

2023 Let's Walk, Roll & Ride Spryfield!

# ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY REPORT



**July 2024**

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**PREPARED BY**

ECOLOGY ACTION CENTRE

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In October 2023, the Ecology Action Centre hosted the **Let's Walk, Roll & Ride Spryfield!** initiative to promote and celebrate active and multi-modal transportation. Alongside several local partners, the team hosted direct delivery programming and engagement events to document the suitability of the current environment for active transportation, and to identify potential solutions for enhancing access to active transportation. The Spryfield community was selected for this project as it is well positioned to have a high uptake in sustainable transportation alternatives.

Over the course of two weeks, a cycling audit, walking audit, dot mapping engagement, and a Youth Mobility Audit were hosted to engage with participants about active transportation in Spryfield. Several other activities were also hosted, including a Women's Safety Assessment, and a Mayor's Bike Ride.

Engagement participants noted that the Spryfield neighbourhood is home to many supportive assets, and that there is a strong foundation on which to build in order to enhance access to active transportation. Necessary infrastructure improvements were identified, including more connected sidewalks and crosswalks, a more connected cycling network, and improved accessibility of active transportation facilities. Participants also noted the importance of complementary facilities, such as lighting, bike parking, trees and shade, benches and rest areas, wayfinding, lower speed limits and year-round maintenance.

Several short-, medium-, and long-term actions for enhancing access to active transportation were identified, including the installation of benches and bike racks, lower speed limits and the development of a Spryfield Active Transportation Plan in partnership with the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM).

Next steps for this project include sharing what was learned with the community, launching a Spryfield Active Transportation Standing Committee, and working together to implement identified interventions.

Ecology Action Centre would like to thank all the partners involved in the **Let's Walk, Roll & Ride Spryfield!** project.

# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

**Let's Walk, Roll & Ride Spryfield!** was a community initiative hosted over two weeks in October 2023 by Ecology Action Centre. The purpose of the initiative was to promote and celebrate active and multi-modal transportation options through a series of direct delivery programming and engagement events. Throughout these engagements, public input and concerns were collected to help answer the following questions:

- What infrastructure is still missing?
- What other barriers exist that prevent people from choosing to walk, roll, ride, or bus?
- Are there low cost, high impact interventions that could be leveraged to make walking, rolling, riding, and/or bussing more equitable and accessible?

A unique aspect of this project is its emphasis on identifying solutions that can be implemented in the short term and start supporting the community immediately. While active transportation and transit work is often focused on big, long-term projects, there are complementary low-cost, short-term projects that can also make a difference in the near-term. This project captures community interest and support for both short-term and long-term initiatives that are needed in the community.

Information collected is summarized in this report and will help to inform the future of active transportation projects and programming in the community.

Partners on this initiative include:

- Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM)
- Halifax Public Libraries
- NS Walks
- Halifax Cycling Coalition
- Dal Bike Centre
- Vida Living
- YWCA Halifax
- Walk 'n' Roll Halifax
- Cycling Nova Scotia
- Zen Electric Bikes
- Long Lake Provincial Park Association
- Chebucto Connections
- Youth from Pathways to Education program

We are also grateful for the support of Councillor Patty Cuttell.

## 1.2 WHY SPRYFIELD

Spryfield is a fast-growing suburban community in Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). It is located outside of the Center Plan jurisdiction and has great potential to benefit from improved active and multi-modal transportation access. HRM has identified Spryfield as having high equity concerns, with a large density of newcomer, African Nova Scotian, and low socio-economic communities.

As a community, Spryfield is well positioned to have a high uptake in sustainable transportation alternatives. The #9 bus is one of the busiest bus routes in the Region, there is a lot of high-density housing and population density along the main transit corridor, and grocery stores, schools, libraries, pharmacies, etc. are all within a reasonable walking distance.

Spryfield also has a rich foundation of organizations and individuals interested in pursuing active transportation and transit opportunities for their community. This includes the local municipal councillor, Patty Cuttell, who has been a vocal champion for improvements.



Figure 1. A map of Spryfield

## 2.0 WHAT WE DID

### 2.1 ACTIVITIES AND TACTICS

A series of engagement activities were planned and tailored to the community's unique needs in coordination with community partners and stakeholders. Table 1 outlines the specific details of each activity.

Table 1. Engagement activities hosted in October 2023

Activity	Host(s)	Date(s)	Description
Cycling audit	Halifax Cycling Coalition	Sunday, October 15, 2023	Participants were invited to join a group cycling audit to assess local cycling conditions. A route with 7 stops was developed with input from people who live and

			work in Spryfield. At each stop, participants used a standardized evaluation instrument to assess its bike-friendliness.
Walking audit	Walk 'n' Roll Halifax	October 19, 2023	Participants were invited to join a group walking audit during which observations were collected about local infrastructure, traffic, walking appeal and safety.
Dot mapping	Ecology Action Centre	October 16-23 <sup>rd</sup> , 2023	People were encouraged to share their thoughts and key destinations by placing dot stickers and sticky notes on large maps. Printed maps were posted at Chebucto Connections, Captain William Spry Library, and at the 2023 Bike Summit, for which Spryfield was the host community.

Youth Mobility audit	Chebucto Connections and Ecology Action Centre	December 5, 2023	Participants include Pathways to Education youth (mostly attending J.L. Isley High School). Route selected by students, using checklist for identifying key AT safety features and other items to consider. Shared chart afterwards for non-participants to view and add ideas.
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In addition to the above-mentioned engagement activities, a series of celebrations and outreach events were also hosted. These included:

- A Women's Safety Assessment
- Coffee Outside
- DIY Bike Repair with the EAC's Pop-Up Bike Hub
- Mayor's Bike Ride (including a pre-ride hosted by Dal Bike)
- An electric bike test ride with Zen Electric
- An information fair

The schedule of events also included an Urban Cycling Course and electric bike test rides with Zen electric, which were cancelled.



# SCHEDULE



SCAN HERE

**Hike - Purcells Cove Backlands**  
 Sunday, Oct. 15, 9:30 a.m. - 11 a.m.  
 Registration Required

**Pop-up Bike Hub - DIY Bike Repair**  
 Saturday, Oct. 21, 12 p.m. - 4 p.m.  
 500-599 Block, Herring Cove Rd

**Cycling Audit Ride**  
 Sunday, Oct. 15, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.  
 Registration Required

**Dal Bike Ride**  
 Sunday, Oct. 22, 9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.  
 Dal Bike Centre

**Youth Mobility Audit**  
 TBA  
 Closed for partnering school students only

**Mayor's Bike Ride**  
 Sunday, Oct. 22, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.  
 Captain William Spry Public Library

**Walk Audit Route #1**  
 Monday, Oct. 16, 2 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.  
 Herring Cove Rd to Old Sambro Rd

**Zen Electric Bike Test Ride**  
 Sunday, Oct. 22 - 1 p.m. - 5 p.m.  
 Captain William Spry Community Centre

**Action for Health Summit**  
 Wednesday, Oct. 20, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.  
 Registration Required **SOLD OUT**

**Information Fair** *come out & meet orgs working on A.T.*  
 Monday, Oct. 23, 4 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
 Captain William Spry Community Centre

**Coffee Outside**  
 Thursday, Oct. 19, 7 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.  
 Williams Lake Road Pocket Park

**Bike Summit**  
 Monday, Oct. 23, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.  
 Captain William Spry Community Centre **SOLD OUT**

**Walk Audit Route #2**  
 Thursday, Oct. 19, 10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.  
 Williams Lake Rd to Clovis Ave

**Women's Safety Assessment**  
 Tuesday, Oct. 24, 6 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.  
 Captain William Spry Community Centre

**Pop-up Bike Hub - DIY Bike Repair**  
 Friday, Oct. 20, 2 p.m. - 5 p.m.  
 500-599 Block, Herring Cove Rd

**Urban Cycling Course**  
 Saturday, Oct. 28, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.  
 Registration Required



# 3.0 WHO WE HEARD FROM

## 3.1 PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

Table 2. Overview of project participants

Activity	Number of Participants	Participating Organizations
Cycling audit	4	Local citizens
Walking audit	8	Local citizens Hike NS staff NS Walk Leaders HRM Design Engineer Walk 'n' Roll Halifax Director
Dot mapping	98 dots mapped	Chebucto Connections Captain William Spry Library Ecology Action Centre
Youth Mobility audit	15	Grade 9-11 students Chebucto Connections patrons Pathways to Education adult supporters Ecology Action Centre

## 3.2 ENGAGEMENT GAPS

Several specific gaps were identified by those organizing engagement activities.

As noted by the Halifax Cycling Coalition, the group participating in the cycling audit was small and did not represent the diversity they would have liked. This included a bias towards more experienced riders as participants were warned that they would be riding in fast moving traffic and to not participate if they were not comfortable doing that.

It was also noted that the Youth Mobility Audit was constrained by time and did not allow for many locations across Spryfield identified by youth to be included. Spryfield could benefit from another audit to include identified locations slightly further away from Chebucto Connections, but along the routes many of the youth use in the community.

## 4.0 WHAT WAS SAID

This section provides a summary of the input provided by participants as part of each engagement activity.

### 4.1 CYCLING AUDIT

#### **Spryfield has some existing infrastructure that is safe and inviting for cycling**

There are some beautiful off-road facilities in Spryfield, i.e., trails, as well as bike racks at some key destinations.

#### **Spryfield lacks safe and connected cycling routes**

The community has no direct route to or from the rest of Halifax that is safe and comfortable for cycling, and cycling within the community to key destinations is not well supported either. In particular, there is no protected All Ages and Abilities (AAA) infrastructure, very few painted bike lanes, and bike racks are often missing or insufficient at key destinations.

#### **Most routes in Spryfield feel unsafe for cycling**

Of the seven destinations included in the cycling audit, the ride to just one was unanimously rated as feeling safe—J L Ilesley High School. The ride to three destinations was unanimously rated as feeling unsafe, while the ride to the remaining three destinations was rated intermediate in terms of safety. It's important to note that the audit took place on a Sunday morning, when the routes had less traffic than would be typical. When asked how they would feel riding these routes at a busier time, at night, in bad weather, or with kids, none of the routes felt safe to any participant.

Some routes in Spryfield include sections that are very dangerous for cyclists, such as sections of streets leading to Mumford Transit Terminal that also include steep grade hills. As a result, Mumford Transit Terminal was not included in the audit, even though the audit participants were experienced cyclists.

#### **Some positive cycling improvements are already planned**

The main thoroughfare in Spryfield, Herring Cove Road, is slated for major rework that will include cycleways, good sidewalks and transit priority lanes. This project will make a huge difference. Audit participants emphasized the importance that these improvements be implemented quickly and continue right to the Armdale Roundabout, and that the roundabout itself be made safer for people cycling and walking.

## More investment in cycling infrastructure is needed

The audit recommended the following:

- Create an additional trunk cycling route–The Dunbrack Greenway, extended to Old Sambro Road (as outlined in the Active Transportation Priorities Plan).
- Install good-quality bike racks at Graves-Oakley Baseball Field and at the Spryfield Shopping Centre/No Frills plaza.
- Add tactical protected bike lanes on Williams Lake Road and Leiblin Drive, until permanent installation.
- Add a flashing beacon crosswalk on Williams Lake Road across from the junior high school.
- Conduct a comprehensive study to identify and prioritize additional improvements, including the possibility of adding wide, paved neighborhood connectors that weave a path through quiet residential streets and avoid main roads

The full summary of the cycling audit, including the evaluation instrument, can be found in [Appendix A](#).

## 4.2 WALKING AUDIT

### **Spryfield has the potential to be a very walkable community**

Spryfield offers many amenities that will be easily accessible by people walking if some conditions are improved. Audit participants noted some existing infrastructure and design that is already walk-friendly, including continuous sidewalks on the audit route that were easy to walk on (with the exception of a few tripping hazards such as utility poles on the sidewalk); clear street signs; some trees and plants; well-spaced LED light fixtures; good sight lines; crosswalks at intersections with signals that provide enough time to cross the road; and some benches, garbage cans, and transit shelters.

### **Walking infrastructure in Spryfield needs improvements**

Audit participants noted an extensive list of suggested improvements that would make walking safer and/or more inviting.

Highlights of suggested **new infrastructure**:

- Add boulevards between sidewalks and vehicle lanes to improve comfort of walking on sidewalk while vehicles pass by, to provide space for shoveled snow, and to aid rainwater absorption thereby potentially decreasing ice on adjacent road surface.
- Install sidewalks where there are 'desire' lines demonstrating repeated use, e.g., near the Sobeys south entrance.
- Install more crosswalks, including a mid-block crosswalk between Williams Lake Road and Circle Drive/Clovis Avenue.
- Install some pedestrian refuge 'islands' to reduce the 'exposure time' experienced by people walking in intersections.
- Install more benches and garbage cans.
- Plant more trees to provide shade.

- Install wayfinding signs.

#### Highlights of suggested **repairs, maintenance or improvements to existing infrastructure:**

- Ensure privately- and city-owned spaces are kept tidy and maintained, e.g., vegetation trimmed, litter picked up
- Ensure snow is cleared from sidewalks, using blades of the correct width so that there isn't damage to adjacent private property.
- Widen the sidewalk in some areas, and narrow vehicle lane widths.
- Reduce corner radii or add curb extensions (bump outs) on many intersections to slow turning movement and reduce crosswalk crossing distances.
- Ensure existing infrastructure is repaired as needed, e.g., fix benches, make sure signs are all legible (not faded).

#### **Lowering the speed limit could improve safety**

There was consensus among the audit participants that lowering the posted speed limit, perhaps to 40 kph, would improve walkability.

#### **Spryfield needs to improve the accessibility of its walking infrastructure**

Several of the suggested infrastructure improvements were specifically related to improving conditions for people of all ages and abilities, including:

- Add Tactile Warning Surface indicators to crosswalk ramps, to warn blind and partially sighted people they are about to enter/leave a vehicle lane.
- Change the shape/angle of crosswalk ramps to provide good navigation guidance for blind or partially sighted individuals, i.e., eliminate the current large 'fan' shaped ramps.
- Ensure all crosswalks have smooth transitions from the sidewalk to the vehicle lane to make walking and rolling easier and safer for all, including people in wheelchairs, using a walker, or pushing a stroller.

The full summary of the walk audit can be found in [Appendix B](#).

## 4.3 DOT MAPPING

#### **Parks and trails are key Spryfield assets**

Spryfield includes many regional wilderness parks and trails networks, and these destinations received many dots in the dot mapping exercise. However, the destinations with the most dots were Captain William Spry Community Centre and Spryfield Shopping Mall.

#### **Spryfield should improve its infrastructure and amenities for cycling and walking**

- Many comments requested more cycling lanes, and in particular, better connectivity across the cycling network.
- There was a request for making the McIntosh Run 'beaten path' behind the mall more accessible for bikes, strollers, and wheelchairs.

- Some comments were related to improving safety, e.g., a request for safer cycling routes to schools and for a crosswalk in front of Captain William Spry Community Centre, and for removal of tripping hazards on sidewalks.
- Wayfinding signage, and more bike racks, trees, and benches were requested.

### **Spryfield public transit needs improvement, too**

There were many comments requesting expanded, and more reliable bus service.

### **Maintenance is important for walkability and bikeability**

- One comment pointed out that **winter maintenance of paths** is needed to improve safety and accessibility.
- There were comments related to keeping **amenities clean**, i.e., requests for more garbage cans, and keeping bathrooms cleaner.

The full summary of the dot mapping activity can be found in [Appendix C](#).

## 4.4 YOUTH MOBILITY AUDIT

### **Spryfield has many positive features that support active transportation (AT)**

The youth participants noted many positive AT features in their neighborhood, including:

- playground
- bike racks at J.L. Isley High School
- 30 km/h speed limit by J.L. Isley High School
- network of AT trails (McIntosh Run Community Trail)
- sidewalks on both sides of Herring Cove Road
- various amenities within 1 km of school and Chebucto Connections Centre

### School routes need improvement

The quickest routes to school often take students off main roads and onto streets that sometimes lack sidewalks, have little lighting, and/or are not maintained during the winter. Audit participants want a network of well-lit and maintained sidewalks that link to the school through the neighbourhoods rather than simply along the main roadway. They also requested a bike rack at Chebucto Connections.

### Cycling on busy roads does not feel safe

Seventy percent of the youth participating in the audit noted that they do not feel safe cycling in traffic, especially along the four lanes of traffic on Herring Cove Road. This suggests the need for more protected bike lanes and safety signage on busy roads. On a positive note, they did report feeling relatively safe when cycling on side streets.

### More crosswalks are needed on Herring Cove Road

Herring Cove Road is frequently travelled by students, year-round, and it is a main AT artery for the entire community, not just youth. Participants feel that installing more crosswalks along this road would encourage greater use of AT and improve safety.

- Participants are interested in the feasibility of adding a crosswalk either at the corner of Lynett or Autumn.

### Skatepark improvements

Participants also noted the nearby skatepark and the need to improve accessibility to the skatepark, and other locations frequented by youth. To get feedback on how this could be done, it is recommended to reach out to youth who frequent the skatepark. A future project on the site could also include the addition of visuals by local artists to promote positive concepts and inclusivity.

### Do you feel safe riding your bike in traffic?

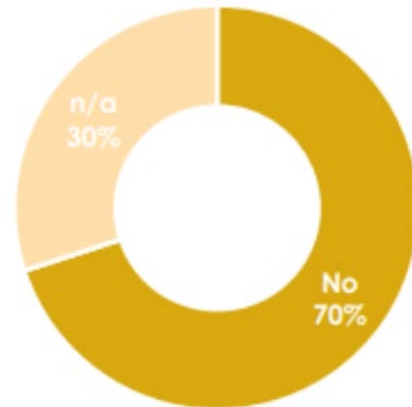


Figure 2. A graph about cycling safety from the youth mobility audit.

### Are the crosswalks in the right places?

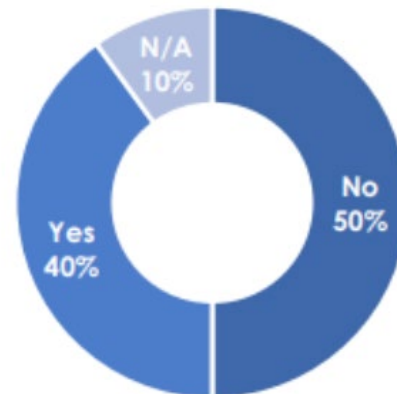


Figure 3. A graph about crosswalk access from the youth mobility audit.

The full summary of the youth mobility audit, including the audit checklist, can be found in **Appendix D**.



## 5.0 KEY THEMES & TAKEAWAYS

A great deal of information was collected as part of this project. Overall, participants identified that the Spryfield neighbourhood is home to many supportive assets, and there is a strong foundation on which to build in order to enhance access to active transportation. This includes existing parks, trails, side streets for cycling, and a density of destinations that are close enough for active transportation.

In terms of what infrastructure is missing in the community, several gaps were identified, including:

- An overall lack of connected sidewalks and safe crossings for walking.
- A disconnected cycling network and lack of All Ages and Abilities (AAA) facilities.
- A need for accessibility to be prioritized to support active transportation.

While project participants highlighted a lack of safe spaces to walk and roll, the infrastructure necessary to support active transportation goes beyond bike facilities and sidewalks. Necessary supportive infrastructure identified by participants also includes:

- Lighting
- End of trip facilities (e.g., bike parking)
- Trees and shaded spaces
- Benches and rest areas
- Wayfinding to help with navigation
- Lower speed limits for motor vehicles
- Maintenance of active transportation facilities

This project sought to identify both higher cost, long-term active transportation solutions, and lower-cost short term actions that could be implemented to support the community immediately. A summary of sample short- and long-term actions are provided in Table 3.

Table 3. Sample short- and long-term actions

Action	Term	Estimated Cost Range <sup>1</sup>
Benches along main walkways and trails	Short	\$800 - \$1,400 per +taxes and installation
Bike racks at destinations, starting with Chebucto Connections	Short	\$1,000 - \$10,000 <sup>2</sup> +taxes and installation
Volunteer clean-up days to pick up litter	Short	\$50 - \$150 for supplies
Wayfinding signage to local points of interest, including schools	Medium	\$45 - \$500 per + taxes, graphic design and installation
Trimming of vegetation along active transportation corridors	Short	
Spryfield Active Transportation Plan in partnership with HRM that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plans for a connected cycling network with a trunk route and connections to the rest of Halifax.</li> <li>Plans for crosswalks and improved safety at intersections.</li> <li>Enhanced accessibility of AT spaces, e.g., curb cuts and smooth surfaces.</li> <li>Identification of year-round routes that are cleared of snow and debris.</li> </ul>	Medium / Long	\$50,000 - \$150,000
Speed limits lowered to 40km/h	Medium / Long	

<sup>1</sup> Note that all cost estimates are preliminary and local quotes need to be collected before moving forward.

<sup>2</sup> Cost range depends on whether rack is standalone, or covered / secure

# 6.0 NEXT STEPS

Next steps for this project include:

- Sharing this report and its findings with the community and through a presentation at the Spryfield Community Association.
- Launching a Spryfield Active Transportation Standing Committee with those who indicated interest during the engagements.
- Working with the Spryfield Active Transportation Standing Committee and partnering organizations to compile a pitch for active transportation and transit interventions to address the feedback collected.

## 7.0 APPENDICES

Click the links below to access each of the Appendices.

[Appendix A - Spryfield Cycling Audit Report](#)

[Appendix B - Spryfield Walking Audit Report](#)

[Appendix C - Dot Mapping Engagement Report](#)

[Appendix D - Spryfield Youth Mobility Audit Report](#)