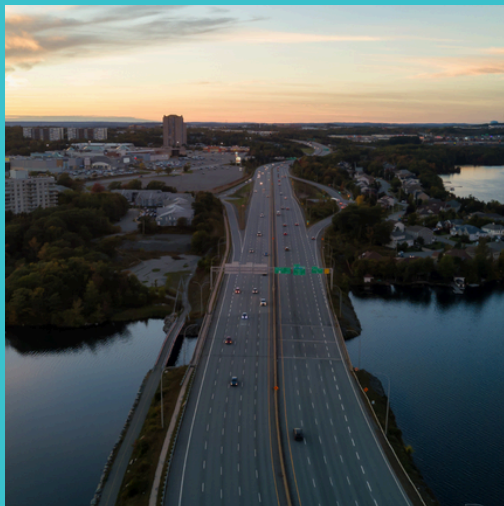
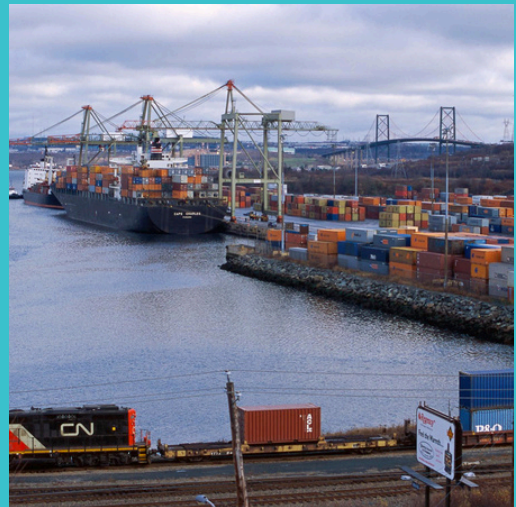


JRTA JOINT REGIONAL
TRANSPORTATION
AGENCY

2024 Annual Report



Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq People. This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" which Mi'kmaq, Maliseet and Passamaquoddy Peoples first signed with the British Crown in 1726.

African Nova Scotian Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that people of African descent have been in Nova Scotia for over 400 years, and we honour and offer gratitude to those ancestors of African descent who came before us to this land.

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Message from the Minister

I'm pleased to introduce the Joint Regional Transportation Agency's (JRTA) 2024 Annual Report.

2024 brought many milestones for the Agency, including the completion of the activity-based transportation demand model, Stage 2 engagement (including community-led outreach), and in-depth work on the Regional Transportation Plan.

The work of the JRTA is helping to bring together the major transportation owners and operators in the region, improving collaboration as they tackle transportation issues that will make travelling easier, safer, and more affordable.

As more people call Nova Scotia home, we'll need to work together to make sure the transportation system is ready for the future of our great province.



Sincerely,

Fred Tilley
Minister, Department of Public Works
Province of Nova Scotia

About the JRTA

Transportation plays a significant role in the day-to-day lives of all Nova Scotians.

It enables access to healthcare, education, and employment opportunities. It allows for the movement of goods to support people and the economy. It fosters independence and can help address issues of isolation and social and economic exclusion.

The JRTA is a provincial Crown corporation tasked with addressing transportation issues associated with rapid growth in Halifax and surrounding communities.

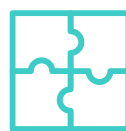
To achieve this mandate, the JRTA is collaborating across organizations and governments to develop a Regional Transportation Plan to ensure the transportation system is prepared for the future.

The Regional Transportation Plan will identify the projects and initiatives needed to meet the region's anticipated levels of growth in an efficient, cost-effective, and sustainable way.



MISSION

Championing regional collaboration to advance transportation solutions through joint planning, partnerships, data-driven analysis, and strategic investments.



MANDATE

Plan for all modes of transportation consistent with the region's growth and development to ensure the safe, efficient, and coordinated movement of people and goods.

Board & Governance

Technical Advisory Board

The JRTA works closely with a Technical Advisory Board (TAB) to help inform and guide the work. This key collaborative mechanism is comprised of senior leaders representing transportation organizations in the Region, including:



These Core Partners own, operate, or fund transportation in the region, and have existing plans, strategies, and studies that are important to, dependent on, or that inform the plan.

The TAB is a critical forum focused on advancing the plan, including aligned partner transportation projects, and taking a multi-purpose approach to planning and infrastructure decision-making to maximize investments and improve efficiency.

Governance

The JRTA is a provincial Crown corporation, and the Minister of Public Works is the sole shareholder of the Agency. The CEO reports to the Deputy Minister of the Department of Public Works (DPW) who is also the Chair of the JRTA Board and the Technical Advisory Board.

The JRTA reports to an interim Board of Directors made up of the Deputy Minister/Chair and the Chief Engineer of DPW.

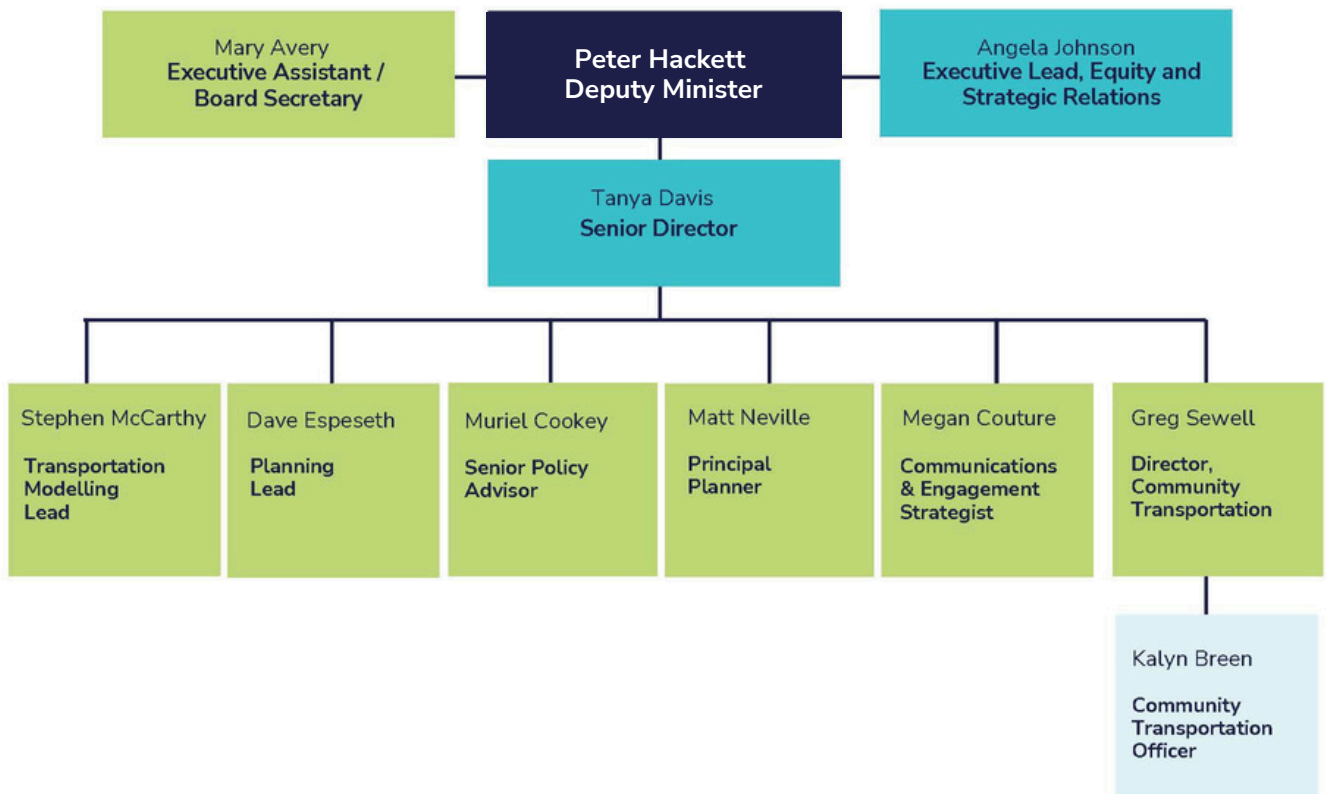
Accountability

The JRTA submitted our 2023-24 Accountability Report, which tracks our progress against our mandate and the priorities of government. We also completed audited financial statements for the year, and our 2024-25 Business Plan.

Team & Structure

Our Team

The JRTA operates with a small, dedicated team that works to further the mandate, build and strengthen relationships, and develop the plan.



Regional Transportation Plan

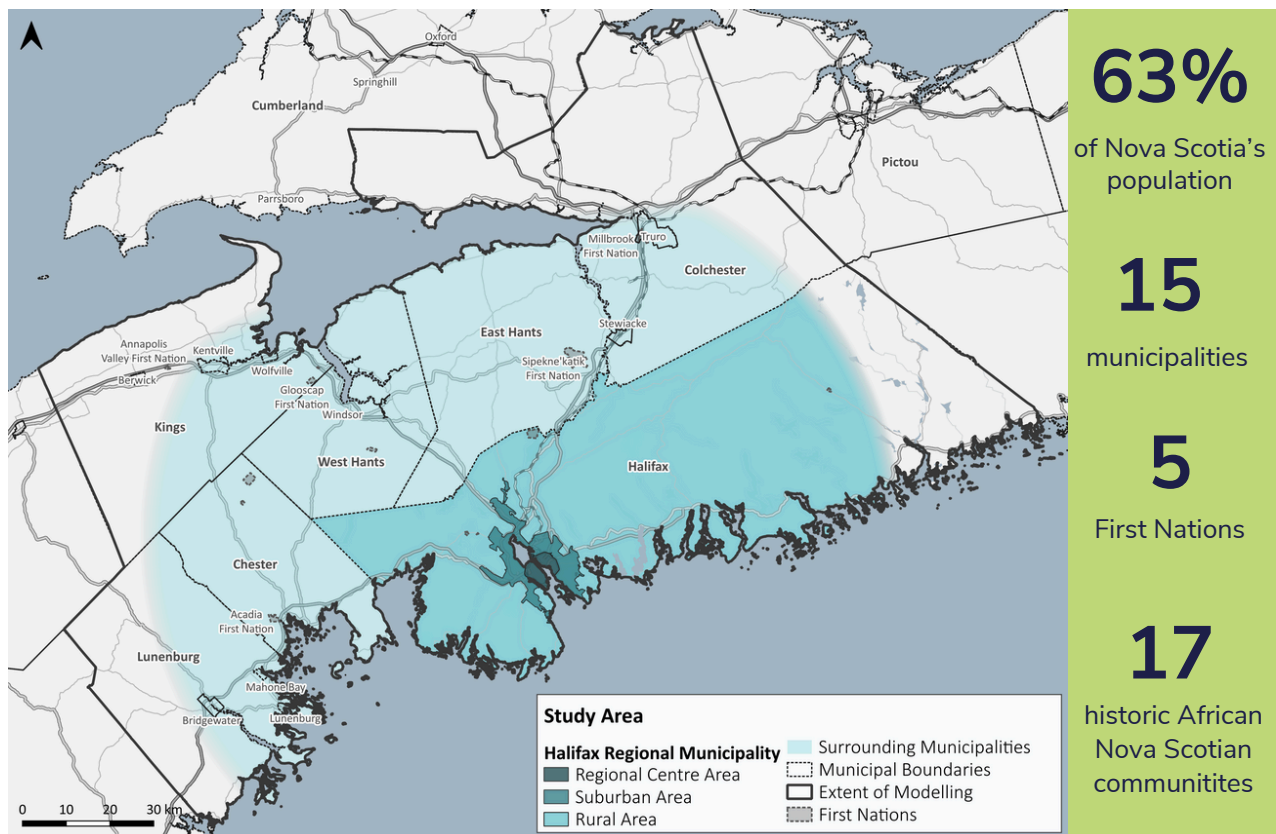
The Regional Transportation Plan (the Plan) will establish a long-term coordinated and strategic vision for a regional transportation system that makes sustainable growth and development possible. The Plan is a detailed review, focused on improving the safe and efficient flow of people and goods across the region.

As government works to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve healthcare, increase housing stock, and make life more affordable, the recommendations within the Plan will support these priorities.

While the Plan is focused on transportation planning (planning for how people move), land use planning (planning for where people live and work) will also play a critical role, as these disciplines are fundamentally linked.

The Plan is a series of actions - projects and initiatives that, collectively, will improve the transportation system now and into the future.

The Region included in the Plan - illustrated below - is home to 63% of Nova Scotia's population and is the key employment, education, and healthcare destination for the province. The area also includes a major port and the international airport.



Background & Challenges

For decades, Nova Scotia experienced low population growth and even decline because of low birth rates and emigration of youth to other parts of Canada.

However, starting in 2016, this trend reversed, leading to population growth that continues to present day.

In 2021, the province reached a significant milestone of one million people. In 2023, HRM reached 500,000 people.

With this growth comes tremendous opportunity, but also challenges that must be addressed in order to maintain the quality of life that has attracted so many to the region.

Growth strains existing services and infrastructure, including the transportation system.

Challenges



Safety

In 2022, Nova Scotia had the third highest provincial rate of traffic fatalities in Canada, and the second highest provincial rate of traffic injuries in Canada.



Efficiency & Reliability

Growth means more cars on our roads, and with structural limitations on the existing system, this creates congestion, increasing the time it takes to travel.



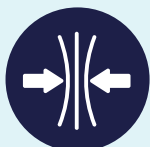
Access & Affordability

Few, if any, transportation options exist outside of the city centre, contributing to equity and accessibility concerns. Transportation is the third highest cost for Nova Scotian households.



Sustainability

Transportation is the second highest producer of GHG emissions in Nova Scotia. We need to significantly reduce transportation emissions to become a net-zero province by 2050.



Resiliency

The existing system is vulnerable to disruptions and has limited redundancy; a single traffic collision can cause delays to thousands of people travelling.

Vision, Goals, Principles

Vision

A safe, efficient, equitable, and resilient regional transportation system that supports sustainable economic growth and prosperity for Nova Scotians.

Goals

What do we want the plan to achieve?

Strengthen regional connections

Travel between communities and to regional destinations, regardless of mode or trip purpose is safe, easy, and enjoyable. A realistic range of affordable and sustainable transportation options are available that lower household costs, emissions and car dependency, reduce fatalities and injuries, and enhance social connectivity.

Enable efficient and sustainable goods movement

Essential corridors for moving goods locally and regionally are developed, preserved, and well-maintained to enable the reliable movement of goods and support economic development and trade.

Develop a future ready regional transportation system

The transportation system is resilient and adaptable, able to respond to changing trends, uncertainty, and climate change. There is consideration for technological advancements, societal changes, and the long-term needs of the system.

Coordinate and collaborate on long-term planning

All orders of government work to align transportation and land use across departments and initiatives. The regional transportation system supports environmentally and fiscally sustainable development, recognizing the different needs of health urban, suburban, and rural communities.

Lead strategic investments, alignment, and implementation

Infrastructure decision-making and service delivery is cost effective, integrated, and efficient. Actions included in the plan are ambitious yet achievable, maximizing their potential to be funded and built.

Principles

All aspects of the planning process are guided by the below principles.

Accessibility

Provides access to affordable, efficient transportation essential for communities to thrive. The design of the system aligns with the province's goals for an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030.

Collaboration

Integrates a diverse range of ideas to advance regional transportation solutions that address challenges and maximize opportunities.

Equity

Addresses transportation needs for underrepresented and underserved communities so all Nova Scotians can travel easily throughout the region.

Resiliency

Prioritizes solutions that reduce the transportation system's vulnerability to climate impacts and enhances the ability to recover from service disruptions.

Sustainability

Prioritizes transportation solutions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and align with the province's climate change legislation and plan.

Well-being

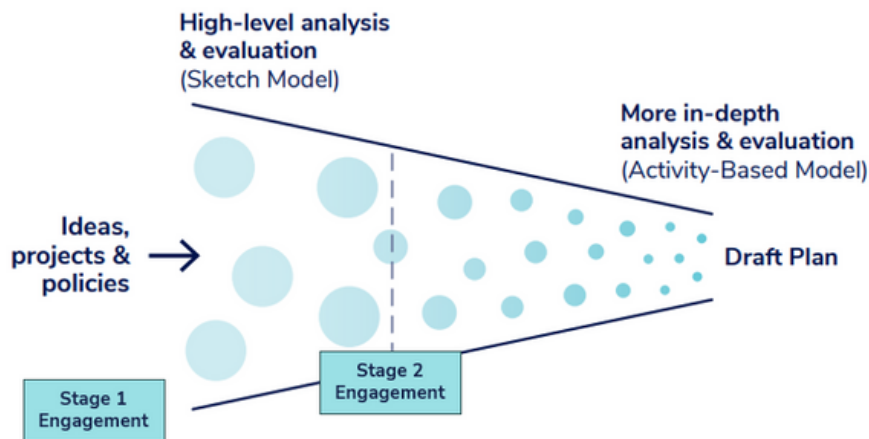
Better connections for Nova Scotians to one another and the goods, places, and services they need to help build prosperous and healthy communities.

Plan Progress

Working the with JRTA, and the Technical Working Group (for more information, see page 13), the following work on the RTP was completed by HDR Corporation in 2024. As the Transportation Planning consultant, they are responsible for the technical aspects of the planning process.

Previously, HDR used a high-level spreadsheet-based Sketch Model tool to analyze a wide range of possible futures and assess how the transportation network might respond to each. This high-level analysis determined that a mix of projects and policies across modes will be needed.

HDR then proceeded to detailed analysis using the Activity-Based Model (ABM). This tool models the entire transportation network explicitly and can assess travel demand at a much finer level (for more information on the ABM, see page 12).



As part of this work, HDR identified proposed regional population numbers for the study area and completed a gap analysis, outlining key issues based on modelling results.

Summary of gap analysis

- Due to scale of projected growth, future demand will exceed the capacity of the road network, particularly into / out of the Halifax peninsula.
- Transit service is limited outside of HRM, both for intra-regional connectivity, within rural town centres, and for connections to HRM.
- High level of cycling stress on most roads due to limited extent of cycling network.
- Street connectivity into / out of the HRM Regional Centre limited due to rail cut and highway ramps.
- Goods movement will be impacted by road congestion.
- The A. Murray MacKay Bridge is aging and needs rehabilitation or replacement.

Network Planning

The Network Planning stage narrowed in on a most likely baseline / business as usual future and systematically explored collections of network improvements, iterating until the most optimal grouping of projects and initiatives was found.

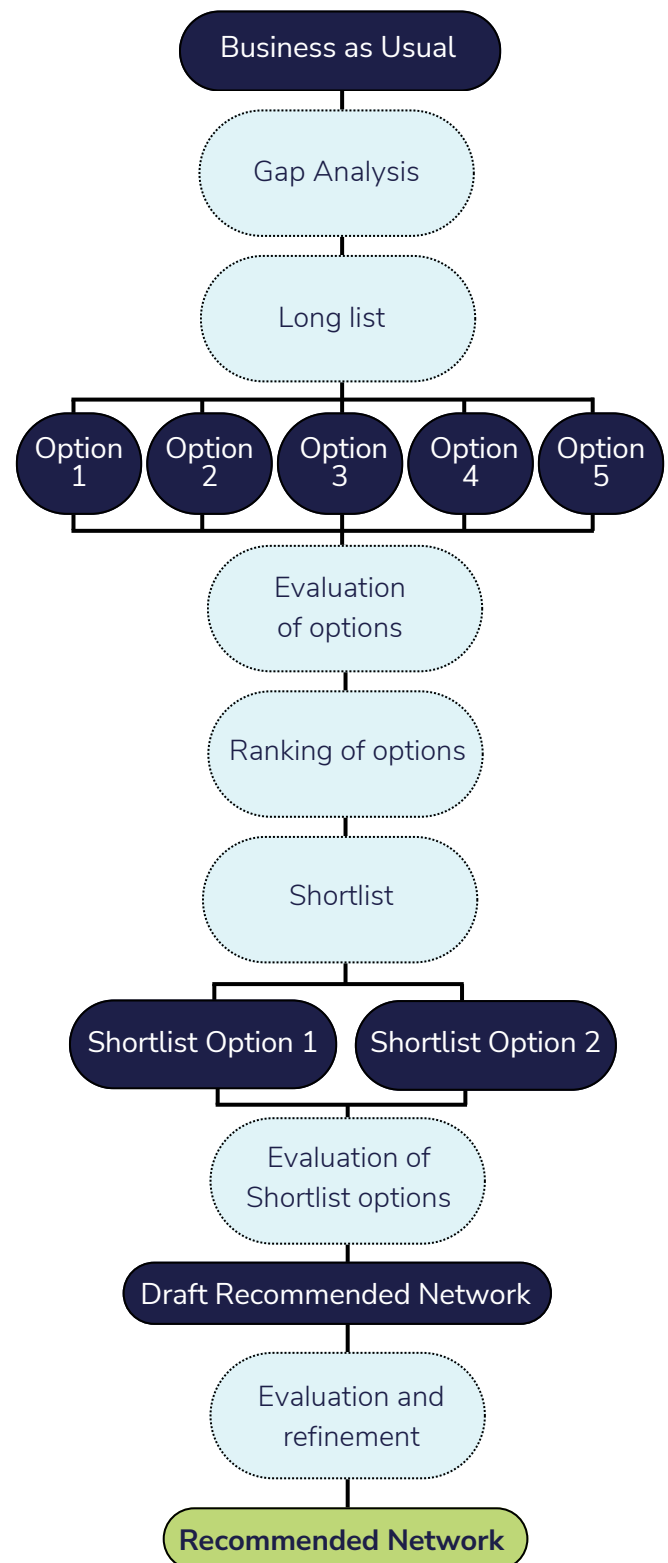
Whereas the Scenario Planning phase from 2023 looked at a 40-year time horizon, the Network Planning phase focused on a narrower 20-year period.

This stage of work tested numerous options, starting with five Network Options, which were refined into two Shortlist Options, and then ultimately the Draft and Final Recommended Transportation Network.

Using the added detail from the ABM, the options tested in each iteration were evaluated using system-level measures of effectiveness (like those used in the Scenario Planning phase). These measures provided big-picture insights for how the network was performing in each municipality in the Region.

Initiatives to be tested were identified based on the results of the previous phase, feedback from our Core Partners, and an assessment of future most likely baseline conditions.

Sensitivity tests were also conducted, where certain projects or collections of projects were added or removed to determine their importance to network performance.



Draft Plan & Preferred Network

Once the refinement and evaluation was complete, HDR and the JRTA started putting together the plan document. In partnership with the JRTA, the plan was revised, iterated, and designed.

The recommendations that form the Plan are based on the technical analysis, engagement work undertaken along the way, and the foundational work that was completed in 2023.

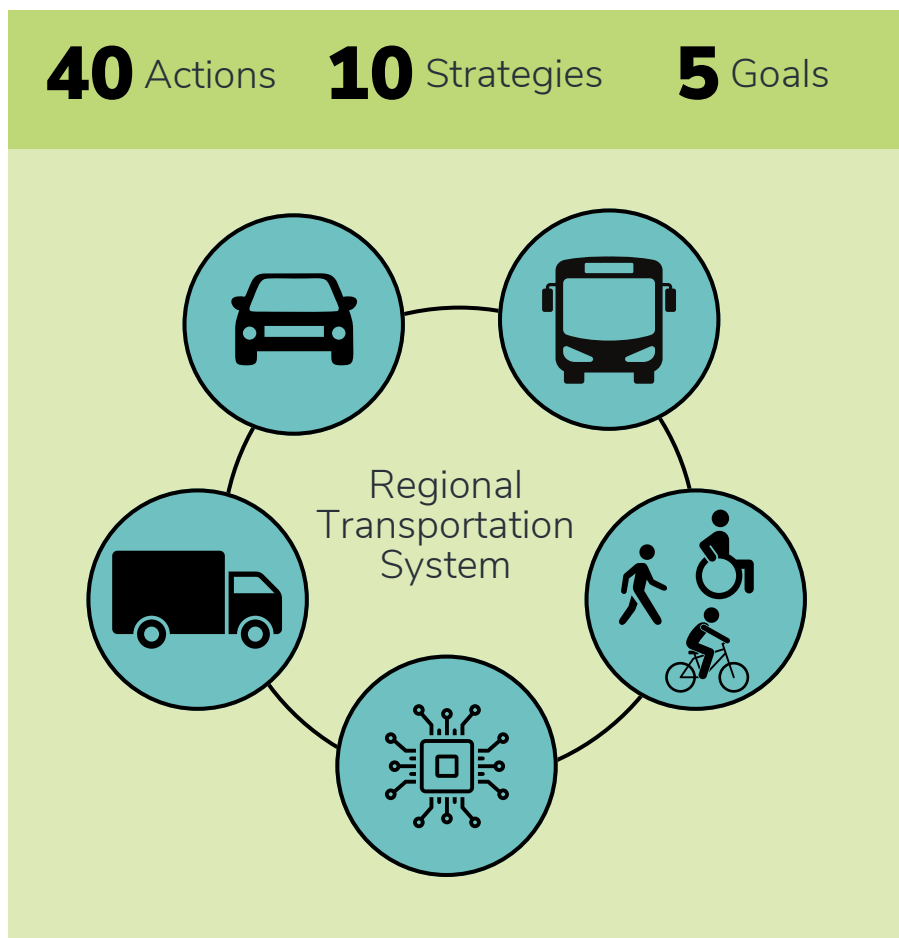
This includes all the network improvements we want to make for each mode and the Action Plan.

It outlines a series of 40 actions under ten strategies across five goals (see page 7).

At its core, the plan outlines a future regional transportation system comprised of four networks:

- Road
- Goods movement
- Transit
- Active Transportation

Plus investment in new technologies.



Travel Demand Model

The JRTA and HRM (in partnership with WSP Canada and the University of Toronto) have completed a new activity-based travel demand model (ABM) in early 2024 to help us make more informed decisions as we develop the Regional Transportation Plan and support other major transportation projects in the region going forward. This level of analysis has been critical in the development of the plan and is the first of its kind in Atlantic Canada.

The ABM is a flexible, realistic, and policy-sensitive tool that simulates travel behaviour (where, how, and when people travel). A regional-scale travel demand model examines the interactions of population, employment, land use, and mobility options and allows us to test different possible futures, estimate the future need for travel, and assess the impact and benefit of different modes of transportation that will be required to serve the region in the future.

Other types of travel models focus on estimating trips between origins and destinations based on the characteristics of different areas. These trips are then combined to represent travel patterns.

ABMs start at the individual person and household level and are based on people's participation in activities outside of their homes (like going to work, school, appointments, events, etc.). These activities generate a daily schedule and are linked together to provide a more realistic representation of the complexity of people's travel patterns. These daily schedules also consider time and space constraints (like returning home after completed activities) which further enhances the ability to replicate real world travel behaviour.

Representing the daily travel decisions for a rapidly growing region of 600,000+ people required a significant amount of data, time, and technical work to understand their habits, choices, and preferences well enough to examine not only how things are operating today and why, but how this might change in the future.



Collaboration & Engagement

Engagement and collaboration are so critical to the work of the JRTA that they are enshrined in *The Joint Regional Transportation Act*.

A successful regional transportation system requires strong relationships and alignment across provincial and municipal planning initiatives.

In 2024, the JRTA's collaboration focus was to continue to build relationships with Core Partners, provincial departments, municipalities, and expanding community-led engagement.

Technical Working Group

Subject matter experts from each of our six Core Partners. The experts provided insight and feedback across each phase of planning.

Municipal Working Group

CAOs or directors of planning from the 15 municipalities in the Region. Ensures that the transportation actions in the plan were aligned to land use and population projections.

Provincial Collaboration

Worked to align with other Province of Nova Scotia departments, as transportation can affect the work of many other initiatives.

Public Engagement

Broad In-person and virtual engagement sessions across the Region to support Plan development.

Focus Groups

Four external groups including community transit operators, community organizations, advocacy groups, industry, major employers, and educational institutions.

Community-led Engagement

Supported trusted, community-rooted organizations for first-person and community-specific accounts and perspectives on transportation issues.



Stage 2 Engagement

During Stage 2 engagement, the JRTA shared back the finalized vision, goals, and principles, and introduced both the concept of Scenario Planning and bundles of Potential Projects & Policies and their performance / impacts on the transportation system.

The JRTA also wanted to hear from the public, answer their questions, listen to their ideas and concerns, help everyone understand the plan and its potential benefits, and determine if anything was missing as plan development continued.



14 Community Drop-ins



8 Working Group Meetings



Community Partner-led Engagement



Virtual Information Session

Virtual Information Session

On February 13, 2024, the JRTA held a virtual information session from 6:30-8 p.m. During the presentation, the JRTA team and HDR provided a background on the JRTA, work on the Regional Transportation Plan to date and shared the latest information on “bundles” of potential projects and policies that are being tested for their effectiveness.

Following the presentation, a Q&A session was held. A recording of the presentation and a text version of questions answered is available on the JRTA website.

Over 100 participants attended the session, and over 500 people viewed the video recording after the session.

Drop-in Sessions

Following the virtual session, the JRTA held 14 in-person sessions across the region.

These were casual ‘drop-in’ style events. Rather than a meeting with a formal presentation, these sessions were held in locations where people are already visiting (recreation centres, libraries, farmers’ markets, etc.) with information boards and staff on hand to provide context, share updates, and answer questions about the JRTA, the plan, and the work to date. Participants could come at any time to learn more and share their thoughts.

For most sessions, the JRTA was joined by planning and / or transit staff from the local municipality to answer questions on their work that the public may have.

Community-led Outreach

The JRTA is focused on a collaborative approach to developing the plan and recognized the need for more focused engagement people and groups that have been historically or structurally excluded from past processes.

As work on the plan relies heavily on demographic and travel behaviour data collected through standard sources, first person accounts of experiences accessing transportation are an important layer to address systemic biases that have contributed to inequity in past transportation-related decision making.

To be most impactful, the JRTA supported existing trusted community-rooted organizations that are already working in areas where transportation acts as an enabler or barrier to host a series of listening sessions. The JRTA was not prescriptive in how these sessions were designed, organized, or facilitated, allowing host organizations to use their own expertise and discretion. JRTA provided support and guidance in the development of themes and questions and supported the following organizations to host sessions:

Detailed accounts of what was learned during these sessions, and broader public engagement, was published in our Stage 2 What We Heard report. At a high level, themes of Safety, Affordability Car Dependency, and Missed Experiences were heard across sessions and participants.



Seven sessions in HRCE High Schools with African Nova Scotian youth.

175 participants.



Four sessions with youth at risk of or experiencing sexual exploitation, immigrant women, 2SLGBTQIA+ youth, and women experiencing homelessness.

40 participants.



Three sessions with Millbrook First Nation in Cole Harbour, Millbrook, and Sheet Harbour.

80 participants.



Four sessions with urban Indigenous populations and MNFC staff.

100 participants.

Supporting Projects

While work on the Regional Transportation Plan has been the primary focus, in 2024 the JRTA worked alongside their Core Partners to further or support projects and programs that align with their mandate:

Mill Cove Ferry Project

Funding from all three orders of government was announced for the Mill Cove Ferry project. New ferry service will travel from Bedford to downtown Halifax.

Halifax Transit Student Transit Pass Pilot Extension

Worked with Halifax Transit, Halifax Regional Centre for Education (HRCE), and Provincial Departments to extend and expand the pass for the 24-25 school year to all high school and junior high students in HRCE. More than 25,000 students now have access to free bus and ferry service.

Public Transportation Standards Development Committee

The JRTA is a member of the committee, which helps the Accessibility Directorate make recommendations for accessibility standards in public transportation and transportation infrastructure in Nova Scotia.

Canada Public Transit Fund

Worked with DPW, HRM, and the Municipality of East Hants to further pursue federal transit funding for major transit projects.

Community Transportation

Effective November 2024, the Community Transportation team, previously part of DPW, joined the JRTA team.

Delegations to British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec

Trips to Vancouver, Victoria, Ottawa and Montreal took place to explore how other jurisdictions manage moving people and goods, multi-modal approaches, and governance.



Looking Ahead

The JRTA is preparing for the future of the Agency. With the submission of the Regional Transportation Plan, we must shift focus to furthering the projects and initiatives recommended.

We look forward to continuing to engage with Core Partners, interested parties, and the public on the plan, with more opportunities to engage as projects move into their respective design phases.

The JRTA is exploring several projects that strategically align with the plan, benefit our partners and our province, and unlock new opportunities to strengthen our regional transportation system.