities are safe and fun, more people will be active. And when more people are active, there will be better facilities.. This plan was written for the people of Huron County to remind them of the benefits of activity in their daily lives and how their local governments will support them through enhanced active transportation facilities and opportunities.

County

The County's support for active transportation, as part of the *Take Action for Sustainable Huron* report as expressed in 2011, reflects the many community benefits that can occur. This support also needs to recognize that some actions within the County's mandate are better achieved by:

- Local municipalities
- Community and service groups
- Individuals

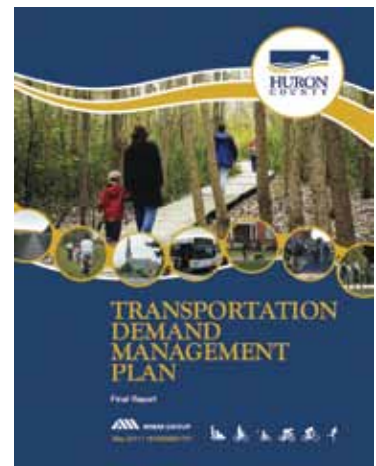
The County's *Transportation Demand Management Plan* (2011) also offers support for active transportation.

In this call to action, the County moves from offering support to identifying its position on active transportation. It focuses on initiatives that fall within the County's jurisdiction and identifies its coordination role.

There is a relationship between the County of Huron and the nine lower-tier municipalities in the county (Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh, Bluewater, Central Huron, Goderich, Howick, Huron East, Morris-Turnberry, North Huron, and South Huron). The responsibilities of these municipalities include parks, sidewalks, local roads, and recreational services.

On the other hand, the County provides certain services that transcend municipal boundaries. These include services provided by the Health Unit and other County departments, such as: Planning and Development, Economic Development, and Highways Department. By using these services to improve active transportation, it will lead to better coordination of services among organizations and individuals across the county. County budgetary decisions can also help to facilitate healthy active communities.

This call to action sets out a county-wide strategy for moving forward and encourages municipalities, groups, and individuals to take up the cause themselves.



The County's *Transportation Demand Management Plan* (2011) also offers support for active transportation.

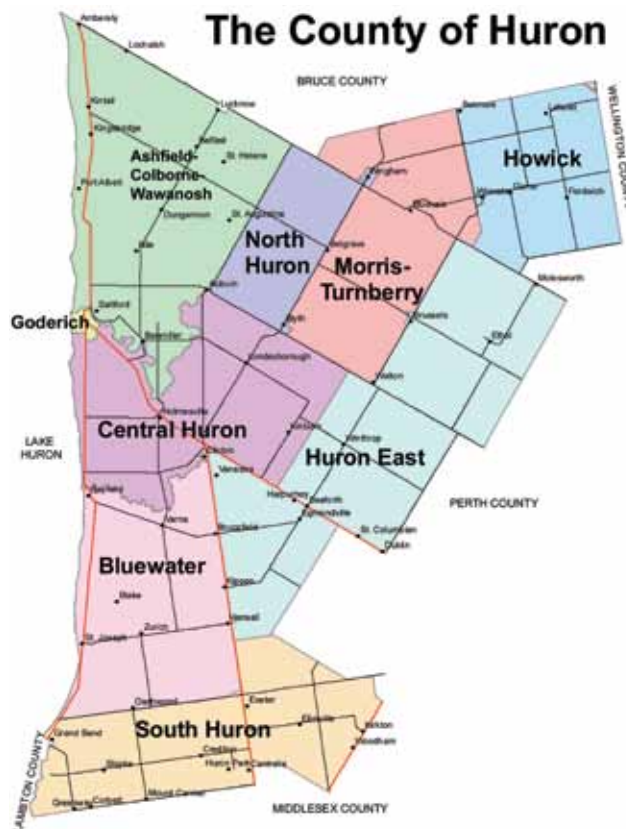
Municipalities

By taking direction from the County's experience, municipalities can better develop and adopt active transportation plans to their own local needs. This would help them to proactively address potential barriers. For example, when Huron County residents were consulted about active transportation initiatives, their attitude was "how can we stop you" rather than "how can we help." They suggested that this barrier must be addressed in order to take active transportation beyond recreation to a broader use.

Another response included: "In Huron County, municipalities tend to look to the Health Unit instead of taking an active role in health themselves. Residents recognize the importance of active transportation and look to the County and municipalities for more support and to provide infrastructure to make it safe and comfortable."

Municipalities can help build momentum:

- Conducting walking audits to determine how walkable they are and where connections are needed.
- Developing a plan to improve their communities
- Budgeting the money
- Recognizing fiscal constraints
- Identifying creative ways to partner
- Making incremental improvements



Making the Case for Active Transportation

“We have made our generation the most sedentary in history.”

—Dr. Sheela Basrur, former Ontario Medical Officer of Health

What is active transportation?

Active transportation refers to any method of going from one place to another using your own body such as walking, running, cycling, canoeing, and skiing. It also a means getting around for everyday life such as when you walk to the mailbox at the end of your lane instead of drive.

What are the benefits?

Active transportation provides many long-term benefits such as improved health and safety, stronger economy and healthier environment.

Health

People are becoming more aware that physical activity profoundly affects their physical, social, and mental health. “In 2012, the Ontario government identified childhood obesity reduction as an important area of action for health, targeting a reduction of 20% over five years. A substantial number of Ontario’s children and youth do not get enough physical activity, and many engage in sedentary behaviours for long periods of the day, a trend that increases with age”.¹

Current research shows:

- 62% of Huron County adults are considered overweight or obese.²
- 26% of Huron County youth (12 to 17 years) are overweight or obese
- 91% of Canadian children and youth and 51% of Canadian adults do not get the recommended levels of daily physical activity.
- 69% of Huron County residents are not active during leisure time.
- Low physical activity rates result in an estimated \$5.3 billion per year in direct and indirect health care costs.³

Active transportation is one method of increasing overall activity levels in our population. A study by Public Health Ontario shows that communities that are more walkable, have mixed land uses, and accessible destinations may also have increased activity levels in their residents. The same study also found that youth living in rural areas may be more likely to be overweight than their urban cousins.⁴

“Walking is convenient, it needs no special equipment, is self-regulating and inherently safe. Walking is as natural as breathing.”



¹ Public Health Ontario, Addressing Obesity in Children and Youth. 2013.
http://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/eRepository/Addressing_Obesity_Children_Youth_Sept2013.pdf

² Huron County Health Unit, and Active Transportation in Canada: A Resource and Planning Guide, 2011, page 8

³ Active Transportation in Canada: A Resource and Planning Guide, 2011, page 8

⁴ Public Health Ontario, Addressing Obesity in Children and Youth. 2013.
http://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/eRepository/Addressing_Obesity_Children_Youth_Sept2013.pdf (page 16)



Recreational trails generate economic activity and are in keeping with the County of Huron's sustainability goals for alternative means of transportation.

Economy

The economy can benefit in several ways. Places that are more walkable attract tourists, long-term residents, and young people. Recreational trails generate economic activity and are in keeping with the County of Huron's sustainability goals for alternative means of transportation.

The County recognized these benefits that could be achieved by developing the (Goderich to Guelph) G2G trail:

- Economic benefits during all four seasons, especially creating needed activity in the shoulder seasons of spring and fall.
- A safe, off-road family option for group cycling, walking, and snowmobiling.
- Destinations to the west for the large population centres at the east end of the trail.
- The appeal of easy navigation for the target boomer looking for outdoor leisure.
- The appeal to the longer-distance cyclist because of its length and the loop options it provides with other road routes and trails in the area. Ontario Tourism states that the average overnight cyclist spends \$148 per day (food, beverages, attractions, and retail purchases) in addition to spending on accommodations.

Younger people place a high value on walkability. They want to locate in places that keep active transportation front and center in land use planning and developing infrastructure. Some predict that a community without trails will be as disadvantaged as one without a school, hospital, or library.

Hike Ontario points out that trails can provide a meeting place for socializing and special activities. This can improve community cohesion and overall quality of life.⁵

Well-developed trails attract tourists from across the country and around the world. The Bruce County Trail Network reports that current use by residents and tourists of county trails contributes \$24.5 million annually to the local economy.⁶ Contrary to some perceptions, properties that are adjacent to trails often obtain higher selling prices and stay on the market for a shorter time.⁷ Huron County, with its beautiful natural environment, has a huge opportunity to develop this resource.

By walking or cycling, individuals can lower the costs of driving and maintaining their vehicle.



Environment

The natural environment also benefits from increased use of active transportation. “It is estimated that 90% of the emissions in a typical 11-kilometre trip are generated in the first 1.6 kilometres, before the engine warms up. This means that replacing short car trips with active transportation could have a significant effect on reducing emissions.”⁸ Reduced energy consumption is another benefit of using leg power instead of gasoline. “A bike can travel 423 kilometres on the equivalent energy of a litre of gas.”⁹

“In many ways it’s about quality of life. Have a look at the Boardwalk in Goderich on a Sunday afternoon or the MacNaughton–Morrison Trail in South Huron or the Blyth Greenway Trail. People love their walks.”

⁵ www.hikeontario.com/benefits/benefitsoftrails.htm

⁶ www.brucecountytrails.com/page.php?page=trailfacts

⁷ www.brucecountytrails.com/trailmanager.php?page=trailbenefits

⁸ Active Transportation in Canada: A Resource and Planning Guide, 2011, page 11

⁹ Active Transportation in Canada: A Resource and Planning Guide, 2011, page 12

Active Transportation Challenges

Rural living

Rural communities face many challenges not experienced by their urban cousins:

- Lack the required economies of scale to support public transit
- Are spread out geographically
- Are economically challenged to maintain their infrastructure they have, without the added burden of developing cycling trails and other alternative infrastructure to support active transportation

For people who live in the country or in small communities that lack services, the distances are often too great to travel without a car. And once in a car, people tend to stay inside moving from place to place within the urban area.

In town, businesses provide a disincentive for walking when they post signs stating that parking is provided only for cars whose drivers are patronizing their stores. When people need to carry shopping bags, work supplies, or small children, they are more likely to drive.

In addition, cars keep people safe, dry, and clean if they are going to work or functions where appropriate clothing does not include hiking boots or special sportswear. Our culture needs to be more accepting of how active people appear.

Winter weather

Huron County faces the challenge of winter weather. Sudden storms can be dangerous to hikers, cyclists, and runners, especially if they are sharing the road with vehicles. Keeping sidewalks, trails, and roads clear of snow and ice is expensive. Trails that are beautiful in the summer require specialized equipment such as skis or snowshoes in the winter.

Huron County
faces the challenge
of winter weather.



Public Consultation and Research

The development of an active transportation plan began in March, 2013. The authors established criteria for evaluating a number of existing active transportation plans, specific to rural communities across Canada and in the United States. This is available as a separate report.

Concurrently, we invited community members to attend an introductory meeting and, followed it with a second meeting. We then formed two groups: Liaison Group and Network Group. The Liaison Group provided input for going forward. It included Health Unit staff, two County planners, a representative from the United Way, and three members of the public who were involved in community and active transportation initiatives. The Network Group provided a way for groups to connect, share, and promote active transportation in their own communities.

Throughout the fall of 2013, we consulted with the community in three ways: facilitated discussions with various groups throughout the community, an online and paper survey, and key informant interviews.

Facilitators contacted community groups and, when permitted, participated in regularly planned meetings to discuss the challenges, vision, and suggested actions around active transportation (Appendix 2). Participating community groups included the Hensall Kinsmen, County of Huron Planning and Development department, Huron County Accessibility Committee, F.E. Madill Enviro Club, Grade 6 class at Bluewater Coast Elementary School, Maitland Trail Association, G2G Trail Association, Huron Stewardship Council, Huron County Health Unit staff, Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority, and the Huron Food Share.

The input generously provided by these community members was used in all areas of this strategy, including challenges, vision, and actions. Several themes emerged from the input provided. Some cross-cutting issues touch on all or most of these themes to varying degrees. The following issues will either affect active transportation in Huron County or will require special consideration:

- **Climate.** Winter weather severely impedes active transportation and was mentioned consistently throughout consultation. Keeping major walking routes clear of ice and snow becomes a physical challenge as well as a financial burden.
- **Geography.** Distance between centres.
- **Population density.** Relatively low population density relative to urban centres makes it difficult to fund facilities.
- **Accessibility.**
 - Financial: The relatively low population density makes it harder to fund capital-intensive projects and there are perceived added costs at a personal level.
 - Physical: Mobility issues associated with people with disabilities is an even larger concern due to the aging population in the county.
- **Capacity:** This refers to social, financial, physical, and time limitations.

The input provided by community members was used in all areas of this strategy, including challenges, vision, and actions.

Active transportation is good for communities from environmental, health, social, and economic perspectives.

Groups within the county that may require special consideration when developing a plan include:

- **Seniors.** Huron County has an aging population. Many people have increased mobility issues and may need an inexpensive alternative to walking outside.
- **Youth.** Given the fact that Huron County's youth are spread throughout the rural community, it is challenging for them to fully participate in activities.
- **Farmers.** Because of the importance of agriculture in Huron County, consideration could be given to this group when considering an active transportation strategy. As farm work has changed to rely more on technology, this sector may require an additional cultural shift when it comes to encouraging activity.



Guiding Principles

The authors developed the following principles after reviewing several active transportation plans developed in other rural municipalities and with input from the Active Transportation Liaison Committee. We selected for overall completeness then distilled principles to guide the planning process.

Principle 1

Active transportation is good for communities from environmental, health, social, and economic perspective.

Principle 2

Active transportation in a rural context is not the same as in an urban context.

Principle 3

An effective active transportation strategy must recognize the need for a shift in vision—there is a need to push communities towards new ideas and new strategies.

Principle 4

An active transportation strategy in Huron County must recognize the special needs of the farming community.

Principle 5

Active transportation must embrace both recreational and day-to-day incorporation of physical activity.

Principle 6

An active transportation strategy must be inclusive, mindful of, and welcoming to all members of the community, regardless of ability. Including multi-generations in active transportation considerations can help families be active together.

Principle 7

An active transportation strategy recognizes the wisdom of the community—it should be developed by the community for the community.

Principle 8

An active transportation strategy should be mindful of existing strengths and assets in the community and build on those.

Principle 9

An active transportation strategy must be realistic considering the financial and human capacity of the community.

Principle 10

An active transportation strategy seeks to recognize and overcome barriers to physical activity.

Principle 11

An active transportation strategy must be accessible to and written for the entire community. This incorporates presentation, brevity, language, and clarity.

Principle 12

An active transportation strategy must have a clear long-term vision that will help guide the community in future decisions.



Active transportation must embrace both recreational and day-to-day incorporation of physical activity.

County Commitments

When our team of consultants and staff gathered input from the community, we found several recurring themes. From these themes, we distilled challenges, a vision and actions that allowed us to identify these 10 County Commitments:

1. Tourism

The County will develop and promote active transportation as a means to encourage tourism and related economic activity.

2. Economy

County resources will be used to pursue active transportation initiatives that enhance economic opportunities within the county.

3. Trails

The County will continue to facilitate and support initiatives aimed at enhancing and promoting opportunities to develop trails.

4. Safety

The County will consider active transportation and related safety issues when planning road upgrades.

5. Schools

The Huron County Health Unit will actively work with school boards to promote the lifelong benefits associated with an active lifestyle.

6. Connectivity

The County will consider ways to support municipalities in developing connections between places people could realistically travel using active transportation.

7. Infrastructure

The County will consider active transportation when planning infrastructure improvements and promotional mapping.

8. Culture of Active Transportation

The County will facilitate an awareness campaign oriented towards county staff, the public, and key partners.

9. Land Use Planning

Active transportation will be the priority for the County and staff in planning current and future land uses. The County will encourage local municipalities to adopt a similar strategy.

10. Maximizing Existing Resources

The County will work in partnership with municipalities, community groups, and external bodies to promote, develop and profile existing active transportation resources.

Highlights from Call to Action

Community consultation revealed many helpful ideas under all of the identified themes. A complete listing can be found in appendix 2. Committee members and the liaison group evaluated the actions listed under each theme and highlighted those that were either relatively easy to accomplish (easy wins) or those that would have a high impact on increasing the rates of active transportation within the county.

Easy wins are important because they motivate communities to tackle actions that have high impact, but are more difficult to achieve. Early success encourages people to embrace active transportation and support activities that have higher impact.

Table 1. Easy Wins and High Impact Opportunities

Theme	Easy Wins	High Impact
Tourism	Improve way finding signs.	Continue to support trail development, initiatives and connectivity.
Economy	Attach active transportation initiatives to existing events.	Develop walkable communities to attract young people.
Trails	Creative events to attract new people to trails.	Work with communities and farm communities to educate on the benefits of trails.
Safety	Host Share the Road event or program.	Investigate feasibility of paved shoulders.
Schools	Use school system to educate student and families on active transportation so they become advocates for this cause.	Build walking opportunities into new school and community design.
Connectivity	Develop and promote active transportation trails in towns and villages.	Improve routes that connect communities.
Infrastructure	Increase the number of safe and effective bike racks.	Improve information available at kiosks and facilities to promote active transportation.
Culture	Organize walking annual audit.	Make downtowns more welcoming and walkable.
Land Use Planning	Include active transportation in Official Plans.	Encourage residential intensification and discourage sprawl.
Existing Resources	Promote existing active transportation services and facilities.	Encourage partners to enhance, promote and utilize existing initiatives.

Themes/Call to Action

The themes in this section were identified through community consultation and reflect the key directions identified in this report.

Figure 1. Fifty most recorded words from Huron County public engagement



Source: Word Cloud

Tourism

What the community told us

Challenges

- How do we use tourism to encourage investment in active transportation?
- Sometimes public opposition to trails.
- Lack of signage, and markings for visitors and local people.

Vision

Huron County is a welcoming community and tourism is important to our economy. Active transportation facilities will help to make our county more attractive to visitors.



County Commitment

The County will develop and promote active transportation as a means to encourage tourism and related economic activity.

Call to Action

County

- Include active transportation options in promotional materials.
- Sponsor study measuring and documenting active transportation use and economic benefits.
- Facilitate dialogue between municipal and community groups concerning active transportation.
- Develop a theme-based “Trail of Attractions”: (e.g., cycling and antiques).

Municipality

- Include active transportation options in promotion materials.
- Improve active transportation facilities as resources allow.
- Look for innovative strategies that make it fun.
- Ensuring quality infrastructure is encouraged.
- Close a road: Pick a day and encourage pedestrians and cyclists to use it.

Community Groups

- Attach active transportation options to community events and activities.

Individual/Business

- Businesses can cater to the needs of the public: bike racks, accommodations, related services etc.,
- Become a bicycle-friendly business: Ontario by Bike <http://ontariobybike.ca> promotes businesses and regions that are mindful of and welcome cyclists.

Economy

What the Community told us

Challenges

- The cost of fuel has not reached the point of encouraging people to switch from cars to active transportation.
- Necessary changes to infrastructure are perceived as too expensive.

Vision

Huron County residents envision a better public sense of the economic value of active transportation, which would include health benefits, tourism attraction, and environmental benefits.



County Commitment

County resources will be used to pursue active transportation that enhances economic opportunities within the county.

Call to Action

County

- Provide signage that raises awareness of cost savings when using active transportation.
- Attract young people by creating walkable communities.
- Profile active transportation opportunities to help attract new residents and businesses.

Municipal

- Provide signage that raises awareness of cost savings when using active transportation.
- Encourage drivers to park in one location and walk.

Community Groups

- Provide encouragement/incentives at the end of the trip for active transportation.

Individual/Business

- Provide encouragement/ incentives at the end of the trip for active transportation
- Encourage workplaces to support active transportation: provide showers, incentives, etc.
- Downtown businesses benefit from increased use of active transportation. Consider ways to support it.
- Bicycles are a low-cost transportation resource.
- Become a bicycle-friendly business. Ontario by Bike <http://ontariobybike.ca> promotes businesses and regions that are mindful and welcoming to cyclists.

Trails

What the Community told us

Challenges

- Awareness. While there are over 150 km of trails within the county, there is limited awareness and use by the local population.
- Capacity. Trails are currently developed and maintained by volunteers, who are needed for many other ventures.

Vision:

Huron County residents envision a trail system in Huron County that is safe, accessible, connected, and separate from highway traffic. They would like the system to be well maintained year-round, with good signage that connects major centres to each other as well as to other places outside the county.



County Commitment

The County will continue to facilitate and support initiatives aimed at enhancing and promoting opportunities to develop trails.

Call to Action

County

- Develop a county trails master plan to encourage connectivity and promotion.
- Initiate a county-wide trails organization.
- Continue to provide trail guides to all Grade 5 students.
- Promote trails to local residents as well as tourists.
- Continue to support new trail initiatives.
- Bring training from Ontario Trails Council to support trail development.

Municipal

- Off-street bike trails for more direct active transportation.
- Develop and promote multi-use trails in town.

Community Groups

- Trail groups work together to share promotion and marketing.
- Trail groups and Conservation Authorities: Encourage winter and night use of trails, keeping safety in mind.
- Trail groups and Conservation Authorities: Use trails creatively to attract new interest and partner with Huron Tourism Association.
- Community groups: Support trail development and events.

Individual/Business

- Participate in events. Hundreds planned every year in Huron County. Promote and support special events and trails.

Safety



What the Community told us

Challenges

- Sharing the roads with motorized vehicles.
- Concern about wildlife and other people on trails.
- Lack of signage, lights, and markings.
- Greater community involvement.

Vision

Huron County residents envision their community as safe for people of all ages and abilities to use more active forms of transportation. This includes safer roadways for cyclists and pedestrians, safer communities, better awareness of traffic rules, and a higher priority placed on active transportation within the county.



County Commitment

The County will consider active transportation and related safety issues when planning road upgrades.

Call to Action

County

- Encourage a Share the Road campaign.
- Promote cycling maps of the county that profile secondary roads.
- Educate the public on safety.
- Consider painting bicycle lanes, additional signage, and crosswalks.

Municipal

- Ensure safe speed limits in pedestrian areas.
- Consider developing an audit. Discover barriers in walkable areas.
- Improve sidewalks and winter maintenance.
- Consider painting bicycle lanes, additional signage, and crosswalks.
- Investigate allowing cyclists to use a sidewalk.

Community Groups

- Huron Tourism Association is responsible for cycling/hiking maps.
- Host a community walking audit. Business Improvement Associations, Ratepayers Associations, trail associations might host a walking audit. Provide input to the municipality.
- Coalition for Huron Injury Prevention: Share the Road Campaign.

Individual/Business

- Reflective clothing for cyclists and pedestrians.
- Helmet use for everyone.

Schools

What the community told us:

Challenges

- Rural school closures have reduced the number of students able to walk to school.
- Traffic concerns provide a barrier to those who are close enough to walk.
- Shorter recesses, fewer intramural activities, and fewer outdoor opportunities have led to less active students.

Vision

Although Huron County residents envision keeping their local schools open, they also want to ensure there are enhanced opportunities for students to remain active.



County Commitment

The County and the Health Unit will actively work with school boards to promote the lifelong benefits associated with an active lifestyle.

Call to Action

County

- Educate parents and community members on active transportation in the school system such as designated pick-up areas and walking school buses.
- Clear signage of bicycle paths to schools.
- Explore opportunities to work with seniors such as seniors leading walking school buses.

Municipal

- New schools should have walking as part of design.
- Ensure adequate crossing-guard staff.
- Explore opportunities with Active & Safe Routes to School movement: www.saferoutestoschool.ca is dedicated to children's mobility, health, and happiness.

Community Groups

- Walking school buses.
- Designated pick up areas.
- Generate community safety awareness.
- Explore opportunities with Active & Safe Routes to School movement: www.saferoutestoschool.ca is dedicated to children's mobility, health, and happiness.

Individual/Business

- Become a Block Parent.
- Make sure your kids have appropriate clothing and safety items.
- Make walking and cycling a priority in your family.

Connectivity

What the Community told us

Challenges

- Distances between communities. Lack of public transit makes this problem worse.
- Distances within communities. Places people want to go are not adequately connected.

Vision

Huron County residents envision better connections throughout the county as a whole. This includes some access to public transportation connecting communities as well as larger centres. It also includes improving the location of key services such as grocery, retail, and library so that pedestrians and cyclists can more easily use active transportation to move between these services and residential areas. People also envision more connectivity between existing trails.



County Commitment

The County will consider ways to support municipalities in developing connections between places people could realistically travel using active transportation.

Call to Action

County

- Develop inventory of abandoned rail lines to connect Huron County communities.
- Develop a trails master plan to connect existing trails.
- Promote cycling and pedestrian routes that connect Huron County communities.
- Support and promote existing trails throughout the county.
- County support the Huron Perth Transportation Task Force dealing with public transit initiatives.

Municipal

- Improve facilities and aesthetics along routes.
- Develop an active transportation trail through urban areas to connect shops, residential, churches, libraries, workplaces, and schools. Brussels had a Paw Trail developed by recreational staff. Clinton had a Heart-Healthy Trail.

Community Groups

- Trail groups: Work together to enhance connectivity and promotion.
- Business Improvement Associations: Example, Heart Healthy Trail.

Individual/Business

- Small bus systems that connect to larger cities and airports.
- Consider a public-private transit partnership.

Infrastructure

What the Community told us

Challenges

- Infrastructure to make active transportation comfortable, safe and accessible.
- Maintenance of existing infrastructure. This includes clearing ice and snow.
- Lack of knowledge. Signs telling people of available active transportation resources are lacking and reduce use.

Vision

Huron County residents envision developing a community that has active transportation front of mind instead of being so centered on use of cars. This includes improved sidewalks, bike lanes, winter maintenance, and connections. It also includes improved access to public transit between and within urban areas, as well as access to rental and more affordable equipment.



County Commitment

The County will consider active transportation when planning infrastructure improvements and promotional mapping.

Call to Action

County

- Promote and facilitate municipal and individual action.

Municipal

- Active transportation kiosks: Where to find washrooms, water filling, maps, information, phone charging, shelter.
- Accessibility: Sidewalk ramp transitions at curbs, crosswalks with sounds, texture changes, etc.
- Annual community walking audit: Barriers and connectivity issues.
- Improve maintenance of facilities: winter maintenance.
- Make active transportation fun: Signs suggesting health, economic benefits, etc.
- Set annual target for new signs.
- Improved lighting.
- Places to lock bikes.

Community Groups

- Active transportation kiosks: Where to find washrooms, water filling, maps, information, and shelter. Could partner with municipality and business.

Individual/Business

- Rental bike and canoe outlets with pick-up and drop-off services.
- Rental equipment.
- Better local access to active transportation related equipment and clothing.
- Improve accessibility and use signs to promote.
- Shuttle bus between and within communities.
- Encourage people to park once and walk.

Culture of Active Transportation



What the community told us

Challenges

- Time. Daily activities are time consuming.
- Practicality. Cars are essential in Huron County.
- Attitude. How do we make active transportation a priority for residents, government, and businesses?
- Appeal. Active transportation needs to be comfortable, attractive, and fun.

Vision

People in Huron County envision a county that is more physically active. They imagine an active transportation system that is inclusive, accessible, family-oriented, and helps build a sense of community for all residents. “Active transportation should be a lifestyle, with less dependence on non-renewable resources that are becoming more expensive.” Broad lifestyle changes such as more working from home, working and living in the same place, as well as an overall change in attitude were included as part of a broader vision.

County Commitment

The County will facilitate an awareness campaign oriented towards County staff, the public, and key partners.

Call to Action

County:

- Health Unit to work with businesses and school boards to encourage active lifestyles.
- Health Unit will continue with educational campaigns promoting active transportation for everyday use.
- Promote existing services and facilities.
- Facilitate G2G trail, encourage walking clubs.
- Support organizations with an active transportation objective.
- Profile existing active transportation network and successes.
- Education for councillors and staff.

Municipal:

- Promote existing services and facilities.
- Improve active transportation infrastructure such as bike stands.
- Make downtown a place to be.
- Encourage local active-transportation-related businesses.
- Have locals appraise active transportation environment.

Community Groups:

- Critical mass rallies, walks for charity.
- Promote activities in community: Example, fall fair and parades.
- Innovative initiatives: Bike to movies, “Janes’ Walk”, pedestrian passport; bike to work, set up a “meet up” website to facilitate group active transportation.
- Patrol bike and walking trails for safety.
- Encourage kids to walk and bike to school.
- Recruit volunteers.
- Support Share the Road initiatives

Individual/Business:

- Express support for active transportation in your community.
- Family and dog walks
- Invite public officials to take a position.
- Use a pedometer.
- Companies to encourage and support staff.
- Walk to get the mail.

Land Use Planning

What the community told us

Challenges

- Community design. Many of our communities are not walkable. Shopping and work should be close to people.
- New development should be planned with active transportation in mind and connected to other parts of the community
- Official plans need to actively plan for active transportation

Vision

Huron County residents feel that land-use planning can lead to a more active community. They identified a planning system that supports active transportation, provides more parks, and a mixture of commercial and residential uses in order to make communities more walkable. People also envisioned locating commercial areas within downtowns and increasing the density of residential development.



County Commitment

Active transportation will be a priority for the County and staff in planning current and future land uses. The County will encourage local municipalities to adopt a similar strategy.

Call to Action

County

- Encourage traditional neighbourhood development such as living, working, and shopping within walkable distances.
- Protect natural heritage.
- Place active transportation in all Official Plans and require new/redevelopment to incorporate active transportation in community design.
- Advocate existing design guidelines to developers and municipalities.
- Discourage suburban and retail sprawl until empty lots are filled in.
- Encourage connectivity between communities.
- Planning and Development Department and Health Unit to partner on public awareness.

Municipal

- Develop active transportation plans to address local circumstances.
- Implement or consult existing design guidelines.
- Official plan policies requiring new/ redevelopment to incorporate active transportation.
- Intensify downtowns with residential buildings in proximity for walking.
- Discourage suburban and retail sprawl until empty lots are filled in.

Community Groups

- Identify barriers/restrictions to mobility and connectivity. Fix ONE in each community.

Individual/Business

- Participate in land-use planning processes, official plan reviews. Voice opinions and encourage sidewalks, cycling lanes and connectivity.

Maximizing Existing Resources



What the community told us

Challenges

- Explore possibilities for developing abandoned railways and county forests.
- Using existing resources to their maximum potential.

Vision

People recognized that Huron County has existing resources that could be used to encourage a more active population. They suggested further development and promotion as well as connecting “people and groups to maximize community-driven projects with municipal support where possible.”



County Commitment

County Commitment

The County will work in partnership with municipalities, community groups, and external bodies to promote, develop, and profile existing active transportation resources.

Call to Action

County

- Inventory all existing maps and organized groups related to active transportation.
- Introduce pocket and mobile maps (and apps) using existing information that profiles active transportation. Example: pocket maps for cycling.
- Revitalize old railway beds.
- Improve existing pathways and expand throughout the county.
- Consider developing trails during forest management in existing county forests.

Municipal

- Highlight successes in the community.
- Promote existing resources.
- Plow and salt sidewalks in winter.
- Promote and improve existing trails before creating new ones.

Community Groups

- Create best practices guidelines for new groups.
- Explore potential partnerships between existing groups.
- Develop mobile apps and maps.

Individual/Business:

- Become more involved in existing opportunities for active transportation.
- Volunteer with local trail organizations.
- Participate in events. These are advertised in print, online, and on radio.
- Explore one trail you’ve never tried each month.

Measures of Success

Success is partially about how well we plan and design for active transportation.

It also relies on municipalities, organizations, and individual's willingness to adapt, adopt, and embrace the principles. It will also be measured in the shift in the way that county residents embrace principles of active transportation.

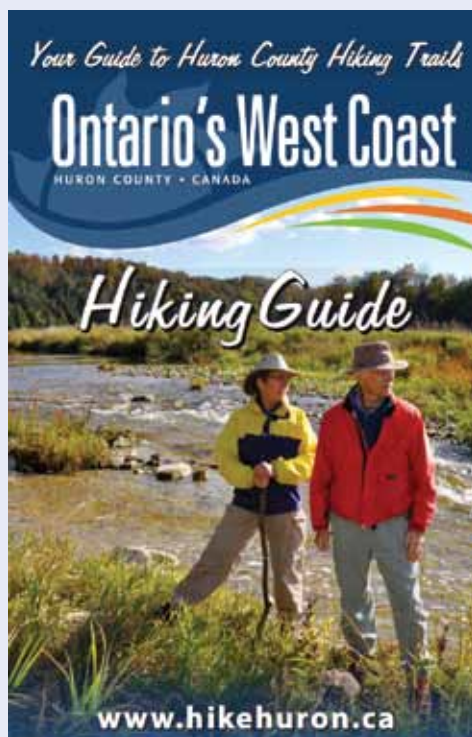
To measure the success of this plan, we need to complete the following:

- 1) The Huron Active Transportation Network will be invited to annually review and evaluate progress on the 10 themes that comprise this call to action.
See Appendix 3 for suggested measures of success.
- 2) The Health Unit will report annually on the progress of the County as it relates to the 10 commitments adopted within this report.
- 3) The Health Unit will continue to measure and monitor the health of Huron County residents that relate to the health implications as noted in the above sections of this report.



Snapshot of Resources

Huron County has a vast collection of resources related to active transportation. The goal of this section is to identify existing resources and explain how they can be used.



Ontario's West Coast Hiking Guide: Your Guide to Huron County Hiking Trails

This guide includes information and maps for 27 different trails located in Huron County. It is current as of 2014.

The guide provides an overview for each trail, including the distance, difficulty level, trail use, trail hazards, trail surface, cost for using trail, and driving directions.

Sample map from the hiking guide is featured below.

Hard copies of this guide are available from the County of Huron.

A copy is available at:

www.ontarioswestcoast.ca/beta/news/publications-brochures



Snapshot of Resources



Ontario's West Coast Cycling Guide: *Your Guide to Cycling in Huron County*

Cycling guide provides an overview of the different cycling routes in Huron County. It includes circuit route descriptions for many areas including Wingham, Brussels, Blyth, Auburn, Port Albert, Goderich, Bayfield, Seaforth, Zurich, Dashwood, Exeter and Clinton.

A large overview map of Huron County and its cycling routes is also included within the guide, which is current as of 2014.

Hard copies of this guide are available from the County of Huron.

A copy is available at: www.ontarioswestcoast.ca/beta/news/publications-brochures/



Ontario's West Coast Cycling Guide: *Fishing & Paddling Guide*

Fishing and paddling guide provides an overview of the different fishing and paddling opportunities in Huron County. It includes cold and warm water fishing locations, regulations, and licensing information as well as paddling access points throughout the county.

Also included is a large overview map of Huron County and selected conservation and natural areas with paddling access and fishing. Hard copies of this guide are available from the County of Huron.

A copy is available at: www.ontarioswestcoast.ca/beta/news/publications-brochures/

Snapshot of Resources



Goderich, Ontario

Downtown Core Master Plan: Town of Goderich

The 2012 *Downtown Core Master Plan* for the Town of Goderich was initiated after the 2011 tornado devastated much of the downtown area. The plan recognizes the importance of pedestrian-oriented design, addressing the many benefits of having a walk-able, liveable community.

The Master Plan is available at:

www.goderich.ca/en/economicdevelopment/resources/1304_FinalMasterPlanReport1.pdf



Maitland Trails Association

The Maitland Trails Association has been active for almost 40 years. It encourages hiking, cross-country skiing, snow shoeing, all-terrain cycling and nature study as a form of recreation along the trails.

The association posts regular updates at:

www.maitlandtrail.ca



Port to Point Trails Association

The Port to Point Trails Association advocates for and stewards a multi-use active transportation trail that connects the Port of Goderich to Point Farms Provincial Park and adjacent communities. Details are available at:

<http://www.porttopoint.ca>

Snapshot of Resources

G2G Rail Trail

The G2G Rail Trail facilitates a community-based conversion of the former CPR right of way between Goderich and Guelph to a non-motorized trail connecting local communities. By providing a safe and accessible connection between populations in the Golden Horseshoe westward to the Lake Huron shoreline the trail will be a significant contribution to local, regional & provincial cultural and economic development capacity.

Details are available at: www.g2grailtrail.com



Ausable Bayfield and Maitland Valley Conservation Authorities

The two authorities have dedicated conservation areas available for public use and provide many hiking and leisure opportunities.

More information can be found at: www.mvca.on.ca/index.php and <http://www.abca.on.ca/index.php>

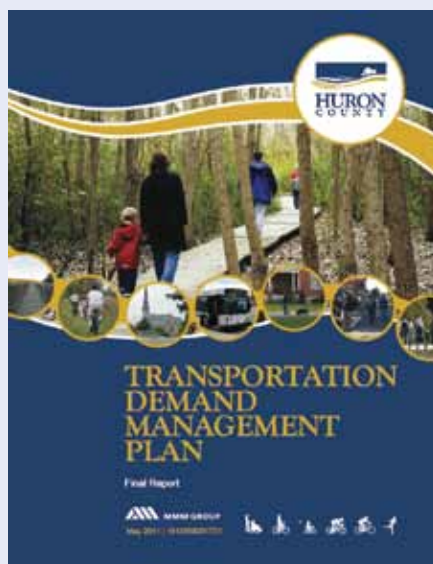


Share the Road Cycling Coalition

The Share the Road Cycling Coalition focuses on making Ontario bicycle friendly by improving accessibility, safety, and education.

Details are available at:
www.sharetheroad.ca/home-s11698

Snapshot of Resources



Transportation Demand Management Plan (2011)

The *Transportation Demand Management Plan* and strategy addresses the unique transportation needs for the County and its local area municipalities. This document includes resources relevant to active transportation including the two maps below. It also includes policy recommendations for active transportation and other transportation issues within the County.

Details are available at: www.huroncounty.ca/sustainablehuron/downloads/TDM_Report/TDMP_fullreport_May11.pdf



Active Transportation Plan–Public Consultation and Research

We consulted with the community throughout the fall of 2013 using these methods:

- Facilitated group discussions
- Online and paper surveys
- Key informant interviews

We contacted community groups and, with permission, participated in their regularly planned meetings to discuss the challenges, vision, and suggested actions in regard to active transportation.

The following issues will either affect active transportation in Huron County or will require special consideration:

- Climate. Winter weather severely impedes active transportation. It was often mentioned during the consultations. Even keeping major walking routes clear of ice and snow becomes a physical challenge as well as a financial burden.
- Geography. Distance between centres.
- Population density.
- Rurality.
- Accessibility.
 - o Financial: The relatively low population density makes it harder to fund capital-intensive projects and there are perceived added costs at a personal level. For example, it is expensive to outfit a family with clothing that makes active transportation comfortable in all seasons.
 - Physical: Mobility issues associated with people with disabilities is an even larger concern due to the aging population in the county.
- Capacity: This refers to social, financial, physical, and time limitations.

Groups within the county that may require special consideration when developing an AT plan include:

- Seniors. Huron County has an aging population. Many people have increased mobility issues and may need an inexpensive alternative to walking outside such as using an indoor track or high school corridors.
- Youth.
- Farmers: Because of the importance of agriculture in Huron County, consideration could be given to this group when considering an active transportation strategy. As farm work has changed to rely more on technology and less on physical work, this sector may require an additional cultural shift when it comes to encouraging activity.

Active Transportation Plan– Public Consultation and Research

Community input was analyzed and sorted under the following categories:

1. Connectivity

- a. Issues:
 - i. Distance. There are large distances between communities and no public transportation. If people are required to have a car to get to an urban center, they are less likely to use active transportation once they get there. This issue seems to be getting worse instead of better. Public transportation options have become more limited in recent years. For example, bus services that used to connect rural towns and larger urban centres no longer operate. Services that used to be available in smaller centres have closed and moved to larger centres. Rural schools continue to be centralized, moving from one-room school houses on concession roads to super schools that service a larger radius. One high school student pointed out that routes used for active transportation are usually not direct routes and take longer to travel. Direct routes are reserved for vehicular traffic, Placement within communities. Distances within communities are a barrier. Schools, churches, shopping areas, parks, and trails are not located at a walkable distance or connected to encourage active transportation.
- b. Vision. When asked to envision what they would like Huron County to look like in the future, people responded by saying they would like better connections throughout the county as a whole. This includes some access to public transportation connecting communities as well as larger centres. It also includes improving the location of key services such as grocery, retail, and liquor stores so that pedestrians and cyclists can more easily move between these services and residential areas. People also envision more connectivity between existing trails.
- c. County Commitment.
- d. Actions.

2. Safety

- a. Issues:
 - i. Active transportation on roads. The combination of motorized vehicles sharing the road with pedestrians and cyclists was often cited as a major safety concern. This provides a significant barrier to people who might otherwise consider active transportation for themselves or their children. Respondents said that lack of education and awareness of traffic rules causes problems. Many communities in the county are centred on at least one major highway. Traffic lights and crosswalks would improve the walkability of these places, but many do not have them. Busy grain-delivery terminals in Hensall, Goderich, Clinton, and Blyth become more dangerous during harvest season (late July to December) in Huron County.

- ii. Trails. Respondents listed a lack of knowledge of safe trails (fear of other people or wildlife) as a barrier.
- iii. Lack of signage, lights, and markings. Improvements to these would increase feelings of safety and encourage people to use more active transportation.
- iv. Greater community involvement. This would encourage parents to allow their children to use active transportation more.
- b. Vision: Huron County residents want their community to be safe for people of all ages and abilities to use active transportation. This includes safer roadways for cyclists and pedestrians, safer communities, better awareness of traffic rules, and a higher priority placed on active transportation within the county.
- c. Action.

3. Economy

- a. Issues:
 - i. People pointed out that inexpensive fuel provides a lack of incentive for people to use active transportation.
 - ii. Changes to infrastructure, originally designed for cars, is seen as too expensive and not a good investment for rural communities struggling to pay for essential services. A lower population density in rural areas makes paying for improvements such as bicycle lanes and wider paved shoulders more difficult than in urban centres.
- b. Vision: People envisioned a better public sense of the economic value of active transportation, which would include health benefits, tourism draw, and environmental benefits.
- c. Action.

4. Trails

- a. Issues:
 - i. Awareness. There are many well-developed trails throughout the county, but there is limited awareness and use of these trails by many people. Challenges that could be addressed are connecting trails, sharing resources, and improving promotion. Missed Opportunities: Because active transportation is not a priority within the county, there is a danger of missing opportunities to enhance this. Examples given are lack of support to develop the G2G trail and the P2P trail initiative.
- b. Vision:
 - i. People envision a trail system in Huron County that is safe, accessible, connected, and separate from highway traffic. They would like the system to be well maintained year round, with good signage that connects major centres to other places inside and outside the county.
- c. Action.

Active Transportation Plan– Public Consultation and Research

5. Tourism

- a. Issues:
 - i. How to use tourism to encourage investment in active transportation.
 - ii. Sometimes public opposition to trails.
 - iii. Lack of signage and parking for visitors and local people.
- b. Vision:
 - i. Huron County is a welcoming community and tourism is important to our economy. Active transportation facilities will help to make our county more attractive to visitors.
- c. Action:
 - i. Include active transportation options in promotional materials.
 - ii. Develop a theme-based “Trail of Attractions” e.g., cycling and antiques).
 - iii. Look for innovative strategies that make active transportation fun.
 - iv. Businesses can cater to the needs of the active public (e.g., bike racks, accommodations, related services).

6. Culture

Culture was identified very strongly as being one of the biggest barriers to people using more active transportation. One person said “it is just not on people’s radar”, which could possibly be one of the biggest challenges. A variety of issues were identified, which largely point to the fact that in rural areas, the car is king. Infrastructure, schedules, lifestyles, and land-use planning have traditionally all been developed with the car at the centre.

- a. Issues:
 - i. Time, using active transportation usually takes more time. People think they are too busy and don’t have time to use active transportation. Lack of public transit is also an issue here. Using active transportation requires a time commitment that is compounded by not having the option of travelling by bus if necessary.
 - ii. Practicality. Cars make life easier. Not only do they get us from point A to B, they allow us to carry things that would otherwise be unmanageable, protect us from the elements, and help us arrive to work in our dress clothes without being hot and sweaty. People identified lack of showers at work, need to carry groceries or work-related items, and even appropriate clothing as barriers.
 - iii. Attitude. Respondents revealed a definite lack of awareness of active transportation. One respondent said, “I had never heard about active transportation before.” Also, it is not seen as the “normal” way to get around. Several groups pointed out that people are “lazy” and spend too much time plugged into screens to make the effort. Another person pointed out there is a lack of societal expectation: “If I knew that everyone else

was going to walk here, I would have too.” Businesses that prohibit customers from leaving vehicles in parking spaces also discourage active transportation because people must move their cars from business to business. Lack of awareness or priority for local government was also listed as a barrier.

- iv. Appeal. In order to make the extra effort to use active transportation, it must be comfortable, attractive, and even fun. Walking to get groceries along a busy highway, with a rough sidewalk or no sidewalk, getting sprayed by salty slush is not something that is appealing to most people.
- b. Vision:
 - i. People in Huron envision a county that is generally more physically active. They imagine an AT system that is inclusive, accessible, family-oriented, and helps build a sense of community for all residents. “Active transportation should be a lifestyle, with less dependence on non-renewable resources that are becoming more expensive.” Broad lifestyle changes such as more working from home, working and living in the same place, as well as an overall change in attitude were included as part of a broader vision.
- c. Action:
 - i. Find creative ways to make it fun. For example, slides beside stairs. This initiative was undertaken in other jurisdictions. People who could slide down were more likely to use the stairs and walk back up.
 - ii. Create and promote events that highlight active transportation.
 - iii. Have special days that raise awareness.

7. Schools

- a. Issues:
 - i. School closures. The recent move to close rural schools and those located in smaller centres has reduced the number of students who are able to walk to school. Most students are bused and traffic concerns at larger schools are a barrier to the few students who live close enough to walk.
 - ii. School Culture. Students want longer recesses, and more intramural activities and outdoor opportunities at school such as tobogganing hills to increase their activity level.
- b. Vision.
 - i. Huron County residents envision keeping their local schools open, which would provide more opportunity for students to use active transportation to go to school.
- c. Action.
 - i. Walking school buses.

Active Transportation Plan– Public Consultation and Research

8. Infrastructure

Challenges to active transportation due to infrastructure, or lack of it, proved to be one of the most commonly mentioned barriers. Most infrastructure issues could also be listed under other categories such as safety, convenience, and culture. However, there are definitely physical infrastructure issues that were repeatedly identified as providing barriers.

- a. Issues:
 - i. Infrastructure to make active transportation safe: Sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, lighting and paved shoulders were all identified as lacking in most of Huron County's communities. A shortage of crossing guards was also noted.
 - ii. Infrastructure to make active transportation comfortable: Washrooms, showers, rest areas, shelters, water-bottle filling stations were all identified, especially if using active transportation to move to and from work, and having access to a shower and change room would make this much more feasible. Safe places to leave strollers, bicycles, and carts would also make active transportation more comfortable.
 - iii. Infrastructure accessible for all: Challenges were reported due to existing infrastructure that was not designed for people with mobility issues. Even one step can be a barrier to someone in a wheel chair or with a walker. Better surface integration from one surface to the next was suggested as a solution to this.
 - iv. Maintenance of existing infrastructure: Many people pointed out that cracked and uneven sidewalks, and poorly maintained sidewalks in the winter were barriers.
 - v. Lack of knowledge: People identified that there is inadequate signage to direct people to existing features that could improve use of active transportation. One person with mobility issues pointed out that many downtown stores have back doors that are accessible, but there are no signs to tell people. Apart from signs, people are often unaware of the many trails and canoe routes available throughout the county.
- b. Vision:
 - i. Huron County residents envision developing a community that focuses on active transportation instead of on cars. This includes improved sidewalks, bike lanes, winter maintenance, and connections. It also includes improved access to public transit between and within urban areas, as well as access to rental and more affordable equipment.
- c. Action:
 - i. Community audit. At a set time, perhaps annually, conduct a public walking audit throughout the community or part of it. Look for barriers such as sidewalks that don't go anywhere, or leave people to walk on the

road and on poorly maintained sidewalks, and lack of connectivity between places people want to go. Be creative. As issues get solved, consider taking the audit up a level in order to make continual improvement. Or tackle a new area of town.

- ii. AT kiosks or stations: These could serve a variety of purposes such as a washroom, water filling, shelter, or place to promote local activities with maps and information.
- iii. Improved infrastructure for accessibility: Include improved surface integration, and sidewalk ramp transitions at curbs.
- iv. Rental bike and canoe outlets with pick up and drop off service.

9. Land Use Planning

a. Issues:

- i. Urban Design. Although Huron County does not have large urban centres, its existing urban areas have become less walkable. This is because, in some cases, shopping centres at the outside edges of town have replaced downtown businesses. Goderich was cited many times as being particularly unwalkable due to grocery stores with large, dangerous parking lots being located far from downtown. Highways 8 and 21, the main routes to these shopping centres, were listed as being particularly unpleasant and unsafe to walk along.
 - ii. New Development. People pointed to a lack of planning for active transportation in new developments specifically, with few sidewalks and inadequate connectivity between places people would like to go.
 - iii. Official Plans. Active transportation needs to have a higher priority in the County Official Plans.
- b. Vision. Huron County residents recognize that land-use planning can lead to a more active community. For example, they identified a planning system that supports active transportation, and provides more parks and mixed commercial and residential areas. People also want commercial areas to relocate downtown and to increase the density of residential development.
- c. Action.

10. Existing resources:

- a. Vision. People recognize that Huron County has existing resources that could be used to develop a more active population. They suggest further development and promotion as well as connecting “people and groups to maximize community-driven projects with municipal support where possible.”
- b. Maps.
- c. Existing organized groups.

Suggested Measures of Success

It is understood that evaluation measures will evolve and change based on how decisions regarding implementation are made throughout the county.

- 1) The following list was developed to provide ideas for possible methods of measuring success. With each method of measurement, baseline data would be collected, reasonable targets assigned and monitored on an annual basis. As priorities are established, other measures of success may become apparent.
 - a. Safety: Obtain statistics from Ontario Provincial Police about rate of accidents involving non-motorized persons. This would form the current baseline.
 - b. Trails: Determine current baseline for the number of kilometers of trails per Huron County resident. Set targets and monitor, keeping in mind that awareness of current trails was identified as a challenge. Trail use could also be monitored, but this would require financial support to acquire equipment to do so.
 - c. Infrastructure: Conduct an audit to determine an inventory of active-transportation-related infrastructure currently in place. This could include bike racks, washrooms, shelters, water-filling stations, signage, and active transportation safe places.
 - d. Economy: Count the proportion of trips taken of less than two kilometres that people take using active transportation. This could be tracked over time and converted to a comparison related to the price of fuel.
 - e. Maximizing existing resources: Conduct an inventory of what you have now. This could include items not included in “infrastructure” such as kilometres of sidewalks cleared in the winter, money spent on promotion of active transportation initiatives and trails, or dollars contributed to the local economy from these initiatives. This baseline number would provide the starting point from which to develop targets, and could be monitored over time. Information that is already gathered may not be currently evaluated and used for this purpose.
 - f. Tourism: Measure the number of Huron Tourism Association members offering active transportation-related services.
 - g. Land-Use Planning: Measure the number of County and municipal plans that specifically include active transportation policies. An organization called Walk Score ranks communities based on their walkability. Goderich currently has a walk score of 59, “somewhat walkable”, which means that there are some amenities that are within walking distance. This score could be monitored over time to determine if a community is deemed to be more or less walkable. www.walkscore.com/CA-ON/Goderich

Easy Wins and High Impact Opportunities

Appendix

4

Theme	Easy Wins	High Impact
Tourism	• Signage/road markings • Market lifestyle • Increase portal/linkage • Shutting down square to traffic • Encourage ppl who like AT to speak up • Way finding signs • Distribute existing guides throughout the County (hotels, motels etc.) • Have mtgs with maps and have public show us what roads they use and identify challenges	• GTG Trail and P2P trail • Dedicated bike paths • Support development of trails and connectivity • Define what is a trail (on road/off road)
Economy	• Social media • Linking for AT • Events-seniors, triathlons, Tough Mudder • Community network meetings • Risk management with signs • Promote communities as cycle/hike friendly	• Market community as active and healthy • County-wide campaign-promote certain days for AT use • Explore existing opportunities and promote as means of getting active
Trails	• VLA to LCBO • Access to local trails • Way finding	• GTG Trail • Farmer by-in • Connecting trail systems
Safety	• Bike racks • Signage • Bike lane on North St • Share the Road signs • Walking Audit (should be done by stds)	• Paved shoulders • Separate bike lanes • Drivers education in classroom
Schools	• Helmets-fitting clinics • Walking school bus • Drop kids off a few blocks away from school • Allow kids to bike on sidewalks • More bike safety education • Teach instructors and host more bike ro-deos • More field trips to existing resources-become advocates	• Education for families • Bike to school days-work to include rural kids- shift community attitudes

Easy Wins and High Impact Opportunities

Connectivity		• Paved shoulders to connect communities • Special trails to easier connect walkers/bikers through town
Infrastructure	• Safe Bike racks • More share the road signs (especially in high traffic areas) • Bike racks	• Turn a parking space into a bike space (on roads connecting to square) • Paving roads-side (machinery-less dust)
Culture	• Campaigns like: carless week, Park it and Walk, AT challenges for employers • Walking school bus • Newsletters for communities highlighting AT and events (ex. Bayfield Breezer) • Pedestrian friendly downtown core • Terry Fox run on the trail	• Support trail groups such as GTG and P2P • Break car culture
Land Use Planning	• AT in Ops • Encourage street furniture	• Discourage suburban and retail sprawl • Ensure new developments are walkable communities • Less car centric and more people centred • Decrease urban sprawl
Existing Resources	• Highlight and increase awareness of existing AT through communication hub including social media(FB, blogs, websites), traditional media (paper, radio) and email lists and through employers • Attract populations that are not already actively engaged • Promote county forests • Have local businesses involved to promote AT	

Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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