

# Appendix D: Internal Research and Engagement Report



# Appendix D: Internal Research and Engagement Report

November, 2021

*Note for reviewers: The following Appendix reports the overall research, engagement, and site assessment findings that were used to inform the Accessibility Plan. Information has come to light since the creation of this document that has informed the Accessibility Plan further. In the case there is a discrepancy between information provided here, and the Accessibility Plan, refer to information in the Accessibility Plan.*



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# 1.0 Executive Summary

This Current State Working Document is a gathering location for all information pertinent to the development of the Accessibility Plan for the Municipality of the County of Kings, the Villages, and the Kings Transit Authority [KTA]. Using the “How Might We...” question format as a guide, the overarching issue that the Accessibility Plan intends to solve through this process is:

How [might] we make our community accessible to everyone regardless of ability?

The information outlined in this working document represents all of the information gathered during Phase One of the development of the Municipality of the County of Kings Accessibility Plan. There have been four key sources of information that have led to the development of this working document:

- Community Engagement - Conducted during October and November of 2021, both in-person and virtually. This information is informed by a series of pop-up engagement events, an online and print questionnaire, a workshop with JAAC members and a series of user experience interviews.
- Accessibility Audits - Conducted in-person throughout the Municipality of the County of Kings to understand the physical limitations currently present in the County.
- Existing Practice Review - A series of other pertinent case studies were examined and reviewed to inform and provide paths forward for developing the forthcoming plan.
- Policy Review - A comprehensive policy review of all local and provincial documents was conducted to understand the current state of the policy framework and how this plan will fit within it.

These four sources of information have been compiled throughout this report and will ultimately inform the development of the Accessibility Plan. The information has been organized under seven focus areas; goods and services, information and communication, transportation, employment, built environment, awareness, and recreation. Each of the focus areas has been organized to present an overview of the current state, the achievements to date, barriers that have been identified, what policies pertain to it, and the potential improvements that have arisen during the community conversations. These seven focus areas provide the framework that the information has been organized and will influence the goals and actions in the plan to follow.

This report is designed to be a living document and be updated as more information presents itself. During November 29th and 30th, the project team will be conducting a Strategy Sprint to initiate Phase Two of the project. The information gained during that Sprint will then be incorporated into this document to ensure that this working document is reflective of all information gained.

## 2.0 Introduction / Purpose

The Current State Working Document is a gathering location for all information pertinent to the development of the Accessibility Plan for the Municipality of the County of Kings, the Villages, and the Kings Transit Authority [KTA] collected to date. Using the “How Might We...” question format as a guide, the overarching issue that the Accessibility Plan intends to solve through this process is:

How [might] we make our community accessible to everyone regardless of ability?

To begin the exploration of this question, the team developed a series of research questions to guide the background review and engagement process:

- a) Local Context (50%): What are the barriers to access in the Municipality? Where are the opportunities for improvement? What are the current success stories? What does a day in the life of various persons with disabilities look like in this context? How can everyone access key services? What goods or services are not accessible? What does an entire trip look like (planning, leaving their house, modes of transportation available, accessing their destination)?
- b) Provincial/federal/international context and trends (30%): What policies does this plan need to align with? What are the provincial, federal, and local accessibility goals? What does the literature suggest for creating a more accessible community?
- c) Existing practice review (20%): What are other local municipalities doing for accessibility practices? What practices are municipalities doing elsewhere that would work for The Municipality of the County of Kings?

The Current State Working document aims to:

- Document the barriers, positives, opportunities and ideas of residents within the Municipality and the Villages have for accessibility
- Understand the policy context that the Accessibility Plan sits within
- Document what local or similar communities are doing for accessibility
- Record the lived experience and accessibility assessment of different site locations within the community
- Find success stories for inspirational next steps

### 2.1 Deliverable Purpose

The details for this deliverable are described in the 20210720 Proposal, which states: "Following the conclusion of the engagement process, we will use our 6-step process to analyze feedback across the various forms of community conversation. This method provides a robust understanding of the issues that the community and stakeholders have identified. The engagement analysis would focus on themes that emerged from the engagement process, highlighting the relationships and tensions between these issues, providing insights to be explored and discussed in Phase 2 of the process. Process highlights (including process metrics, successes and challenges) will also constitute part of the summary in order to tell the story of community engagement and inform ongoing community collaboration into the future."

Rather than isolate community feedback from what was learned in the background and current situation analysis (Phase 1.2), we would develop a 'What We Learned' report. This working document would integrate the learnings from the analysis and integrate these findings with community feedback, resulting in a more robust understanding of the current state of accessibility in the County of Kings. This report would be presented to the County team, acting as a close of Phase 1 and obtaining County's insights as the project moves to the second phase."

This What We Learned Working Document was developed to inform the final Accessibility Plan. Components of this working document may change over time, as additional information becomes available through staff surveys, sprint processes, JAAC feedback, and further administrative research. As such, this document is not presented as a final report, but rather as a gathering location for information as it arises.

## 3.0 Methodology

This What We Learned Working Document was developed using four main sources of information:

1. Accessibility Audits: in-depth investigations into site-specific accessibility concerns and public spaces
2. Community Engagement: survey, pop-up, workshop, and interview conversations with members of the general public
3. Existing Practice Review: an investigation into existing Accessibility Plan documents from across Canada
4. Policy Review: an in-depth investigation into National Provincial and local policies that either provide direction for accessibility or affect accessibility locally

Methodologies for each of these sections are described in greater detail below.

### 3.1 Accessibility Audits

Level Playing Field (LPF) reviewed the current accessibility of the Municipality of the County of Kings. The work began with a desktop exercise to determine what locations to visit and experience in person. We viewed potential locations on Google Street View, reviewed the Municipalities transit information and assessed how easy it was to find relevant, accessible transportation information on the transit website. We also reviewed Wolfville's, Kentville's, and other accessibility strategies.

The assessment included the following Villages in the Municipality:

- New Minas
- Greenwood
- Aylesford
- Canning
- Cornwallis Square
- Kingston
- Port Williams

Site visits focused on, but were not limited to, the following:

- Site access, including accessible parking spaces and curb cuts to entrances
- Sidewalks
- Walking & Bicycle Trails

- Parks
- Public Transit
- Libraries, Recreation Centres and Community Centres
- Municipal Buildings

Assessments utilized visual inspection, walking, and using a scooter to traverse the various locations.

## 3.2 Community Engagement

From October 11 to November 12, an engagement process was implemented to ensure the general public, accessibility stakeholders, and Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee Members could share their insights and feedback on current barriers, achievements, and ideas for accessibility as part of the Accessibility Plan development for the Municipality of the County of Kings and Villages. Throughout the course of the project, we heard from 307 community participants.

To share questions, comments and insights, people were encouraged to:

- Attend one of the JAAC meetings held on September 8, October 13, October 27, or November 10 held in the County Council Chambers
- Provide feedback at one of the three pop-up engagements, held between October 24 and October 26 at the New Minas Atlantic Superstore, Sobeys Kingston (Greenwood), or The Great Devour! Community Supper
- Provide feedback online via the project website:  
<https://www.countyofkings.ca/accessibility>
- Fill out the online or paper survey, available at pop-up engagements, municipal and village offices, and public libraries
- Have a user experience interview with us to share their lived experiences.

### Online Survey

The approach to online engagement allowed residents to share their insights for action in a way that allowed for 24/7 access with a relatively minimal investment in time. This enabled the project team to gain a wider variety of insights into accessibility in the Municipality of the County of Kings, the villages, and the KTA. We asked questions about barriers, achievements, and potential actions to improve accessibility in the area.

Between October 11 and November 12, the survey received 193 responses. For a detailed account of whom we heard from in the survey, please see Appendix B.

## **Pop-Up Engagements**

Pop-up events allowed the general public who may not be connected to accessibility groups to share their views on the Municipality of the County of Kings and Villages Accessibility Plan in the places where they already were. We asked questions about accessibility barriers and opportunities. The project team undertook the following three pop-ups:

- New Minas Atlantic Superstore: 23 Participants
- Sobeys Kingston (Greenwood): 20 Participants
- The Great Devour! Community Supper: 38 Participants

Between October 24 and October 26, the pop-ups received a total of 81 participants.

## **Podcast**

The creation of a podcast with 3 JAAC members, and our accessibility consultant, Darby Young of Level Playing Field helped to share knowledge about the project and the lived experiences of those both in and surrounding the Municipality of the County of Kings. The podcast was produced in October, and released via 360degree.city on October 16, 2021.

## **Workshops/Committee Meetings**

Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee digital and in-person meetings each had a series of questions being asked about the big picture of accessibility in the Municipality of Kings and diving deeper into the subject's nuance. Using a dynamic mix of data, visual precedents, and real-time visualization, the committee sessions aimed to gain a deeper understanding of what forces work for and against accessibility in the Municipality of the County of Kings.

There are 16 members on the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee that meet monthly. In addition, four members of staff also provided input and answered questions in this monthly meeting.

## **User-Experience Interviews**

When addressing significant systems change, the lived experiences of residents are often missed. This can lead to a detachment from the proposed change and solutions to the community it is intended to help. To address this issue, we underwent a set of discovery interviews with residents to understand life in the community in a precise way - leading to a more contextualized understanding of accessibility in the Municipality of the County of Kings and the Villages.

Between October 11 and November 12, we interviewed ten varied stakeholders who are on the JAAC, applied to be on the JAAC or connected to a JAAC member to understand the diversity of lived experiences in The Municipality of the County of Kings and the Villages.

#### **Website**

With a Municipal website landing page and Village website articles, the team shared project details, advertised engagement sessions, provided means for feedback and displayed ongoing developments as the process unfolded.

#### **Engagement Communication**

Engagement opportunities were communicated using the following:

- The Municipality of the County of Kings and Village websites
- Direct invitations to key stakeholders, interviewees, and surrounding nations
- Radio interviews on Rewind 89.3 (Lexie Misner)
- Newspaper advertisements in the Valley Wire and the Valley Journal Advertiser
- Social media advertisements via Facebook and Twitter (326 engagements and link clicks)
- In-person promotion during pop-ups
- Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee promotion and distribution
- Posters distributed to community partners, and public locations
- Digital posters circulated to community partners
- Podcast with JAAC members and Accessibility Specialist released through 360 degree City
- Public press release

### **3.3 Existing Practice Review**

The existing practice review draws from pertinent case studies from across Canada. Case Studies were selected using the following rubric:

<b>Level</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	Impact	Has the source led to positive and demonstrable impact?
2	Practice	Has the source been applied within a jurisdiction?
3	Scale / Context	Has the source been tailored to preferred scale / context?
4	Theory	Is the source theoretically sound?
5	Subject Alignment	Is the source aligned with the overarching subject?

Existing Practices that were selected include:

- Kentville Accessibility Action Plan
- Wolfville: Access by Design
- Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (RHFAC) Ratings Professional Handbook
- Mobility/Accessibility Master Plan, City of Lethbridge (July 2020)
- Halifax: Accessibility Strategy (April 2021)
- City of Guelph: Multi-Year Accessibility Plan - Now to 2022

Each resource was summarized with key project takeaways to refer back to when developing the Accessibility Plan. Throughout this research report, these case studies can be found within sections that best reflect the case study's subject matter.

### 3.4 Policy Review

The policy review draws from documentation prepared by government (supranational, national, provincial, regional, local) and non-government organizations as described in the RFP. Policies that were investigated and summarized include:

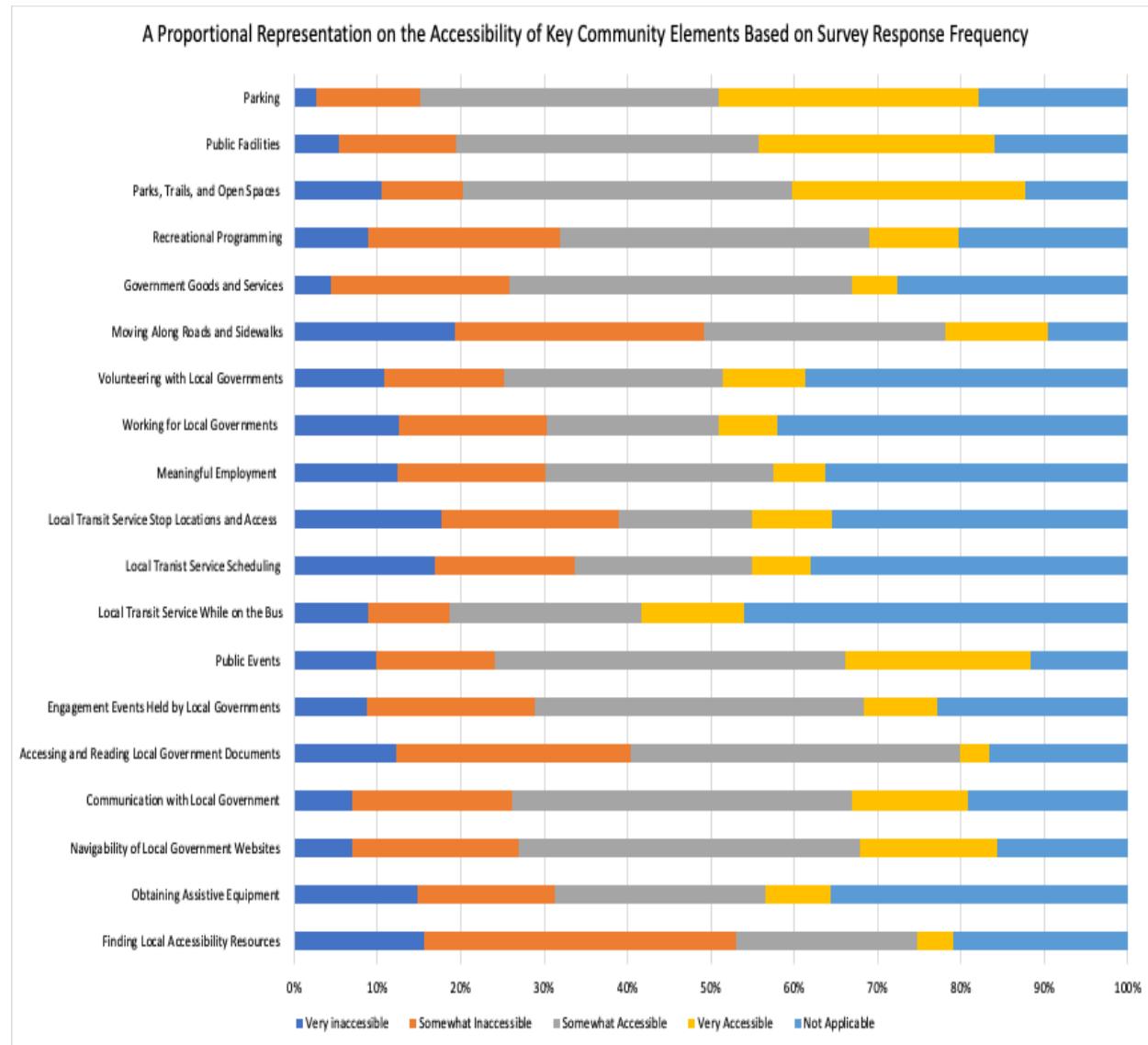
- CSA B651-18, Accessible Design for the Built Environment
- Accessibility Act. 2017, c. 2, s. 1
- Municipal Government Act 1998, c. 18, s. 1
- The Accessibility Directorate website
- Access by Design 2030
- The Accessibility Planning Toolkit for Municipalities
- Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan
- Interim Accessibility Guidelines for Indoor and Outdoor Spaces
- Guide to Planning Accessible Meetings and Events
- Nova Scotia Building Code Regulations
- Intermunicipal Service Agreement between the Municipality and the Villages
- Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee Terms of Reference
- Municipal By-laws
- Municipal Policies
- Village By-laws
- Village Policies

Each of these documents was initially summarized to include the publication's: year, author, jurisdiction, key takeaways & best practices, and takeaways as they relate to each accessibility goal area, including; goods and services, recreation, transportation, built environment, information and communications, awareness, and employment. Initial summary tables can be found in Appendix A, and findings and recommendations for each accessibility goal area can be found under findings in section

## 4.0 Overarching Results

### Survey Feedback

This section documents the overall summary of what was heard across themes, primarily from community engagement. In our online and print survey, we asked participants to indicate how accessible different elements in their community were. The results are summarized in the proportional graph below.



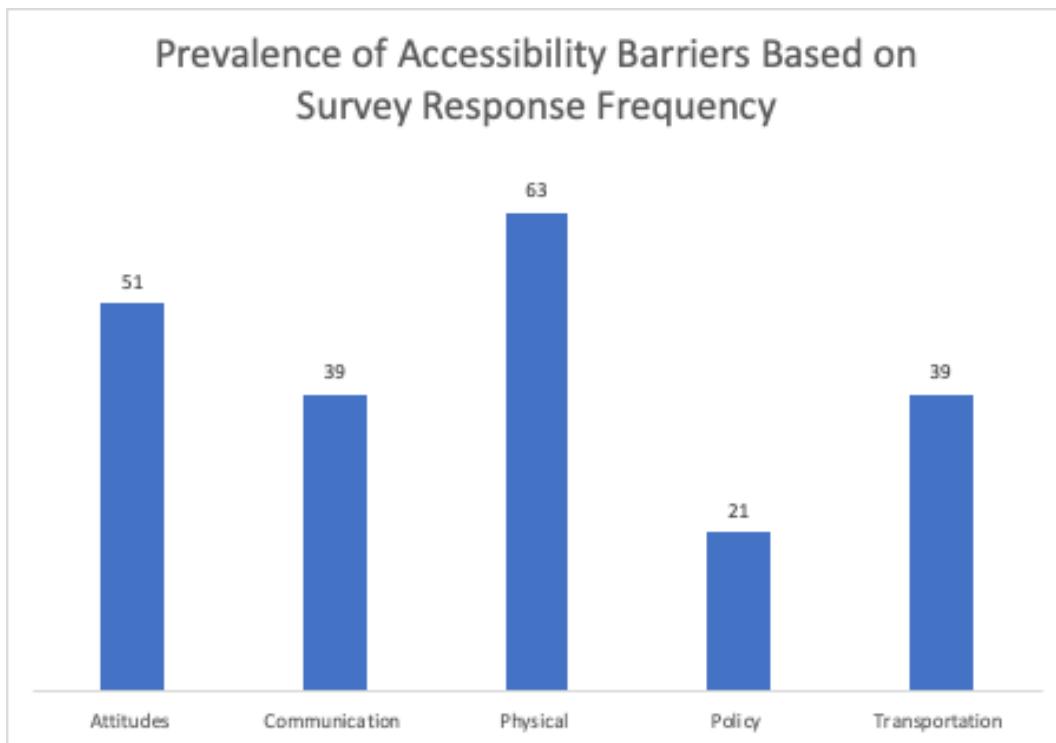
Elements that were reported as being the least accessible in the Municipality, the Villages, and the Kings transit Authority were

- finding local accessibility resources,
- moving along roads and sidewalks,
- accessing and reading local government documents, and
- local transit service stop locations and access.

Among those reported as the most accessible include: Parking at Municipal and Village Facilities (e.g. parks, trails, and open spaces), Public facilities (e.g. community centre), Parks, trails and open space, and public events.

We also asked survey participants to select all of the accessibility barriers they've seen or experienced in the Municipality of the County of Kings, the Villages, or the Kings Transit Authority. The results from this question can be seen in the bar graph below.

Physical barriers were frequently identified as barriers among survey participants, followed by attitudes, communication, and transportation. It was anticipated that fewer survey participants would have interacted directly with policy documents than other barrier areas, yet still, many participants identified policy as a barrier in general.



Together, these accessibility barriers and accessibility Likert questions will help prioritize initial accessibility actions proposed in section 7.0.

## Forces For and Against

Throughout a series of Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee [JAAC] sessions, we asked committee members to brainstorm some of the forces working for and against sustainability. These forces are aspects of the community that will influence the development and uptake of this plan as the Municipality and the villages continue to work together to improve Accessibility.

### **Forces working for accessibility**

- An aging population that considers future barriers for themselves

- Provincial mandate to improve accessibility with potential for future funding
- Changing attitudes in the County to support aging well and more exercise
- A caring and helpful community, with a want to be inclusive and a belief that everyone is important
- Opportunities to build new with better standards and facilities for people with disabilities or aging population
- Parallel focusses on broader diversity and inclusion initiatives and accessibility plans regionally, which are trying to make the County more accessible and comfortable for everyone
- Provincial, Federal and other grants and funding opportunities exists
- The municipality has an opportunity to work closely with the towns and villages
- Access to Acadia University, who may be a resource for accessibility studies
- Accessibility is front of mind right now, and there is an opportunity to capitalize on that
- The JAAC and having a plan moving forward is key
- There is physical space to make changes like adding ramps
- Many community advocacy groups
- We have lots of pride in being the leaders in accessibility

### **Forces working against accessibility**

- Funding to implement accessibility retrofits and changes
- Specialized companies are needed to carry out building modification changes
- Lack of empathy, education and understanding of accessibility barriers, issues and accessible design
- Legislation can be a binding
- Lack of available training for staff to feel confident serving needs of the diverse disability community
- Inconsistent accessibility requirements and specifications
- Lack of powerful allies to champion this
- Physical retrofit restraints in historical buildings
- Not enough buy-in from the communities that this is a priority
- Lack of motivation to act
- The dispersed geography of the County

# 5.0 Topic Results

## 5.1. Goods and Services

### 5.1.1. The Starting Point

#### 5.1.1.1. Overview

Goods and service provision varies from Municipality to Village to KTA.

The Municipality of the County of Kings provides services including; road maintenance and sidewalk maintenance for geographies outside of village boundaries, their respective park and recreation space services, animal control services, sewer and water utilities, building and development services, civic addressing, fire and emergency services, community grants and funding, and land use planning.

Village responsibility varies, but generally, they are responsible for sidewalk maintenance within their borders, animal control, building code enforcement, elections and voting, recreation program provision and bookings, care of their respective recreational areas, police services, and waste management.

The KTA is responsible for the maintenance of their fleet, communications and distribution of transit service.

For reference, we have identified the committee, Council, and Village commission as a service provided by the Villages and the Municipality. Barriers and achievements for the built environment and recreation amenities can be found in their respective sections.

#### 5.1.1.2. Achievements

##### *Site Assessment:*

- Entrances
  - Most front entrances on public buildings have automatic controls and mitigations for an accessible entry so users can access services
- Parking
  - Many municipal buildings have accessible parking stalls provided adjacent to entrances with proper curb cuts and signage



## *Public Engagement*

- Staff
  - Accessibility coordinators available for the Municipality and New Minas

### **5.1.1.3. Barriers**

#### *Site Assessment:*

- Parking
  - Accessible stalls adjacent to building entrances
  - Signage
  - Curb cuts
- Entrances
  - Automatic door controls are preferred
  - Accessible door hardware with appropriate opening force if automatic controls are not provided
  - Level thresholds between exterior and interior
  - Sufficient clear area to manoeuvre doors
- Wayfinding
  - Large, colour contrasted lettering so the building name can be seen from the street
  - Signage at parking lot entrances to easily find accessible parking & the accessible entrance



#### *Public Engagement:*

- Lack of Partnerships and Information
  - Many people with disabilities and organizations that support them struggle with finding funding, and are isolated from one another
  - Lack of accessibility representation on committees and Council
  - No relationship between accessibility-serving agencies and engagement staff
- Customer Service
  - Lack of understanding about accessibility among staff, council and commissions
  - Information is delivered without clarity, leaving citizens without a clear understanding and a lack of trust in government services
  - Entry to spaces is not friendly, and confusing for where to go for most with learning disabilities
  - Perception that Municipality and Villages are too worried about liability to do things to provide accessible goods and services - e.g. nothing to do with delivery of assistive equipment that is needed

- No knowing what to expect for scheduling and public events can be overwhelming for those with learning disabilities - not knowing the plan in advance can cause anxiety and removal from participation
- Infrastructure
  - Much of the community does not currently have high speed internet and cannot access online meetings
  - Computers for internet access in some libraries are on the second floor, without an elevator
- Maintenance
  - Sidewalk snow clearing - particularly in commercial areas
  - Bus shelter snow clearing
- Funding
  - More funding available to those with learning disabilities, and not as much available for those with physical disabilities

### **5.1.2. Policies**

Resource Name: Accessible by Design 2030, Nova Scotia Department of Justice, 2018

Takeaway(s):

- To understand how people with disabilities access goods and services, in addition to the current standards for delivering these services.
- Develop a government-wide accessible customer service policy to ensure service delivery is consistent across government

Resource Name: Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan, Government of Nova Scotia, 2018

Takeaway(s):

- We will ensure people with disabilities have equitable access to goods and services delivered by the Government of Nova Scotia. This includes ensuring there are policies, procedures, and tools in place to promote accessibility in customer service.
  - Develop a government-wide Accessible Customer Service Policy with the aim of ensuring consistency in accessible customer service across the Government of Nova Scotia.
  - Ensure our public enquiries operators are equipped with information on services related to accessibility and disability.
  - Embed inclusion and accessibility into digital service design processes and ensure an inclusive and accessible by design approach.
  - Promote accessibility in procurement processes undertaken by the Government of Nova Scotia. This will include developing resource materials for Departments

- to assist in identifying and including accessibility requirements in tenders for goods and services purchased by the Government of Nova Scotia.
- Explore the establishment of accessibility navigators to assist persons with disabilities in accessing information and services.

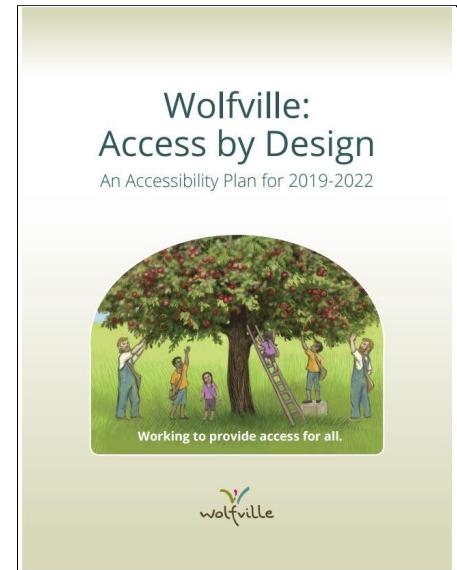
### **5.1.3. Case Study Example**

#### **Wolfville - Access by Design**

The Town of Wolfville is located within Kings County in a similar way to the Town of Kentville. This plan takes a focused look at equitable design promoting fair treatment based upon needs and abilities. The plan includes five areas of focus: Built environment, Information and Communication, Transportation, goods and Services, and Employment.

#### Key takeaways and best practices

- Establishing top priorities for each category throughout the town creating clear and attainable goals
- Plan priorities were guided by local residents, grassroots involvement from the beginning led to its successful adoption
- Plan has a legal requirement to be updated every three years



### **5.1.4. Potential Improvements**

#### *Public Engagement*

- Partnership support
  - Help to connect social organizations and individuals with disabilities to one another and to information on funding and local supports
  - Create a list of agencies to connect to and a description for what each of them do
  - Partner with accessibility serving providers when doing engagement, to help those with learning disabilities meaningfully provide input.
  - Have people with disabilities at the design table for all accessible infrastructure projects
  - Support and advertise existing events happening within other accessibility organizations
- Council, Commission, and Staff training

- Include accessibility training with diversity and inclusion training for Council, Commissions and staff
  - Ongoing training with guest speakers to educate about different users
  - Include spokesperson for accessibility on committees and Council
  - Consult the JAAC on accessibility decisions and guidance
- Service Delivery
  - Provide and spread awareness that further assistance is available through municipal services - in the case that someone needs interpretation, braille versions of documents, tax support, or to attend meetings virtually
  - Provide and communicate adaptive sensory hours with decreased light and noise during certain times of the day
  - Deliver services to all with the standards for accessibility as a standard, so everyone can participate without feeling isolated
  - Ensure there is someone at the entry to municipal offices to welcome people to the space and direct to where they need to go.
  - When giving information or instructing people about an inquiry, ensure that questions are being asked and never assume that the person on the other side fully understands (e.g. do you understand? Do you need any more information?)
- Maintenance
  - Clear snow from sidewalks and bus shelters, particularly in commercial areas for easy access with mobility device
  - Clear snow on some public trails in the winter
  - Bush and tree maintenance along sidewalks to ensure they are transversible
- Internet Infrastructure
  - Increase internet connection and access
  - Offer both in person and online service and attendance options
- Staffing
  - Hire and accessibility coordinator for each village
- Safety Program
  - Flagging system for those who use accessible equipment to communicate that they are in trouble or stuck (e.g. stuck on sidewalk in the winter)
  - Buddy system of seniors and those with disabilities

## 5.2. Information and Communications

### 5.2.1. The Starting Point

#### 5.2.1.1. Overview

The Municipality of the County of Kings and Villages have differing levels of information and communication materials available. Municipally, there is a brand strategy in development and a 2-pager available which doesn't currently include accessible considerations. A municipal engagement strategy was developed in 2017 that lists inclusivity and accessibility as their first core value.

The Municipality, and the villages of Aylesford, Kingston, Canning, Greenwood, New Minas and Port Williams each have their own websites for information and communications. The most commonly used platform among Villages and the Municipality is Facebook, with five entities having their own Facebook pages.

Villages and the Municipality utilize the multiple communications channels available locally, including: Valley Journal-Advertiser, Annapolis Valley Register, The Valley Wire, The Chronicle Herald, 14 Wing Greenwood's Aurora newspaper, Magic 94.9/ AVR 97.7, Rewind 89.3, The Canning Gazette, and Grapevine Publishing, among others.

#### 5.2.1.2. Achievements

##### *Site Assessment:*

- Websites
  - Some websites have screen reader access
- Park Signage
  - Some outdoor parks have large, colour contrasted signs
- Parking Signage
  - The Canning Village Office is a good example of parking lot wayfinding



##### *Public Engagement*

- Existing private entities
  - There are already strong ties between those with learning disabilities and autism and their employers and program coordinators.
  - Accessibility service providers and groups already have a series of resources to share, which just need to be distributed.

- There are already great connections between private partners in the accessibility space

### **5.2.1.3. Barriers**

#### *Site Assessment:*

- Websites
  - Ensure information on websites are accessible for people of all abilities
- Outdoor Signage
  - Park signage could be improved with the addition of tactile characters, braille and maps outlining their accessibility features and paths
- Building Entrance Signage
  - County standards need to be created as all public buildings have different entrance signage
  - Tactile characters and braille should be provided on all informational signage at entrance doors
  - Position signage to reduce reflection, shadowed areas and glare
- Parking Signage
  - Outdated language is present in many parking lots
  - Wayfinding is needed to direct users to accessible parking stalls



#### *Public Engagement*

- Deaf and hard of hearing communication
  - Caretakers, and staff that they interact with don't know ASL - Isn't able to fully communicate due to verbal disability
  - Masks without see through cover - doesn't allow for lip reading
- Internet Infrastructure
  - Limited access to high speed internet and therefore, online materials
  - Limited opportunity to book online without internet
- Technology
  - Oftentimes those with fine motor skill issues and learning disabilities have trouble accessing web platforms and using computers without deleting programs
- Websites
  - Websites are hard to navigate

## **5.2.2. Policies**

Resource Name: Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan, Government of Nova Scotia, 2018

Takeaway(s):

- We will ensure persons with disabilities can equitably receive and understand information and communications delivered by the Government of Nova Scotia.
  - Complete a review of communications policies, procedures and practices to improve accessibility and ensure they are not creating barriers to accessibility. This will include: Government of Nova Scotia Communications Policy and supporting guidelines; Government of Nova Scotia brand standards; communications platforms including print, electronic and digital (i.e. video).
  - Implement a phased launch of a more user-centric government website, beginning in 2018-2019. The website will be accessible in line with the international standards (WCAG 2.0 AA), and augmented with user experience best practices. Future phases will include transactions (e.g., Adobe PDF forms) documents and other web assets that were produced separate from the new website (e.g., video, live webcasts).
  - Conduct a review of industry standards for ICT services, policies, practices and procedures and leverage this information to promote accessibility in the design, development and implementation of new ICT services, products and systems. An example of this, ICT Services will consider accessibility requirements in the upcoming tender for laptop and desktops devices used by Government of Nova Scotia employees.

Resource Name: Accessible by Design 2030, Nova Scotia Department of Justice, 2018

Takeaway(s):

- To ensure that all information shared and received by Nova Scotians is provided through accessible formats including accessible websites and technologies.
- Actions:
  - Launch a new Government of Nova Scotia website that is focused on the users' needs and meets international accessibility standards.
  - Develop new training resources for staff about accessibility and disability issues.
  - Promote accessibility in government procurement processes.
  - Explore the possibility of establishing accessibility navigators to help persons with disabilities access information and services.

Resource Name: Interim Accessibility Guidelines for Indoor and Outdoor Spaces, Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate, 2020

Takeaway(s):

- Assistive listening systems should be used in areas where people assemble. This includes—but is not limited to—classrooms, auditoriums, meeting rooms, and theatres with
  - an area of 100 square metres; or
  - 75 or more fixed seats; and/or
  - installed speakers

Resource Name: Guide to Planning Accessible Meetings and Events, Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate, Department of Justice, 2018

Takeaway(s):

- Where possible, ensure that the timing of your event does not conflict with another event that many people with disabilities and service providers may be attending.
- Disability support and service agencies (ASL/ English interpreters, oral translators, and real-time captioning professionals) are in great demand and short supply, so must be booked weeks in advance.
- Asking for and using information regarding participants' accessibility needs is the essence of a person-centered and respectful approach to planning an inclusive event. Be sure to invite participants to identify any accommodation needs early in the planning process.
- Planning may involve providing large print or braille documents, electronic and audio versions of documents, ASL/ English interpretation, real-time captioning (CART), and sighted guides. The person(s) for whom you are booking the service should be consulted on their preferences and involved in booking service providers.

### 5.2.3. Case Study Example

#### Kentville - Accessibility Action Plan

The Town of Kentville has recently undergone a review of its accessibility. The outcome of the audit is the creation of the town's Accessibility Action Plan. This plan sets out to develop accessibility standards across the town. In addition, the plan sets out how the town will support marginalized groups and how it will uphold accessibility standards. The plan also includes a section that focuses on monitoring accessibility which is set out to change municipal policy to reflect provincial standards.



## Key takeaways and best practices

- Community Digital Kiosk to create a physical space for marginalized community members to come and access town information
- Accessibility Rating System – Help citizens make informed choices on what spaces are accessible while also establishing what buildings and public spaces need accessibility improvements first.
- Accessible parking is a major issue to Transportation

### **5.2.4. Potential Improvements**

#### *Public Engagement:*

- Hard of Hearing and Deaf communication
  - ASL interpreter on municipal staff, particularly for Council meeting interpretation
  - ASL resources are made available through Municipality for further development in the private sector
  - Ensure all community spaces have an audio system and use microphones
- Advanced scheduling
  - For public events and meetings, ensure that there is an agenda released in advance with a description of what participants are going to expect
- Plans and public-facing materials
  - Ensure materials are easy to understand, use simplified language, and that complex projects have an overview of their content with a low reading level (HL suggests using Flesch reading scale)
  - Public plans and documents are made screen-reader friendly (e.g. images have alternative text).
  - Braille versions of public plans are made upon request
  - High colour contrast is ensured in all public facing documentation
  - Make interfaces visual and use icons for those with learning disabilities
- Communication Technology
  - Provide communication technology at staff offices for those who may need speech to text service
  - Council meeting and committee exports to have closed captioning or transcription provided
  - For buildings that have staff interacting with the public for presentations, allow for auditory systems
- Wayfinding and clear signage

- Provide clear signage in buildings, parks and trails, and along roads to ensure people can find their way when staff support isn't available or applicable
- Tactical signage for the blind community
- Communications
  - Ensure there are various online and in-person options for communicating with residents (i.e. posters, newsletters, radio, newspapers).
  - Connect with existing accessibility agencies to engage with user populations in a thoughtful and respectful manner
  - Allow people to connect via phone
  - Be prepared for all engagement needs in advance instead of being reactionary
  - Advertise that events are accessible and what accessible supports are available
- Websites
  - Begin creating a user-centric website with easy to use and understanding materials

## 5.3 Transportation

### **5.3.1. The Starting Point**

#### **5.3.1.1. Overview**

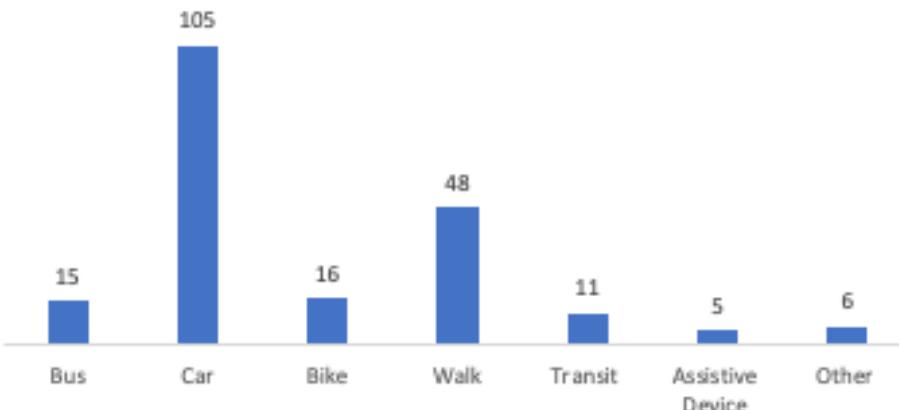
The Kings Transit Authority [KTA] is a municipally-owned corporation that supplies fixed transit services along the Valley corridor (primarily following the No. 1 Highway). Service is based out of a facility located in New Minas. The fleet consists of 12 buses, including four which run in the Kings County core area, and three spare buses for Digby and Annapolis Counties. There are approximately 250 bus stops.

Kings Point to Point [KPPT] is a community-based, non-profit charitable organization offering accessible transportation services to all residents of Kings County, east of Aylesford, in need of transportation, with priority placed on those with challenges and seniors. The Municipality of the County of Kings is one of 5 sponsors for this service, and the KTA is a supporter.

Active and Automotive transportation considerations are documented in Recreation and Built Environment sections, respectively.

Of those who took the public survey, most respondents commute primarily by car or walking, with 26 respondents commuting by bus or transit.

## Utilization of Different Transportation Methods Based on Survey Response Frequency



There were a series of specific locations that were listed as achievement and barrier areas for transit in public engagement. For specific spots that were identified, please [click here to see the web map](#) with specific comments.

### 5.3.1.2. Achievements

#### *Site Assessment:*

- **Transit Stops:**
  - Some transit stops provide users with a covered rest area
  - A bench is provided with space for a wheeled mobility device
- **Transit Website:**
  - Users are able to see live updates on the location of all buses in service. This provides flexibility and allows users to make informed decisions about using transit.
- **Buses:**
  - All buses in the Kings Transit fleet are accessible with provided ramps, tie-downs and kneeling capabilities
- **Ridership:**
  - For those who require additional aid in riding transit, a free ride pass is available for attendants



*Public Engagement:*

- KTA communication & support
  - The KTA emails accessibility-serving organizations when they are unable to make their run
  - Frequent posting on Twitter and mobility app for any cancellations or delays
  - Personally connect with residents of larger housing communities in need of assistance
- Busses
  - The busses, their tie downs, and staff are accessible
- Services
  - Kings Point to Point was highlighted as a shining example of transit accessibility
- Bus Stops
  - Some bus stops (e.g. Port Williams)

### **5.3.1.3. Barriers**

*Site Assessment*

- Transit Stops
  - Signage is not consistently placed
  - There is no indication for new riders or visitors to go on the app for information
  - Located only along highway with no additional rural access
- Pathways
  - Pathways leading to bus stops are not always accessible
  - Curb cuts are not always present and are without tactile indicators



*Public Engagement:*

- Buses
  - Noise and lack of personal support can make riding the bus overwhelming for those with learning disabilities or Autism.
- Transit Network
  - Limited frequency of buses and bus scheduling
  - Limited bus network coverage (Canning, South Mountain, North Mountain and rural services were mentioned frequently)

- Expensive for the everyday user
- Organizing timetables easily causes anxiety
- Transit Stops
  - Lack of sidewalks and accessible pathways surrounding bus stops make the stops inaccessible
  - Limited bus stop locations
  - Limited covered bus stops with wheelchair accessible space

*JAAC Input*

- Transit does not service all areas, limiting access
- The transit schedule isn't flexible or accommodating

### 5.3.2. Policies

Resource Name: Accessible by Design 2030, Government of Nova Scotia Department of Justice, 2018

Takeaway(s): Goal set to ensure that travel in both rural and urban Nova Scotia is easy and accessible.

Resource Name: Interim Accessibility Guidelines for Indoor and Outdoor Spaces, Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate, 2020

Takeaway(s):

- Seating should be provided at regular intervals along pedestrian routes and before level changes or decision points.
- Links to transportation should be accessible to all members of the community. An accessible transit stop will have a paved or concrete level surface connecting the transit stop to an accessible pedestrian route. Adequate snow clearing to the ramp of transit vehicles is essential.

Resource Name: Guide to Planning Accessible Meetings and Events, Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate, Department of Justice, 2018

Takeaway(s):

- People with disabilities may need extra time to arrange transportation and prepare for an event. Additionally, be aware that, due to transportation arrangements, disabled participants may arrive early, and if the event runs over the scheduled time, people with disabilities may be unable to stay.

### 5.3.3. Case Study Example

#### Guelph - Multi Year Accessibility Plan Now to 2022

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan  
Now to 2022



Since 1995 the city of Guelph has been committed to removing barriers and increasing accessibility throughout the city. The city has worked within provincial policy and found ways to build upon the provincial base. Guelph has committed to a results-based plan that holds itself accountable by setting goals and creating a route to achieving them.

Key takeaways and best practices:

- On-demand Accessible Transportation Services
- City Standards that meet and exceed provincial regulation of accessible design standards
- Physical and Digital Accessibility

#### **5.3.4. Potential Improvements**

*Public Engagement:*

- On-Bus Communication
  - Audible bus stop names announced for those with vision impairments
  - Ensure large font and colour contrast for upcoming bus stops
- Last-mile options
  - Create a way to connect rural and hamlet residents to the bus stops themselves, where geographically spread
- Pricing
  - Consider an affordable pricing program
- Service Expansion
  - Consider expanding service and creating more bus stops (Canning, South Mountain, North Mountain and rural services were mentioned frequently)
- Schedule communication
  - Make scheduling easier to understand
- Scheduling
  - Consider increasing bus frequency
- Bus stops
  - Make bus stops more accessible from the surrounding area
  - Provide wheelchair accessible covered shelters at bus stops
- Busses
  - Consider leaning busses or ramps with better traction

## 5.4 Employment

### 5.4.1. The Starting Point

#### 5.4.1.1. Overview

It is not adherently clear what the full-time equivalent staff members for the Municipality, Villages, and KTA are, but it is known that the number and breadth of employees vary for each body. Each body has its own Human Resource Policies, and for many, an Equal Opportunity Employment Policy that includes those living with a physical or a mental disability. These policies are often available publicly on Municipal and Village Websites. Some employment policies and the equity available to applicants are not transparently posted and require further internal investigation.

#### 5.4.1.2. Achievements

##### *Site Assessment:*

- Access to employment
  - Many public buildings have some form of accessibility built into the design of the building
  - Many buildings have accessible parking and an accessible entrance



##### *Public Engagement:*

- Providing opportunities
  - New Minas offers many volunteer opportunities in collaboration with those with disabilities - Flower Cart Group

#### 5.4.1.3. Barriers

##### *Site Assessment:*

- Access to employment
  - Many private buildings do not have an accessible entrance making them off-limits for some users
  - Many buildings do not have an accessible washroom
  - Accessible parking is not always provided



*Public Engagement:*

- Lack of flexibility
  - Those with autism or learning disabilities can be overwhelmed on certain days and in particular environments. This includes school and work.
  - Lack of accessibility supports available with fast-paced work
- Hiring
  - Using hiring surveys or tests that are not screen reader friendly or that don't use closed captioning
  - Biased when looking at experience
  - Some negative attitudes when hiring, including not being open or accommodating
- Funding
  - If someone with a disability is able to work, their funding gets cut from the government
- Private businesses
  - Many businesses are not willing to change their practices or invest in accommodating people with disabilities
- Lack of transportation to employment
  - Transportation doesn't connect to places of employment

#### **5.4.2. Policies**

Resource Name: Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan, Government of Nova Scotia, 2018

Takeaway(s):

- We will remove barriers to employment for persons with disabilities seeking a career within the Government of Nova Scotia. This includes ensuring our workforce reflects the province's diverse population and that we are making our employment practices and workplaces more accessible for new and existing employees with disabilities.
  - Investigate establishment of a centralized system within the Government of Nova Scotia to better support managers and employees across the public service with respect to accessibility and disability. This will also include analysis of re-establishing a centralized accommodations fund within the Government of Nova Scotia
  - Review recruitment and selection training materials for hiring managers and ensure that content reflects topics specific to the recruitment, selection and hiring of persons with disabilities into the public service of Nova Scotia.
  - Work with the Nova Scotia Works employment services system to develop a Diversity and Inclusion Plan that will incorporate accessibility into the provision

of employment programs and service delivery. In addition, build the capacity of Employer Engagement Specialists to provide support to employers in developing inclusive and accessible workplaces.

- Support the development of an Accommodations Application for employers, developed by Saint Mary's University's Inclusion by Design partnership.

Resource Name: Accessible by Design 2030, Government of Nova Scotia Department of Justice, 2018

Takeaway(s):

- Goal to ensure equal access to meaningful employment for persons with disabilities
- Ensure government training materials for hiring managers include information about recruiting and hiring persons with disabilities into Nova Scotia's public service

Resource Name: The Accessibility Directorate Website, Government of Nova Scotia, 2020

Takeaway(s):

- The Employment Standard Development Committee will be announced in the fall of 2021 – no real work or recommendations appear to have occurred in this area yet. However, the goal is to make sure that persons with disabilities have equitable access to employment.

#### **5.4.3. Potential Improvements**

*Public Engagement:*

- Flexible work
  - Permit allowances for flexible work arrangements (e.g. allow for people to work from home or remove themselves from meetings in the situation they are unable to interact on that day).
  - Allow for accommodations where needed for work environment (e.g. working at slower times of the day for those who are easily overwhelmed with sensory inputs or locking applications to their desktop in the case they have issues with fine motor skills). Bring these up in the signing stages of the contract, and ensure accommodations are upheld as agreed upon.
  - Create a welcoming environment with the accommodations needed by the employee (e.g. ergonomic desks, or including music)
- Business Materials
  - Provide businesses with materials for how to onboard a new employee with differing ability levels
- Hiring

- Ensure all materials used in the workplace are compatible with different communications impairment needs - e.g. screen reader friendly and videos with closed captioning
- Consider applicants who may not have the provided job experience due to lack of other employer accommodations. Consider applicants with workshop experience and skills that are taught via non-formal institutions
- Partner with external agencies for employment support

## 5.5 Built Environment

### 5.5.1. The Starting Point

#### 5.5.1.1. Overview

Ownership status among the Municipality, the village and the KTA varies depending on location. Some of their built environment infrastructure (not including recreation) includes:

- The Municipality of the County of Kings owns a series of public assets, including 26.83 kilometres of streets and roads, 18.16 kilometres of sidewalks, 61 crosswalks, 93 intersections, 51 access roads and trails, and 63 public buildings.
- The Village of Canning owns 7 buildings, 2.2 kilometres of trails, 1 parking lot, over 2000 meters of sidewalk, 5 intersections, and 3 crosswalks.
- The Village of Greenwood owns one building, 7 kilometres of trails, 25 kilometres of streets, 67 intersections, 10 kilometres of sidewalks, 17 crosswalks, 1 parking lot and 1 pedestrian bridge.
- The Village of Kingston owns 8 public buildings, 3 parking lots, 5.8 kilometres of trails, 9.67 kilometres of sidewalks, 6 crosswalks, and 12 village-owned vehicles or trailers.
- The Village of New Minas owns over 15,000 meters of sidewalk, 8 crosswalks, 17 public buildings, 3 outdoor washrooms, 6 parking lots, and 3 pathways or trails.
- The Village of Port Williams owns 11 public buildings, 2 pathways, 3 outdoor washrooms, 5 parking lots, 24 streets, over 4,000 meters of sidewalk, and 11 crosswalks.
- The KTA is responsible for its facility in New Minas, 12 public transit busses, and approximately 250 bus stops.
- The Village of Cornwallis Square and Aylesford numbers will be recorded in future reports

There were a series of specific locations listed as achievement and barrier areas for the built environment in public engagement. For specific spots that were identified, please [click here to see the web map](#) with specific comments.

### **5.5.1.2. Achievements**

*Site Assessment:*

- Park Pathways
  - Park pathways are made up of many materials, but most are hard compacted gravel
- Building Entrances
  - Many public buildings and recreation centres have an accessible entrance
- Curb Cuts
  - Curb cuts can be found in many areas of the county in both residential and commercial areas
- Playgrounds
  - Accessible playgrounds have been constructed in some locations in the county



*Public Engagement*

- Parking
  - Some parking in larger centres and malls
- Buildings
  - Fire halls are accessible
  - Newly renovated public buildings, like the Port Williams Library renovation, White Rock Hall, the Canning Village renovation, the New municipal building in Coldbrook, the Louis Millett Community Complex
  - Generally good entries with ramps and buttons
- Roadways
  - New sidewalks and Crosswalks
- Pathways
  - Well maintained and new pathways

### **5.5.1.3. Barriers**

*Site Assessment:*

- Park pathways
  - Some pathways are dangerously steep and are made up of loose gravel



- Railings are needed in areas where grades are too steep
- Bridge crossings
  - Bridge pathways are in a rough state of disrepair
  - They are not wide enough for multiple users and lack tactile warning and guardrails at path edges
  - Temporary ramps have become long term solutions
- Curb Cuts
  - Curb cuts are not always present along pathways

*Public Engagement:*

- Parking Stalls:
  - Width of parking stalls, particularly in private malls. Limited ability to leave the parking stall without getting stuck when getting back into the van.
  - Most parking stalls are taken by seniors, leaving those in wheelchairs to find parking further away
  - Parking stall signage isn't consistent or clear
  - Not adequate number of accessible parking stalls
  - Lack of accessible parking enforcement for signs and placement
- Parking Lots:
  - Fast-moving traffic without delineated spaces for pedestrians and mobility devices to cross through. This causes anxiety and fear when leaving vehicle
- Private residences and buildings
  - Housing needs to be heavily renovated when someone in a wheelchair wants to be independent, which is expensive.
  - Few businesses have accessible entryways, including push buttons or ramps
- Washrooms
  - Bathrooms need additional adaptive equipment like ceiling lifts
  - Lack of public accessible washrooms
    - We have been provided with a list of 254 bathrooms in the Municipality and Villages that an engagement respondent has identified as inaccessible. This washroom list will be provided to staff for further investigation.
- Public buildings
  - Elevator buttons too low for those in mobility devices (quadriplegic)
  - Rotating doors induce anxiety and are difficult for some mobility devices (autism)
  - Narrow entrances and a few open door buttons in some locations
  - Inaccessible community halls

- We have been provided with a list of 15 community halls with accessibility concerns from an engagement respondent. This list of community halls will be provided to staff for further investigation.
    - Multi-storey community halls without elevators
- Furniture
  - Furniture is too close together in some rooms for mobility devices to use
  - Furniture height isn't compatible with some mobility devices
- Roads & sidewalks
  - Roads without sidewalks or any amount of walker space along high traffic roads (see map)
  - Aging infrastructure with potholes and uneven surfaces hard to transverse, particularly for the blind and users of motorized scooters
  - Lack of public lighting on busy sidewalks - unable to see potholes
  - Cracked paving and gaps along sidewalks
  - No sidewalk on a busy street
  - For the visually impaired, not enough notice or warnings for curbs or steps. And many curbs/steps without railings that are unsafe
  - Sidewalk turning radius too tight for some wheelchairs and scooters
- Crosswalks
  - Crosswalk buttons inaccessible to reach (post base is not flush with the sidewalk)
  - Lack tactile coverings
  - Few crossings along busy streets
  - No crosswalk audio cue for some crosswalks
  - Some crosswalks do not allow ample time to cross the street
- Building code
  - Some buildings are not up to the most recent code requirements
  - Buildings not inspected for accessibility after construction
  - Building requirements, illustrations and municipal and village requirements are all different.
  - Nova Scotia building code doesn't have the same rigour as CSA
  - Impact of bylaw controls on affordability and ability to build ramps

*JAAC Feedback*

- Many trails in the community not accessible

### **5.5.2. Policies**

Resource Name: Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan, Government of Nova Scotia, 2018

Takeaway(s):

- We will ensure persons with disabilities can equitably receive and understand information and communications delivered by the Government of Nova Scotia.
  - Conduct a review of existing occupied spaces to determine accessibility issues and priorities and develop an action plan to achieve accessibility in Government of Nova Scotia owned and leased premises by 2030.
  - Incorporate clauses into new Government of Nova Scotia leases for occupied spaces that stipulate that landlords must meet the current Nova Scotia Building Code accessibility requirements.
  - Initiate standards development processes and develop initial accessibility standards for Nova Scotia (built environment)
  - Make improvements to provincial parks, beaches, and campgrounds to ensure that more services are accessible.
  - Increase the number of barrier-free sport-fishing sites across the province, and advertise sites to the public. This includes expanding support under the Nova Scotia Sportfish Habitat Fund for projects that improve public access to sport-fishing areas, including barrier-free access to fishing sites.

Resource Name: Accessible by Design 2030, Government of Nova Scotia Department of Justice, 2018

Takeaway(s):

- Goal set to address gaps in current regulations when it comes to making buildings, streets, sidewalks, and shared spaces accessible to all.
- Actions:
  - Conduct a review of spaces owned and leased by the government to determine their accessibility issues and priorities, and develop an action plan to make them accessible by 2030.
  - Incorporate clauses into new government leases for occupied spaces to ensure landlords meet the current Nova Scotia Building Code accessibility requirements.
  - Improve the accessibility of Nova Scotia courts, including the Amherst Supreme Court, Digby Justice Centre, Halifax Law Courts, and Annapolis Royal Court House.
  - Improve accessibility for persons with disabilities at provincial parks, beaches, campgrounds, and sportfishing sites. Provide barrier-free access to at least one provincial beach in every region by 2021.

Resource Name: The Accessibility Directorate Website, Government of Nova Scotia, 2020

Takeaway(s):

- Built Environment Standards Development Committee has submitted a recommendation to the Minister of Justice addressing gaps in the current regulations for:
  - Exteriors
  - Interiors
  - Emergency systems
  - Site selections
  - Housing and residence
  - Wayfinding and signage
  - Parks and recreation

Resource Name: Accessible Design for the Built Environment, CSA Group, 2018

Takeaway(s):

- This document provides tactile instruction on how to design spaces for people with varying physical, sensory, or cognitive abilities. The document provides building instruction on:
  - General requirements
  - Interior circulation
  - Interior facilities
  - Residential accommodations
  - Exterior Circulation, spaces, and amenities
  - Vehicular access
  - Passenger pick-up areas
- The document provides figures and tables to help visualize accessibility requirements in the built environment.

Resource Name: Interim Accessibility Guidelines for Indoor and Outdoor Spaces, Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate, 2020

Takeaway(s):

- Whole journey approach—all parts of a journey are interlinked and equally important. A single obstacle can make it impossible to complete the journey, even if the rest of the way is accessible.
- Universal design—any environment should be designed to meet the needs of anybody wishing to use it, regardless of their age, size, ability, or disability.
- Seasonal maintenance—seasonal conditions, such as snow and ice, can create barriers to accessibility; seasonal maintenance can help to ensure that public spaces are accessible at all times.
- The minimum standards for a ramp slope according to the CSA is 1:12 (8.3%) or less, but the recommended slope is 1:20 (5%).

- The minimum standard for turning radius of a manual wheelchair is 1.5 metres
- Playgrounds should be connected to at least one accessible route, providing adequate space for all children and their caregivers to move through, and quiet areas to support children with invisible disabilities.

Resource Name: Guide to Planning Accessible Meetings and Events

Takeaway(s):

- A facility that is accessible also minimizes the number of additional arrangements to be made to accommodate participants with disabilities. Conducting a site visit before booking the location is the best way to determine how accessible a venue is.
- The size of the space, positioning of service providers such as ASL/ English interpreters and CART providers, lighting, audio systems, and assignment and positioning of seating all must be considered in relation to the needs of participants, and the content and objective of the event.

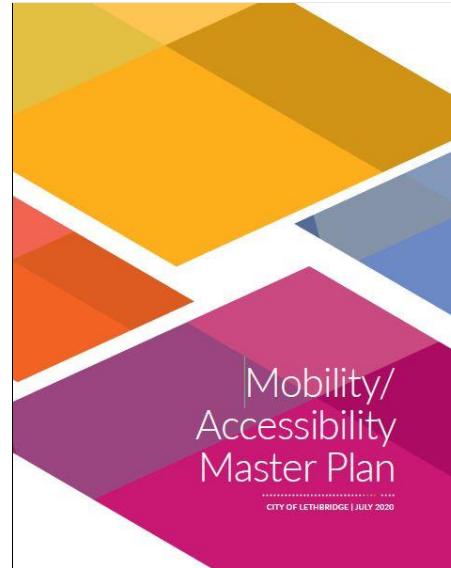
### **5.5.3. Case Study Example**

#### **Lethbridge - Accessibility Master Plan**

This plan is unique due to its location and role within Alberta accessibility standards. This plan took a deeper dive into the city's built form and what elements were in a higher need of a redesign. Universal design was a recurring theme along with the associated municipal funding requirements. This document is intended to be a living document and will be adjusted as needed and as accessibility standards evolve over time.

Key takeaways and best practices

- Lethbridge's desire for Universal Design to become standard across the city
- Accessible design consistency in new construction
- Real Estate and Land Development Business Unit (City Department) helps to determine what is the next project to complete with the council's approval (Matrix)
- Prioritization matrix – proactive improvements over-reactive
- Accessibility across the city in winter and through construction areas



#### **5.5.4. Potential Improvements**

*Public Engagement:*

- **Parking**
  - Ensure parking spaces are wide enough for side unloading vans or ramps OR create spaces beside accessible parking stalls where no one can park.
  - In site plan design, ensure that developments have pedestrian crossing areas marked in parking lots from parking spots to the sidewalk
  - Create wheelchair-exclusive parking spaces
  - Ensure parking lots are well lit - unable to see potholes and cracks in pavement that damage or topple wheelchairs
  - Remove unnecessary curbs within parking lots to allow for wheelchair transversal
  - Clear and consistent parking signage
- **Streets & sidewalks**
  - Ensure there are ramped curbs to all crossings throughout the neighbourhood
  - Crosswalks all have auditory sound and tactile surfacing for crossings in addition to light signals
  - Bridge fixes in Kingston area (purported federal funding available)
  - Install lighting at busy sidewalk locations and bus shelters
  - Ensure sidewalks are flat and upgraded to remove cracks
- **Buildings**
  - Providing quiet public spaces for de-escalation
  - Ensure elevators have buttons that are the correct height for those in mobility devices
  - Create complexes that allow people with disabilities who have self-managed care to live and work together independently - independent living complex
  - Update all public buildings to the newest building code and ensure they are Rick Hansen Certified
  - Use a wheelchair or mobility device to test all public buildings
  - Make ramps more visible and accessible to use
  - Accessibility audit of all public and private buildings
- **Land Use By-laws & building codes**
  - Remove building footprint minimums to allow for affordable tiny home development
  - Ensure that all new facilities are designed, built, and enforced to be accessible
  - Ensure that accessible building code requirements are being met and enforced, particularly in regards to accessibility

- Remove discrepancies in code recommendations and refer to CSA B651 standards whenever there are discrepancies
  - Educate all building professionals and businesses on accessibility standards (see awareness)
- Washrooms
  - Ceiling lift in one bathroom for each hotel
- Accessible L-grab bars implemented into all public bathrooms
- Create accessible bathrooms in line with CSA standards
- Ensuring there is adequate transfer space and seating space for those with disabilities and with different body types.
- Street Furniture
  - More benches along walking routes and sidewalks for seniors and those with mobility issues to rest
  - Battery charging stations for electric wheelchairs

## 5.6. Awareness

### 5.6.1. The Starting Point

#### 5.6.1.1. Overview

Within The Municipality of the County of Kings and the Villages, there's reportedly a growing understanding of inequalities and increased emphasis on diversity and inclusion. In November of 2012, through the development of an Action Plan for Ending Racism and Discrimination in the Municipality of The County of Kings, there were strategic focus areas and actions that aimed "to create a safe and welcoming community that meets the social, cultural and economic needs of all residents regardless of age, ability, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, language, sexual orientation or socio-economic status." In April of 2021, the Municipality hired a Diversity Specialist under their community development department to enact actions proposed in this action plan.

There is still a long way to go with accessibility awareness, as the second most referenced barrier to the built environment was personal attitudes, which was repeated throughout interviews, survey results, and pop-up engagement alike.

#### 5.6.1.2. Achievements

##### *Site Assessment:*

- In public areas, accessibility upgrades are being integrated into design



- Ramps and curb cuts are increasing
- Automatic door openers are being added to aid in accessible access

*Public Engagement:*

- There is effort being made to improve accessibility and a general shift towards universal design principles

### 5.6.1.3. Barriers

*Site Assessment:*

- Outdated language on parking signage even on new parking stalls
- Not all ramps provided are accessible due to their width, slope, lack of landings and tactile warnings



*Public Engagement:*

- Feeling isolated and different
  - Feels observed in small-town environment due to lack of exposure and education of fellow residents about different abilities
  - Some people make quick judgments about a person's capabilities based on their appearance. Some feel sorry for them, which is an uncomfortable feeling.
- Lack of support and training
  - Lack of public social support and awareness of how to manage different behavioural patterns among those with learning disabilities and autism
  - Some feel like their disability is overlooked in public events and within their government. This was highlighted for learning and communicative disabilities specifically.
  - Lack of publicly available mental health supports
- Invisible disability issues
  - Fragrances in public can exclude some people from events and locations

### 5.6.2. Policies

Resource Name: Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan, Government of Nova Scotia, 2018

Takeaway(s):

- We will create a culture of accessibility across our organization. This includes increasing awareness of the Accessibility Act and building capacity for government staff to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to equitable participation.
  - Strengthen capacity within Departments to champion diversity and inclusion, including accessibility and disability issues across government. This work will align with development and implementation of the Public Service Commission's new diversity and inclusion strategy.
  - Develop new training offerings within the Public Service Commission Learning Environment specific to accessibility and disability issues. Make training compulsory for managers and staff across the provincial public service.
  - Continue to enhance policy analysis and program development, including building an accessibility framework for assessment of policy/program development initiatives.
  - Build capacity among Communications Nova Scotia staff to ensure they can support Departmental clients to build accessibility into their communications products and deliverables.
  - Develop and implement public awareness programs (internal and external), to build awareness around the Accessibility Act, barriers to accessibility and what an accessible Nova Scotia means.
  - Work with (support) public sector organizations prescribed under the Accessibility Act, to develop and implement accessibility plans and accessibility advisory committees

Resource Name: Guide to Planning Accessible Meetings and Events, Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate, Department of Justice, 2018

Takeaway(s):

- Treat the person with a disability with the same respect that you extend to every person.
- Focus on the person as an individual, not their disability.
- Ask each person what will make them most comfortable during the event.
- Always ask the person if they need assistance and how you can assist; do not make decisions for the person or assume they need help.
- Address the person directly rather than the service provider.

Limited policies currently inform and direct the awareness of accessibility in the Municipality of the County of Kings.

### **5.6.3. Case Study Example**

#### **Halifax - Accessibility Strategy**



This plan is relevant for the local comparison for Nova Scotia and the newly mandated provincial accessible policy. Halifax is a major city in contrast to Kings County, but it provides context. An interesting topic to explore would be inter-municipal accessible transit to and from Halifax. Halifax also has an accessibility tourism program where accessible trails and attractions are promoted.

#### Key takeaways and best practices

- Remove barriers: Systemic, attitudinal and Structural
- Partnerships with private and not for profit organizations
- Continued awareness toward improving accessibility

#### **5.6.4. Potential Improvements**

##### *Public Engagement:*

- Normalization
  - Increase conversation about ability, and normalize everyone through conversation
  - Treat people with disabilities as capable
  - Increased interactions with the disability community to increase empathy & normalization
  - Help others to understand that people need support, not just through physical buildings, but through their lives - services, and online platforms
- Knowledge Building
  - Knowledge building in the general public about different abilities and supports necessary
  - Centralized resources for where to access information about different abilities, needs, and programs, including self-managed care
  - Experiential learning among Council and staff about what it means to use different assistive equipment (e.g. Test washrooms with a wheelchair)
  - Share grant opportunities with other public and private entities to make it easier to implement accessibility needs
  - Share information on where to find accessibility equipment in the community
- Training
  - Provide training programs and resources for staff to understand how to interact with different disabilities and deescalate situations using trauma-informed practices.

- Provide training to staff, Council and Commissions about accessibility and person-first training during diversity and inclusion training (e.g. reading someone's tax bill to them)
  - Provide toolkits to inform the business community and other partners of what makes an accessible environment (including built environments, furniture arrangements, employment, signage location, etc.).
- Engagement
  - Build relationships with client base via service agencies who have a pre-existing relationship with their clientele
- Policy
  - Reviewing policy to ensure that people are treated with respect and compassion
- Signage
  - Increased signage and wayfinding for all trails, buildings, and accessible parking stalls
- Advocacy
  - Create a rating system that advertises which accessible services a facility or a business has. For example, do they have dimmed lighting during certain times of the day? Do they have ramps? Ensure that details are described so that those with different disabilities know where to shop.

## 5.7. Recreation

### 5.7.1. The Starting Point

#### 5.7.1.1. Overview

There are varying amounts of recreation facilities spread throughout the Municipality and the Villages. When it comes to the number of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, partnering governments are responsible for the following:

- Municipality of the County of Kings: 54 outdoor recreational spaces
- Village of Canning: 3 recreational spaces (gazebo, park, playground)
- Village of Greenwood: 6 outdoor recreational spaces
- Village of Kingston: 13 recreational spaces
- Village of New Minas: 3 recreational buildings, 29 outdoor recreation spaces, and 54 pieces of supporting recreational furniture (benches and picnic tables)
- Village of Port Williams: 13 outdoor recreational spaces
- The Village of Cornwallis Square and Aylesford numbers will be recorded in future reports

Looking at these facilities, there are a series of achievements and barriers that are directly in Municipal and Village control.

#### 5.7.1.2. Achievements

- Parks
  - Hard packed gravel access to local parks
  - Accessible playgrounds for children and guardians to use
  - Spray park with a level entrance
- Recreation Centres
  - Accessible parking
  - Automatic door openers at entrances
  - Accessible facilities within the recreation center



Public Engagement:

- Parks and some trails
  - Many park trails are easily transversible
  - Good distribution of parks overall were reported

#### 5.7.1.3. Barriers

*Site Assessment:*

- Playgrounds
  - Most playgrounds are not accessible due to the curb perimeter
  - Rest area seating is commonly not adjacent to an accessible path
  - Playground ground surface is not wheelchair accessible
- Recreation Centres
  - Doors are not all accessible with push access, accessible hardware, appropriate opening force and level thresholds
  - Interior facilities, such as washrooms, are not all accessible



*Public Engagement:*

- Playgrounds
  - Little to no accessible and courtesy parking close to the equipment

- Choice of ground cover (woodchips) is accessible, as well as equipment
  - Spread apart park elements - washrooms, equipment and garbages
- Trails
  - Rail trail: Limited access points, poor wayfinding, some difficulty travelling down
  - Dirt and gravel trails - loose gravel can be difficult to move down, mainly when gravel is fresh
  - Gates to move along pathways can make things difficult
- Program Exclusion
  - Many programs are reportedly not accessible to all, and are expensive if they are
- Parks
  - Some park trails and areas are not accessible via mobility device
  - Difficult to get to some parks without travelling by car
- Events
  - Events taking place in the same geographies that are too far for many residents relying on transit
  - Some events are not accessible, like Apple Blossom or Gala days

### **5.7.2. Policies**

Limited policies currently inform and direct the accessibility of recreation services in the Municipality of the County of Kings.

### **5.7.3. Potential Improvements**

*Public Engagement:*

- Playgrounds
  - Create playgrounds that are fully accessible (i.e. equipment, ground coverings, close to washrooms, garbages, and accessible parking, not spread apart)
  - Partner with schools to ensure school playgrounds are accessible
- Recreation Supports
  - Adaptive equipment supports like ice sleds for those who can't skate
  - Recreational activities are affordable or free
  - Programs and camps inclusive of ability
  - Quiet activities for children who don't like being in loud sensory environments
  - Adaptive play and recreational supports and activities
  - Additional staff supports for camps where accessibility needs indicated
- Recreational Facilities
  - An accessible swimming pool with a connecting bus route
  - Accessible change rooms
  - The track around indoor turf for mobility devices

- Accessible spectator locations
  - Year-round recreational facility access
- Programs for all ages
  - More programming accessible to whole families
  - Accessible childrens' programming
  - Accessible seniors' programming
- Recreational trails
  - Remove bollards that do not allow a wheelchair to transverse
  - Connect growth centres to employment areas via accessible trails
  - Bike lanes and sidewalks throughout the County
  - Keep some trails open and accessible over the winter (see goods and services - maintenance)
- Events
  - Provide accessible event parking and potential viewing locations for parades
  - Accessible bathrooms available for events
  - Create and advertise events for different abilities (e.g. autism event)
  - Partner with event organizers to ensure the event is accessible
- Make an accessible beach location

## 6.0 Discussion

There are a series of considerations for each Village, Municipality and Kings Transit Authority to implement. This document is meant to raise awareness of some initial barriers, achievements, and proposed improvements. As such, recommendations from this report are an early attempt to consolidate the recommendations that we've heard and created from site assessments, engagements, policies and existing practices. This working document will continue to be built out as more information comes to light.

## 7.0 Recommendations

Using recommendations from policy, case studies, accessibility audits, and engagement, initial actions were selected from this plan based on the following framework:

1. Is the action in line with Provincial policies and requirements?
2. Is the action within the Municipality's, KTA or the Village's control?
3. Is the action achievable in the next three years, or will it make a sizable difference in the near future?
4. Will the action improve one of the areas that survey respondents claimed to be the least accessible or one of the biggest barriers?

Using this framework, a series of action areas were identified and revised in more detail during the Accessibility Sprint. The following is a list of actions that will be investigated in the sprint for implementation in the next three years:

1. Create a Central Accessibility Information Resource to help people with disabilities find and access information on programs and services.
2. Create a government-wide Accessible Customer Service Policy.
3. Update Committee, Council and Village Commission procedures, and engagement policies to provide accessible resources for meetings and engagements.
4. Build capacity among communications and clerk staff to build accessibility into their communications and website materials. Complete a review of communications policies, procedures and practices to remove barriers and include accessible design requirements in communications strategies and brand guidelines.
5. Conduct a feasibility analysis to construct an Accessible Recreation Centre, including an accessible pool.
6. Modify hiring and procurement policies and procedures to ensure they prioritize accessibility.

7. Develop and administer new training offerings for staff, Municipal Council and Village Commissions specific to accessibility and disability issues.
8. Review maintenance procedures and snow removal and government vegetation maintenance in areas that have sidewalks and bus shelters, particularly in commercial and recreational areas
9. Retrofit playgrounds to become accessible
10. Improve sidewalk access to transit stops, and ensure stops have wheelchair-accessible bus shelters and clear signage
11. Install consistent parking signage throughout Municipal and Village facilities.
12. Conduct an audit of Municipal and Village parking Stalls to ensure they are wide enough to provide side unloading and wheelchair access.
13. Conduct full audit of accessible parks and beaches
14. Upgrade all Municipal and Village buildings to have accessible washrooms
15. Upgrade all pathways & sidewalks to ensure each has curb cuts, level pathways, appropriate widths, maintenance, and tactile warnings
16. Implement braille accessible wayfinding signage throughout
17. Improve entrances to public buildings with ramp access, functional pushbuttons and wheelchair and visually impaired access to all floors

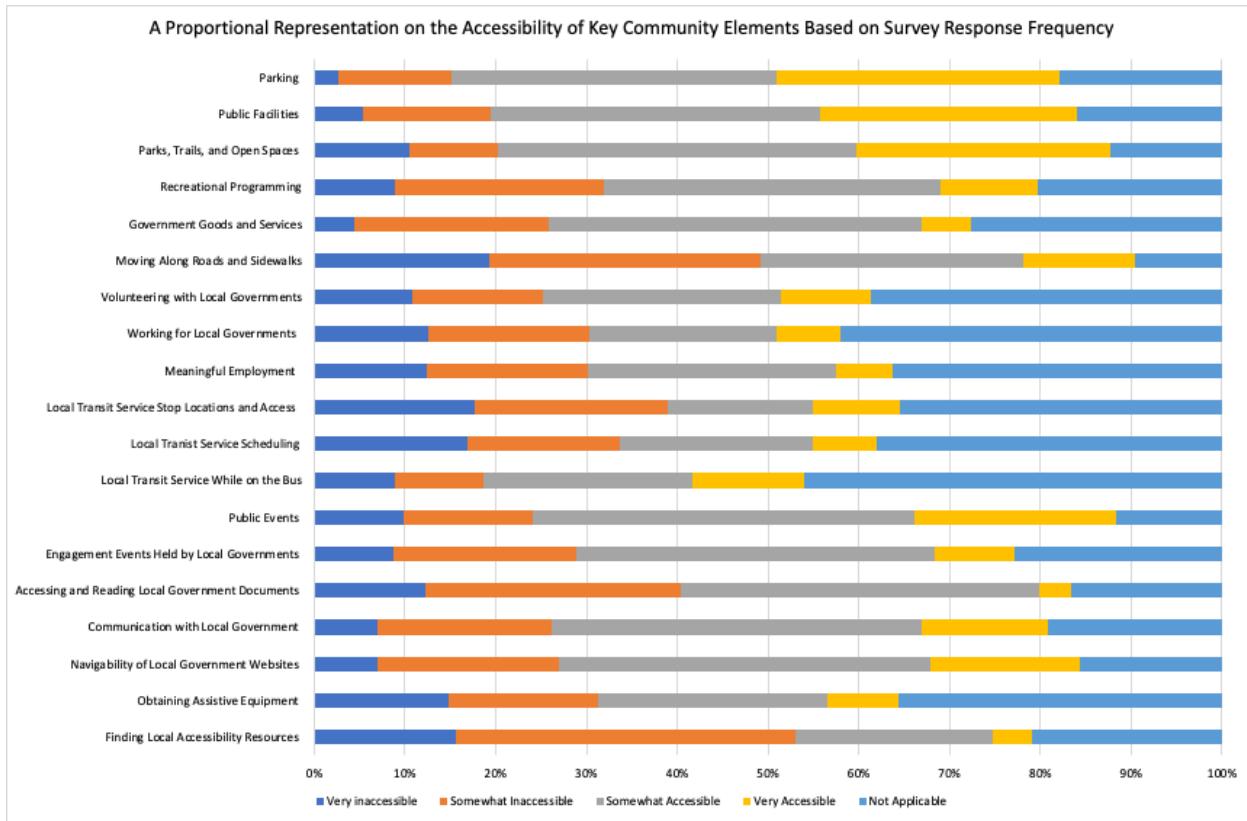
These actions are an initial brainstorm of short-term actions that fit the criteria listed above. These actions will be analyzed in detail in the strategy sprint and modified depending on staff feasibility identification. Longer-term actions will be listed in an appendix of the final document and based on what we continue to learn throughout the plan's development process.

## Appendix A: Policy Recording Tables

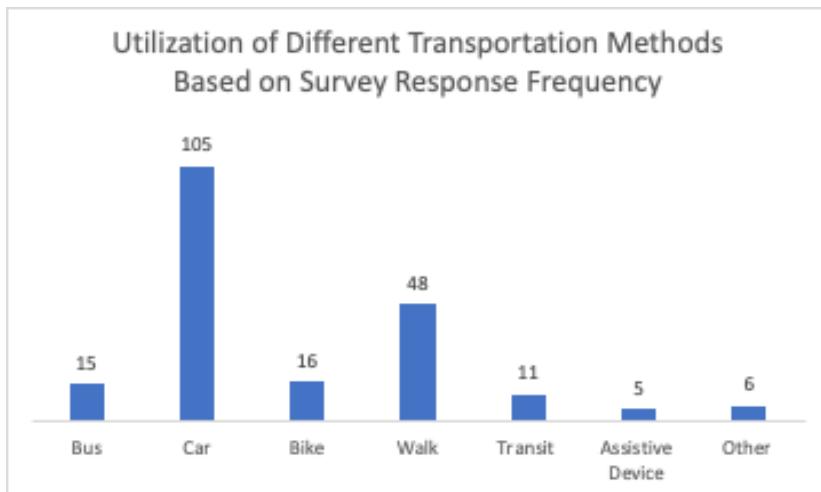
For document accessibility reasons, this appendix has been removed. To see policy tables, please reach out to a member of Municipal Staff directly.

# Appendix B: Quantitative Survey Analysis

## Accessibility of Key Community Elements

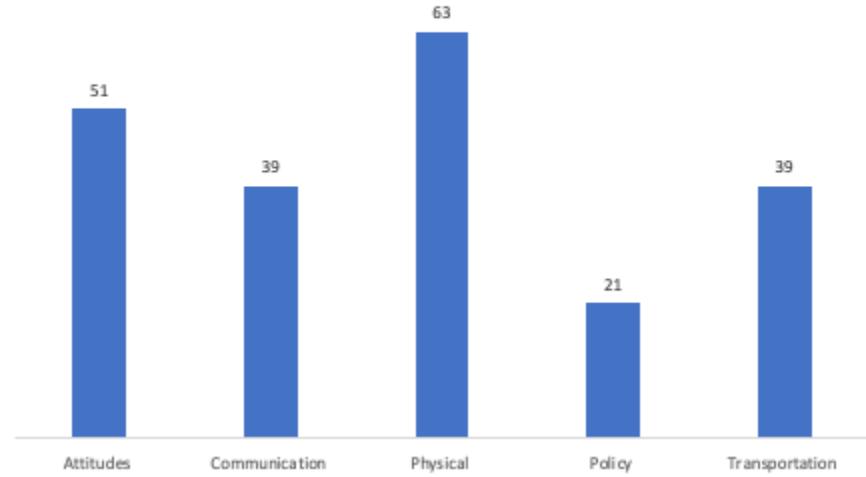


## Transportation



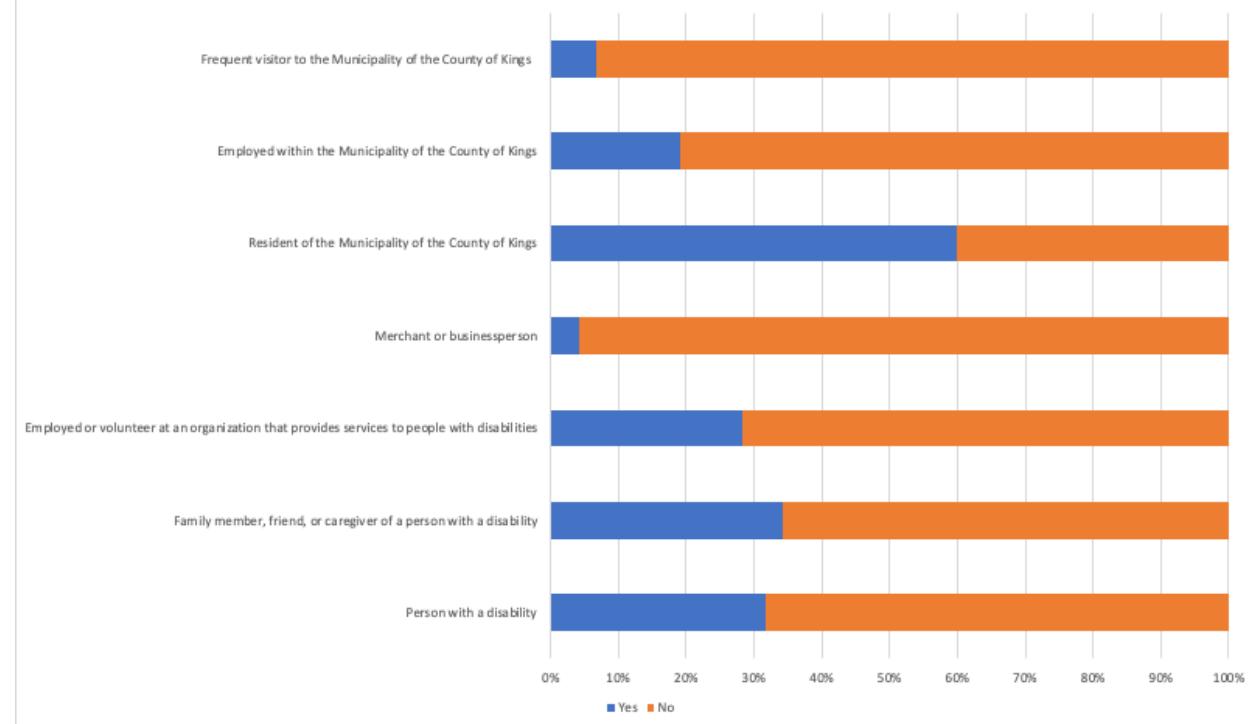
## Accessibility Barriers

Prevalence of Accessibility Barriers Based on Survey Response Frequency

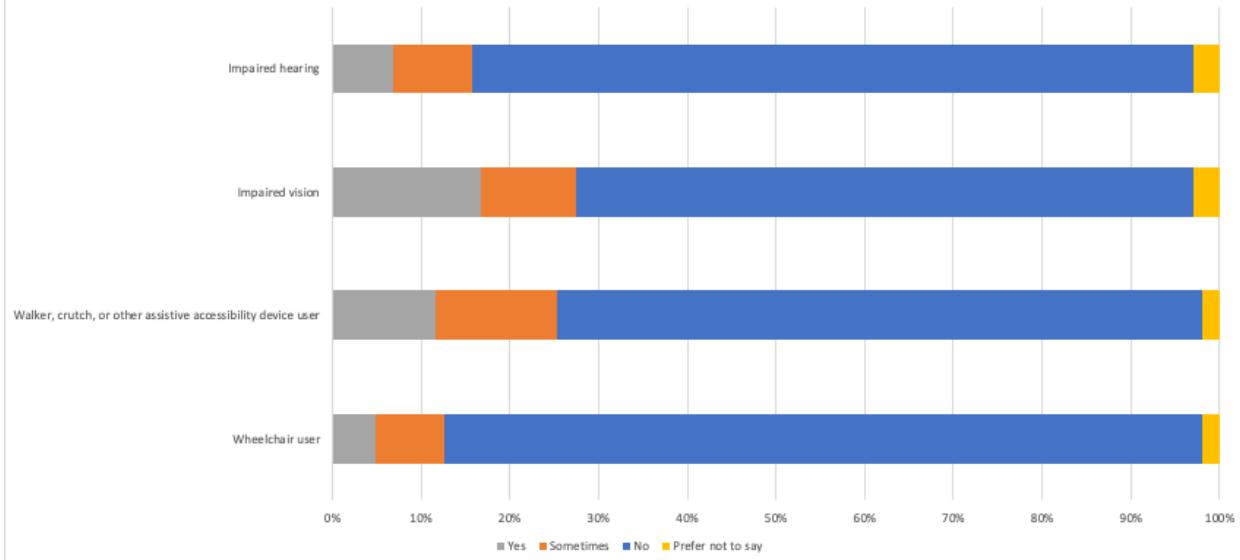


## Demographics

Survey Respondents Relationship to the Municipality of the County of Kings



A Proportional Representation of Survey Respondents Physical Abilities Based on Survey Response Frequency



Where Survey Respondents Live within the Municipality of the County of Kings

