



Joint Accessibility Plan

Accessibility Advisory Committee for the Municipality of the County of Cumberland, the Village of Pugwash, and the Village of River Hebert
March 6, 2025

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Welcome



Joggins Fossil Institute, UNESCO World Heritage Site and surrounding area, courtesy of Explore Cumberland.

The Municipality of Cumberland, Village of Pugwash and Village of River Hebert invite you into this Plan to make Cumberland accessible for all. “Accessible” means that something is easy for anyone to use. People with and without disabilities can use or participate in it fully (e.g. flat sidewalks, job benefits, and documents that anyone can read).

The Joint Accessibility Plan has been developed by the Accessibility Advisory Committee (“the Committee”), which is a collaboration between the Municipality of the County of Cumberland (“the Municipality”), the Village of Pugwash, the Village of River Hebert, the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate within the Department of Justice, and members of the public. The Municipality formed the Committee to create the Joint

Accessibility Plan (“the Plan”), which organizes actions for the Municipality and Villages to take.

At least one half of the Committee’s members are people with disabilities (or employees who work for people with disabilities). Municipal staff have spoken with Cumberland residents to hear their opinions about what should be included. The Plan will be reviewed and updated at least every three years in accordance with [Nova Scotia’s Accessibility Act](#) (2017), or more often as necessary.

About

Cumberland is in Mi’kma’ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi’kmaq, governed by the Peace and Friendship Treaties. [1] Some communities within the colonial borders of Cumberland include Taqamiku’jk (Parrsboro), Atuomjek (Advocate Harbour), Qospemk (Franklin Manor Reserve 22 & area), Wen’jue’katik (Joggins), Pakwesk (Pugwash), Springhill Junction, Remsheg (Wallace), and more [2]. The Municipality also appreciates the presence and contributions of African Nova Scotians in the area for over 400 years, particularly in the community of Springhill [3].

The Municipality of Cumberland is a large and rural population of 19,964 people. [4] It includes two former towns (Springhill and Parrsboro), the Villages of Pugwash and River Hebert, and many small communities and remote areas, all with different characteristics and services. The Municipality shares a border with neighbouring province of New Brunswick and includes all of Cumberland County except the Town of Amherst and the Town of Oxford (an additional population of 10,574 combined). [4] It is the

second largest municipality in Nova Scotia by land area at 4,276km². [1]

About the Village of River Hebert, from Wikipedia:

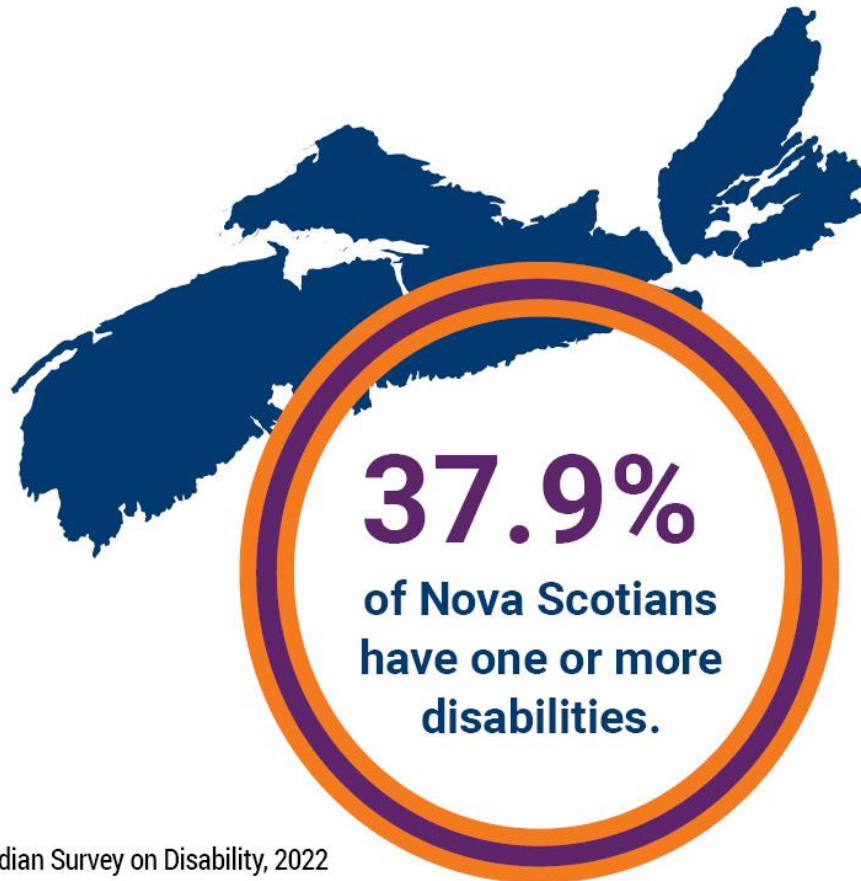
River Hebert is approximately 25 kilometres southwest of Amherst. As of 2021, the population was 468. The village and the river are both named after Louis Hébert, an early French settler from Port Royal, who navigated the river. Until the late 20th century, coal mining was the major industry in the area, but the last mine closed in 1981.

About the Village of Pugwash, excerpts from Wikipedia:

Pugwash had a population of 746 as of the 2021 census. The village is home to fishing, salt mining, small-scale manufacturing, and tourism.

Pugwash is famous for being the site of an international conference of scholars organized by Bertrand Russell in 1957, and hosted by Pugwash's native son, steel magnate Cyrus Eaton (1883–1979) [...] This conference brought high-level scientists from both sides of the Cold War divide to state their opposition to nuclear weapons.

Disability Rate in Nova Scotia



Canadian Survey on Disability, 2022

Nova Scotia has the highest rate of disability in Canada at 37.9% of people having 1 or more disabilities, above the national average of 27%. [5] This is only expected to increase as the population continues to age, however it is not just because of age that the rate is so high. People of all ages in Cumberland have disabilities.

The Municipality and Villages have three municipal service centre buildings, a community centre, libraries, fire halls, parking lots, rinks, parks, trails, and more. Each signing partner (Cumberland,

River Hebert, and Pugwash) is responsible for the Plan's actions for each of their jurisdictions.

There are no fully funded or fixed-route bus services in Cumberland County, and walkability is a challenge in most communities. Depending on region, 15-27% of Cumberland residents live in poverty, above the national average of 11%.¹ [6]

*The Human Rights Remedy*² [7] is a document that will change the way people with disabilities access support in Nova Scotia. It has problems and solutions to give more individual choice and control. Read more about the Remedy here: [Plain Language Summary](#).

Now through 2026 and 2027, people with disabilities are moving out of institutions and into community. The institution in Cumberland is called [The Sunset Community](#), but people could be moving to the county from across the province.

The Municipality has a lot of work to do to get ready for this exciting, but challenging shift. Since every person has a wide variety of interests and needs, this change will affect every part of Nova Scotian communities. Stores, libraries, governments, theatres, rinks, and more must all work together to prepare.

¹ "For a one-person household, the after-tax low-income measure (LIM-AT) is \$26,503. For larger households, this amount is adjusted upward by multiplying it by the square root of household size." [Statistics Canada](#)

² In 2014, Beth MacLean, Sheila Livingstone, Joseph Delaney and Disability Rights Coalition of Nova Scotia (DRC) took the province to court over a human rights complaint: that people with disabilities did not have control over their own lives, such as where they lived or how their money was managed.

Schedule

Items in this Plan have been organized into the following categories:

- Now: if not already finished or started, these items should be started in 2025 and completed by 2027.
- Next: these items should be started in 2026 and completed by 2028.
- Later: these items should be completed by 2030.
- Ongoing: these items should always be happening. There can always be progress, but they will never be fully “finished”.

Equity & Diversity Plan

REALITY	EQUALITY	EQUITY	JUSTICE
One gets more than is needed, while the other gets less than is needed. Thus, a huge disparity is created.	The assumption is that everyone benefits from the same supports. This is considered to be equal treatment.	Everyone gets the support they need , which produces equity.	All 3 can see the game without supports or accommodations because the cause(s) of the inequity was addressed . The systemic barrier has been removed.

The Municipality also now has an Equity & Anti-Racism Plan, available spring 2025 on the “Equity and Diversity” page of the website. The issues between the two plans are related and overlap when people have multiple identities, for example, a Deaf African Nova Scotian man. This is called “intersectionality”, a term coined by American scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw.

The Municipality decided to have separate rather than combined plans so each could have their own focused dedication. The importance of the relationship between these issues is recognized.

Community Engagement



The Community Engagement Coordinator went on a “listening tour” of Cumberland in August 2024.

Listening Tour

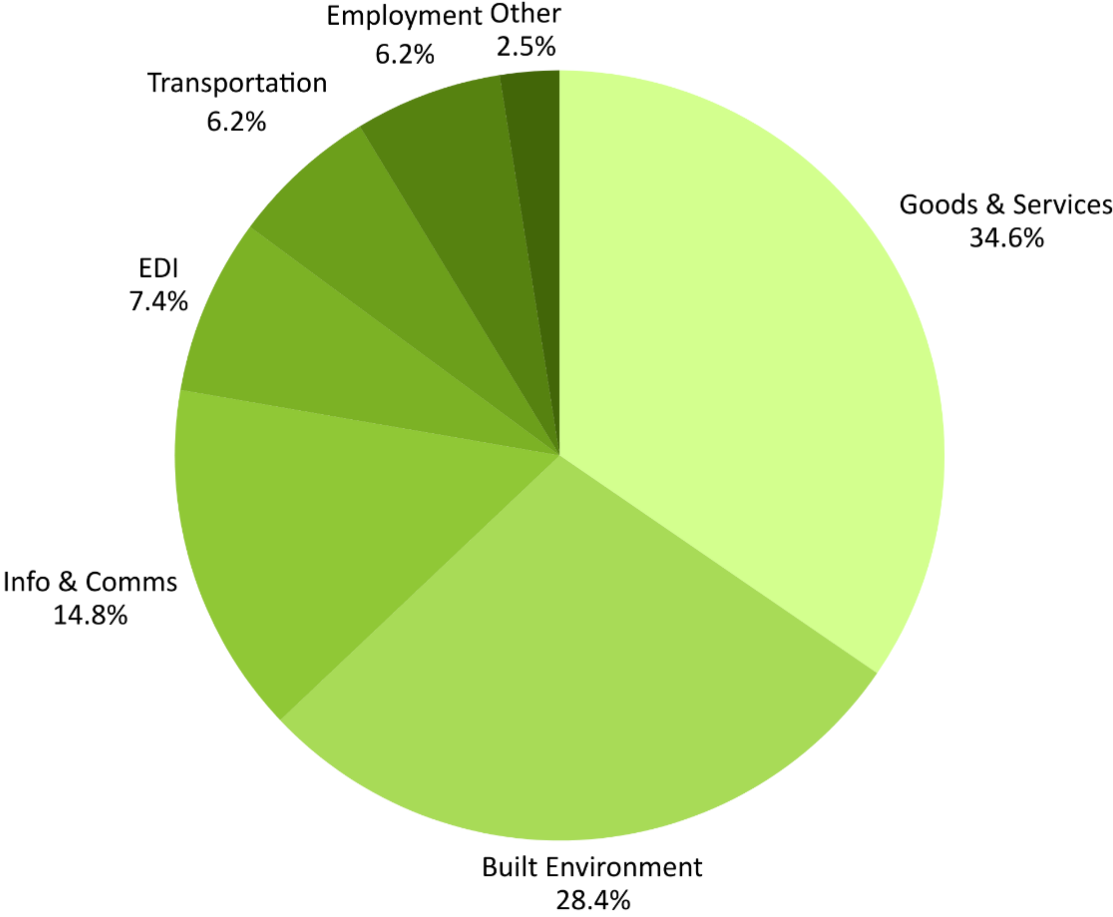
The Community Engagement Coordinator went on a “listening tour” in August 2024. Since she wanted to reach the most people possible, she set up a booth at each farmers’ market in Cumberland. At the markets, she gathered people’s opinions in four ways:

- 1. Conversations
- 2. Anonymous online survey
- 3. Anonymous written comments
- 4. An activity: pots with labels of different issues/barriers sat on the table. People were given popsicle sticks. If they had experienced barriers in a particular area, they would place their popsicle stick in that pot.



The Plan was originally released in 2022, with online public engagement through the early COVID-19 pandemic. See Appendix A for more detail.

Results (2024)



The Coordinator wrote down each comment a citizen made. Of all applicable³ comments, things like recreation, planning, service centres, and snow clearance were of greatest concern:

- Goods & Services: 35% of all comments
- The built environment (28%)
- Information and communications (15%)
- Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) (7%)
- Transportation (6%)
- Employment (6%)
- Other (poverty reduction) (3%).

The Coordinator also benefited from meetings and events with the Association of Municipal Administrators NS, the Accessibility Directorate, the Office of L'nu Affairs, African Nova Scotian Affairs, the Tamarack Institute, Cumberland Adult Network for Upgrading (CAN-U), the Disability Partnership, Cumberland Partners, Cumberland Public Libraries, NS Public Health, SOAR Community Health Board, SeaChange Collab, NS League of Equal Opportunities, and more.

³ Applicable = things the Municipality has control over. Other comments (e.g. about provincial or private roads) have been removed from this data set.

Areas of Focus

The Plan includes the following [areas of focus](#).

- **Goods & Services:** Equal access to Municipal services (e.g. snow removal, recreation programs)
- **Built Environment:** Accessible buildings and public spaces.
- **Information & Communication:** Clear and accessible information (e.g. bills, social media posts).
- **Employment:** Equal access to jobs with fair practices.
- **Transportation:** Equal access to transportation for all.

Goods and Services



Accessing beaches is an important part of mental and physical wellness. At Heather Beach, a hippocampe (beach wheelchair, similar to pictured) and mobi mats are available to enjoy. Cropped image courtesy Nova Scotia Parks website.

Vision

Residents and visitors of all abilities have equal access to municipal goods and services.

Starting Point

Overview

The Municipality provides many services. For example:

- Customer Service counters in several locations.
- Communicating and providing information to the public.
- Plowing some streets and sidewalks (Springhill & Parrsboro), including snow and ice removal.
- Recreation Facilities and Programming.

- Building and Development Permits.
- Tax and water services, bills, and inquiries.
- Police and volunteer firefighting services
- Emergency Management services
- Bylaw enforcement
- Other services such as sewer and streetlights, in some areas.

Progress Made

- Training
 - A building inspector based in Upper Nappan has Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification.
 - Since the accessibility survey, many front-line staff have taken accessible services training.
- Tax payments can now be made in a variety of ways, including online, by mail, and by phone, and through pre-authorized payment, banks, cheque, and credit card.
- Some of the documents on the website are now a text-recognized PDF format. This is an improvement over previously scanned image PDFs, because people with screen readers can hear the content.
- An [adapted equipment loan program](#) is available. Residents can enjoy activities and supplies like sledge hockey, adapted lifejackets, hippocampes, and adapted bicycles.
- Parrsboro has an accessible playground (built 2023), and the Sharpe Splash & Play with many accessible features was built in 2022 in Springhill.
- The Municipality is collaborating with Build Nova Scotia, the Municipality of Colchester, and Xplore Inc. to bring better

rural internet to the region. Improvements have already been made in some areas.

- The Emergency Management Office (EMO) Coordinator has worked with seniors and seniors’ housing to develop a contact list for use in the event of an emergency.

Barriers

- Buildings in which goods services are offered may not be fully accessible.
- Staff are not yet trained to plan accessible events.
- There is a lack of accessible and affordable transportation to services and events.
- The Municipality currently does not provide communication support, for example, ASL interpretation services.
- The Municipality’s website and many online documents are not fully accessible.

Policies

The Municipality will review policies with the goal to deliver goods and services without bias and that no resident is denied a service because of a disability.



Actions

Ongoing

	Priority
GS1	Ongoing staff training in providing services and programs to all people including those with disabilities, including mental health stigma & awareness.
GS2	Communicate in accessible ways with employees and the public.

GS3	Provide accessible buildings and spaces for positive customer experiences, including seating, well-lit and sensory sensitive spaces, and accessible washrooms.
GS4	Include an “Accessibility Lens”/Impact Analysis in relevant reports to council and staff.
GS5	Use provincial standards (when implemented) to support plan development.

Now

	Priority
GS6 	Hire an Accessibility Coordinator to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lead the accessibility advisory committee’s development of the Plan. - Improve organizational awareness of accessibility. - Monitor progress in the Plan and push for its priorities and actions in the Municipality’s budget cycle and other plans. - Assist the public and employees with accessibility accommodation. - Schedule frequent visits to communities to continue to develop relationships, build trust, and improve communications.
GS7 	Welcome service animals and support persons, including staff training.
GS8	Install devices (such as pocket-talkers) to help staff communicate with people who are hard of hearing or d/Deaf.
GS9	Promote and better organize the adaptive equipment program.
GS10	Create a vulnerable persons registry to improve emergency management procedures for people with disabilities.

GS11	Following consultation with d/Deaf residents, develop a policy for offering communication services such as American Sign Language (ASL).
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Next

	Priority
GS12	Engage a third party to review key policies, procedures, and practices (e.g. emergency, procurement, budgeting) with accessibility in mind, and consider it for all future policies.
GS13	Investigate how to better support seniors with strategies such as a focus group, feasibility study, or working with the Community Health Boards.
GS14	Explore accessible and affordable transportation options to select municipal programs and events.

Later

	Priority
GS15	Accessible digital content, technologies, and platforms.
GS16	Clear and accessible wayfinding signage to municipal services and events in accordance to CSA-B651-23 standards.
GS17	Consider including accessibility specifications in RFP criteria.
GS18	Planning accessible public meetings and events by referring to ' Guide to Planning Accessible Meetings and Events ' and ' Guide to Planning Accessible Online Meetings and Events ', Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate, Department of Justice.

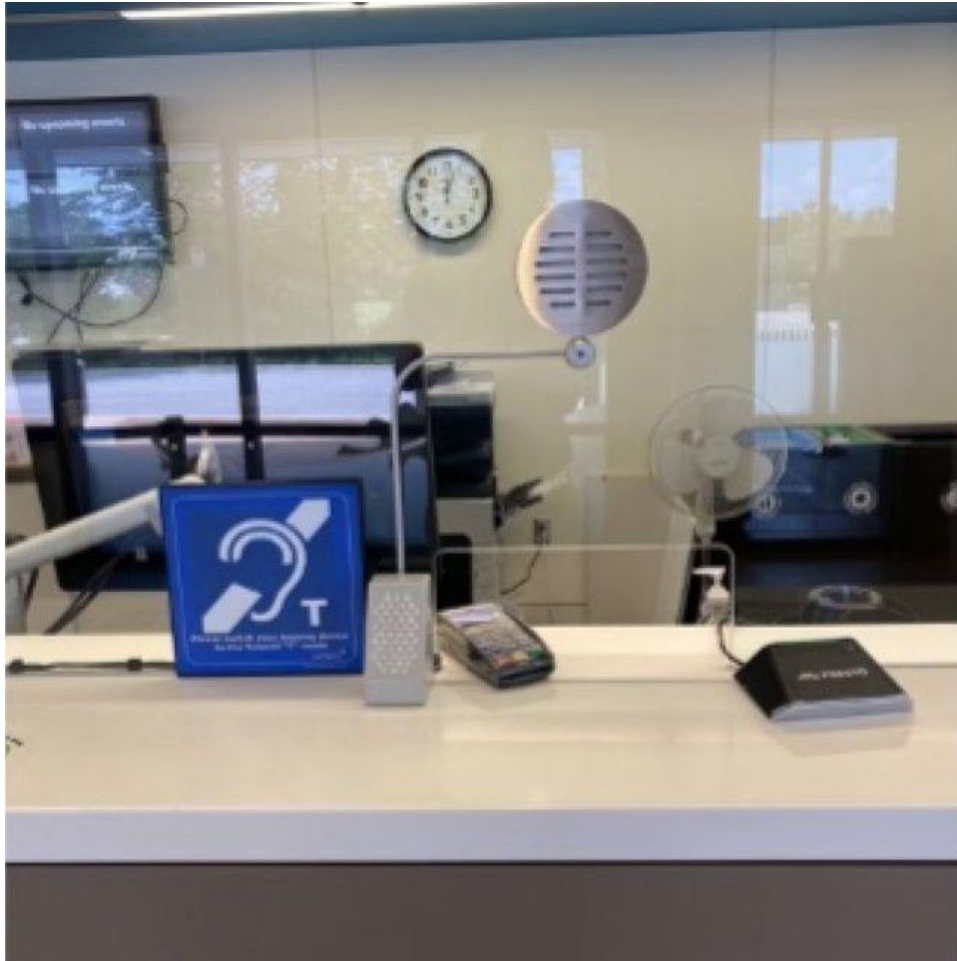


Figure 1 Service counter with a speech transfer system, international ear signage, and hearing loop aerial - Town of Oakville, Ontario.

Built Environment



The office of the Glooscap Campground just outside of Parrsboro.

Vision

Public buildings and spaces will be as accessible as possible in spaces the Municipality owns, leases, or operates. The Municipality will also encourage citizens and the business community to make other public and private spaces accessible.

Starting Point

Overview

The Municipality owns, leases, and operates public places including three service centre buildings, a community centre, libraries, fire halls, many roads and sidewalks in Springhill and Parrsboro, parks, trails, streetlights, and more.

Progress Made

- A new accessible washroom was included in renovations to the Upper Nappan Service Centre.
- A playground with many accessible features was built in Springhill in 2022.
- An accessible playground was built in Parrsboro in 2023. The next planned phases of construction will make the surrounding areas accessible, as well.
- Accessibility audits have been conducted on some buildings and sidewalks.
- Junction Road in Springhill was widened and now includes improved sidewalks, curb cuts, and tactile plates at crossing points.

Barriers

- Some sidewalks are uneven, cracked and crumbling, narrow or blocked, or missing where needed.
- Curb cuts at crosswalks are sometimes not flat or missing where needed.
- Some crosswalks are not clearly marked and do not have light, sound, or tactile indicators.
- Provincially owned rural road shoulders are narrow with steep drops in places, and dangerous for pedestrian use.
- Lighting may not be bright enough around some sidewalks, parking areas, and building entrances.
- Some building entries or washrooms are not accessible.
- Stairs often do not have contrast strips and tactile indicators.
- Winter maintenance cannot clear fast enough for both types of travelers: cars and walkers/wheelers.

- Sometimes sidewalks are not clear enough for scooters or pedestrians with balance issues.
- It can be very expensive to update (retrofit) existing buildings and other infrastructure to make them more accessible.
- It's challenging for the Municipality to fully fund all infrastructure projects, including accessibility projects.
- Many roads and sidewalks are provincially owned and maintained (everywhere except Parrsboro & Springhill).

Policies

The Committee recommends that the Municipality review its policies to:

- Provide basic access for people of all abilities to public buildings, washrooms, and parks.
- Improve sidewalks, crosswalks, and curb cuts, and maintain them in accordance with [CSA-B651-23](#).

Actions

Ongoing

	Priority
BE1	New municipal buildings (including retrofits), outdoor spaces (including sidewalks), roads, and trails will comply with national standards: CSA-B651-23.
BE2	Using available resources (RHF, CSA) review emergency management and building exit plans with people with disabilities. Train staff on these procedures.

Next

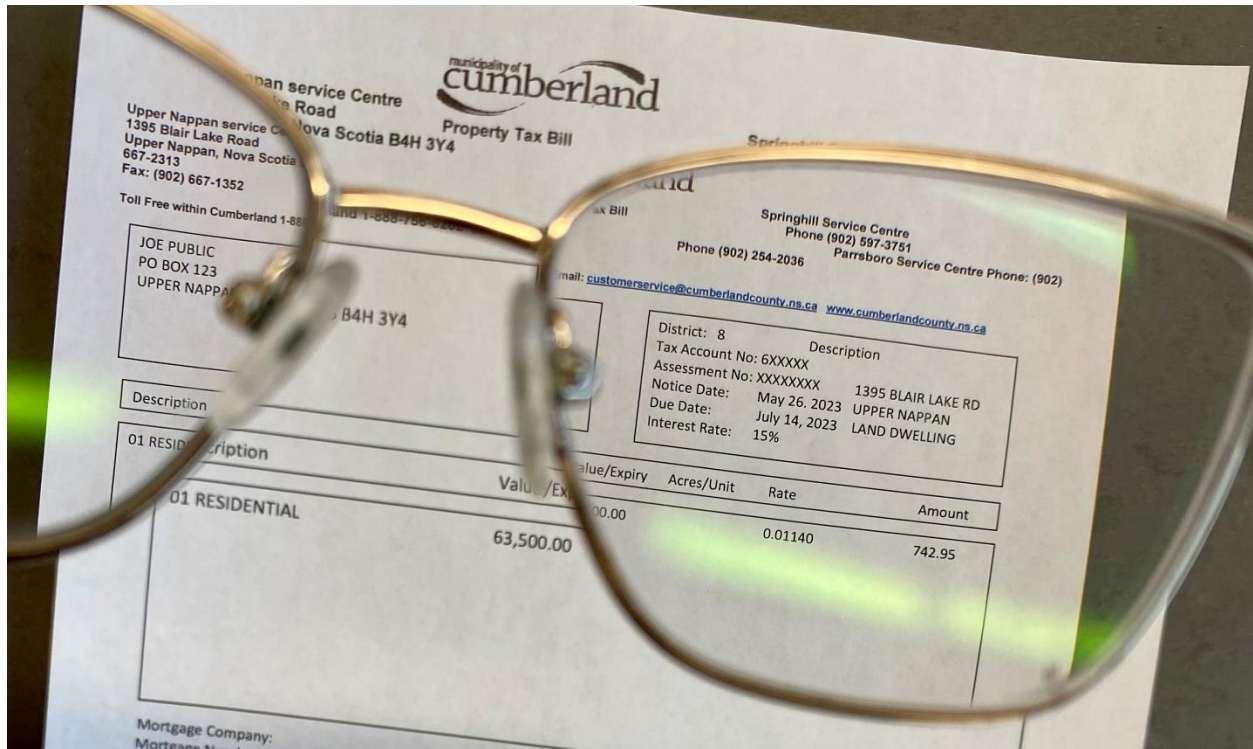
	Priority
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BE3	Continue audits of municipal buildings, sidewalks, etc. to document needs. When auditing, consider: Whole Journey Approach Universal Design Seasonal Maintenance
BE4	Improve accessibility in Municipally-owned libraries.
BE5	Engage with Public Works to identify ways to improve winter maintenance, such as snowbanks at crosswalks, and make changes where possible.

Later

	Priority
BE6	Conduct a “gap analysis” of where sidewalks, crosswalks, and lighting are lacking and needed.
BE7	When closing sidewalks for construction, offer an accessible detour.

Information and Communications



Vision

Information and communications will be easy to understand. The Municipality will take steps to build understanding about better communication, barriers, and people's accessibility rights.

Starting Point

Overview

The Municipality delivers information to the public in many ways, including:

- The website, social media, newspaper, mail, and email.

- Public meetings of Municipal Council and Committees of Council.
- Open houses and other public meetings.
- Kiosks (display structures) to promote events and special municipal meetings.

Progress Made

- People can watch Council meetings live online during the meeting, and links to recordings of the meetings can be accessed on YouTube.
- Since the accessibility survey, training has been offered to staff and council by the committee on digital accessibility, including:
 - Assistive Technology and the Benefits of Digital Accessibility
 - Accessibility using Audio Video
 - Creating Accessible Documents using MS Word
 - Creating Accessible PDFs
 - Accessible Communications and Plain Language
- A reference guide for creating accessible MS Word documents was distributed to staff.

Barriers

- There is currently no process for hearing-impaired individuals to attend or participate in in-person public meetings, including meetings of Municipal Council and Advisory Committees.
- Even with improved online tools and general formatting, the Municipality's website is not accessible to people with visual

impairments (screen readers do not accurately read the pages' contents)

- Although training has been offered, not all staff are sufficiently trained in accessible communications.
- Plain language is not frequently used.
- Many people do not know that others face barriers to accessibility.

Policies

It is recommended that the Municipality review its policies to consider the following:

- Provide information in an accessible format, or with communication supports that consider a person's specific needs. Build a campaign to promote this service to the public.
- Ensure the Municipality's digital presence (e.g., website and social media) and Information Technology systems are designed for people of all abilities.
- Hold all public meetings (in-person and virtual) in barrier-free locations observing the [event guides](#) from the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate.
- Continue to train staff in better ways to communicate with people of all abilities, and to provide information in an accessible format.

Actions

Ongoing

	Priority
IC1	Ensure the Municipality's web presence meets the latest Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).
IC2	Provide different versions of key municipal resources (e.g. in large print and/or in plain language). Examples include recreation guides, emergency management information, and bylaws.
IC3	Use provincial standards (when implemented) to support plan development.

Now

	Priority
IC4	All public communications should be in plain language.
IC5	All new bylaws and policies should have a plain language summary.
IC6	Reformat bills (water, tax) to be in large print as the standard rather than the exception.

Next

	Priority
IC7	Improve signage and wayfinding for municipal buildings consistent with accessibility best practice.
IC8	Ensure digital communications and documents are screen readable. Pay people who use screen readers to test document accessibility.

IC9	Train staff in accessible documents, plain language, and how to communicate with people with varying disabilities (e.g. dementia, autism).
IC10	Work with the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM). Request accessibility to be included in the public notice requirements of the Municipal Government Act.

Later

	Priority
IC11	Plan for meetings with enough time to meet accommodation requests.

Employment



Accommodations for employees can look a variety of ways. Here, a Municipal employee enjoys using a sit-stand desk.

Vision

The Municipality is committed to supporting all employees to succeed by removing accessibility barriers in the workplace. The Municipality welcomes an increasingly diverse population and aims to adjust with open-mindedness to changing workplace norms.

Starting Point

Overview

The Municipality employs over 100 people year-round, and more in the summer months. There are 9 elected representatives on Municipal Council, including the mayor.

Progress Made

- Members of Council receive laptops for reading agendas and Municipal documents. This makes reading more accessible because users can adjust to their eyesight.
- The Municipality’s official accommodations process was outlined in the personnel policy in October 2024.

Barriers

- Some workplaces aren’t yet very accessible (e.g. built environment, information and communications)
- Staff are not thoroughly trained to understand which barriers limit opportunities for qualified candidates.

Policies

It is recommended that the Municipality review its policies to consider the following:

- Be an equitable employer that values diversity and supports its employees to succeed.
- Offer accommodation during recruitment.
- Work with employees to build an understanding of the value of accessibility and inclusion.

Actions

Ongoing

	Priority
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EM1	Build capacity for a culture of inclusion that supports diverse staff and council to thrive.
EM2	Use provincial standards (when implemented) to support plan development.

Now

	Priority
EM3 ✓	Develop an Employment Equity Statement.
EM4 ✓	Clearly state in job postings that they are open to people with disabilities and that accommodations are available in the workplace.
EM5 ✓	Improve support and flexibility in the workplace by providing access to adaptive technologies and accommodations.
EM6	Consider and implement employees' accommodation requests as appropriate (e.g. assistive devices). Promote this on job postings.

Next

	Priority
EM7	Investigate strategies to reach a wider and more diverse audience with job postings.
EM8	Plan accessible meetings and events for staff and council by referring to ' Guide to Planning Accessible Meetings and Events ' and ' Guide to Planning Accessible Online Meetings and Events ' from the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate.

Transportation



Cumberland County Transportation Services (CCTS) has a fleet of accessible, hybrid vehicles to get you where you need to go, when you need to get there.

Vision

Due to increasing need, the Municipality and CCTS will reimagine what rural transportation can look like and make accessible transportation more available and affordable.

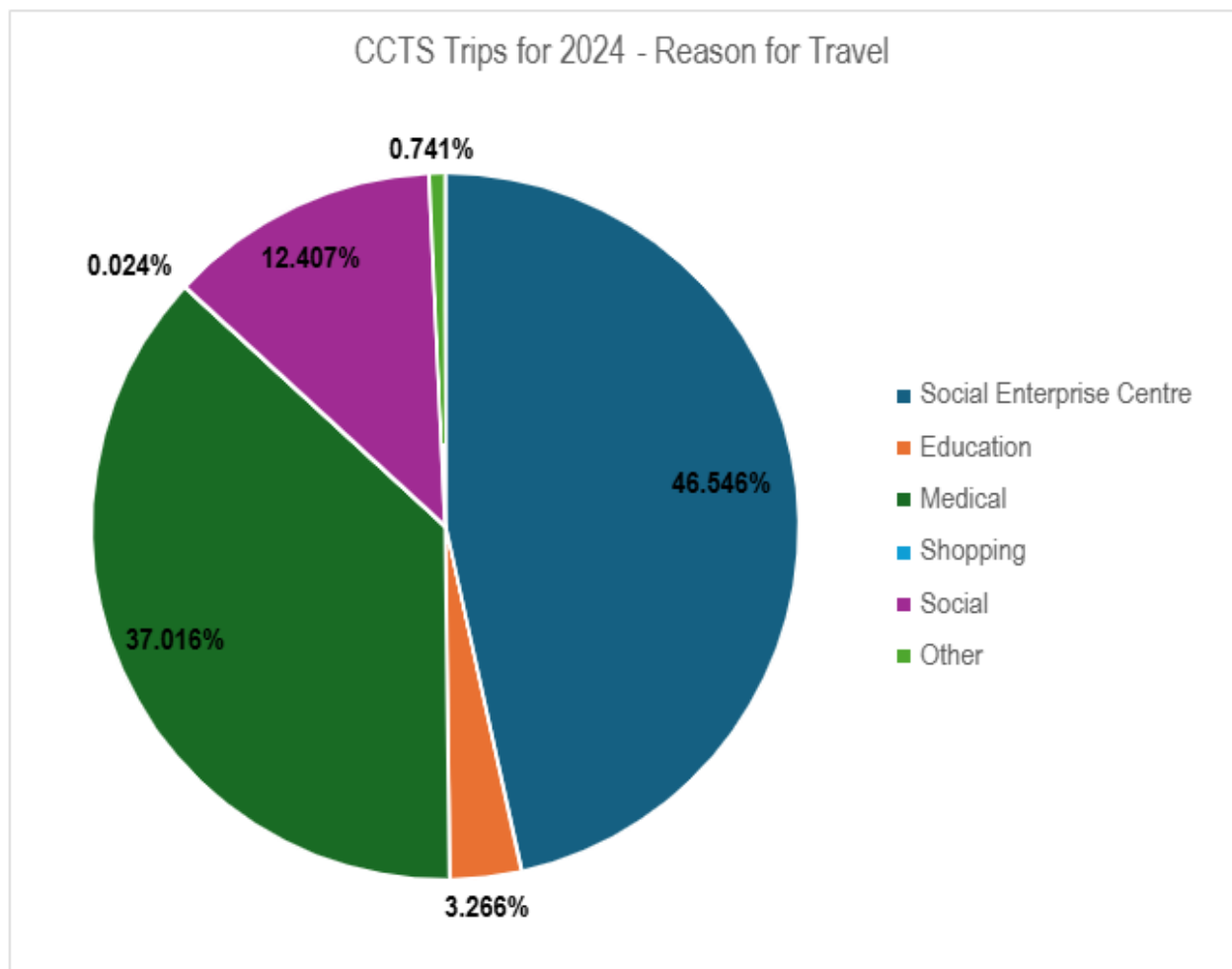
Starting Point

Overview

Cumberland County Transportation Services (CCTS) is a non-profit rural transportation service. They seek to provide reliable, affordable, and accessible transportation to residents of Cumberland County. The service is incredibly valuable to those in the county without transportation, especially those with disabilities. Some challenges remain with needing to book appointments far ahead, and although subsidized, cost is still an issue for many. Taxi service makes up the balance of local public transportation, with some accessible options. The province also has [a pilot program](#) offering free rides for medical appointments.

Progress Made

- CCTS served 8,237 clients in one year (January to December 2024), almost double the number of people (4256) served April 2020-March 2021.
 - 23% were in wheelchairs or scooters, 77% were not.
 - See graph below: 37% were travelling for medical reasons, 46% were special needs clients travelling to Social Enterprise Centres (work), 12% social including the VON Adult Day Programs, 3% education, and 2% for other reasons including shopping.
 - 32% were seniors (65+), 1% youth (under 18), and 67% general population.
 - CCTS vehicles drove clients a total of 350,181 kilometres in 2024.



Pie graph: CCTS Trips for 2024, Reasons for Travel, courtesy CCTS. Stats pictured are also listed in the text above.

- CCTS has five accessible vehicles and one non-accessible vehicle in its fleet, and four of these vehicles are hybrid vans.
- CCTS offers a pre-booked door-to-door-service for all residents of Cumberland County within Cumberland County, Nova Scotia, Southern New Brunswick and PEI as required.
- Priorities are given to medical appointments/specialized mobility needs and/or clients with financial concerns.

Barriers

- CCTS vehicles must be booked at least 72 hours in advance (due to the requirements of its Motor Carrier License) and often a week or more in advance, especially if going beyond Cumberland.
- Cost of transportation is a barrier to many, even though fares are subsidized (lower because of government support).
- Some people might not know about CCTS.
- Some have a misconception that CCTS transit service hours match office hours. CCTS vans operate Monday to Friday from 5:30 am to 7:00pm, Saturday from 5:30 am to 4:30pm, evenings and on Sundays as required.
- Other than private taxis, there are no other transportation services for getting around the local area.

Policies

It is recommended that the Municipality review its policies to consider the following:

- Continue to support Cumberland County Transportation Services.

Actions

Ongoing

	Priority
TR1	Use provincial standards (when implemented) to support plan development.

Now

	Priority
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TR2 ✓	Promote CCTS on the Municipality's ' Accessible Cumberland ' webpage.
TR3 ✓	Municipal staff will work with CCTS staff to review accessibility at frequent stops, including snow removal at municipally-owned facilities.
TR4	Provide a report to Council about the importance of increased transportation options, such as fixed-route transit or weekly trips from smaller communities to grocery stores.

Next

	Priority
TR5	Work closely with the province, Sunset Communities, CCTS, and other partners to support transportation solutions for all, including rural residents with disabilities.
TR6	Develop an active transportation plan.

Implementing the Plan



Image courtesy Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate.

Responsibilities

- Municipal Council is responsible for
 - Adopting and overseeing the Joint Accessibility Plan.
- The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) is responsible for
 - Implementing the Joint Accessibility Plan.
 - Appointing a staff member as Accessibility Coordinator.
- The Accessibility Advisory Committee is responsible for
 - Developing and updating the Joint Accessibility Plan.
 - Monitoring success of the Plan.
 - Feedback and recommendations to Council.
- The Accessibility Coordinator is responsible for
 - Supporting the work of the Accessibility Advisory Committee and leading it in its responsibilities.
 - Monitoring and making progress in implementation of the Plan.

- Advising on Municipal budgets, planning documents, and processes aligning with the Plan.
- Continuing efforts to improve organizational awareness of accessibility.
- Supporting staff who may need accessibility accommodations to succeed at their jobs.
- The Villages of Pugwash and River Hebert are responsible for:
 - Plan actions related to facilities they own.

Evaluating

The Municipality will engage the public to review and evaluate the Plan by 2027. The Coordinator will use the public's thoughts when editing the Plan. An edit of the Plan will be due the following year per provincial legislation.

The Committee will also assess the Municipality's progress annually with community engagement and an accompanying report. The report will be provided to Council and made publicly available on the Municipality's website by March 31 of each year.

[Read the first report \(March 2024\).](#)

The Plan will be updated every 3 years or as frequently as appropriate or required.

The Report Card will be a public document. It will be posted on the Municipality's website.

Responding to Questions and Complaints

- Anyone can make a complaint or ask a question to the Municipality. These should be directed to [customer service](#). Customer service will direct the complaint to the relevant department (e.g. winter maintenance to Public Works) with the Coordinator acting as a resource for their knowledge on accessibility.
- The Coordinator will keep a record of all concerns on which they are consulted, and will provide summary updates to the Committee on a regular basis. These updates will become part of the Committee's continual review of the Plan and may inform future changes.

Appendices

A - Public Engagement Results



The Community Engagement Coordinator speaks with a constituent at Welcoming Week Cumberland.

Community consultations began in early 2020. There have been online surveys, and there was a Listening Tour of Cumberland in summer 2024 (see page 8 for details). Some committee meetings between 2020-24 have been open to the public.

The 2020 survey was aimed towards residents of the Municipality affected by disability, and its purpose was to find how the Municipality might be more accessible to residents, visitors, and staff with disabilities. Of 37 respondents:

- 48.6% were a person with a disability

- 34.3% were a family member, friend, or caregiver of a person with a disability
- 14.3% were an employee or volunteer at an organization that provides disability services.
- 71.4% of respondents were residents of the Municipality, and 31.4% worked in the Municipality.

The Committee did not require people to say what kind of disability they experience. People identified disabilities of mobility, vision, hearing, speech, vision, cognition, strength, balance, and health (including mental health), to varying degrees. The survey responses were a reminder of the importance of direct consultation with people with different disabilities to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to inclusion.

Accessibility as a Right

When asking what the top accessibility priorities should be, citizens reported that all community services and infrastructure should be accessible to everyone, not to have some actions prioritized over others. Indeed, the *Nova Scotia Accessibility Act* recognizes accessibility as a human right and sets a goal of an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030. It was also noted that infrastructure is interconnected, and it needs to be looked at as a whole journey. For example, a building with a ramp is not accessible if it leads to a narrow door or does not have an automatic opener. Seasonal maintenance, lighting, and signage are also important factors.

Timelines in this Plan give an idea of what can be accomplished now, next, and later. It will not exclude or prevent other items from getting the attention they need.

Most Improvement Needed

Respondents were asked if the following categories were “first priority”, “lower priority”, or “unsure”. The percentages below reflect how many people considered each item to be “first priority” (e.g. if everyone chose “first priority” for every item, each would be listed at 100%):

- Sidewalk improvements were rated as the highest priority (94%)
- Library buildings (84%)
- service buildings (72%)
- parks (71%)
- trails (63%)
- sports and recreation (62%)
- digital information (55%)
- fire hall buildings (45%)
- Dr. Carson & Marion Murray Community Centre (43%)
- Glooscap Campground & RV (26%)

Although the Committee wanted to know where efforts were most needed, they acknowledge that all aspects of accessibility are important and often interconnected.

Sidewalks

Sidewalks were the barrier most commented on in the survey. Many sidewalks were found to be in poor condition (crumbling and uneven), lacking continuity, or lacking altogether. SOAR

(Springhill Oxford Amherst and Region) Community Health Board sent a letter to the Committee calling for a sidewalk between the Town of Amherst and the Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre.

Curb cuts in some places are not sufficiently flush to the street and are lacking tactile contrasted indicators. Some crosswalks should be marked more clearly and with light and sound indicators.

Survey respondents also pointed out a need for wide paved shoulders on rural, provincially-owned roads where sidewalks do not exist. Existing sidewalks needing improvement in the Municipality are in Springhill, Parrsboro, and Pugwash (however, Pugwash's streets and sidewalks are the province's responsibility).

Buildings

Some buildings' automatic door buttons are not working. Sometimes there is not enough space to push an automatic door button *and* move out of the doorway with a wheelchair as the second door opens. A respondent who uses a wheelchair said that some counters and cash areas are too high or distanced from the person in the chair. The two floors of the Upper Nappan Service Centre both have ground level access, but there is not an elevator another way to go between floors indoors.

It was suggested that although the Dr. Carson & Marion Murray Community Centre (DCMMCC) in Springhill is a great facility, the washrooms should have been designed without entry doors.

Trails, Playgrounds, Parks, & Businesses

The need for accessible trails, playgrounds, and parks was noted. The need for local businesses to be accessible in their public and private spaces was suggested.

Communication and Information

Many respondents were unsure how the Municipality was doing with digital accessibility of information on the website. The need to improve in all areas were noticed by some, especially calendars of community events and council, by-law and policy documents, the website itself, and the lack of adequate rural internet to access municipal information and services.

Adequate rural internet availability and affordability has become ever more important. It is needed to access anything and everything. Poor connection leaves rural residents at a strong disadvantage to engage with things such as online work or education, virtual health care, or entertainment. Making recorded information and braille available were suggested, with the option of alternative formats posted on the website.

Training & Awareness

Finally, respondents saw the need for staff training and awareness around disability; service and infrastructure have been negatively impacted due to lack of accessibility knowledge.

B - Reference Links

- [Access by Design 2030](#)
- [The Accessibility Planning Toolkit for Municipalities](#)
- [Interim Accessibility Guidelines for Indoor and Outdoor Spaces](#)
- [Human Rights Remedy: Plain Language Summary](#)

- [Nova Scotia Access By Design 2030](#)
- [Nova Scotia Accessibility Act](#)
 - [PDF](#)
 - [ASL](#)
- [Nova Scotia Building Code Regulations](#)
- [NS Health Pilot Program: Free Transportation to Appointments](#)
- [Phase I Built Environment Recommendations](#)
- [Report on the progress of this Plan as of March 2024.](#)
- [Rick Hansen Foundation](#)
- [The Sunset Community](#)
- [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\)](#)

C - Accessibility Advisory Committee Terms of Reference

[Terms of Reference.](#)

D - Accessibility Advisory Committee Members

Stephanie Keilhack (Chair, staff lead, lived experience)

Amanda Purdy (Vice Chair, Sunset Community Representative)

Melanie Prendergast (Secretary, Municipality of Cumberland staff)

Maggie Pitts (Former Chair, Municipality of Cumberland staff)

Catherine Aquino Russell (lived experience)

Helen Sims (Cumberland County Transportation Services/CCTS representative)
David MacEwan (Village of Pugwash and Sunset Community representative)
Christie Blackie (Village of Pugwash representative)
Darrell Fagan (Village of River Hebert representative)
Celina Kinnear (Nova Scotia Early Childhood Development Intervention Services/NSECDIS representative)

E - Definitions

Accessibility: Something is easy to use. This means the design of products, devices, services, or environments, especially for people with disabilities.

Accommodation: A change made to help someone with a disability. For example, a special office chair that helps their back pain.

Appeal: Make a formal request to clarify or change a decision.

Barrier (to accessibility): Something that stands in the way. For example, stairs leading up to a shop that stop a person with a wheelchair from entering.

“Anything that hinders or challenges the full and effective participation in society of persons with disabilities, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or practice.” –Nova Scotia Accessibility Act (2017)

Braille: A reading and writing system with raised dots on a page designed for people who are blind or visually impaired to read with their fingers.

Built Environment: Human-made space where people live, work, and recreate.

CCTS: Cumberland County Transportation Services

CSA-B651-23: Standards often used in industries like construction to build better, safer environments.

Disability: A condition that makes it harder for a person to participate, sometimes or always.

“A physical, mental, intellectual, learning or sensory impairment, including an episodic disability that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders an individual’s full and effective participation in society.” - NS Accessibility Act (2017)

Equality: Everyone is treated the same way.

Equity: (Different from “equality”) Everyone is treated fairly, based on their needs and abilities. This might mean being treated differently because everyone has different needs.

Infrastructure: The structures that makes a community liveable and keeps its systems working (e.g. roads, water treatment, power).

Intersectionality: a thought process that considers different parts of a person’s identity (e.g. race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability), and how these things intersect (combine). Because people have multiple unique identity points, it creates very unique experiences of privilege, oppression, and discrimination. [10]

Municipality: The Municipality of the County of Cumberland.

Pedestrian: A person walking or wheeling (using an assistive device at a similar speed to walking) outside.

Plain language: Text, conversation, or presentation that a reader or listener can understand easily and completely.

Retrofit: To add features to a building not included in the original design. Similar word: renovation.

Tactile: Related to the sense of touch. This is an accommodation that is often helpful to those who are Blind or low vision.

Universal Design: Designing something so it can be accessed, understood, and used by anyone. For example, not everyone needs a ramp, but anyone can benefit from one (e.g. people with strollers).

Villages of Pugwash and River Hebert:

Communities/Incorporated Villages that are part of the Municipality. They independently own and are responsible for property and services.

WCAG: Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. These guidelines, used around the world, help make websites easier to use for people with disabilities.

Whole Journey Approach: All parts of a trip are linked and equally important. One barrier can make it impossible for a person to complete their trip. Designers use this approach when auditing and updating buildings and outdoor spaces to make sure the end results are fully accessible.

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