



Truro-Colchester

MOVING ACCESSIBILITY FORWARD

2022 FINAL REPORT

The Municipality of the County of Colchester, Town of Truro, Town of Stewiacke, Village of Bible Hill, and the Village of Tatamagouche have come together to create a joint Accessibility Action Plan for the region.

THANK YOU!

This report was made possible with much appreciation for the foresight and commitment to change by the Administration, Senior Management, Council, Regional Accessibility Committee and the community as a whole in the Truro-Colchester Region, past and present.

Many thanks to Truro-Colchester Region Staff.

We are very appreciative of the time the Truro-Colchester Region teams have taken to accommodate us during the review as well as to the members of the community who engaged us in discussions regarding making their communities accessible and inclusive.



We have listed a number of resources in the appendices for you to refer to for quick reference. We would love to continue to work with the Truro-Colchester Region to help you obtain the training needed to not only operate with best practice but to be leaders in *next practice*.

We have learned an endless amount from working on this project with you and we hope to continue to work alongside the Province of Nova Scotia in helping to achieve a barrier-free province. We wish you all the very best with this process and look forward to watching change happen within the Truro-Colchester Region as you **move accessibility forward**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jessica Ward". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

Jessica Ward
Program and Project Manager
On behalf of the entire reachAbility Association team



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Truro-Colchester

MOVING ACCESSIBILITY FORWARD

Accessibility is a human right. The equal rights of a person are denied by making access difficult. The first step towards achieving accessibility goals is to increase the communities awareness of accessibility and inclusion and build capacity by providing opportunities for continuous learning, understanding, and acceptance. With this approach, we can achieve a barrier-free community where everyone can participate fully.

This project addresses accessibility improvements for the **Truro-Colchester Region** which includes: Municipality of Colchester, Town of Truro, Town of Stewiacke, Village of Bible Hill, and Village of Tatamagouche.

Working with the Regional Accessibility Committee, we attempted to include the range and experiences of all disabilities and all intersectional barriers.



In order to involve as much of the Truro-Colchester community as possible we reached out to staff, stakeholder groups, and community members in all five regions to identify possible solutions. Our goal in this project was to provide recommendations for the Truro-Colchester Region. It will take resources, human effort, and money to follow these recommendations but they have the power to be transformative for the region.

Did you know that Nova Scotia has the highest rate of people identifying with having a disability in Canada? Nearly one in three people who live in Nova Scotia identify as living with a disability, the most common of which are invisible, cognitive disabilities.



THE TEAM

reachAbility Association is an accessibility and inclusion support organization with 20+ years committed to Accessibility, Diversity & Inclusion and facilitating Audits and Action Plans to make communities equitable and barrier-free. We have been leading the charge on accessibility action planning and continue to provide our expertise to municipalities, government, private businesses, and more!

Our expert **Inclusion In Action** team was on-site in the Municipality, Towns, and Villages throughout this project learning from you and scanning the areas for barriers to accessibility!

What did we do?

We completed this project through research that included both **engagement** and **environment scans**.

Our **engagement** process included public engagement sessions, community surveying, and mapping.

Our project team visited the municipality, town, and village owned spaces and high traffic areas to review them for accessibility - these were the **environment scans**!

Following our research, we published a draft report and asked the community to let us know how we did! The recommendations in this report reflect the information we gathered from you and our environment scans!



TIMELINE



December

Start of our Survey, online Campaign and Environment Scans!



January

Continued Surveying, Mapping and Engaging with the public!



February

More Environment Scans! Creation of Draft Report



March

Draft Feedback Survey and Engagement Session



April

Final Report is out!

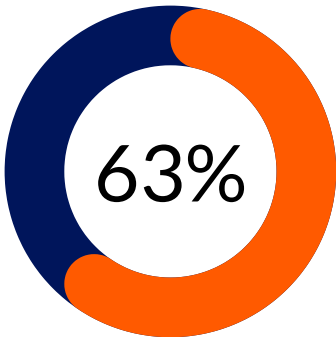
ENGAGEMENT

Throughout our project, we engaged with the community directly. We did this in three ways:

- Community Surveys
- In-Person and Online Engagement Sessions
- Mapping Project

Our goal was to learn about your interaction with the community and what barriers and success you see where you live, work, play, and go to school.

Accessibility:
The prevention and removal of barriers (physical, attitudinal, technological, or system) to allow equitable participation for persons with disabilities or others who experience barriers to accessibility.



63% of people we surveyed said **they want to help move accessibility forward in their community.** The highest percentages coming from **Bible Hill and Truro.**

Our Community Campaigns:



We asked: What places do you use the most in your community?

85% of those surveyed said private businesses like bars, restaurants, car repair shops, shopping, hair salons, and other personal care services.



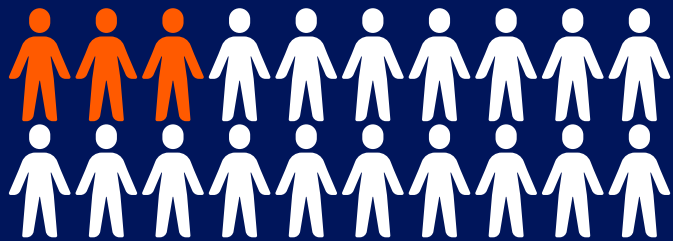
Survey responses also said that these most frequented areas are the least accessible in your community.

“PEOPLE WANT TO BE A PART OF MAKING THIS COMMUNITY BETTER, BUT THEY ARE NEVER TRULY GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY.” - ANON.

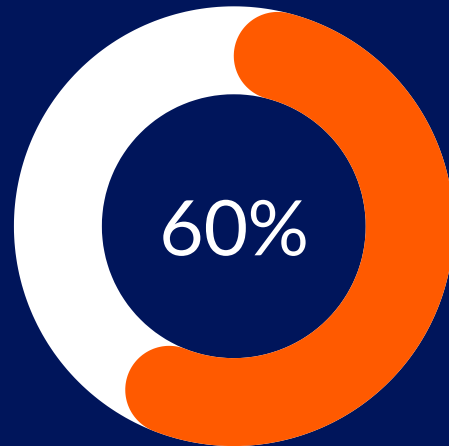
We asked how you receive communication from your Municipality, Town, or Village:



You said that Social Media is the way most of you receive information!



Only 3 out of 20 people reported even knowing about the Regional Accessibility Committee!



We asked you about the accessibility of your workplaces:

60% of you said that in your workplace, there are physical barriers to accessibility.

We asked you how you get around in your community:



49%



78%



90%

Most people said they used a car, walked, or used a bike to travel around their community.

0%

Said they used public transportation because it was either not accessible to them, or because there isn't any.

ENVIRONMENT SCANS

We spent time in the Municipality of Colchester, Town of Truro, Town of Stewiacke, Village of Bible Hill, and Village of Tatamagouche. We looked at a lot of place including:

- Municipal, Town, and Village Halls and Offices
- Sidewalks, Signs, Crosswalks, and Parking
- Community Halls and Recreation Centres
- Parks, Playgrounds, and Trails
- Tourist Attractions and High Traffic Areas

Disability:

Any condition of the body or mind that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities or interact with the world around them.



In the Municipal, Town, and Village Halls and Offices, many needed to have more accessible entrances, accessible bathrooms, and welcoming spaces. In most, it was clear that there was **effort to create more accessibility**. A few small improvements could go a long way in all of these buildings!

From our environment scans, and in the survey results we collected it was clear that the sidewalks, crosswalks, and parking need improvement and to be better looked after throughout the year. **Snow clearing and maintenance are important!**

Accessible parking is not always available, and when it is, they don't usually have all the important pieces to make it fully accessible!



ENVIRONMENT SCANS



We were very impressed with lots of the signage in the communities! Stewiacke's trail maps and community maps are a great example of what to do! Truro's Downtown signs also have lots of successes!

In all of these communities, increasing contrast and making these signs bigger would make a big difference!

Accommodation:
A means of preventing or removing barriers that impede a person from participating fully in a way that is responsive to their own unique circumstances.

The principles of accommodation involve three factors: dignity, individualization and inclusion.

Libraries are the main hub of communities! They have so many services and things to offer the community. **It's important that all members of the community can get in, and use the services available!** Ramps, Elevators, Large Print Signs, space to move around, and different kinds of seating. The libraries in the Truro-Colchester Region are all working hard toward accessibility!

Recreation centres and community halls are where the community comes together. **It is important to make sure that everyone no matter their ability, race, culture, gender, sexual identity, family status, religion or age, is welcome.** These buildings need to have gender neutral washrooms, accessible seating in the lower bowl, adult changing tables in the changing rooms, and automatic doors to make opening them easier - and safer! These are not present at all recreation centres but the region is ready for positive changes!



ENVIRONMENT SCANS



The Parks, Playgrounds, and Trails all have different levels of accessibility.

It's important to think about entrances, maps and signs, trail maintenance, and rest areas! Everyone should be able to enjoy these areas and know what to expect when they enter the park or trail!



Playgrounds should have equipment that everyone can enjoy. It's important to make sure people can get there too with safe crosswalks, sidewalks and accessible parking.

Tourist Attractions and High Traffic areas are central to communities! We want to welcome everyone, that means everyone should be able to get in and use the services provided!

Most of these areas didn't have many accessibility features. It's important to make sure that once in, everyone can move around, easily understand where things are, and access the washroom and other essential areas. **Having a quiet place to go is also very important in busy places like these!**



RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research we did and the feedback we received on our draft plan, these are the recommendations that we are giving to the Municipality, Towns, and Villages

EMPLOYMENT

The Employment standard's goal is to make sure all people have equitable access to employment.



Our Recommendations:

- Make sure that your hiring and accommodation policies take into consideration everyone's differences and aim to include people instead of excluding them.
- Decide what level of awareness and understanding your employees need to have around diversity, equity, and inclusion. Train all employees and make a plan for continued learning!
- Make sure your workplaces are accessible for all current and future staff.

TRANSPORTATION

The focus of the Transportation Standard is to make it easier for everyone to travel throughout the region in both rural and urban areas.



Our Recommendations:

- The Municipality is responsible for deciding who receives Taxi Licenses. Make it the law that taxi companies need to have at least one accessible taxi.
- Make the connection between communities easier by making and following a plan to build more well-lit pathways between rec centres, grocery stores, main common areas, and more. These pathways can be used for active transportation.
- Create a public transportation plan to increase access to public transportation across the Truro-Colchester Region.
- Use traffic calming measures like speed bumps and speed readers to encourage drivers to slow down in areas without sidewalks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The built environment standard addresses how to make buildings, streets, sidewalks, and other public spaces accessible for everyone.

Our Recommendation:

- Make it required for all new buildings to have proper accessible parking spaces.
- Make, and implement, a plan to build and maintain crosswalks and sidewalks. This will increase accessible and safe connections between areas of the community.
- Make a standard for the accessibility of all playgrounds and start updating current playgrounds.
- Make sure all Town, Village and Municipal buildings are updated to the Built Environment Standard by 2030, and stop using buildings that can't be updated.
- Make it required for all new buildings to be accessible based on the accessibility standards.
- Make sure that beaches, rivers, and lakes have safe and accessible entrances and water access.



INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

The goal of the Information and Communication Standard is to make sure everyone can understand and share the same information. Consider accessible formats of communication like braille, American Sign Language (ASL), large print, accessible websites and technology, and accessible methods for communicating with persons with disabilities.

Our Recommendation:

- Make Town, Village, and Municipal brands and logos with accessible font, font size, and contrast.
- Make an accessibility standard for signs.
- Create an Accessible Communication Standard making sure that all communication is delivered in accessible formats, including ASL interpretation and captioning, and that all methods work with assistive technology.
- Ensure all regionally owned built environments have accessible wayfinding, signage, maps, floor plans etc. as outlined in the Accessible Signage Standard.



GOODS AND SERVICES

The purpose of the Goods and Services standard is to make sure everyone can access the goods and services they need. This includes providing training for service providers and making sure there are accessible ways for people with disabilities to access the services they need with the use of assistive devices.

Our Recommendations:

- Provide easily accessed, free, adaptive play items to promote unstructured recreation activity at public parks.
- Extend the hours for public services like libraries, solid waste, recycling, bill payments, etc.
- Create new opportunities to celebrate diversity through community building.
- Make sure everyone has access to recreational programs and organized sports.
- Give incentives to businesses that build or renovate in order to meet the accessibility standards.
- Provide properly trained staffing for roles that provide support ie. day camp and recreation staff to support children with disabilities.

AWARENESS AND CAPACITY BUILDING

In order to achieve a fully inclusive and barrier-free province, we need to improve knowledge about accessibility and increase awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities and barriers to participation.



Our Recommendations:

- Make sure that accessibility is seen as a priority and designate a role to focus on compliance.
- Increase representation of diverse communities by including cultural artifacts, artwork, music, teachings, and practices as part of community spaces, learning, and events.
- Make available information listing non-profit agencies offering free or affordable assistive devices.
- Promote and support organizations within your community that support and represent all marginalized communities



WHAT'S NEXT?



Over the next few years, The Province of Nova Scotia will be creating a compliance process which we believe will include mandatory learning and fines for non-compliance. Meaning, that the province will be creating a process to hold the Municipality, Towns, and Villages accountable to these changes and updates.

The Municipality, Towns, and Villages will be putting in place their own ways to track progress, receive complaints, and community feedback as we all work toward our combined goal of an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030.

For the first step in this process, the municipality will be responsible for appointing someone to oversee the progress in the region and to be the contact for the community to reach out and help hold the region accountable.

1

Next 0-2 Years - Immediate Recommendations

The first few years will focus on building a foundation for further changes and accessibility. These recommendations include building policy and plans, training staff and increasing knowledge around accessibility, starting on small projects to adapt the built environment like moving items on the walls to accessible heights and increasing signage, and extending business hours for important services.



2

2-6 Years - Short Term Recommendations

These recommendations are all about putting words to action! Start following the plans and enforcing policy created of the previous 2 years, start on larger built environment projects to have accessible municipal, town, and village owned spaces. In Year 3 of this Action Plan the RAC will lead a review of the plan's progress.



3

Opportunity Based Recommendations

These recommendations are meant to be focused on throughout the first 6 years of the action plan and beyond. They focus on building a foundation for continued partnership by engaging with organizations that support people with disabilities and other equity seeking groups.





**INCLUSION
IN
ACTION**

**PLAN
TRAIN
INSPIRE**

To learn more about reachAbility programming or our Inclusion In Action projects, go to our website reachAbility.org or email our project team lead jessica@reachability.org.