



Ecology Action Centre

# YOUTH WALKABILITY AUDIT

PARKVIEW EDUCATION CENTRE

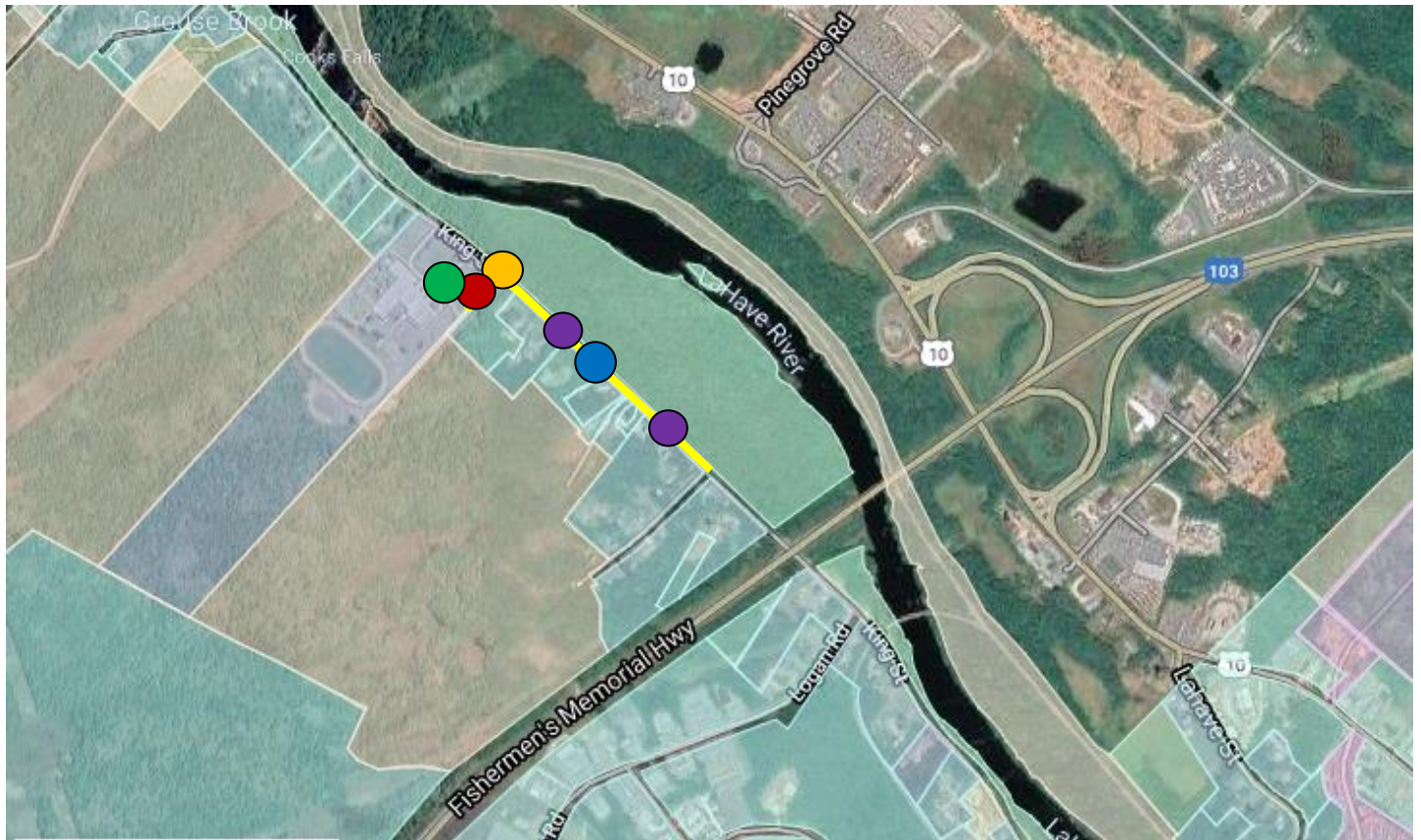
SPRING 2021



# SUMMARY

School: Parkview Education Centre (PVEC), Bridgewater, NS  
Date: April 13, 2021 and April 26, 2021 (follow-up)  
Time of Walk: 1:20pm - 2:20pm  
Participants: Grade 11 class, PVEC students  
Karen Geddes-Selig, Active Living Coordinator, MODL  
Jennifer Meister, School Health Promoter, SSRCE  
Stephanie Johnstone-Laurette, Youth AT Coordinator, EAC (online)

## Walking Route:



- = Sidewalk needed
- = Crosswalk needed
- = School Signage improvement
- = Sidewalk Improvement/Multi-use Pathway Needed
- = Improved Lighting Needed

# WALKABILITY AUDIT

The SSRCE and Ecology Action Centre (EAC) partnered to support a **Walkability/Mobility Audit** for Parkview Education Centre (PVEC). After reaching out to PVEC administration, they connected us with one of their IB teachers, Sandra Martin. Ms. Martin's Grade 11 class (20+ students) participated in two sessions. The first session began with an online introduction by SSRCE, MODL staff and the EAC which outlined Active Transportation, the role of planning in designing walkable and bikeable communities, and how mobility audits can provide necessary information to help guide municipal planning decisions. Given that the options for routes was restricted due to the location of the school, the route for the audit was pre-decided in advance of the meeting with students (see map on page 1). The checklist was shared, and the key categories were noted for students to consider as they conducted the audit, such as Pedestrian Facilities, Cycling Facilities, Parking, Neighbourhood Features and Mobility.

After outlining the purpose of the walk, the Grade 11 class and their teacher met with School Health Promoter, Jennifer Meister and Active Living Coordinator, Karen Geddes-Selig, to begin their walk. The first portion of the walk focused on the school grounds. Students exited the school and proceeded down Panther Way. Once they arrived at King Street, the main connector road to town, they turned right towards Bridgewater, and walked until they arrived at Foley's Lane. Due to time restrictions, the students turned back towards the school at this point and returned to class.

Along the walk the students utilized the checklist (Appendix 1), noting features that either supported or negatively impacted active transportation. They identified key locations and the accessibility/safety issues that pedestrians and cyclists may have to face while actively commuting from the school to the nearby amenities. The graphs shown throughout reflect some of the information gathered through the students' checklists.

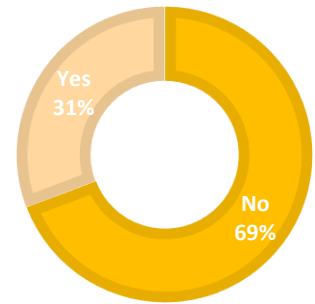


# KEY CONCERNS

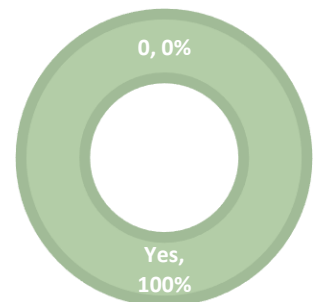
The class had a follow-up meeting with SSRCE staff and the EAC to outline what steps they thought should be prioritized to best support the Town of Bridgewater's newly revised AT Plan and other mobility initiatives. We reviewed the completed checklists and the students brought up 3 main categories: AT Infrastructure, Placemaking, and Accessible Sustainable Transportation.

The **AT Infrastructure** projects prioritized by PVEC students were focused on King Street, the key roadway connecting PVEC to Bridgewater. The youth noted that although there is presently a sidewalk in place along the school side of the road, this is in dire need of reconstruction due to both narrow walking space and poor winter maintenance. Conjointly, the road conditions for cyclists are challenging along this stretch of road, with multiple potholes and raised grates. **The need for a safe, well-lit, well-maintained multi-use path (MUP) linking the school to the downtown community and nearby amenities and other pedestrian/cycling trails would be beneficial to both students and other community members.**

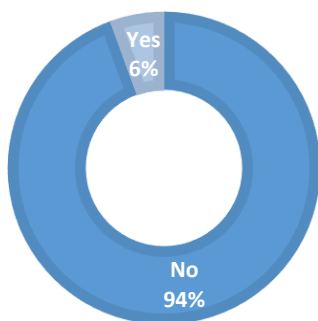
## ARE THERE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY FEATURES? (EX. SIGNAGE, ISLANDS, LIGHTING, REASONABLE CROSSING TIME)



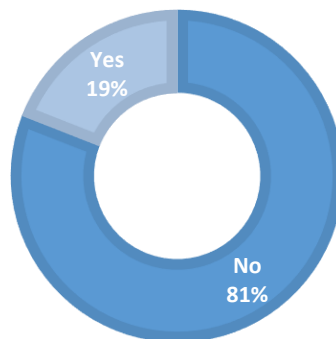
## ARE THERE POTHOLES?



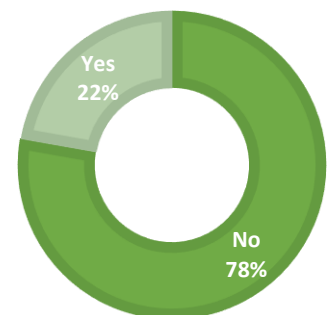
## ARE SIDEWALKS WELL KEPT? (I.E. SNOW REMOVAL, ETC)



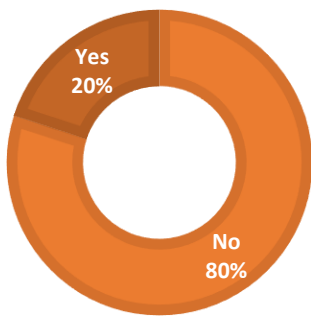
## ARE THE SIDEWALKS A GOOD SIZE AND ACCESSIBLE?



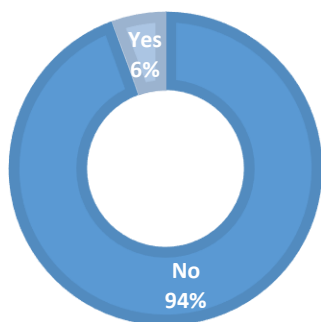
## DO YOU FEEL SAFE RIDING YOUR BIKE IN TRAFFIC?



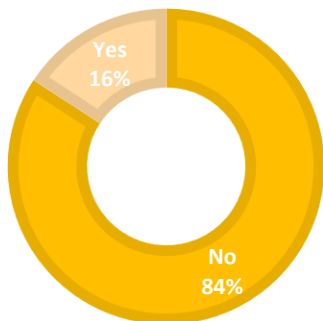
## IS THE SCHOOL PARKING LOT SAFE FOR PEDESTRIANS?



## ARE THERE ENOUGH CROSSWALKS? ARE THEY IN THE RIGHT PLACES?



## ARE THERE BENCHES?



The second category the students touched on was for **Placemaking**, which built nicely on the AT infrastructure concepts. The PVEC students mentioned the benefit of a crosswalk at the base of Panther Way and although this may also fall under the AT Infrastructure category, there is a group at the school that would like to take the crosswalk idea and build on it artistically. Other AT Supports, like benches, were noted which could be viewed as placemaking opportunities and could be painted by students at PVEC. **Placemaking opportunities led by students could offer a unique form of youth involvement in community initiatives while simultaneously encouraging an increased use of both AT and physical activity for all ages.**

Finally, there was discussion about **accessibility** through both a “right of access” lens as well as in the broader sense of the term, for non-drivers being able to access the downtown amenities with ease. The students highlighted areas on the schoolgrounds that presently don’t allow for safe active travel, in particular for wheelchair users. They also mentioned the need for improved sustainable transportation options from the school into Bridgewater. **Accessibility projects like this could improve the general safety of the schoolgrounds for all modes of active travel and encourage AT use within the community for after-school initiatives that students participate in.**

After outlining these points, there was discussion on potential allies for projects like this, moving forward. This included municipal staff and Council, the School Advisory Council and administration, the library, Transit staff, fellow students, and more. They identified key groups that could be a great fit for these roles.

# MULTI-USE TRAIL ON KING STREET

## Issues

The sidewalks along King Street are in poor condition; their narrow width does not allow for easy pedestrian use and could be challenging/dangerous for pedestrians using wheelchairs due to raised grates on the sidewalk. Even on the mobility audit itself, one of the students noted that someone stumbled on a bump in the sidewalk and almost fell out into oncoming traffic.

Students also mentioned that there was no bike lane, and that the frequent use of King Street by large trucks minimizes the likelihood that students and residents of Bridgewater would bike along that roadway due to safety issues.

Also noted was that it was common for vehicles to be speeding along King Street as it is a fairly straight stretch of road.

## Solutions

Various issues can be addressed with one solution; by implementing a multi-use path (MUP) along King Street, from PVEC leading into town, there is an opportunity to improve the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and other AT users of all ages and abilities, while also enhancing the general vibrancy of the community. To support this as a safe multi-use AT option, lowering the speed limits along the road may help with the issues of speeding. Other supports could include benches for pedestrians along the way.

“FIX OUR  
INFRASTRUCTURE!”

– PVEC STUDENT,  
GRADE 11



# CROSSWALK ON PANTHER WAY

## Issues

The students identified a number of AT concerns along Panther Way. After discussing these in detail, the students prioritized the need for a crosswalk at the entrance to Panther Way. There was also discussion on the lack of sidewalks throughout the student parking lot and safe walking spaces linking the King St. sidewalks into school grounds.

## Solutions

The students and their teacher suggested that the PVEC Project Pride group could be a potential partner with the Town of Bridgewater and SSRCE Operations to take on AT initiatives such as Placemaking crosswalks (supporting LBGTQ2 and other key groups/issues). A sidewalk along Panther Way would also create the connector from King Street to the sidewalks that are already in place around the school building itself. This could also be a safe AT link for community access to the on-site recreational facilities (track, soccer field, etc.). This would be a project to present to the SAC and/or SSRCE Operations.



“[THE] CARS ARE DRIVING TOO FAST!”  
– PVEC STUDENT,  
GRADE 11



# IMPROVED ACCESSIBILITY ON SCHOOLGROUNDS

## Issues

PVEC students noted that although many would like to be using AT as a mode of travel, they would also benefit from sustainable transportation options that would link their school to the downtown amenities. PVEC does not have a school library and therefore many students are looking to access the library immediately after school. Others are looking to commute to the LCLC and the YMCA. Bus options for students to these facilities would be convenient for those that have other time commitments after school but still want to fit these in. Presently, the Bridgewater Transit route goes as far as Logan Road.

The youth also pointed out areas within the school parking lot that are not fully accessible, including the sidewalk that is identified as accessible parking, but doesn't have an accessible curb cut allowing for people in wheelchairs to safely get from their car to the school facilities.

## Solutions

An extended bus route could improve connections with the community. Options like this would require further studies into the feasibility of extending the transit route to PVEC; this could be an opportunity for the Town of Bridgewater to look into who might utilize such a service and if it would be economically feasible.

Applying a proper curb cut to this area in the school parking lot would allow for a smooth and safe passage from point A to B for wheelchair users.





# GENERAL

## Issues

Some students mentioned that visibility was an issue in certain areas (King Street and Logan Road); Logan Road connects with numerous facilities that the youth would be likely to access after school (LCLC, library, etc.) and is within a walkable distance. Also, along this route there is a lack of sidewalks, which would need to be addressed.

## Solutions

Visibility at the corner of Logan and King could be dealt with through the design of a multi-use trail along King, allowing for clearer visibility of pedestrians who may be looking to either cross or turn up Logan. Proper lighting at the base of the hill and along King could also assist with this issue. The need for a sidewalk along Logan would provide walkable/bikeable and safe options for students and community members to access some of the key amenities in that neighbourhood.

“WE NEED A  
SIDEWALK ON  
PANTHER WAY.” –  
PVEC STUDENT,  
GRADE 11



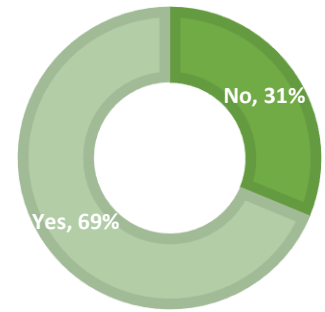
# POSITIVE FEATURES

The students highlighted some of the positive features supporting AT in their school neighbourhood as well. These included:

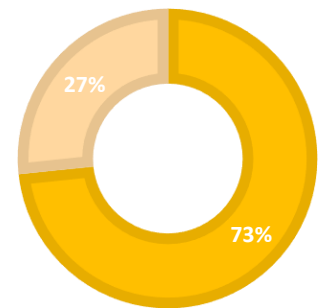
- Multiple Bike Racks on schoolgrounds
- The school property has a separate bus loop with its own entrance/exit
- PVEC is in a 30 km/hr school zone
- Nearby network of local AT trails
- King Street included in recent update of Town of Bridgewater AT Plan
- King Street, the main route into town, is not a wide roadway and allows for pedestrian crossing to be a feasible option (although there are few crosswalks along this stretch)
- Various amenities within 1.5 km radius of school



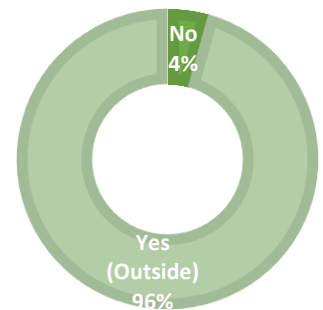
## IF THERE ARE TRAILS, ARE THEY SAFE FOR CYCLISTS?



## ARE THERE ANY ROADS THAT ARE TOO WIDE TO CROSS?



## ARE THERE BIKE RACKS?



# APPENDIX 1

## URBAN Walkabout Checklist

### Pedestrian Facilities

- Are there blind areas with potential for vehicle and pedestrian conflict?
- Is there clear visibility between vehicles and pedestrians?
- Are there continuous sidewalks?
- Are sidewalks proper, and contain cuts to accommodate disabled persons?
- Are there sufficient crosswalks placed in appropriate areas?
- Are sidewalks maintained?
- Is there adequate lighting?
- Are there street trees?
- Are there waste receptacles?
- Are benches, or other street furniture, available?
- Is there graffiti, debris, or other features, that cause uneasiness?
- Are there secluded areas where safety is a concern?
- Are there areas that are prone to excessive puddling?
- Could snow be an obstruction?
- Are pedestrian activated signals within reach?
- Is trail material appropriate for cyclists?

### Parking

- Is there potential for vehicle and pedestrian conflict?
- Is traffic flow and parking clearly signed?
- Is there parking lot supervision?
- Are bus loading zones respected by vehicles and pedestrians?
- Is there an area to accommodate parents who need to accompany young children to the school  
E.g. Kiss N Ride area.?

### Bicycle Facilities

- Are there bike racks?
- Is there indoor bike storage?
- Are there connected bike routes (lanes, trails, etc.)?
- Are there on-street safety signs (share the road, children present, school zone, etc.)?
- Are there potholes, rumble strips, or debris present?
- Are there any dangerous drain grates, utility covers, or metal plates?
- Are there rail crossings?
- Are there any areas where it is perceived that there is not enough space for cyclists to ride with traffic?

### Neighbourhood Features

- Are there public services? (parks, community centres, libraries, churches)
- Are there commercial services?
- Are there residential homes?
- Are there recreational spaces?
- Is the posted speed limit appropriate? Do vehicles follow the posted speed limit?
- Are there any obstructions blocking/hindering vision in key intersections?
- Are there any roads that appear too wide to cross?
- Are there pedestrian refuge islands or other pedestrian safety features?

### Mobility

- Are there links to transit?
- Do the transit stops have amenities?

Additional Comments or Concerns

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# Ecology Action Centre

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