

**JOINT REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AGENCY**  
**BUSINESS PLAN - 2023-2024**



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## Message from the Minister of Public Works and Board Chair

We are pleased to present the 2023-2024 Business Plan for the Joint Regional Transportation Agency (JRTA). With the Royal Assent of Bill 61 – Joint Regional Transportation Agency Act in November 2021, the Crown Corporation was created with the express mandate to guide the collaborative development and implementation of a Regional Transportation Plan for the Halifax Regional Municipality and surrounding areas.

This is important work and will contribute greatly to create the right conditions to support our provincial goals in terms of economic prosperity, health, education, population growth and climate change.

Since the JRTA became a Crown Corporation, the Agency has made great strides to activate their mandate through the establishment of key JRTA policies and procedures, engagement of key partners, and the development of Agency governance.

In the fall of 2022, the Agency achieved a significant milestone in the development and release of three (3) key Request for Proposal (RFP) documents that will enable the creation of the Regional Transportation Plan.

The JRTA has *already* developed collaborative partnerships with key sectoral agencies in the creation of the Technical Advisory Board (TAB) where senior leaders from the Department of Public Works, Halifax Regional Municipality, Halifax Port Authority, Halifax International Airport Authority, Halifax Harbour Bridges, and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency are represented and are engaged in creating the right conditions to advance the joint transportation mandate.

Looking to 2023-2024, the JRTA will continue to create opportunities to collaborate, engage, and advance the commitment for positive and proactive regional transportation planning for the province.

Sincerely,

(Original signed by)

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Honourable Kim D. Masland  
Minister

(Original signed by)

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Peter Hackett, P. Eng.  
Deputy Minister and  
JRTA Board Chair

# The Joint Regional Transportation Agency

## Background

Nova Scotia achieved a major milestone in 2021 as the province surpassed a population of one million people, following a period of record growth. Over 45% of the population of Nova Scotia live in the Halifax Regional Municipality. This region has been growing at a rapid pace in recent years at roughly 2% per year. This pace of growth has exceeded even the most optimistic population growth rates and represents some of the most significant growth amongst Canadian municipalities, with Halifax's downtown core increasing by 26.1% between 2016 and 2021, as the most notable.

Population and economic growth are both key priorities for the province. More specifically, the Government of Nova Scotia has identified a target to double the province's population to two million people by 2060, with a significant proportion of that growth anticipated to occur within Halifax and the surrounding region. Planning for such growth requires collaboration across all levels of government, businesses, communities, and interest groups and a long-term strategy to ensure the region's transportation systems can support this in a sustainable and resilient manner.

Halifax is the main service and economic hub of the province and a critical node in the region's transportation system. As a port city, Halifax also functions as an important gateway and regional trade corridor for freight travelling by rail sea, air, and ground. The region includes transportation infrastructure and services under the jurisdiction of all levels of government, managed by various organizations and agencies. This creates challenges and opportunities for planning and developing a regional transportation system that supports future population growth in a coordinated way.

To address the challenges associated with a multi-jurisdictional transportation system, the Government of Nova Scotia passed Bill No. 61 in the fall of 2021 to establish the Joint Regional Transportation Agency (JRTA).

## Mandate

The mandate of the JRTA is to conduct a comprehensive review of all modes of transportation associated with Halifax and the surrounding region including roads, bridges, highways, ferries, transit, rail, airports, and ports for the purpose of creating a Regional Transportation Plan to ensure:

- a regional approach to transportation consistent with the growth and development of Halifax and the surrounding region; and
- the safe, efficient, and coordinated movement of people and goods.

## **Governance**

The JRTA is a provincial Crown Corporation, and the Minister of Public Works is the sole shareholder of the Agency. The President & CEO report to the Deputy Minister of Public Works who is also the Chair of the JRTA Board. The Agency reports to an interim Board of Directors made up of the Deputy Minister/Chair and the Chief Engineer of the Department of Public Works and works closely with a Technical Advisory Board to help inform and guide the work.

Under the leadership of the President & CEO the team have been actively working to build the Agency's capacity including physical office space set up along with establishing policies and procedures related to staffing, project management, partner and stakeholder engagement, and the onboarding of consultants.

Over the next 12 months, the JRTA will continue to evolve and build upon the current governance structure as outlined in the legislation leveraging both full-time resources and consultant services as it works towards fulfilling the goals of its mandate. All of this aimed at the development of the Regional Transportation Plan.

## Our Approach

The JRTA's work through the execution of the Regional Transportation Plan is intended to create a long-term, cohesive approach to regional transportation, that guides integrated transportation and land use decision-making and infrastructure investments for all modes of transportation. To achieve this, the approach must cultivate new and existing partnerships and build solid long-lasting relationships locally, regionally, and nationally. Collaboration is the foundation of the JRTA, and its decision-making will be critical to the success of the JRTA and the development and execution of the Regional Transportation Plan.

The Technical Advisory Board (TAB) is a key collaborative mechanism leveraged by the JRTA. The TAB is comprised of partners representing transportation authorities and agencies in the region, including:

- Nova Scotia Department of Public Works
- Halifax Regional Municipality
- Halifax Harbour Bridges
- Halifax International Airport Authority
- Halifax Port Authority
- Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency



The TAB is a critical forum to support advancing the JRTA's primary mandate – the development of a Regional Transportation Plan, and it also creates a forum to advance aligned TAB partner transportation projects.

The JRTA has begun to engage various provincial departments with aligned and related planning initiatives and projects. The focus of this collaboration is on working together to take a multi-purpose approach to planning and infrastructure decision-making to maximize investments and enhance Nova Scotian's well-being and drive sustainable growth. These connections highlighted in Figure 1, are key to helping understand the intersectionality of mandates, and identify opportunities for collaboration and joint planning.



Figure 1 - Intersection of Provincial Initiatives

The JRTA will continue to foster partnerships and build relationships with other municipalities and the broader community within the preliminary study area (see Figure 2) to share awareness of the JRTA mandate, as well as to create open lines of communication so that diverse perspectives are shared, heard and included in the development of a Regional Transportation Plan.

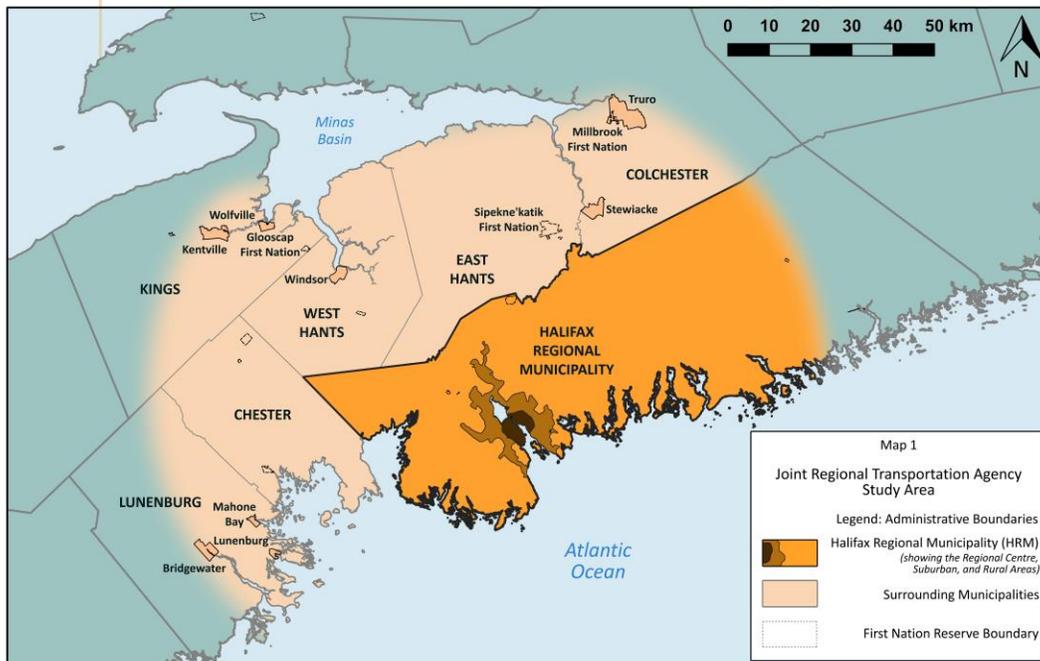


Figure 2 - Preliminary Study Area

## Key Areas of Focus for 2023-2024

There are three key areas of focus for the JRTA in 2023-2024. They include the organization, the development of a Regional Transportation Plan and continuing to identify partnerships and projects. These key areas, initiatives, and expected outcomes are described below.

### Organization

The JRTA was established to provide a collaborative planning forum to address transportation related issues and prepare for rapid growth in Halifax and the surrounding region through the development of a Regional Transportation Plan to help guide long-term transportation investment decisions.

As a newly formed provincial crown corporation significant effort was undertaken in 2022-2023 to develop the organization including the establishment of the JRTA office and hiring of core staff. Work will continue in 2023-2024 to ensure the JRTA is well positioned to successfully deliver on its mandate.

Initiatives	Expected Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop the JRTA's core guiding framework including the organization's vision, mission, and values</li><li>• Establish the JRTA's brand, narrative, digital identity, and website</li><li>• Continue to build organizational capacity and right size the staffing compliment, including the organizational structure, policies, and procedures</li><li>• Building on the above, complete the JRTA's first multi-year corporate strategic plan</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased awareness, understanding and support of the JRTA and the Regional Transportation Plan</li><li>• Increased organizational capacity</li><li>• Developed the foundation for long-term regional transportation planning</li><li>• Multi-year corporate strategic plan</li></ul>

### Regional Transportation Plan

The goal of Regional Transportation Plan is to establish a coordinated and strategic vision for a regional transportation system that facilitates sustainable growth and development and improves the safe and efficient flow of people and goods into, out of, and throughout Halifax and the surrounding region. As the plan's preliminary study area includes a significant proportion of Nova Scotia's population and one of the most important economic hubs in Atlantic Canada, the plan will also play a critical role in advancing broader Provincial Government initiatives to tackle climate change and improve Nova Scotian's health, well-being, and quality of life. The Regional Transportation Plan will be

developed over multiple years with a target completion date of November 2024.

Work began in 2022-2023 to scope out and design the planning process with support and input from the TAB partners. Three core components of the planning process were identified and are described briefly below in Table 1. Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for consultant teams to lead each component were issued in the fall of 2022-2023, and the respective successful proponents were onboarded in January 2023. JRTA staff will be coordinating the work of the consultant teams and collaborating with a Technical Working Group, consisting of representatives from the TAB partners to guide the development of the Plan.

*Table 1 - Regional Transportation Plan Core Components*

<b>Regional Transportation Plan</b>		
<b>Transportation Planning Consultant</b>	<b>Communications &amp; Engagement Consultant</b>	<b>Regional Travel Demand Model Consultant</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Transportation Planning Consultant is responsible for leading the technical aspects of the planning process and supporting the engagement effort.</li> <li>This includes conducting background research, scenario analysis, in-depth system analysis, and ultimately producing the final Regional Transportation Plan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Communications &amp; Engagement Consultant is responsible for developing and executing an engagement strategy to support the Regional Transportation Plan.</li> <li>This includes building awareness of the JRTA and the regional transportation planning process, gathering input and feedback on the plan at various stages.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Travel demand modelling is an integral part of transportation planning, providing key insight into the relationship between transportation, land use, and growth over time and space.</li> <li>A new joint activity-based Regional Travel Demand Model is being developed to support this plan and future collaborative planning efforts.</li> </ul>

The resulting Regional Transportation Plan is expected to guide integrated transportation / land use decision-making and transportation infrastructure investments that ultimately support the achievement of the Provincial Government’s growth target of two million people in Nova Scotia by 2060, provincial and municipal climate targets, and other TAB partner action plans. More details on the Regional Transportation Plan’s desired outcomes and transportation priorities are included in the Appendix.

Initiatives	Expected Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leading the execution of the Regional Transportation Plan through a collaborative process</li> <li>• Develop and execute a robust communication and engagement strategy</li> <li>• Develop a new activity-based travel demand model</li> <li>• Maintain progress towards plan completion by November 2024</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community engagement underway</li> <li>• Planning process underway which includes the existing conditions and foundational analysis as well as the high-level scenario analysis</li> <li>• Travel demand modelling capability to support the in-depth system analysis in 2024-25</li> </ul>

**Partnerships and Projects**

As a new organization, the JRTA will guide the development of a multi-year Regional Transportation Plan that will include a long-term outlook and implementation and funding plan. Recognizing that the region has already experienced significant growth over the past few years, emphasis is needed on identifying aligned work to date and funding opportunities to advance key early win projects.

The TAB partners each have a wealth of transportation planning knowledge and experience and have existing plans, strategies, and studies that can be leveraged. Several initiatives are currently underway, be it in planning or design, while others are on the verge of implementation. Progress on existing initiatives and advancing early wins is key to building momentum around this collaborative forum and at the same time help address current transportation issues.

Initiatives	Expected Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to champion regional collaboration to identify and support the implementation of regional transportation projects</li> <li>• Support the analysis, prioritization, and activation of key partner projects, including the pursuit of funding support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear decision-making criteria for project prioritization</li> <li>• Early win partner projects are advanced</li> </ul>

## Budget Context

The JRTA budget is included in the budget estimates of the Department of Public Works and is outlined below:

Table 2 - Financial Summary

	<b>Estimate 2022-2023</b>	<b>Forecast* 2022-2023</b>	<b>Estimate 2023-2024</b>
<b>REVENUES</b>			
<b>Provincial Funding</b>	\$2,000,000	\$1,800,000	\$2,000,000
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	\$2,000,000	\$1,800,000	\$2,000,000
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Salaries and Benefits	\$540,000	\$540,000	\$860,000
General Operating Expenses	\$1,460,000	\$1,260,000	\$1,140,000
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	\$2,000,000	\$1,800,000	\$2,000,000
<b>NET INCOME/(LOSS)</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0

\*Forecast as of January 2023

## Appendix

Table A - Desired Outcomes for the Regional Transportation Plan

Area	Description
<b>Future-Ready</b>	A long-term planning horizon introduces significant uncertainty. Thus, the plan must identify infrastructure investments and a transportation system that can thrive in an uncertain future. The plan must also establish methods to monitor and respond to trends, technology, and changing socio-economic patterns to ensure regional transportation planning efforts can adapt over time.
<b>Climate Resilient</b>	The impacts from climate change are already being experienced. While the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions will be a major focus of the plan to support the mitigation of more severe impacts, climate change adaptation must also underpin all aspects of the plan to ensure the resulting transportation system and related infrastructure are resilient. Furthermore, the plan must support broader provincial and municipal efforts to protect natural assets and biodiversity as a critical element of climate resiliency by avoiding the siting of transportation infrastructure or encouraging housing and employment nodes in these areas.
<b>Strategically Aligned</b>	The study area (Figure 2: Preliminary Study Area) intersects numerous jurisdictional mandates. As such, the plan must serve to align interests and establish criteria to consistently evaluate recommended projects and actions to arrive at a cohesive regional transportation system. The plan is also anticipated to identify projects which require the pooling of resources among partner agencies or external funding support. Therefore, the plan must also identify and aim to align with existing and anticipated funding opportunities that can support plan implementation.
<b>Action-Oriented</b>	The plan's goals and actions will be guided by broader provincial and municipal policy goals but will be centered on the desired outcomes and needs developed in collaboration with the JRTA staff, partners, interest groups, and the public. To support a phased approach, the plan must include an implementation strategy with specific, achievable actions that are viable and feasible across a range of timescales: immediate (5-year), medium (10 to 15-year), and long-term (20-year plus). The plan must also establish key performance metrics and methods to evaluate progress over time and identify an interim horizon to conduct a review of the goals and actions.

Table B - Regional Transportation Priorities

Area	Description
<b>Safety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance the overall safety and security of the transportation system.</li> <li>Identify initiatives at a regional scale that support the reduction and ultimate elimination of fatalities and serious injury from collisions, while prioritizing and enhancing protection for vulnerable users (e.g., pedestrians and cyclists).</li> <li>Explore initiatives to enhance emergency preparedness.</li> </ul>
<b>Mobility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advance multimodal transportation planning and transportation choice through consideration of all modes of transportation within the region.</li> <li>This includes the movement of people (walking/rolling, cycling, buses, ferries, trains, vehicles) and goods (trucks, trains, ships, planes) as well as the associated infrastructure (streets, active transportation facilities, highways, bridges, rail corridors, ports - marine, ground, air).</li> <li>Explore a combination of conventional measures that may not have been implemented within the study area to date, as well as innovative measures which may not have been studied to date.</li> </ul>
<b>Goods Movement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate goods movement throughout the region, including the adequacy of truck routes, and freight corridors under both existing and future uses, to ensure support of the region’s growing economy.</li> <li>Develop a strategic goods movement network for the region, including associated requirements for those corridors.</li> <li>Consider both national and global markets and the influences on regional goods movement.</li> </ul>
<b>Higher Order Transit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore new or alternative transportation options, including higher order transit concepts (i.e., bus rapid transit, ferries, rail, other future solutions) and under what conditions they may become viable, and timeframes it may be beneficial to implement them.</li> <li>Consider the relationship between conventional and community transit service operating within the study area (Figure 2: Preliminary Study Area) and any new higher-order transit concepts, in particular the importance of these existing systems and service types.</li> </ul>
<b>System Efficiency &amp; Strategic Investments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify opportunities to maximize the efficiency of the existing transportation system.</li> <li>Explore integrated technologies to support greater system efficiencies.</li> <li>Recognizing that not all growth will be accommodated within the existing infrastructure capacity, identify the most strategic and cost-effective options to bring new infrastructure online in an environmentally and financially sustainable way to optimize investments and support the region’s growing population and economy.</li> </ul>

Area	Description
<p><b>Transportation &amp; Land Use Integration</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advance the integration between land use and transportation planning.</li> <li>• Review strategic growth areas in Halifax and surrounding municipalities, housing development, industrial and employment nodes, and the placement of health and education institutions and key destinations.</li> <li>• Identify new potential growth areas that can accommodate the anticipated development as well as areas to be protected (e.g., natural, community, agricultural, resource, and cultural assets).</li> <li>• Determine the most sustainable transportation system that best supports the identified growth areas and development patterns.</li> <li>• Recommend preferred development patterns that support and reinforce the achievement of the preferred future transportation system and broader provincial goals related to climate, health, well-being, and quality of life.</li> <li>• Inform and help guide future provincial and municipal plans (where appropriate).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Technology &amp; Innovation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess societal and technological changes, including disruptive technologies like connected and automated vehicles, among others that may have a significant influence on the region’s transportation system.</li> <li>• Identify policies and investments to better prepare the region for these types of changes, including consideration of those being effectively incorporated in other jurisdictions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Corridor Preservation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify, evaluate, and proactively preserve key corridors (including freight corridors) that serve a critical regional function, or act as key or redundant links between nodes or modes.</li> <li>• This will include the identification of where higher-order transit and road infrastructure may be necessary to complete gaps in the system/network, support goods movement, serve new developments or meet projected demand where it cannot be reasonably addressed through other modes.</li> </ul>