

What We Heard Report

Whycocomagh Active Transportation
and Detailed Design Plan

February 2025



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PART 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 About the Project

This project aims to improve mobility for residents and visitors in Whycocomagh, reflecting the Municipality of Inverness County's vision of a vibrant, sustainable community where active transportation is safe, accessible, and enjoyable for everyone. Currently, the design of Main Street and Highway 105 prioritizes vehicles, limiting opportunities for active transportation. The project covers the area from Whycocomagh Provincial Park at 9780 Highway 105 to where Highway 105 meets the Skye River, including the entire Main Street corridor and the intersections of nearby streets. By introducing thoughtfully designed infrastructure that balances all modes of transportation and prioritizes inclusion, the final plan will improve safety and comfort for active transportation users, and establish a distinct sense of place reflecting Whycocomagh's unique character and identity as a hub for outdoor adventure.

Potential improvements may include but are not limited to:

- Creating welcoming entry points to the community.
- Changing curb lines at intersections to help slow down traffic.
- Adding safe places to cross the street and decorative median areas.
- Building new sidewalks and dedicated lanes for bikes.
- Installing additional bike lanes where needed.
- Enhancing the area with landscaping, better street lighting, benches, and placemaking.
- Improving systems to manage rainwater and prevent flooding.
- Redesigning parking areas to better fit the new transportation plans.
- Analyzing and upgrading street lights for better visibility and safety.

The Municipality of Inverness County is advancing this planning work in partnership with a community group and has hired Englobe and UPLAND to undertake the design, which will be informed by community consultation. Please note that the planning is conceptual, and the successful implementation of the project will be dependent on securing the necessary funding.

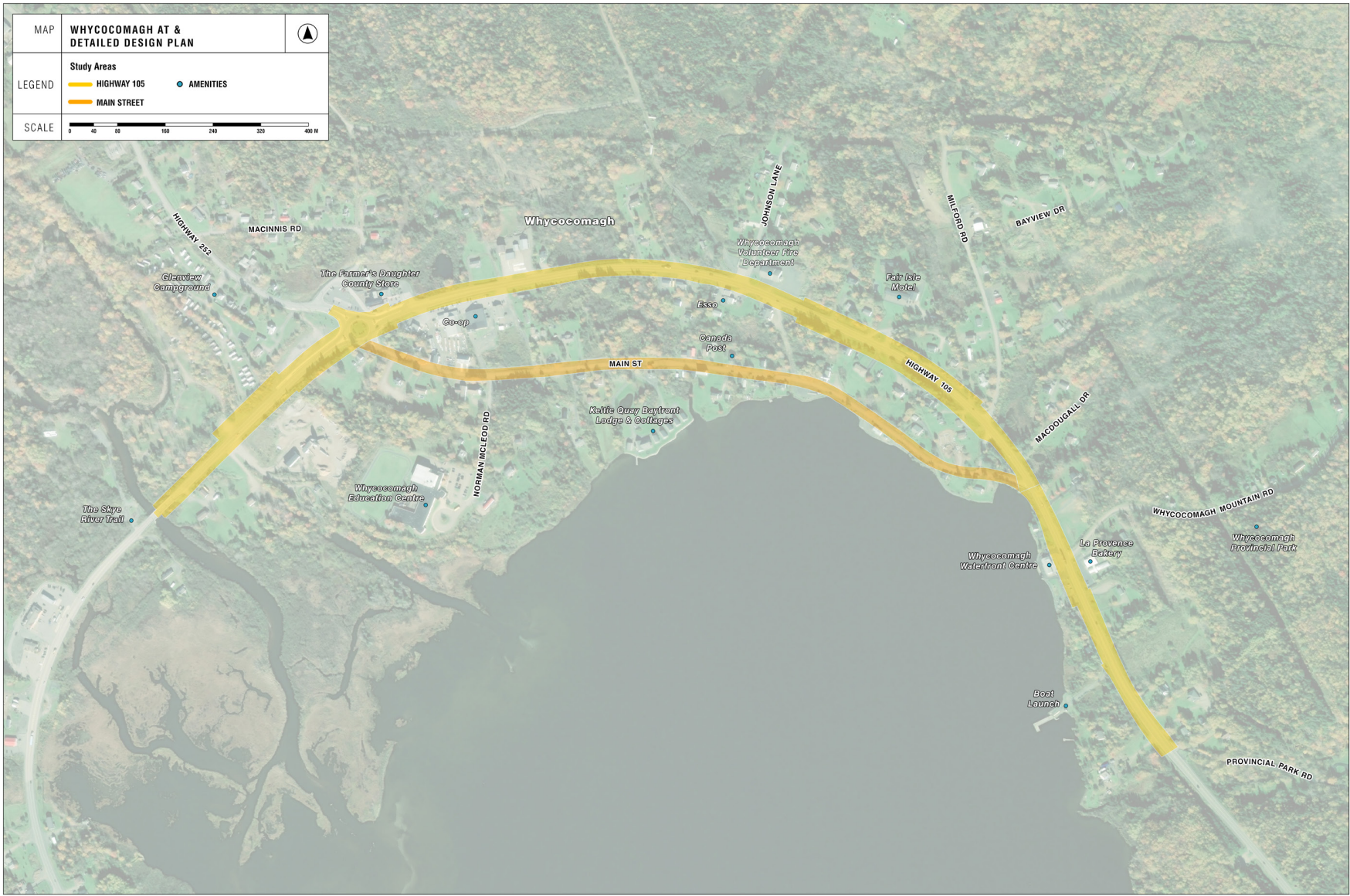
How This Report Will Be Used

This report captures what we heard during the Formative Engagement Phase, ensuring transparency and accountability by sharing how community input has been gathered and considered. It also gives community members a chance to see the big picture—what others are saying, key themes, and emerging ideas.

As a key milestone in the project, this document helps us reflect on whose voices have been included, where there may be gaps, and what still needs exploration. Combined with background research and analysis, these insights will directly inform the next steps of the project.

1.2 Project Scope

The project covers the area from Whycocomagh Provincial Park at 9780 Highway 105 to where Highway 105 meets the Skye River, including the entire Main Street corridor and the intersections of nearby streets.



1.3 What is Active Transportation?

Active transportation is a broad term that refers to all modes of human-powered transportation, including but not limited to walking and rolling (referring to the use of assistive devices such as wheelchairs), cycling, rollerblading and skateboarding, seasonal activities such as kayaking and snowshoeing, and some motorized forms of transportation such as e-bikes and electric wheelchairs.

Some people depend on active transportation to get where they need to go due to lack of alternative transportation, while others choose to use active transportation as a preferred form of commute, exercise, recreation, or leisure. Understanding the multifaceted nature of active transportation is essential for developing plans and infrastructure that accommodate the diverse motivations and needs of individuals utilizing these modes.

Active transportation helps build healthier, more connected, and more sustainable communities while offering a wide range of benefits, including but not limited to:



Improving mental, physical, and social health through increased daily movement and social connection.



Strengthening the economy by supporting local businesses, attracting tourists, and increasing accessibility to services.



Lowering carbon emissions and reducing environmental impact while fostering a deeper connection to nature.



Promoting equity by expanding travel options and improving access to public spaces and key destinations.



Creating safer, more connected, and vibrant communities, while enhancing quality life for individuals of all ages and abilities.



PART 2 WHAT WE DID

2.1 Engagement Overview

Community input is crucial to understanding local active transportation experiences and needs, and to create design solutions that truly reflect the unique character of the area, a collaborative approach is key. Therefore, community engagement is at the heart of this project, and will unfold in three phases:

- **Phase 1: Formative Engagement** | Winter 2024–25
- **Phase 2: Conceptual Design Engagement** | Spring 2025
- **Phase 3: Detailed Design Engagement** | Fall 2025

The Formative Engagement Phase began with an engagement strategy workshop, which established a framework for the first phase of engagement with the public, community partners, and other stakeholders, resulting in an engagement strategy document. The goal of Phase 1 was to gather an overview of active transportation desires, challenges, opportunities, and experiences, providing a solid foundation for the draft design concepts.

Guiding Questions

Engagement was informed by the following questions:

- What are the main challenges you or others face when participating in active transportation in Whycocomagh, and what improvements would make these modes of transportation easier and safer?
- How do you feel about adding sidewalks, bike lanes, crosswalks, and other infrastructure? Are there specific areas where these changes are most needed?
- What types of improvements, like better street lighting, landscaping, or seating areas, would make Whycocomagh feel more welcoming and comfortable?
- What excites you most about this project? What are the biggest opportunities?

2.2 Formative Engagement Activities

To gather input from a diverse range of voices, we used a mix of in-person and online engagement methods, including:

- Project website
- Interactive social map
- Public questionnaire
- Initial stakeholder engagement
- In-person stakeholder sessions

Community vision is at the heart of this project, and we appreciate everyone who took the time to share their thoughts. All feedback received is valuable and will help shape the conceptual designs, which will be available for public review in Spring 2025.



Project Website www.speakupland.ca/whycocomagh-at-plan

The project website served as a central hub for information, offering an overview of the project and access to key online engagement activities, including the questionnaire and interactive social map. It also provided multiple ways for community members to connect with the project team, including an email address and phone number for direct inquiries. Additionally, visitors had the option to subscribe with their email address to receive updates throughout the next phases of the project. The website will remain active until the project's completion, ensuring continued access to information and engagement opportunities.



Public Questionnaire with 47 Responses

A public questionnaire, hosted on the project website, was used to gather valuable feedback on community needs, barriers, and priorities related to active transportation. To ensure accessibility, residents who were unable to complete the survey online had the option to participate by phone, and printed versions were made available at stakeholder sessions.



Stakeholder Sessions and Email Updates

The project team engaged with community stakeholders at various levels, providing information about the project and opportunities for public participation. Stakeholders were also invited to attend in-person sessions to share their perspectives. These sessions, held at the Whycocomagh Waterfront Centre, included a project overview followed by focused discussions that provided valuable insights into community needs, existing initiatives, and other key considerations for the project.



Online Social Map With 42 Contributions

In addition to the questionnaire, the project website hosted an online interactive social mapping tool to collect location specific feedback. This tool enabled community members to identify areas they liked, disliked, or wished to see improved, and to leave comments or suggestions. This method generated a broad range of location-specific insights.

PART 3

WHAT WE HEARD

3.1 Overview

This section of the report summarizes the key themes and priorities identified through all engagement activities. A wide range of topics were discussed and documented, with some themes emerging consistently, while others were less common. All feedback received is valuable and will contribute to shaping the foundation of the final plan and detailed design.

Community Priorities

The following six priority areas have been identified as essential focus points by the community, and provide structure for the feedback explored in this chapter. To make it more consistent and digestible, the feedback has been formatted as bulleted recommendations.



Increase Safety and Comfort



Ensure Access for All Ages and Abilities



Improve Connectivity and Expand Infrastructure



Enhance Amenities and Community Identity



Expand Programming and Resources



Prioritize Community Engagement

Figure 1. Survey responses to the question, “How often do you currently **walk or roll** in Whycocomagh?” highlight both active engagement and barriers to participation. While 37% of respondents walk or roll 4–7 times per week, 16% report never participating. A significant portion (18%) get moving less than once per week, and 22% reported walking or rolling 1–3 times per week.

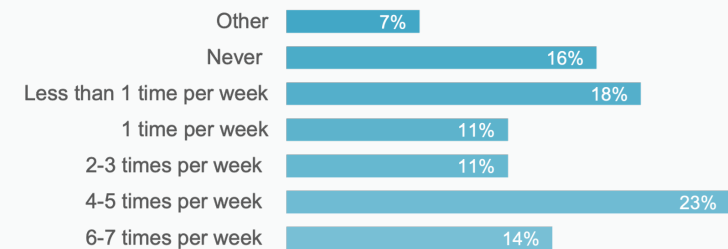
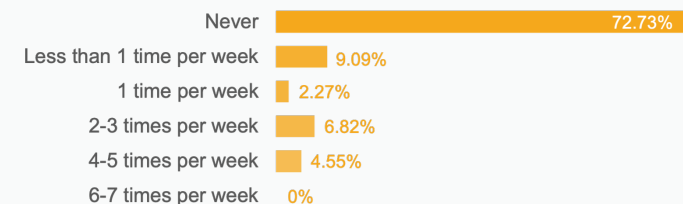


Figure 2. Survey responses to the question, “How often do you currently **cycle** in Whycocomagh?” highlight low levels of cycling participation. Nearly 73% of respondents report never cycling, while only a small percentage cycle occasionally, and no respondents reported cycling 6–7 times per week.





“Improving physical health”, “enjoying the outdoors and connecting with nature”, “improving mental health”, and “spending time with family and friends” all ranked among the top five reasons for both walking or rolling and cycling in Whycocomagh.

Figure 3.

Survey Responses to “Why do you currently **walk or roll** in Whycocomagh?”

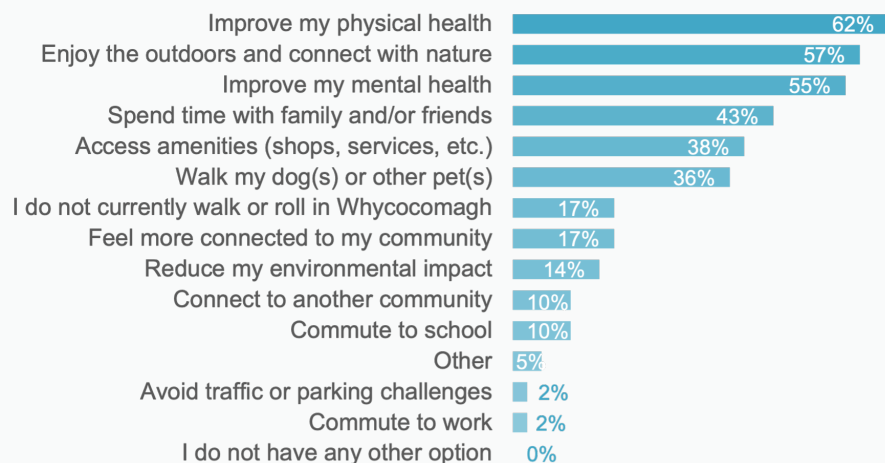
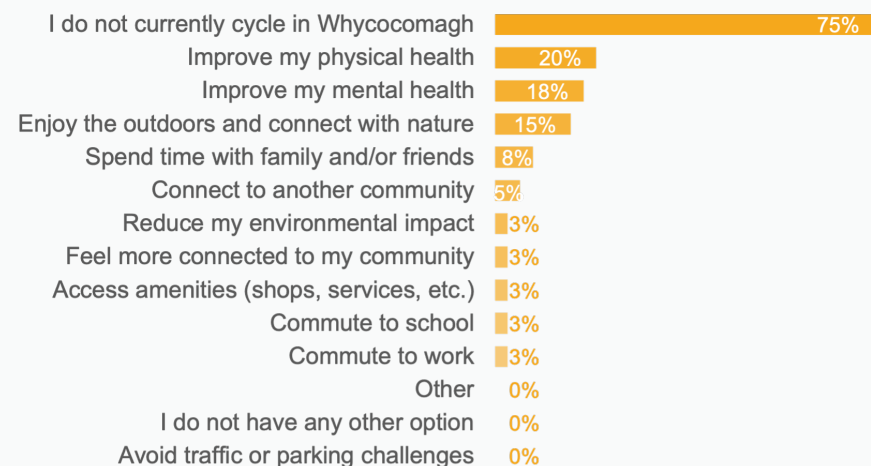


Figure 4.

Survey responses to “Why do you currently **cycle** in Whycocomagh?”



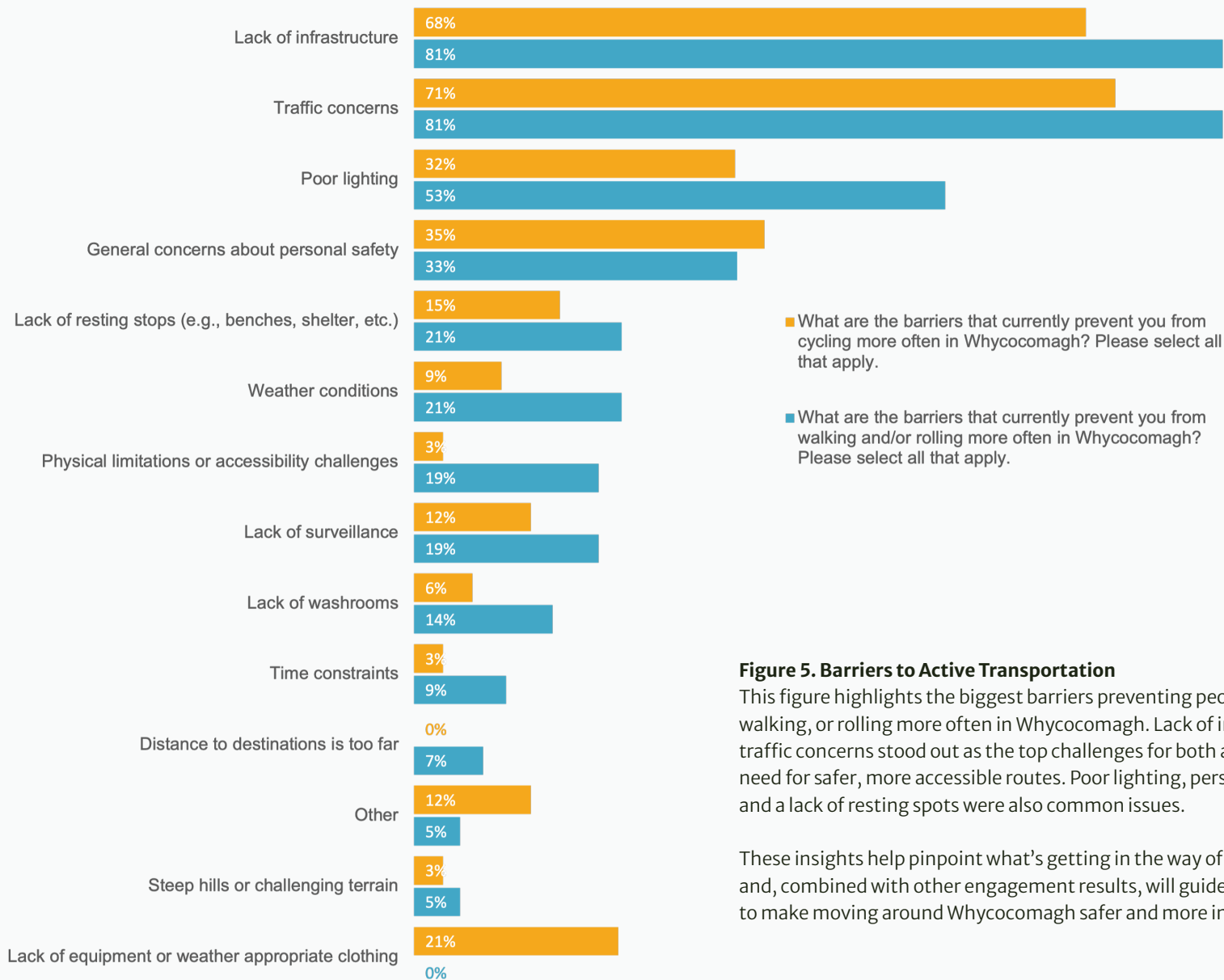


Figure 5. Barriers to Active Transportation

This figure highlights the biggest barriers preventing people from cycling, walking, or rolling more often in Whycocomagh. Lack of infrastructure and traffic concerns stood out as the top challenges for both activities, signaling a need for safer, more accessible routes. Poor lighting, personal safety concerns, and a lack of resting spots were also common issues.

These insights help pinpoint what's getting in the way of active transportation, and, combined with other engagement results, will guide future improvements to make moving around Whycocomagh safer and more inviting for everyone.

3.2 Increase Safety and Comfort

Safety emerged as the top priority across engagement activities. To address concerns, participants made the following recommendations:

- Implement traffic calming measures, such as speed bumps, to slow traffic and improve safety for active transportation users
- Prioritize both traffic flow for motorists and safety for active transportation users, including physical separation whenever possible.
- Provide clear and informative signage and road markings to guide drivers safely and ensure respect for other users.
- Improve lighting along roads and crossings to enhance visibility, especially for early morning or evening users.
- Install flashing lights, including button-press signals with sound, at intersections and crossings to increase safety and accessibility
- Improve access and safety at the roundabout by adding a welcome post to slow down traffic, creating a separate pedestrian connection, and using lighting to guide both pedestrians and motorists.
- Address dangerous pavement drop-offs at shoulders and improve winter maintenance on highway edges and sidewalks for year-round accessibility.
- Improve safety for highway crossings.

Location Based Feedback

- Improve roundabout design, as it is currently not effectively slowing down vehicles, causes confusion, and provides unsafe crossing options.
- Implement a safer pedestrian crossing at the Skye River Bridge, as crossing is currently dangerous.
- Improve speed limit transitions, as the current changes (100 km/h → 70 km/h at the Whycocomagh Provincial Park entrance → 60 km/h at the Waterfront Centre → 70 km/h after the roundabout) are confusing.
- Install a flashing pedestrian crossing between Esso and the Fire Hall, and near the Trans Canada Trail trailhead on Johnston Lane.
- Install marked crosswalks near Main Street and Highway 105 at the eastern end of the village.
- Improve crossing between the Waterfront Centre and Bakery.

- Reduce speed from the Whycocomagh Provincial Park entrance westward into the village.
- Consider a speed bump on Highway 252 after the roundabout to slow down exiting traffic.
- Increase the number of crosswalks in front of the Co-op and near the Fire Hall.
- Improve road conditions on the approach to Whycocomagh from Skye Glen for safer cycling.
- Address safety concerns for pedestrians and cyclists at the Skye River Bridge by providing better access points.
- Reduce vehicle speeds on Highway 105, especially on the eastern side of the village.

“Solutions to problems need coordinated efforts that recognize the importance of both traffic and pedestrians / cyclists. Efforts should be made to ensure people can access public transportation, services and park facilities safely at all times of the year and when dark. Pedestrians and cyclists need to be safe and drivers need to be able to see them clearly. Drivers need clear and informative signage and road markings to move safely through the village while respecting other users. Lighting is very important to drivers.” – Public Questionnaire Respondent

“A major safety issue for any kind of travel in the area is car speed. The marker on the map indicates an area where cars, trucks, motorcycles and 18 wheelers speed especially as heading away from town, towards mabou, although many speed towards the round about. It is very dangerous. Please look at ways to reduce speed here (speed bump-traffic calming strategies) and I believe it will reduce the speed in most areas of the community.”
– Social Map Participant

3.3 Ensure Access for All Ages and Abilities

Access and inclusion was highlighted as a top priority throughout the engagement process. Many participants shared that the existing infrastructure creates barriers that limit their ability to engage in active transportation comfortably, or even at all. To address these concerns and ensure the active transportation network is accessible to everyone, participants made the following recommendations:

- Widen infrastructure to accommodate strollers and assistive devices such as wheelchairs, and consider accessibility needs at every stage of development, from engagement to construction.
- Install benches at regular intervals along walking routes for resting spots and ensure that gathering spaces are accessible to individuals with mobility challenges.
- Reduce grade changes and ensure sidewalks are accessible for wheelchair users and others with mobility challenges.
- Plan for ongoing maintenance, including snow removal and debris clearing, to keep infrastructure accessible year-round.
- Provide family-friendly amenities, such as washrooms and baby-changing areas, to support a broad range of users.

Location Based Feedback

- Explore options for a pedestrian crosswalk or tunnel from MacDougall Lane to the waterfront, with a sidewalk extending to the waterfront lookout.
- Provide sidewalks along Main Street to support residents of all ages
- Improve access to key locations, including the future public library space and the Bras d'Or Lakes waterfront, with safe pedestrian crossings, traffic-calming measures, and sidewalk connections between Waycobah and Whycocomagh for equitable access to services.

“Side walk or at least a decent shoulder from RV park to school, and maybe as far down as the post office. Would be nice to safely walk around town with a stroller and get kids to school.”

–Social Map Participant

“Whycocomagh needs sidewalks desperately! Walking on Main Street (Village Road) is treacherous on a good day, but in the winter it is deplorable. I walk often and a lot of times, it is safer to take chances walking along the highway than take the risk of walking through the village. I am fortunate to have good mobility and I feel terrible for those who don't – our seniors and those with decreased mobility deserve to have safe access to services in our area. Having sidewalks in Whycocomagh should be a priority!” – Public Questionnaire Respondent

“Pedestrian bridge to connect both communities is needed for safe walking.” –Social Map Participant

“Future site of a public library, with a cafe across the street. Accessibility and safe walking/crossing here is key!”

–Social Map Participant

3.4 Improve Connectivity and Expand Infrastructure

The importance of a well connected active transportation options was highlighted by many community members. To improve connectivity, participants made the following recommendations:

- Extend sidewalks to cover both core business and residential areas
- Construct sidewalks on the higher side of roads for increased safety.
- Consider implementing multi-use paths (MUPS) instead of separate sidewalks and bike lanes where space is limited.
- Develop a well-lit, safe pathway along Highway 105 that connects key destinations such as the pharmacy, grocery stores, and parks.

Location Based Feedback

- Create a sidewalk loop from the provincial park to a central parking area for recreational walking.
- Establish a boardwalk from Keltic Quay to the provincial park to enhance active transportation options.
- Build a cycling and walking bridge over Skye River.
- Improve connectivity between Whycocomagh and We'koqma'q through safer infrastructure.
- Expand sidewalks to cover key areas, including Main Street and along Highway 105.
- Provide a sidewalk connection to the Skye River Trail to improve access for students at WEC.
- Provide sidewalks on both sides from Mackenzie to MacDougall Drive.
- Prioritize connections to the Whycocomagh Provincial Park, Salt Mountain, and the new Musical Loop.
- Improve connection from the Irving to the Waterfront Centre.
- Create a safe pedestrian connection from Mackeigans Lane to the co-op, car wash, school, roundabout, and a safe crossing to the farmers market (currently unsafe for children).

- Improve trail and sidewalk connections to the Skye River Trail, We'koqma'q community, and RV campground.
- Enhance pedestrian access between the boat launch and Provincial Park entrance.
- Improve connection between Skye River and Whycocomagh Provincial Park, with a MUP listed as a potential solution.
- Ensure new active transportation infrastructure does not create conflicts with ATVs and snowmobiles.
- Improve connections to the picnic park, as it is a popular place to exercise and walk in the community.
- The Nova Scotia Blue Route (NSDPW's right of way) is planned to travel east on Hwy 252 until meeting the Celtic Shores Coastal Trail. Consider how the proposed Whycocomagh AT plans can provide a safe connection for locals and visitors using the Blue Route.
- The Nova Scotia Blue Route has planned to have a MUP from Whycocomagh to St. Anns. With this context, the plan/designs should consider how a connection between the future AT facilities in Whycocomagh connect with the (long range plan) facility type on the HWY 105 in relation to the planned designs/work by NSDPW.
- Focus development along the highway while ensuring easy pedestrian access to essential services.
- Improve connectivity from We'koqma'q community all the way to Lower Park.

"Some sort of sidewalk/lane would encourage more people to go along Main Street which is beautiful and underutilized. If some sort of bike lane/sidewalk could go from We'koqma'q to the Upper Park or even Charlene's that would be incredible and connect elements of the community and encourage safe travel throughout the community." – Public Questionnaire Respondent

3.5 Enhance Amenities and Community Identity

Participants stressed the importance of providing adequate amenities to enhance the comfort and functionality of the active transportation network. Recommendations included:

- Use sidewalk improvements and placemaking strategies to attract more visitors, improve connections to the provincial parks and trailheads, and position Whycocomagh as a starting point for exploring outdoor recreation and active transportation opportunities.
- Improve lighting across the project area to ensure visibility during evening or early morning hours while minimizing light pollution, and enhance signage for clearer trail and park access, including the Provincial Park entrance.
- Ensure accessible public washrooms, water refill stations, and garbage bins at trailheads, busy intersections, gathering areas, and along key walking routes, as well as dog waste bag stations.
- Provide seating, shelters, and benches along routes, and make scenic areas and the waterfront more accessible for active transportation users.
- Incorporate historic elements into the design as part of Whycocomagh's tourism planning, and enhance Main Street design to better accommodate seasonal and festival events.
- Improve waterfront infrastructure to support activities such as fishing, sailing, and seasonal businesses like kayak/canoe rentals and ice cream stands.
- Enhance the village's appeal as a destination by improving safety, accessibility, and sustainable landscaping to maintain its natural beauty.
- Implement a lakeside boardwalk for walking and biking, with seating, lighting, and streetscape improvements reflecting Whycocomagh's history and culture.

Location Based Feedback

- Develop a potential green or pocket park outside the campground at the 252/Highway 5 roundabout.
- Add privacy screens or plantings along sidewalks, especially where space is tight on Main Street.

- Install shaded benches and pocket parks with landscaping in core areas (e.g., near the campground, facing Highway 105).
- Enhance the waterfront lookout with a boardwalk, picnic tables, lighting, and interpretative panels.
- Preserve the quiet character of Main Street by limiting bright lighting and after-hours traffic.
- Improve landscaping, seating, and lighting across from the church on Main Street to create a community gathering space.
- Revamp the rotary and surrounding area to make it more inviting.
- Develop a dock or designated space at the waterfront lookout, and add features along sidewalks (e.g., bus stop enhancements) to attract both residents and tourists.

"Benches along the village road looking towards the bay would be very welcoming." – Public Questionnaire Respondent

"Sidewalks and lighting with some areas for resting would be effective. Suitably planned landscaping at appropriate places can look very appealing – provided the landscaping is low maintenance and comes with provision to maintain it. Good quality signage with walking distances noted is useful, particularly for visitors."

– Public Questionnaire Respondent

"Make wharf more of a prominent feature in the community. Fix road going down to, so it's easier to access, maybe put a bench or two near by." – Social Map Participant

"Community park fostering connection between whycocomagh & wekoqmaq nice place for benches trees shrubbery etc."

– Social Map Participant

3.6 Expand Programming and Resources

Many community members expressed a desire for more programs and educational initiatives to change attitudes toward active transportation and increase overall participation. We also heard about the importance of effective communications to raise awareness. Recommendations included:

- Promote walking and active lifestyles within the community.
- Host seasonal, low-barrier events to engage the community in active transportation.
- Partner with businesses to enhance active transportation access by adding amenities such as bike racks, dog leash ties outside storefronts, and rest opportunities for cyclists.
- Promote safety, etiquette, and responsible use of active transportation spaces through campaigns and educational materials.
- Offer education on biking safely through the roundabout and provide bike safety courses for both cyclists and drivers.
- Provide electric scooter or bike rentals at the waterfront area via an app.

“This sounds like a wonderful plan and all of the suggestions in the plan will enhance the beautiful area and community of Whycocomagh and its residents and visitors.”

– Public Questionnaire Respondent

“Create community space/park, sculptural artwork or mural, etc... Something to represent both We’koqma’q and Whycocomagh.”

– Social Map Participant

3.7 Prioritize Community Engagement

To keep the community informed and involved throughout the project, and ensure a successful final plan, the following actions are recommended:

- Continue to provide project updates and engagement stages on the project website, and offer regular updates and engagement opportunities for residents.
- Ensure communication about community meetings and surveys to reach residents goes beyond social media, ensuring all residents are aware of public input opportunities and decision-making processes.
- Promote active transportation as a key part of Whycocomagh’s tourism strategy and continue community engagement efforts to gather input and refine plans.
- Recognize and honor the community’s history of active transportation and its importance in planning, while ensuring new development supports community growth while maintaining Whycocomagh’s identity.
- Offer one-on-one sessions for property owners concerned about sidewalk encroachment, and ensure collaboration with We’koqma’q throughout the project.
- Encourage ongoing conversations about improvements to make Whycocomagh a safer, more connected, and welcoming place.

“This is an exciting project. My main concern is that it should be coordinated with active transportation through We’koqma’q. So many We’koqma’q community members travel on foot or bicycle through their community and on through Whycocomagh. The two communities are intimately connected neighbours and partners. If a sidewalk and or bike lane is put in place, it only makes sense that it would travel through We’koqma’q and Whycocomagh if desired by both communities.” – Social Map Comment