



November 28, 2023

RE: Department of Transportation & Infrastructure Confederation Trail Public Consultation

I am pleased to provide the province with recommendations on how the Confederation Trail can continue to be the "crown jewel of the island."

To begin, I approach this letter wearing two helmets. One, that of being the President of SAFE Summerside. We are a registered not-for-profit organization with the goal to advocate for creating safe and accessible streets for active transportation of all various types within the City of Summerside and surrounding areas by working with government, businesses, community organizations, and members of the general public to:

1. Develop strategies to reduce or eliminate the barriers to active transportation;
2. Promote and prioritize active transportation as a healthy, economical, ecologically sound, and variable means of transportation; and
3. Promote and prioritize equity and access to active transportation for all individuals of all ages, sizes, genders, sexualities, races, ethnicities, abilities, and incomes.

My second helmet is of my paid employment at Dreams Unlimited Childcare Centre in Summerside. Since 2010, I have been bicycling with a group of 15 children (ages 5 to 11) for 11 weeks of the year daily, and we use the Confederation Trail whenever possible. Every time we travel by bicycle, I have the lives of these children in my hands and my heart – hands-down, the Confederation Trail is the safest and most enjoyable route from point A to point B. And, for the longest rides in one day, we bicycled from Summerside to Kensington and back, as well as Wellington and back. In 2022, we bicycled enough as a tag team to cross Canada [<https://tinyurl.com/BikeXCanada>].

There is no better feeling than knowing I am creating this human-powered experience for these children on a protected trail. I can tell them "to bicycle as fast as they want" at specific points and meet them at the next road. It is so wonderful to watch kids still able to be well.... kids – and the Confederation Trail gives this childhood of memories to them!

I say all of this to give you my frame of reference when I make these upcoming recommendations and how much the Confederation Trail matters and needs to grow and connect to new destinations to provide a "safe neighborhood network" of expansive experiences that help shape the young, and young-at-heart.



The above interaction with 84-year-old Gabriel Stewart is one of hundreds that we have had throughout the years. This interaction occurred in 2022 and was made possible only because of the Confederation Trail. We stopped on the bench at the Trail before it crossed Glenn Drive (Summerside). We looked for crab apples and drank some water. Then, Gabriel arrived with his rainbow umbrella on a bright sunny day. We talked with him for nearly thirty minutes as he explained he walks daily and calculates how far he walks around the world; we shared that we were trying to see if we could bicycle virtually across Canada. As I said, this interaction was one of many we have had, but maybe the only one I could capture on video. You can listen to a small portion of our conversation here:
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=426300482885262>



We also met Dwayne. Dwayne gave me permission to share his story: He often gets honked and yelled at when he travels on the side of the road (the children heard this and asked me questions). Dwayne explained the battery is located on the bottom of his mobility scooter and sidewalks don't allow enough clearance; so, traveling on the side of the street is his only option, unless flat surfaces such as Greenwood Drive or the Confederation Trail take him to his destination.

Now, here are our recommendations for the Confederation Trail (while focused on Summerside, would apply to other jurisdictions as well):

1. Pave the Trails

The trails become more accessible to various forms of active transportation:

- Walkers
- Rollerblades (getting more popular in Summerside)
- Thin-tired (road, racing, or hybrid) bicycles
- Skateboards
- Scooters
- Human-powered wheelchairs
- Bicycles with training wheels
- Thin-tired baby strollers
- Shopping carts, and much more.

Paving the trails also reduces the number of crashes. For example, the children I bicycle with often fall off their bicycle when making quick turns on the gravel as their front tire "sticks" into it, and then they are thrown off their bike. Children fall face-first and knees and hand out into the gravel with the need for first aid treatment, as gravel is a challenging (and infectious) foreign object to have embedded into the skin.

Lastly, a flat and smooth surface is preferred for people with mobility issues (who cannot drive a car or choose not to drive a vehicle) in Summerside. **We hear many people with mobility issues feel unsafe walking on sidewalks and prefer a paved surface.** We also see evidence of this happening regularly in our city (people with walkers and mobility scooters on the street when a sidewalk is available).



Here are two images of persons with mobility issues choosing to walk/ride on the flat surface of the street when there is a sidewalk present. A paved, smooth surface of the Confederation Trail promotes an all ages and all abilities network we advocate for.



2. Wintertime Maintenance

In municipalities where the Trail is used as an active transportation connector, we recommend grooming and clearing snow from the trails in the wintertime. Once the trails are paved, the safest trail on the Island will be accessible to people year-round. In Summerside, the trails are closed to snowmobiles in the winter, and we see the option to maintain the Trail over the winter as a key to maintaining year-round recreation, fitness, social, and equity for those who do not own or cannot drive a car. We must change the thinking that we "shut down" in the winter.



You don't see him struggling. I did. I watched as he carried his bag and tried to maneuver his walker over early morning frozen clumps of gravel.

The above photo was taken Nov 2023: A person using a walker to navigate the gravel of the Confederation Trail after a light snowfall. Later we talked at supper time, and he told me he had been out all day, visiting with friends, and that he does this every day on the Confederation Trail. He told me, "when the snow gets too bad, I travel on the road." **With 4 pedestrian fatalities in the last 5 years in Summerside (including a collision with a walker, a wheelchair, and a mobility scooter), clearing the Trail in the winter is one step to help the most vulnerable road users be safe.** Increased safety = increased usage = increased sense of belonging = increased health.



A Mother traveling two children in a cargo bicycle (on the front) to school. She chooses the Confederation Trail as a safe connector and travels in all weather conditions. (Oct 2023)

3. Overhead Street lighting

Lighting improves safety and 24-hour access. Furthermore, overhead street lighting (while more expensive) would also be less prone to vandalism as the lights on the Summerside Boardwalk appear to need repair from vandalism regularly. Options to include charging stations become available with access to electricity as well.

4. Remove or open up the gates in municipalities

The width between gates makes the Trail inaccessible for some, a risk of injury for others, and leaves larger groups in the middle of the road waiting their turn to clear the gate.



We request the Confederation Trail gates be opened or removed based on three concerns:

- a. **Accessibility** (the width makes the Trail inaccessible for people who require a wider AT assistive devices, Trishaws, or a challenge for longer AT vehicles that tow cargo or ride a tandem bicycle)

Depending on funding, a min. of three (max: six) Trishaws will be in Summerside next summer thanks to the Rotary Club of Summerside, Community Connections, and Wedgewood/Summerset Manor. The width of the assistive bicycle requires the gates open.



Info: www.safesummerside.ca/CWA

Here are a few other photos of the Trishaw being showcased on the Boardwalk and Confederation Trail during the 2021 Pedal for Parkinson's (the gates needed to be open during this event).



Note the width of the Trishaw in relation to the 6-foot-wide Boardwalk and 8-foot Confederation Trail.



- b. **Injury** (a child's bicycle is the perfect height of the metal gates, and because they are less stable, they sometimes "smash" into the gates, and their fingers get caught between the metal gates and the handlebars);
- c. **Risk of Collision for Larger Groups** (larger groups take more time to navigate around and through the gates, leaving AT users in the middle of the road, waiting their turn to clear the obstacle.)



A Summerside resident shared an image of a 2023 crash at the South Drive gate.

The good news is there are already 16 streets in Summerside with the gates removed.

West Confederation Trail



<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO GATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES GATE
Myrtle Duke Notre Dame Cedar N Market Market Second St First St Water (x 2) Queen Spring Granville Northumberland King	Glenn South Greenwood Elm Willow King

East Confederation Trail



“The most dangerous intersection in the city is the Water Street/Confederation Trail. I have nearly been run over twice,” community feedback.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO GATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES GATE
Autumn	Harvard MacEwen Gillespie Small Read Dr Autumn

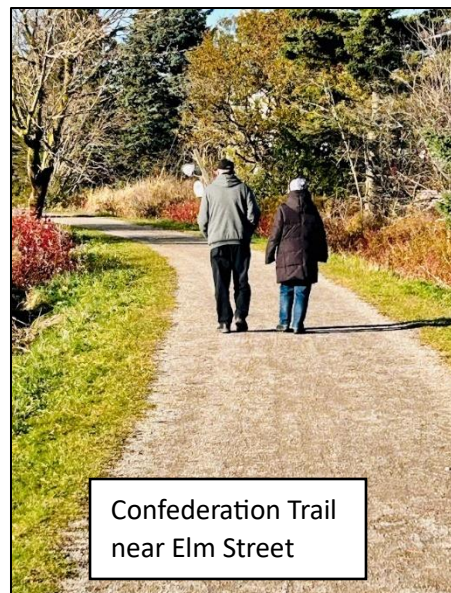
If opening or removing the remaining gates is not possible, we recommend a longer setback from the road. While this will not reduce injury or increase inclusion, it will facilitate larger groups of users (in my case, 15 children) being able to cross the street and spend less time in "limbo" as we wait for every single rider to navigate the gates. One particularly troublesome crossing is crossing Glenn Drive. It is on the city's outskirts, and there is a bend in the road, and the corner is tree-lined (thus, we only see the vehicles traveling at a high rate of speed when they make it around the corner). While crossing, I stand in the middle of the road, my body between the children passing behind me and my bicycle between the oncoming traffic and my body. Mentally, I rehearse what I will do if I sense a car cannot react when they see us: Drop/throw my bicycle and pick up/run and carry the children as quickly as possible.

5. Water Stations, Washrooms, and More Benches

These are necessary amenities best to support an all-ages and all-abilities approach. These facilities would also act as a rest stop or a shelter from the elements.

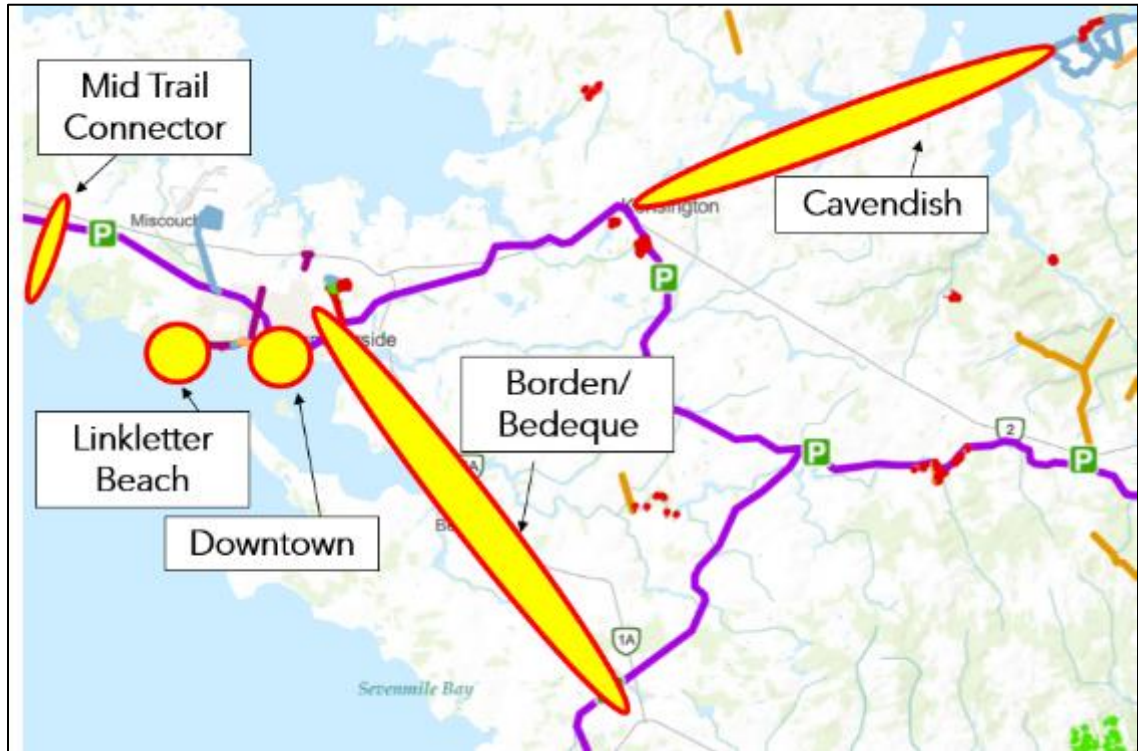
The washroom at North Rustico Beach is the best example of a world-class rest/washroom station that combines safe bicycle storage and 24-hour access. I don't have any photos of the exterior, but this photo (to the right) of the interior impressed me so much that I had to take a picture of it. This facility illustrates the benefit of running water (hot and cold is important), real toilets, electrical outlets to charge cell phones, and an inside space large enough to bring your bicycle or other mode of AT inside (so, no need to carry a lock or worry about theft).

Also, we recommend less space between benches. A theme in our consultations with seniors is the need for more benches. It has been reported that walking is their primary form of exercise when some seniors are recovering from a health crisis or have health issues. Benches provide a time to reenergize, a place to socialize, and a time to pause and reflect.



6. Create New Connections

I was so encouraged when this public consultation was introduced, and I appreciated that it explicitly requested ideas for expanding or branching off. To this end, from a Summerside and Area perspective, five key destinations come to mind:



- a. Connecting to Linkletter Beach
 - i. A connection to the Confederation Trail via Emery Road (3.0km) or
 - ii. A partnership with the City of Summerside via the Boardwalk (1.7km) or
 - iii. Both (would enhance the network by creating a scenic loop)
NOTE: 43% of SAFE Members support a safe AT route that connects Linkletter Beach to Summerside, and I can say my cycling group of children would access this route many times annually. This extension would help serve the Summerside and Linkletter communities and increase active transportation and recreation options.
- b. Connecting Kensington to Cavendish (an off-road trail to Cavendish would best support the Island Walk route for all levels of walkers, hikers, and cyclists who are uncomfortable traveling this route with a lot of turns and hills)
- c. Connecting Summerside to Bedeque/Borden (another route on the Island Walk system and a central connector from/to Summerside)

- d. Connecting the Summerside Confederation Trail downtown to a pedestrian village of sorts, much like the success of the Kensington Railyard.

Recommend Kensington Railyard Duplicated Across the Province

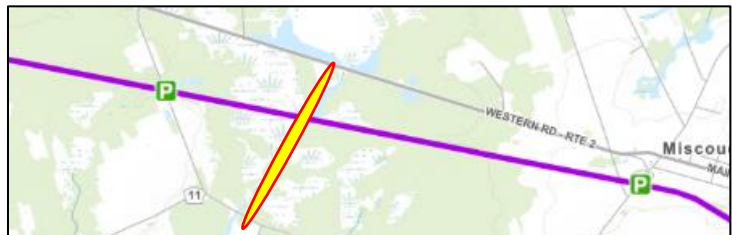


Currently, the Confederation Trails passes in the backyard and parking lots. The Core Plan (2016) for City of Summerside states:

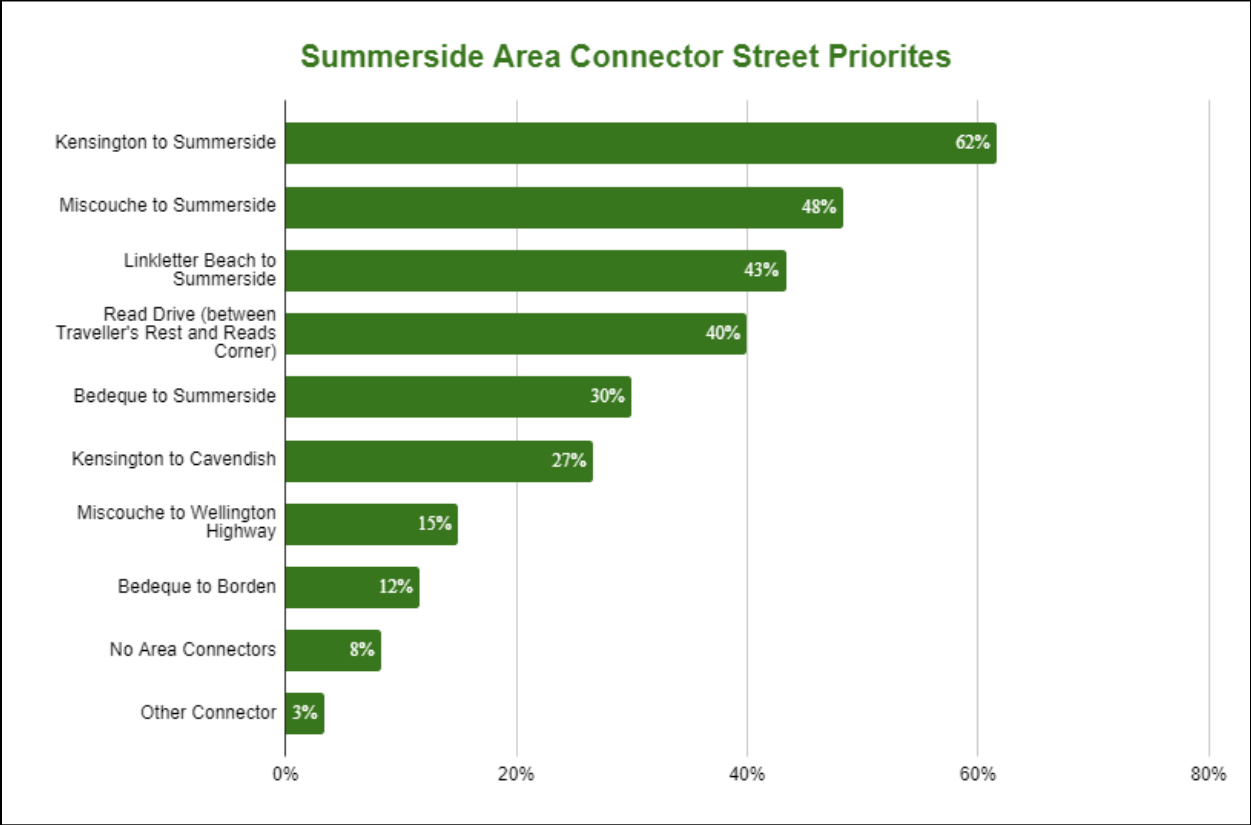
- "In Downtown Summerside, the trail system loses its quality as the Confederation Trails runs through a parking lot. . . . On the waterfront, Spinnaker's Landing is a popular boardwalk for visitors in the summertime; but lacks connectivity." (p.27)
- "The Confederation Trail passes through the backside of the parking lots on Water Street. The trail would be much more memorable if it were brought to the Baywalk to maximize views of the waterfront." (p. 73)

We recommend branching the Confederation Trail to Spinnakers Landing as the Core Plan states -- opening many possible experiences for the Trail User.

- e. Add a mid-trail extension between Lady Slipper Drive and St. Nicolas Road (the 5.8km without a connecting street or road creates a potentially unsafe environment or a feeling of "being trapped" for some people). Muddy Creek runs perpendicular to the Trail that connects Route 2 and Route 11 (a potential extension route, perhaps).

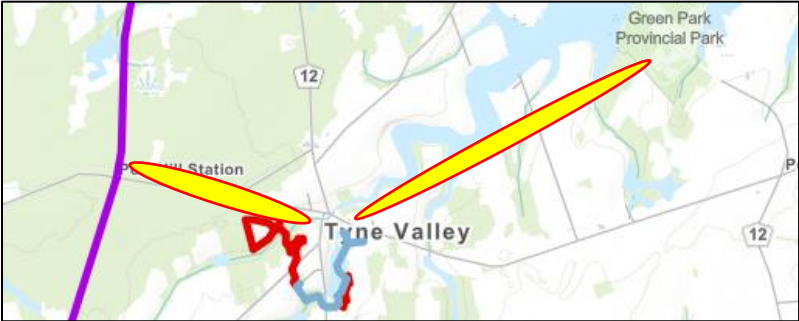


Here, we provide a chart of our membership survey to illustrate the top corridor connections:

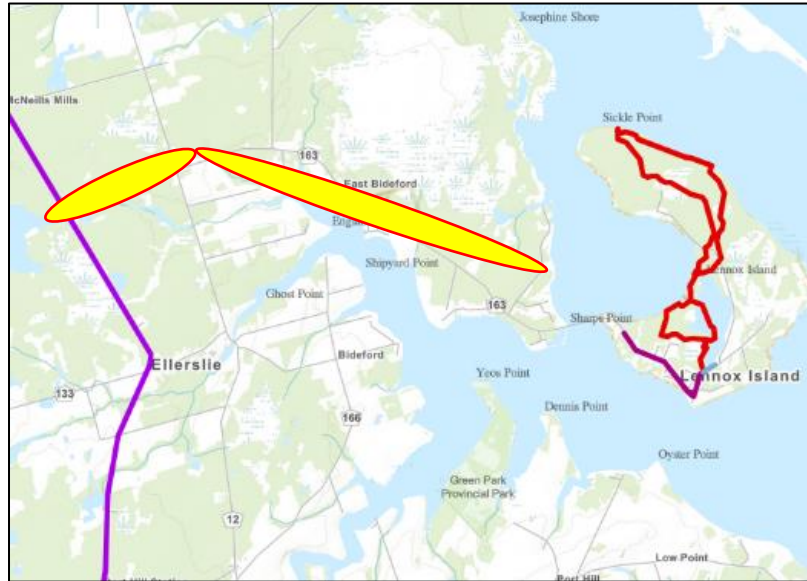


We also have recommendations for western PEI:

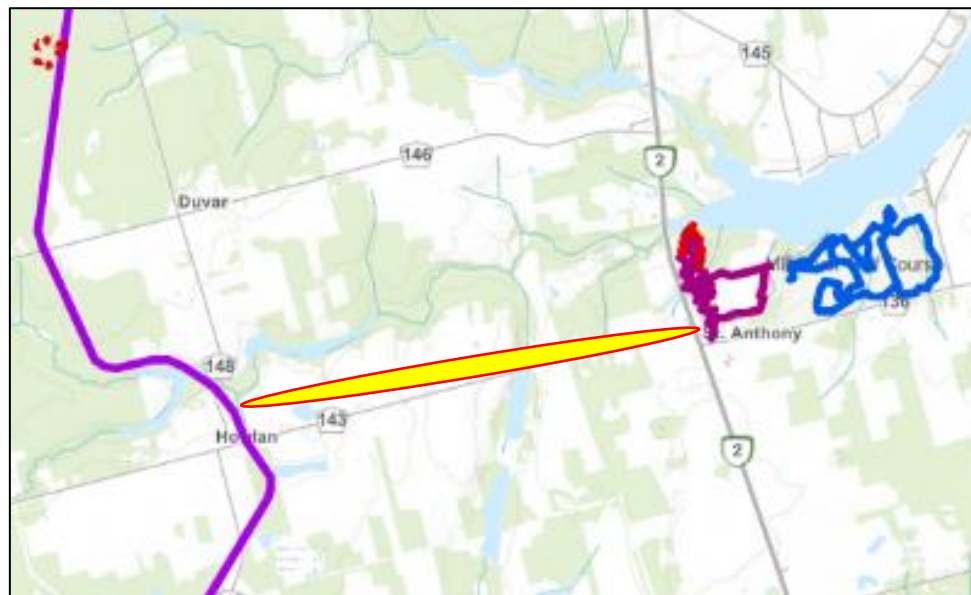
- f. Utilizing a branching out at Port Hill Station to connect with
 - i. Green Park
 - ii. Tyne Valley



- g. Utilizing a branching out between Ellerslie and McNeills Mills to connect to Lennox Island



- h. Utilizing Howlan Road (or Carruthers Brook) to connect with Mill River



7. We Do Not Support Sharing the Trail with ATVs

SAFE Summerside is opposed to allowing access to ATVs on the Confederation Trail. The Trail is world-renowned as a popular tourist attraction for walkers, hikers, and cyclists. It is a pan-PEI haven for people who find peace, enjoyment, and safety when we can "get away" from motorized traffic.

At a time when we fully understand the need to protect our environment and natural landscapes, allowing motorized vehicles on the Trail would be turning back the clock. The Island Trail comprises 410 km of rolled stone dust with gentle gradients. I have met close to a hundred tourists on the Trails over the years, and the consistent message is about the pristine quality of the traveling portion: "It is not like anything at home" and "You are so lucky". This will be altered with ATV use.

Further, it is well-researched that the risks of ATVs sharing pedestrian/cyclist trails are a safety concern, will significantly reduce non-ATV use of the Trail by close to 50 percent, and will reduce the health benefits¹. The PEI Active Transportation Strategy calls for a system designed with a beginning cyclist in mind², and shared streets between motorized vehicles and cyclists require a high degree of confidence and skill on the part of the bicycle rider.³ Beginner cyclists would no longer look at the Confederation Trail as an option.

With the province's goal to double active transportation rates by 2030, eliminate pedestrian and cyclist injuries and deaths,⁴ and become Net Zero by 2040⁵, adding shared access for ATVs will most certainly have the opposite effect.

¹ SAFE is in the process of compiling an annotated bibliography on this issue but two studies from Acadia University quantify the comments made above:

VanBlarcom, Brian and Janmaat, John (2008) Estimating the Health Benefits from a Proposed Rail Trail. Department of Economics, Acadia University, Wolfville, NS

https://economics.acadiau.ca/tl_files/sites/economics/resources/ACEA/Papers%20and%20Proceedings/2008/B.Vanblarcom.et.al.2008.pdf

Janmaat, John and VanBlarcom, Brian (2009) 'Impact of all terrain vehicle access on the demand for a proposed trail', *Managing Leisure*, 14:1, 57 — 70. Department of Economics, Irving K. Barber School of Arts and Sciences, University of British Columbia, Canada and 2Department of Economics, Acadia University, Wolfville, Canada <https://doi.org/10.1080/13606710802551262>

² "When thinking of safety, it is important to think of all users and not just a confident cyclist or an experienced walker when designing routes. Ultimately, if an active transportation system is designed to provide safety for a grade one child to walk to school, an older adult to get their groceries or a beginning cyclist to bike to work, then it likely will be considered safe for most." (PEI Active Transportation Strategy, Page 6).

³ PEI Active Transportation Network Plan, draft, page 25

⁴ PEI Active Transportation Network Plan, draft, page 6

⁵ <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/environment-energy-and-climate-action/path-to-net-zero>

With a network of safe and well-maintained recreation trails in Summerside, it is a concern that if ATVs were permitted on the Confederation Trail, there would be "spillover" into Summerside's recreational trail network that includes The Boardwalk/Baywalk, Rotary Friendship Park, Business Commons Eco Park, and the Hall Family Trail (all accessible via the Confederation Trail).

Best practices worldwide inform us that separation from motor vehicles is the key to increasing recreation/active transportation usage and safety. The safer someone feels to ride a bicycle or walk, the more frequently they will do so.⁶ In fact, in 2011, Trans Canada Trail stated it would no longer fund or promote trails that allow all-terrain vehicles⁷. On November 27, 2023, Eleanor McMahon (President & CEO of Trans Canada Trail) issued a public statement⁸:

Since 1995, we have contributed \$2.5 million to 55 different projects and initiatives on the Island. . . . We are advocating for the Confederation Trail to remain a greenway, meaning that we would like to see the existing motorized vehicle ban upheld. We have written to the Minister of Transportation to share this perspective and to outline our concerns that any change to the existing policy would have a detrimental impact on trail user experience, trail infrastructure, trail quality, and in turn, on the tourism and economic development generated by the Trail.

Permitting motorized vehicles on the Confederation Trail risks compromising the pristine and peaceful environment that makes it a leading trail tourism asset, ultimately altering the experience for visitors and threatening the economic impact of a thriving tourism industry.

Trans Canada Trail, in partnership with trail groups and communities in PEI – and the rest of Canada – is steadfast in its commitment to protecting and increasing the number of designated greenways to enhance the safety and enjoyment of non-motorized trail users.

While we understand the comments by the Transportation Minister Ernie Hudson ("There's tremendous opportunities here to work with the ATV Federation and to grow the tourism aspect of ATVing"⁹) is good for tourism; however, we respectfully oppose ATVs on the Confederation Trail as it is not in the best interest of residents' health, land, safe transport, and enjoyment.

⁶ IPSOS Market Research Group (2022). Cycling Across the World
<https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2022-05/Ipsos%20-%20Cycling%20Across%20the%20World-2022.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/atv-trails-lose-trans-canada-status-1.1042854>

⁸ <https://tctrail.ca/stories/trans-canada-trails-statement-on-peis-confederation-trail/>

⁹ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/pei-legislature-mlas-question-future-confederation-trail-use-1.7024447>

Conclusion

I was so encouraged when the province asked for public feedback on the future of the Confederation Trail. With more interest in, and the increased need for, active and sustainable transportation options, we look forward to the final report of recommendations being tabled and working together to build this incredible resource for future generations.

Respectfully submitted,

Ken Trenholm
President
SAFE Summerside

cc: Minister of Transportation, Hon Ernie Hudson
MLA District 20, Matthew MacKay
MLA District 21, Tyler DesRoches
MLA District 22, Minister of Social Development and Seniors, Hon. Barb Ramsay
MLA District 23, Hilton MacLellan
MLA District 24, Minister of Economic Development, Innovation and Trade,
Minister responsible for Acadian and Francophone Affairs, Hon. Gilles Arsenault
Mayor of Summerside, Dan Kutcher
Mayor of Linkletter, David Buell
Mayor of Kensington, Rowan Caseley
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Parks & Greenspace Manager, Trent Williams
Director, Policy & Stakeholder Relations, Trans Canada Trail, Michael Goodyear
Executive Director, Cycling PEI, Jordan Bober
Executive Director, Bike Friendly Communities PEI, Mitch Underhay
Executive Director, Valerie Vuillemot, Recreation PEI
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