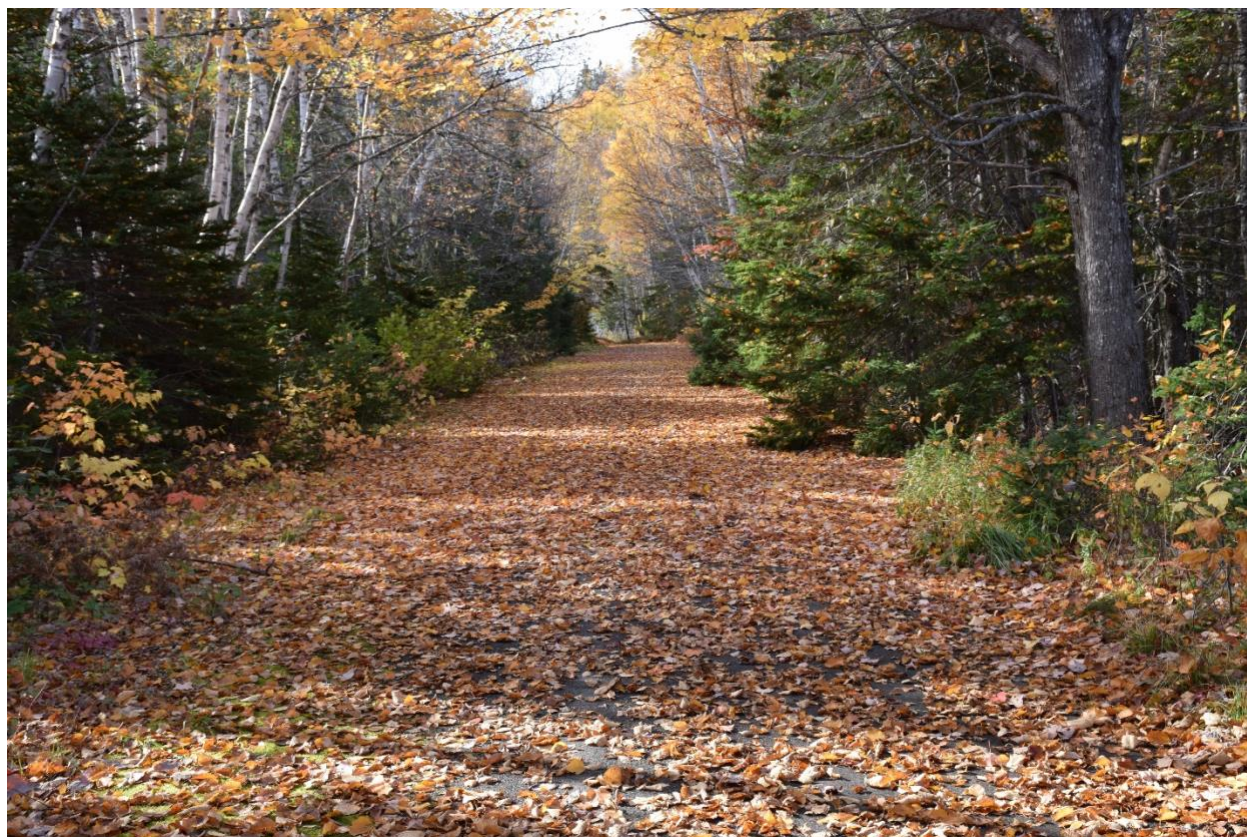


Multi-Use Trail Development in Victoria County – A Proposed Path Forward



*Prepared by: Victoria County Trails Federation
May 2019*

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	3
BACKGROUND.....	3
Victoria County Trails Federation	3
Multi-Use Trail Development in Victoria County.....	3
THE VISION.....	4
Phase 1 – Victoria Highland Civic Centre to Point A.....	6
Phase 2 – Point A to Dennison Rear Road	8
Upgrade 1 – Existing Dennison Rear Road	10
Phase 3 – Existing Dennison Rear Road to MacDonald Road.....	11
Upgrade 2 – End of MacDonald Road to Point B.....	12
Phase 4 – Point B to Gaelic College	13
Upgrade 3 – Rear Big Hill Road to Big Glen Bridge	14
Phase 5 – Point A to Baddeck River Bridge.....	15
THE BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSED MULTI-USE TRAIL	16
Alleviating Easement Issues.....	16
Building on Investment.....	16
Tapping into Growing Markets/Opportunities	16
Off-Highway Vehicle Users	16
Year-Round Tourism	16
Popularity of Trails	17
Connecting Communities.....	17
OTHER CONSIDERATIONS	17
Trail Type and Work Required	17
Maintenance.....	18
Integrated Approach to Marketing.....	18
REFERENCES.....	19

Multi-Use Trail Development in Victoria County – A Proposed Path Forward

INTRODUCTION

The following document provides a brief overview of how the Victoria County Trails Federation proposes to move forward with multi-use trail development in Victoria County now that the multi-use trail overpass has been constructed in Baddeck. It is designed as a starting point for discussions surrounding partnerships, funding, and timelines.

The report is broken down into the following sections: Background, The Vision, The Benefits of the Proposed Trail, and Other Considerations.

BACKGROUND

In order to provide the proper context for our vision moving forward, it is important to understand the history of the Victoria County Trails Federation and of multi-use trail development to date in the county.

Victoria County Trails Federation

For many years, Victoria County has had a number of active organizations committed to trails development in the area. Snowmobile clubs have developed and maintained over 350 km of trails in the County, ATV groups have constructed a number of formal and informal trails throughout the County, and hiking, skiing, snowshoeing, cross-country biking, and community groups have been active in trail promotion and physical activity projects within the county.

With communities and municipal governments throughout Nova Scotia recognizing the value of a coordinated strategy to develop trails for community use and as an economic development tool, the Victoria County Trails Federation was formed in 2018. It includes volunteer representatives from a number of trail user groups including snowmobilers, hikers, ATVers, skiers, snowshoers, and bikers.

The objectives of the federation are:

- To develop, build, and maintain sustainable multi-use trails in Victoria County
- To bring together trail users and community representatives in planning and developing a multi-use trails system

Multi-Use Trail Development in Victoria County

For a number of years, the Municipality of Victoria County, business organizations, and local business leaders requested that the provincial government address the issue of snowmobiles and ATVs being unable to legally and safely cross the controlled access highway that surrounds the Village of Baddeck. Without that safe crossing, the growing number of local and visiting snowmobilers and ATVers, would have remained cut off from the many businesses and services in Baddeck.

In 2017, the Nova Scotia government recognized that this issue was affecting the area's ability to attract recreational groups to Baddeck for tours and activities and funded the construction of the Baddeck multi-use overpass, which is now in place over the TransCanada Highway, between Exit 8 and Exit 9.



Continued multi-use trail development is critical in achieving a trails system that can be used by all users – hikers, bikers, snowmobilers, ATVers, skiers, etc. – throughout all four seasons. A snowmobile trail, for example, may not be accessible to hikers or ATVers in the spring, summer and fall seasons, while accessibility to all users is at the forefront of multi-use trail construction.

THE VISION

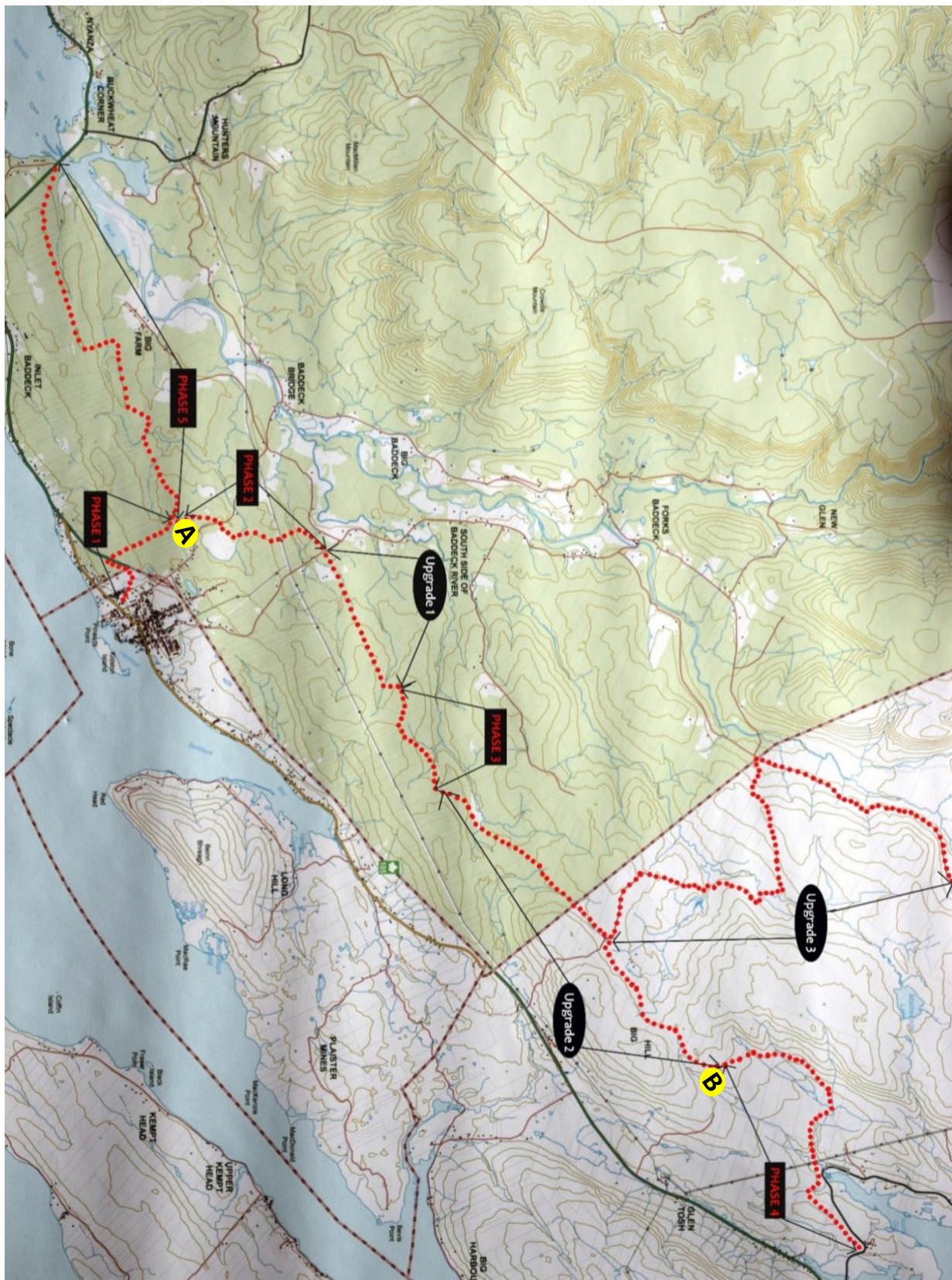
With the overpass nearing completion, the federation is looking to the future. As an organization, our hope is that the trail from the overpass to the arena property can be completed this year. This section of trail has been cleared and work will begin over the summer to construct a 20-foot wide gravelled base over the 1.45 km section.

Looking to the future, it is our hope to complete a 41.8 km multi-use trail between the campgrounds at Baddeck River and the Gaelic College in St. Ann's, and one that connects the overpass with the trail network in the Cape Breton Highlands. Given the scope and size of the project, the federation proposes it be carried out in the following phases and upgrades:

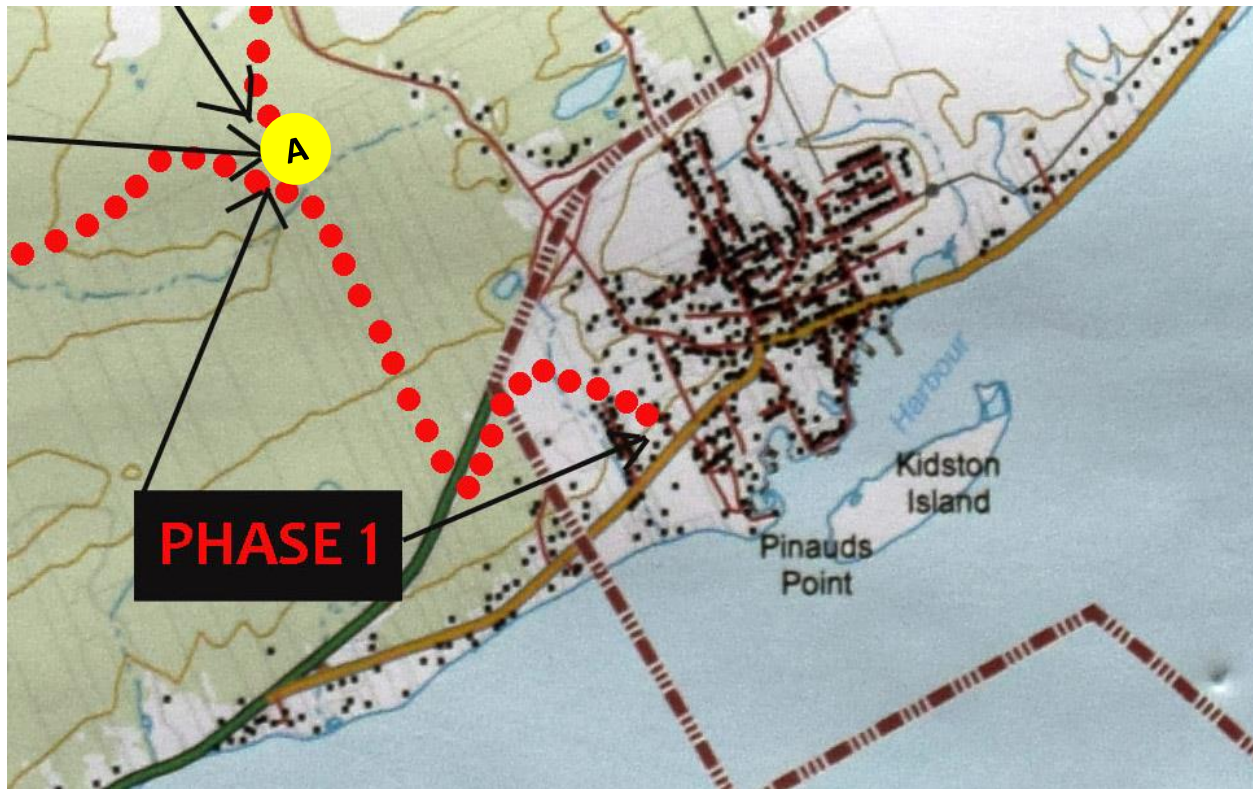
- [Phase 1 - Victoria Highland Civic Centre to Point A](#)
- [Phase 2 – Point A to Dennison Rear Road](#)
- [Upgrade 1 - Existing Dennison Rear Road](#)
- [Phase 3 - Existing Rear Dennison Road to MacDonald Road](#)
- [Upgrade 2 - End of MacDonald Road to Point B](#)
- [Phase 4 - Point B to Gaelic College](#)
- [Upgrade 3 - Rear Big Hill Road to Big Glen Bridge](#)
- [Phase 5 - Point A to Baddeck River Bridge](#)

Phases represent sections where some or all new construction of trail is required, while upgrades represent mostly existing trails where improvements are required to make them fully-functioning multi-use trails. Details about each phase and upgrade are outlined in the following sections.

PROPOSED MULTI-USE TRAIL ROUTE



Phase 1 – Victoria Highland Civic Centre to Point A



DISTANCE: 2.45 km (1.45 km south of TransCanada Highway, 1 km north of TransCanada Highway)

STATUS: Trail from overpass to Victoria Highland Civic Centre/Baddeck Curling Club has been cleared of trees

OWNERSHIP: All easements acquired and tentative approval from Dept. of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal

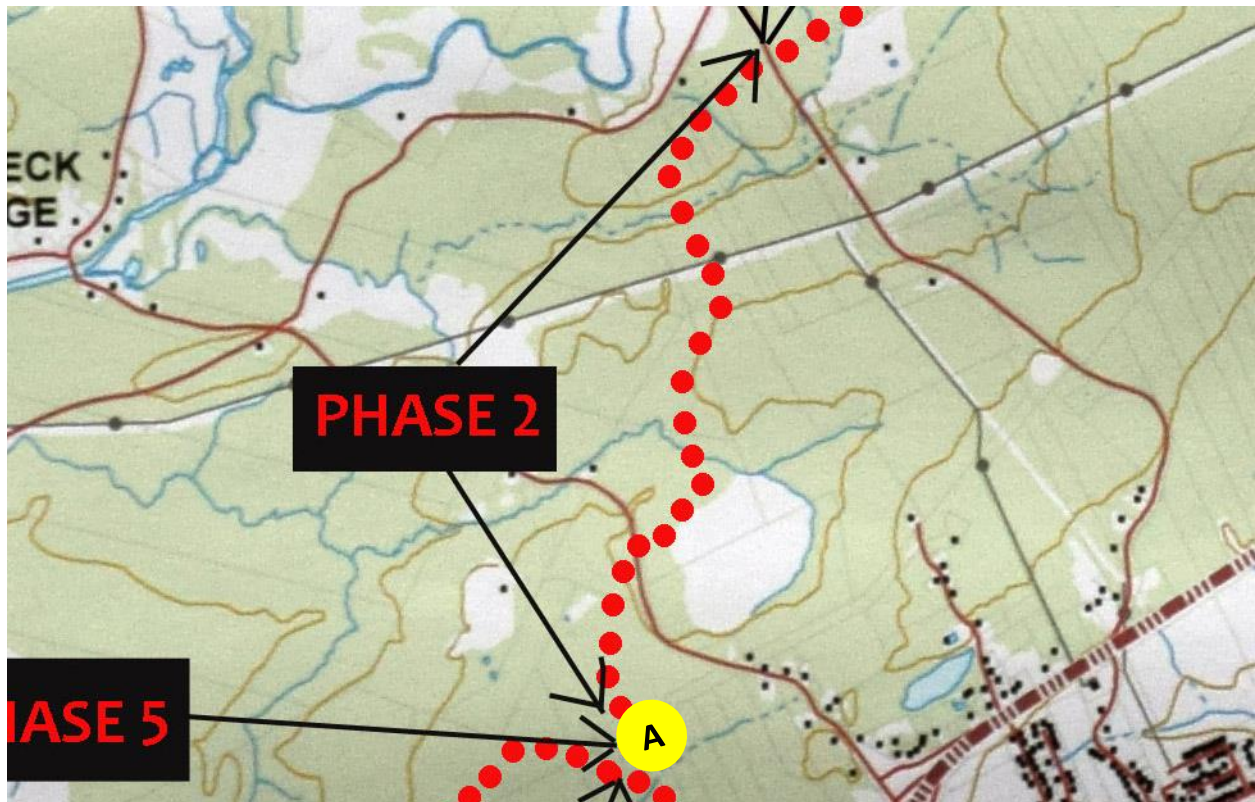
WORK REQUIRED: Trail bed (grubbing, ditching, gravelling) required; 1 km north section requires an upgrade

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

PHASE 1 Continued – Second Map



Phase 2 – Point A to Dennison Rear Road



DISTANCE: 3.36 km (new build)

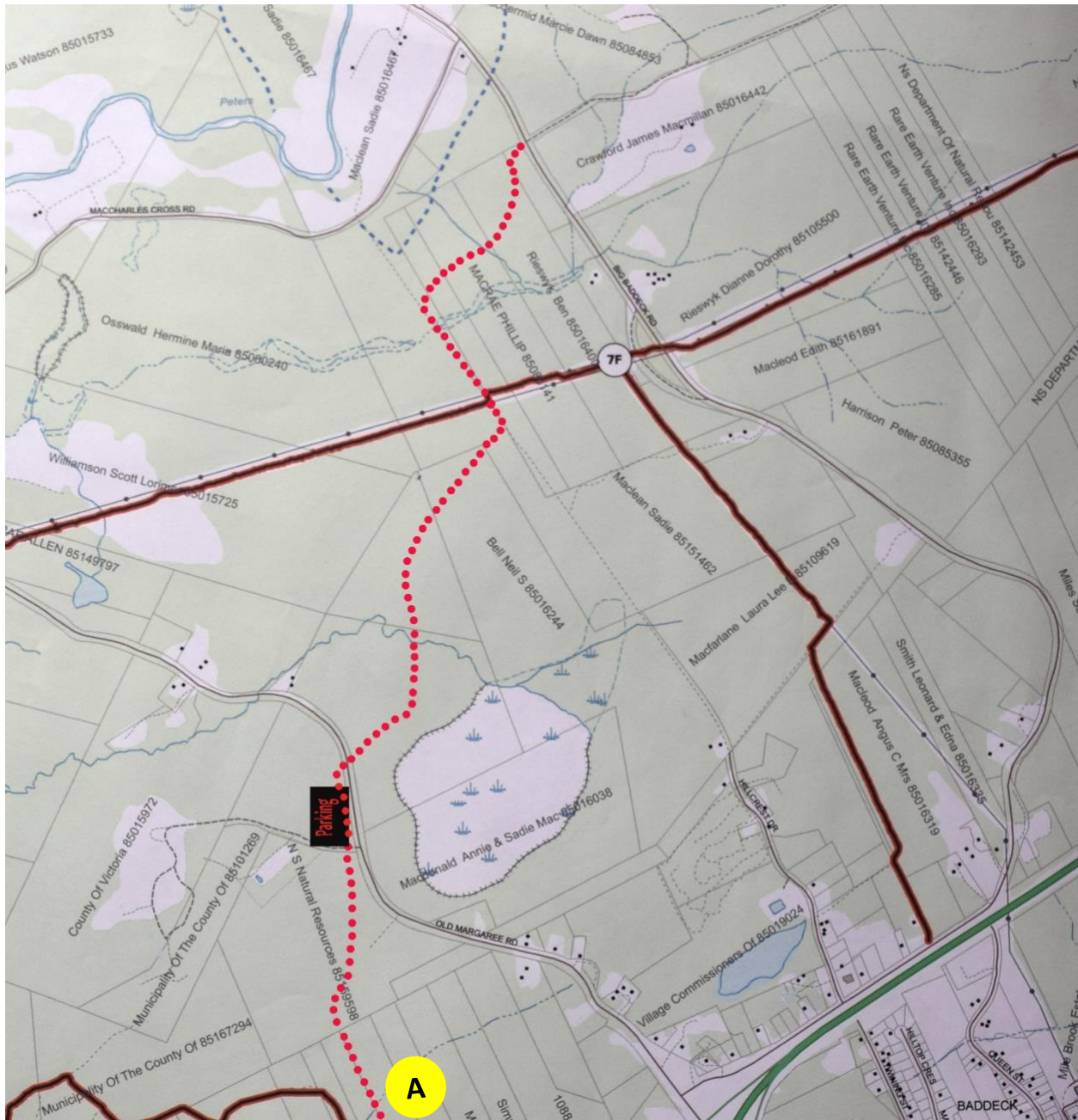
STATUS: Trail location assessed; preliminary contact made with owners

OWNERSHIP: Dept. of Natural Resources, Municipality of Victoria County, four private landowners

WORK REQUIRED: Mark final trail location; clearing, grubbing, ditching and gravelling; one new bridge and upgrade of one old bridge; parking (staging) area north of entrance to municipal waste management facility

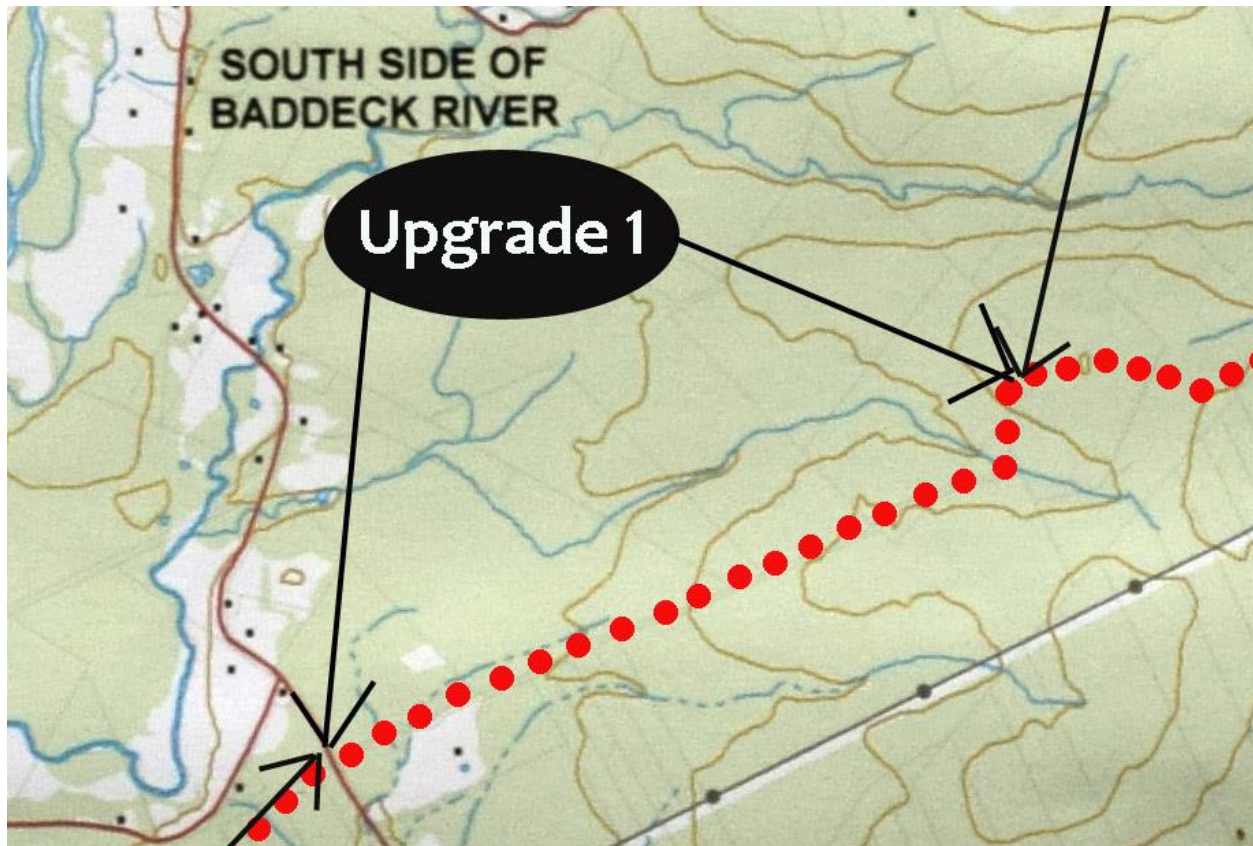
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: Work with Dept. of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal regarding two trail crossings of highway

PHASE 2 Continued – Second Map



NOTE: Information about parking area construction and design included in separate handout.

Upgrade 1 – Existing Dennison Rear Road



DISTANCE: 3 km

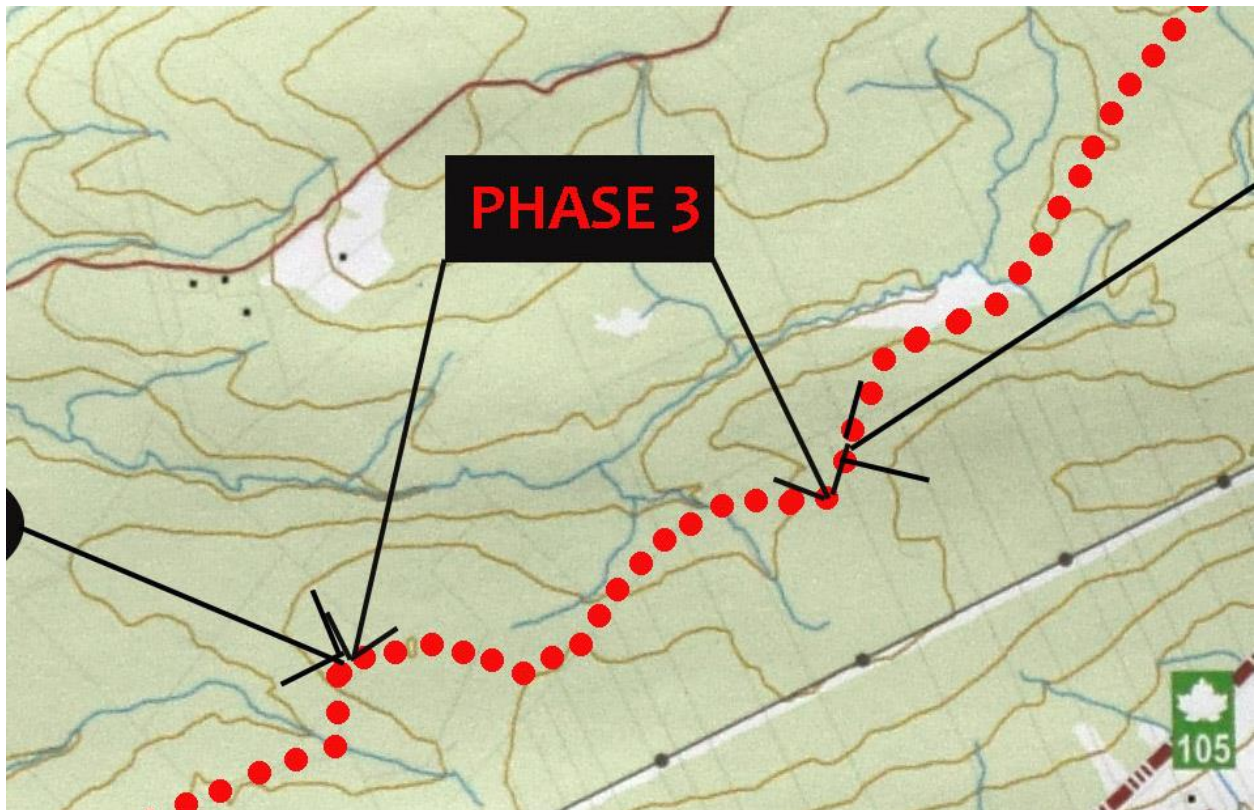
STATUS: Existing old public road in decent shape

OWNERSHIP: Dept. of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal

WORK REQUIRED: Gravelling and ditching on western end

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Phase 3 – Existing Dennison Rear Road to MacDonald Road



DISTANCE: 2 km (new build)

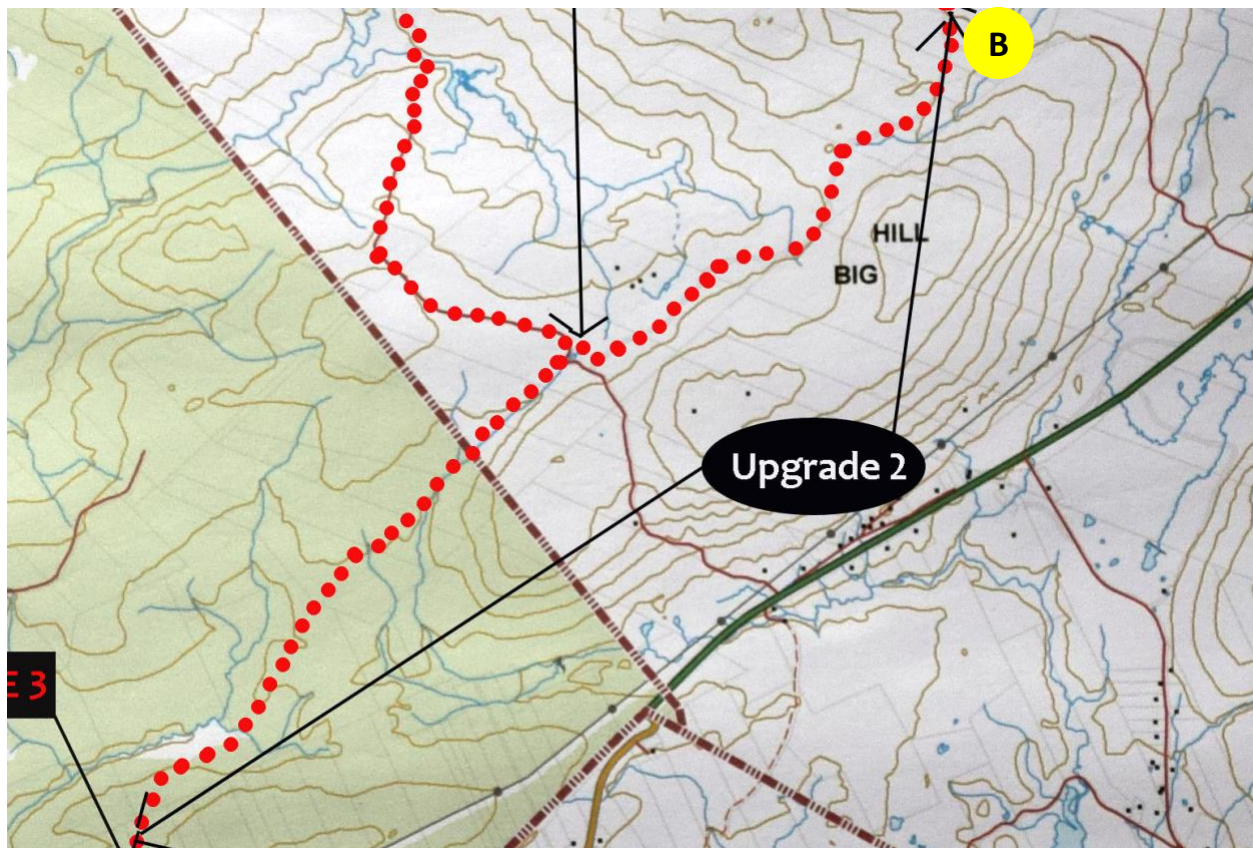
STATUS: Trail location assessed

OWNERSHIP: Dept. of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal (old road from existing Dennison Rear Road to MacDonald Road)

WORK REQUIRED: Mark final trail location; clearing, grubbing, ditching and gravelling

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: Old public road now overgrown

Upgrade 2 – End of MacDonald Road to Point B



DISTANCE: 7 km (western end – 3.8 km, eastern end – 3.2 km)

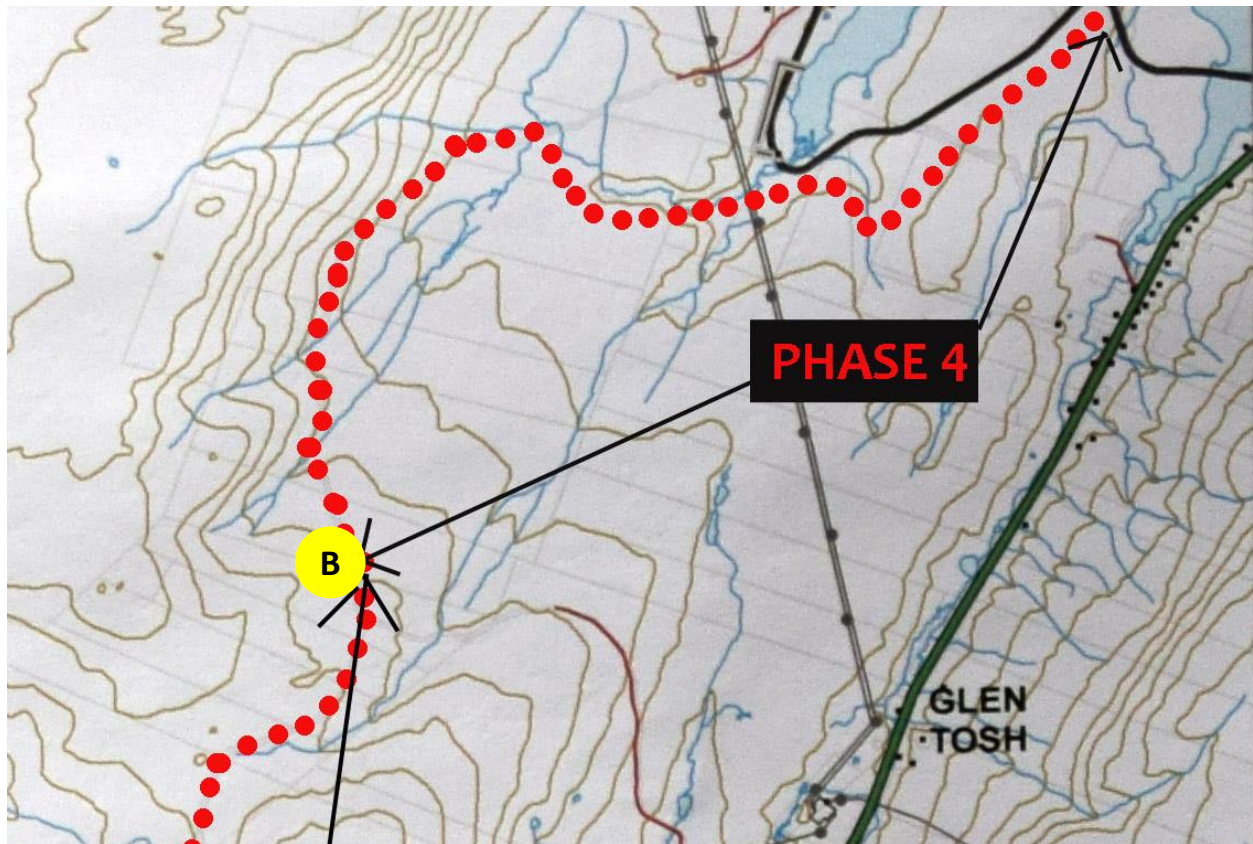
STATUS: To be determined by assessment

OWNERSHIP: Dept. of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal old public road

WORK REQUIRED: Upgrades as determined by assessment; western end needs gravel on last 600 feet of MacDonald Road and coverage on culvert

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Phase 4 – Point B to Gaelic College



DISTANCE: 5.7 km (part upgrade/part new build)

STATUS: Old public road from Rear Big Hill (easterly end) to lands of Alan MacLeod; ATV clubs have done some work on this section

OWNERSHIP: Dept. of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal and private ownership from Alan MacLeod's property to Gaelic College

WORK REQUIRED: Complete assessment required

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: New construction require from Alan MacLeod's property to Gaelic College; significant brooks to cross near provincial park at North Gut Brook

Upgrade 3 – Rear Big Hill Road to Big Glen Bridge



DISTANCE: 10.5 km

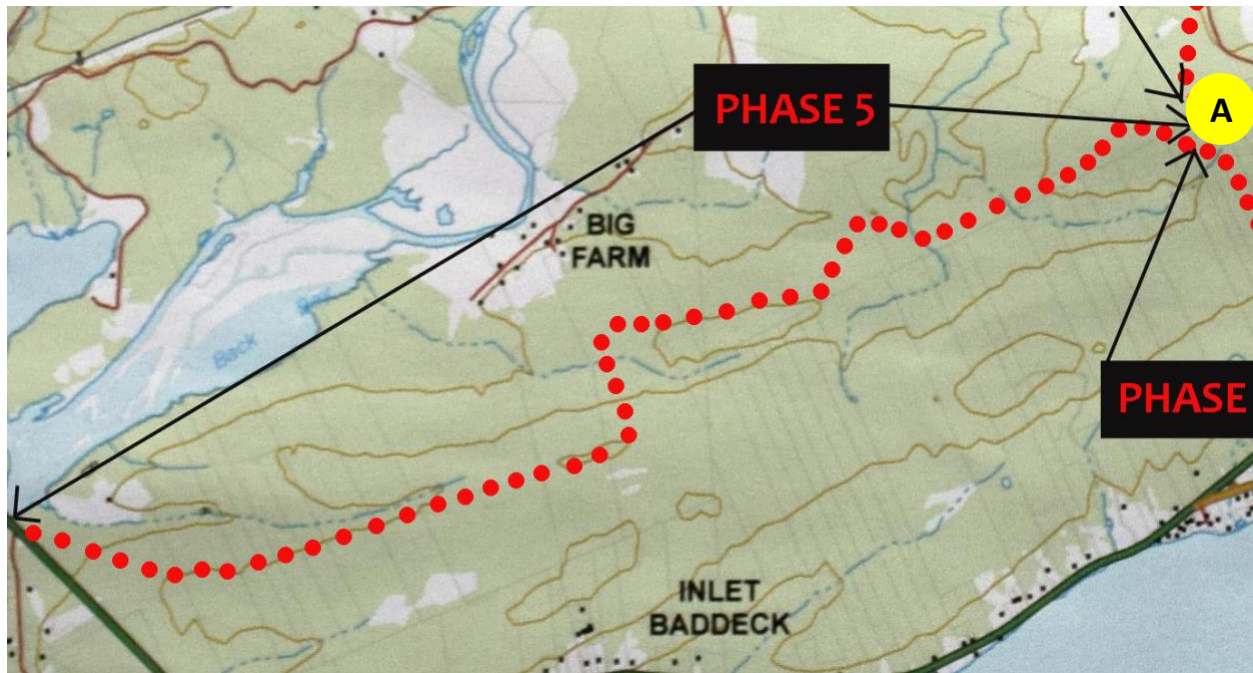
STATUS: To be determined by assessment

OWNERSHIP: Dept. of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, old public roads, adjoining ownership mostly Dept. of Natural Resources

WORK REQUIRED: Upgrades as determined by assessment

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Phase 5 – Point A to Baddeck River Bridge



DISTANCE: 7.8 km (part upgrade/part new build)

STATUS: Snowmobile trail at present

OWNERSHIP: Private owners, Dept. of Natural Resources, and old public road

WORK REQUIRED: Location assessment required, private owners to be consulted before any trail construction begins

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

THE BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSED MULTI-USE TRAIL

The benefits of the proposed Multi-Use Trail are that it would alleviate easement issues with many existing trails, it would build on the investment already made with the multi-use overpass in Baddeck, it would tap into key areas of growth and opportunity, and it would connect our communities.

Alleviating Easement Issues

All existing snowmobile and ATV trails in Victoria County have sections that are subject to 90-day easements from area property owners. In order to be sustainable over the long term, trails must be constructed in areas where long-term easements are available and can be established.

Building on Investment

In April 2017, the provincial government announced a \$2 million investment to build a highway overpass to carry a new multi-use trail in Baddeck over Highway 105, and a tunnel in Oxford that runs under the connector road into Oxford at Exit 6 off Highway 104. The total provincial investment for both structures was \$2 million.

At the time, Geoff MacLellan, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, stated: “We’ve worked with ATV and snowmobile associations to find safe highway crossing solutions that also benefit other trail users. The structures we’re building in Baddeck and Oxford will connect to the existing trails network, helping to increase trail activity for all, as well as increasing the economic benefits that go with it.”

Now that the overpass is in place, a multi-use trail system is required in order to maximize its usage and the benefits to the community.

Tapping into Growing Markets/Opportunities

The economic benefits of multi-use trail are many as its development taps into a number of areas of growth and popularity.

Off-Highway Vehicle Users

According to the provincial government, there are more than 38,000 registered off-highway vehicle users in Nova Scotia. In 2014-15, the economic impact of direct spending by off-highway vehicle riders was estimated at \$189.4 million.

Year-Round Tourism

Winter tourism is widely recognized by local business owners, government, and industry as a key opportunity for growth in Nova Scotia, and Victoria County is no exception.

“In a small area like Baddeck, having safe access to the village by snowmobile opens up more opportunities to market our winter tourism. Businesses can remain open throughout the winter months, keeping more people employed,” noted Darren Baker, president of the Baddeck Snowmobile Club, during the announcement of multi-use trail overpass in 2017.

In Victoria County's Tourism Strategy, completed in 2017 by Group ATN Consulting Inc, it noted that Victoria County is well positioned to support year-round tourism, with many opportunities for visitors to appreciate the winter tourism experience. An excerpt from the report states that:

"The county is often referred to as the province's snow belt. The average annual snowfall in Ingonish – for example – is nearly 4 metres cm (393 cm), more than double that of Halifax (154 cm). These conditions support cross country skiing, snowshoeing and downhill skiing options. There is also an extensive network of groomed snowmobiling and ATV trails throughout Victoria County. The province is building a highway overpass, to carry a new multi-use trail in Baddeck over Highway 105 to further support these activities. The new infrastructure will provide trail users with safe access between Baddeck and Cape Breton Highlands, opening up new tourism opportunity. The number varies, but about a dozen winter accommodations are available in Victoria County. Three winter festivals played a prominent seasonal role in 2017 – Hello Winter in Baddeck, Bay St. Lawrence Winter Festival and Victoria County's Winter ActiveFest. Victoria County is home to many outdoor rinks, including an Olympic size outdoor rink in Ingonish as well as, an indoor rink at Victoria Highland Civic Centre in Baddeck along with the Baddeck Curling Club. Ski venues include North Highlands Nordic Ski facility in Cape North, Ski Tuonela at Goose Cove and Ski Cape Smokey in Ingonish."

Popularity of Trails

With the TransCanada Trail now winding its way across Canada, and the 92-km Celtic Shores Coastal Trail in neighbouring Inverness County, trails are a popular recreation option for many. Stretching from Port Hastings to Inverness, the Celtic Shores Coastal Trail system meanders along the coast providing first-class trail experiences for bikers, hikers, runners, quadders, skiers, snowmobilers and horseback riders. The trail's website boasts accolades like this:

"It will stand out as one of the best experiences of my summer of 2012, and a perfect opportunity to experience the diversity and beauty of Cape Breton Island. It is one of my top cycling experiences ever; a very memorable day." - Steve Allan, Chair, Canadian Tourism Commission.

Connecting Communities

As a rural county, providing increased connectivity is a crucial part of attracting and retaining people to the area – both residents and visitors.

From Middle River to Ingonish, Wreck Cove to Inverness, our proposed multi-use trail would connect Victoria County residents and visitors to all corners of the region, by providing the link needed to access existing trails in those communities.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

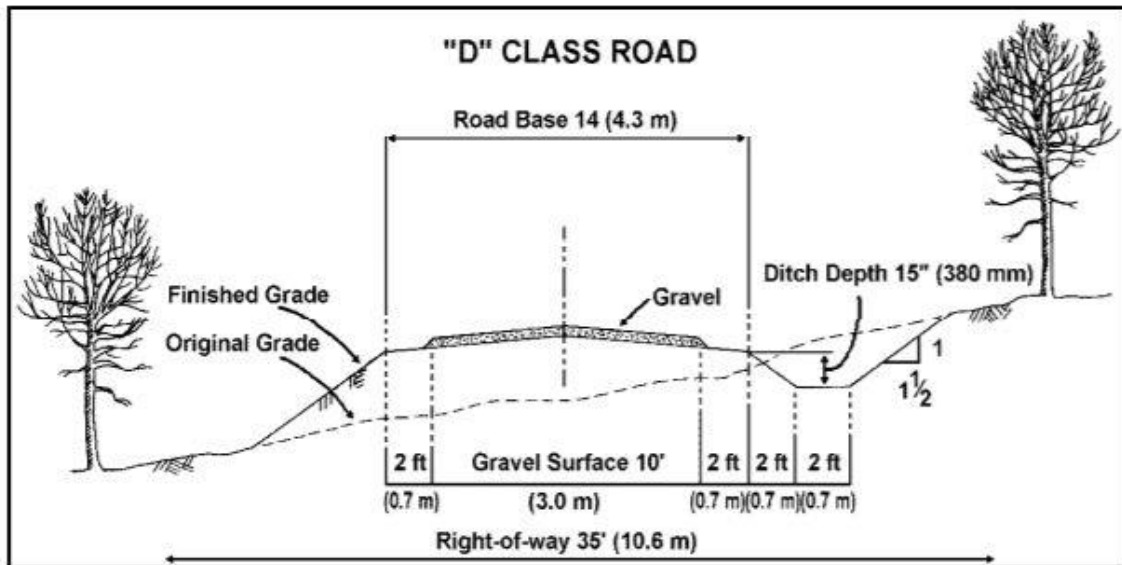
As with any major undertaking, there are many things to consider including the type of trail and work required, maintenance over the long-term, and marketing the trail to maximize benefits.

Trail Type and Work Required

In order to develop a multi-use trail, many of the principles and guidelines of road building must be adhered to during construction.

In its Woodlot Management Home Study Program materials (Module 11), the Department of Natural Resources provides an overview of the steps required in road building, which are similar to the steps required for trail building. It notes that: "A road is built in small sections beginning with cutting the trees, grubbing or removal of debris, ditching, installing culverts, building the base and crown, and grading. It is best to preplace any needed culverts and bridges along the route so they can be installed as the road is built. Ideally, culverts should go in as soon as possible to handle runoff immediately and protect the watercourses."

It also provides this graphic of a "D" Class Road:



Maintenance

Members of the Victoria County Trails Federation represent an active, experienced, and coordinated group of volunteers, committed to trails development and maintenance in the region. For years, organizations like the Crowdis Mountain Snowmobile Club, the Baddeck Area ATVs and the Biosphere Northeast Trails Association (all represented in the Victoria County Trails Federation) have built and maintained trails for their own uses and are committed to overseeing the maintenance required to sustain a multi-use trail.

Integrated Approach to Marketing

By taking a phased approach to the establishment of a multi-use trail from the campgrounds at Baddeck River to the Gaelic College in St. Ann's and to the trails network in the Cape Breton Highlands, local communities and businesses would have time to provide input and begin marketing the trail to their advantage.

REFERENCES

The following reports and articles have been cited in this report:

<https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20170403004>

<https://www.victoriacounty.com/broadband-recreation-tourism-documents-1/747-victoria-county-tourism-strategy-final-report-gatn.html>

<http://www.celticshores.ca/>

<https://thegreattrail.ca/>

<https://www.novascotia.ca/natr/Education/woodlot/modules/module11/pdf/module11.pdf>