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Item No. 15.1.4
Halifax Regional Council
August 19, 2025

TO: Mayor Fillmore and Members of Halifax Regional Council
FROM: Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer
DATE: July 8, 2025
SUBJECT: Improvement to the Active Transportation Network – CN Crossing

ORIGIN

Item 15.5.3 at the August 6, 2024, meeting of Halifax Regional Council

MOVED by Councillor Morse, seconded by Councillor Cleary

THAT Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to prepare a staff report with recommendations for improving Active Transportation links between Mainland Halifax and the Halifax Peninsula within 1 km of the Windsor Street Exchange, including revisiting the option of a bridge and pathways connecting Chisholm Avenue and Scot Street over the CN rail cut.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The CN rail corridor between the west side of the Halifax peninsula and the mainland is a barrier for people walking and cycling. There are a number of locations with wear paths indicating significant crossings, including at this location.

An Active Transportation connection across the CN corridor between Scot Street and Chisholm Avenue has been studied in the past. High-level planning suggests it is viable and would cost between \$2 and \$4 million. It would also require property acquisition or an easement, as well as connecting infrastructure.

A crossing here would better connect the people living in higher density residential on the peninsula side with shopping and services on the mainland side. It would improve safety with respect to crossings of the active CN rail corridor.

A successor to the Active Transportation Priorities Plan will be developed, and it is recommended that this project be considered for future project priorities in this work.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council:

1. Direct the CAO to include consideration of a new active transportation crossing of the CN rail corridor between Scot Street and Chisholm Avenue in the development and prioritization of projects in the successor to the Active Transportation Priorities Plan and next phase of implementation of the Integrated Mobility Plan.

BACKGROUND

The Active Transportation Priorities Plan (ATPP) and Integrated Mobility Plan (IMP) provide direction for considering new Active Transportation infrastructure in HRM.

Recommendation #38 of the ATPP states: *Halifax should consider building AT Bridges or crossings to overcome barriers in the AT network, particularly between high density residential areas and business/commercial areas.* The recommendation identifies a crossing of the CN rail corridor in the area of Chisholm Street as an example of such a location, and it is identified as a candidate facility in the ATPP.

Action 83 of the IMP states: *Identify and implement solutions to facilitate active transportation links across railways, highways and watercourses, consistent with the Active Transportation Priorities Plan.* This bridge and connecting facilities were not part of the proposed Regional Centre Bikeway Network. The Bayers Road crossing of CN is part of that network.

In 2014, HRM developed preliminary design options for an active transportation bridge at this location. It was considered feasible but was not advanced to more detailed design or property acquisition.

DISCUSSION

The CN rail corridor is a barrier for active transportation on the west side of the Halifax peninsula. Figure 1 shows two AT crossing projects currently in design (Windsor Street Exchange and Bayers Road) and the potential Scot-Chisholm crossing discussed in this report.

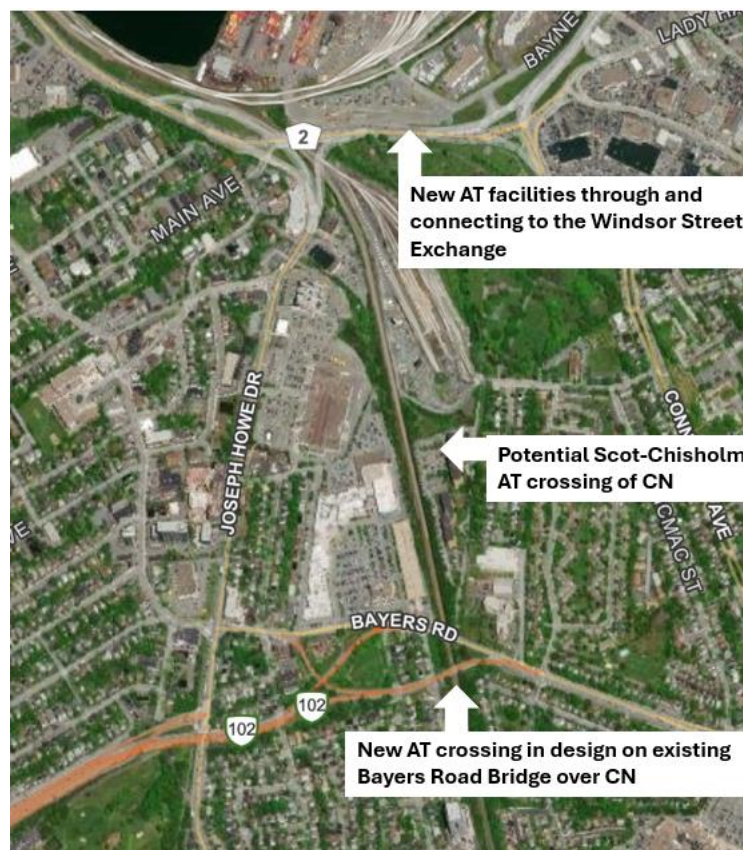


Figure 1: AT crossing context of CN corridor between Bedford Basin and Bayers Road

At the Scot-Chisholm location, the CN corridor separates higher density residential areas on the east side of the tracks from larger shopping, services and employment destinations to the west. As evidenced by the strong informal wear path shown on *Figure 2* below, many people walk across this location.

A connection at this location could be part of a more regional AT link between the Chain of Lakes Trail and sidewalks and future bikeways at the north end of the peninsula. It could also provide an alternative to the Windsor Street Exchange for some AT trips.

Making a proper active public transportation crossing here would require construction of a bridge over the tracks (with permission from CN) and property acquisition or easements to connect either side to public streets. Property acquisition is required between Chisholm Avenue and the CN corridor and between Scot Street and the CN corridor.

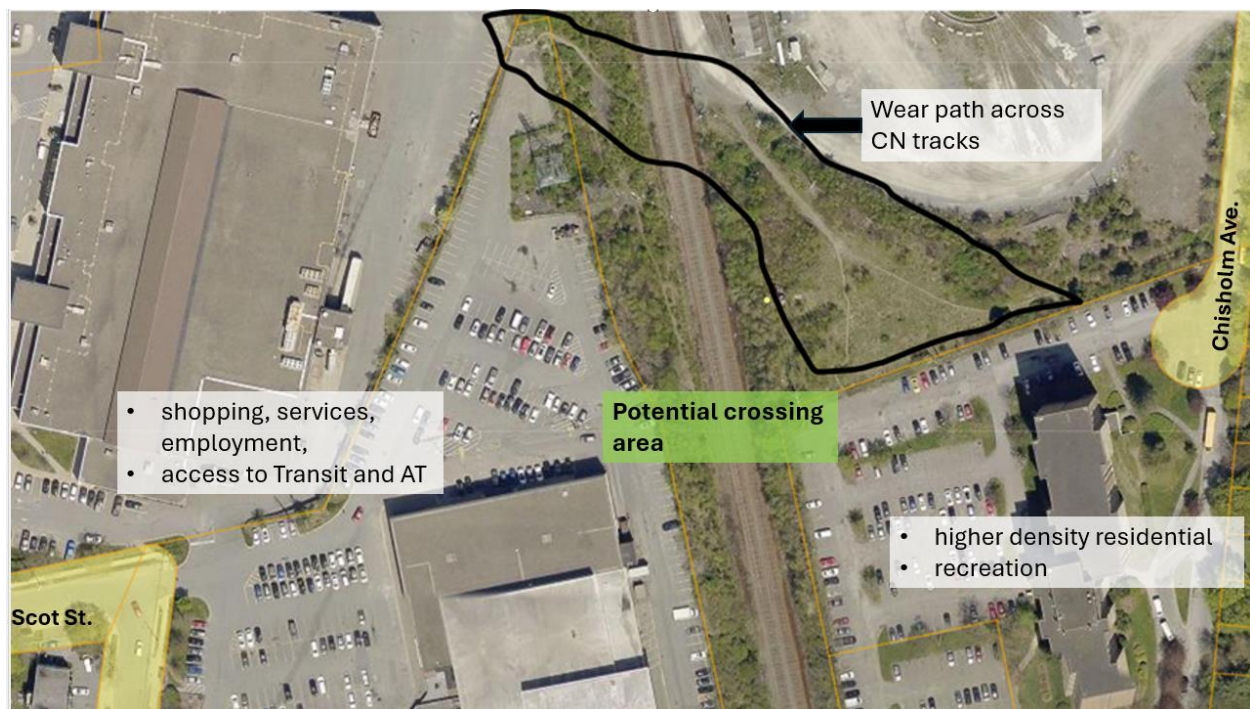


Figure 2: Location of potential CN corridor crossing for active transportation near Scot Street

Preliminary estimates indicate that an AT bridge at this location could cost between \$2-\$4 million. There would also be a cost for an easement or acquisition to enable public access on either side from Scot and Chisholm Streets as well as the costs of an AT facility over these approaches.

The CN rail cut is a barrier to active transportation at several locations between mainland Halifax and the peninsula. The current priority project to address this is at the CN overpass on Bayers Road to widen the sidewalk to accommodate bicycles. Design work is ongoing for that project. The need for an AT crossing between the West End Mall and Olivet Street has also been identified.

HRM is currently in the process of updating the Integrated Mobility Plan and determining the successor to the Active Transportation Priorities Plan. This potential crossing has clear connectivity and safety benefits and, subject to Council approval, will be part of the projects considered for prioritization in the next five to ten years.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate financial implications associated with the recommendations provided in this report. If approved, this project would need to be prioritized in future capital budget plans.

RISK CONSIDERATION

There are no significant risks associated with the recommendations provided in this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

No community engagement was required.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No environmental implications were identified.

ALTERNATIVES

Halifax Regional Council could choose to direct the CAO to exclude the Chisholm Ave / Scot St crossing of the CN rail cut and investigate alternative crossing locations and treatments as part of future projects identified in the successor to the Active Transportation Priorities Plan and Integrated Mobility Plan.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, S.N.S. 2008, c. 39

7A: The purposes of the Municipality are to (a) provide good government; (b) provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality; and (c) develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

ATTACHMENTS

n/a

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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