

Dartmouth North Active Transportation Planning Project

Phase 2 - What We Heard Report

What We Did

Phase 2 consultation activities were carried out in November and December 2021. The purpose of this phase was to gather feedback about three route options and design concepts in the study area. It focused on key destinations, and pros and cons of street changes. Respondents shared what they liked and disliked about each segment, and shared additional ideas for improvements.



The following activities were undertaken:

- Local Stakeholder Meeting: An in-person meeting was held with 9 community leaders.
- Active Transportation Advocacy Stakeholder Meeting: An on-line meeting was held with representatives from 4 organizations, including an accessibility advocacy leader.
- Lived Experience Focus Group: An online discussion group was held with 5 long-time residents of Dartmouth North, including a youth, seniors, and people living with a disability.
- Online Survey: There were 51 respondents to the online survey.
- Paper Survey: Approximately 150 surveys were distributed, and 15 were completed.
- In-Person Community Events: A combination of public and targeted events were held; 2 community pop-ups at the library (10 participants), a class discussion at John McNeil Junior High School (30 participants), and a community consultation session at the Leaman Street mosque (30 participants).
- Promotion: Mailed letters highlighting the route options and opportunities for feedback were sent to every residence in the study area. The engagement activities were promoted locally with posters and through stakeholder network communications. Activities were also promoted online through geographically targeted HRM social media and stakeholder social media shares.



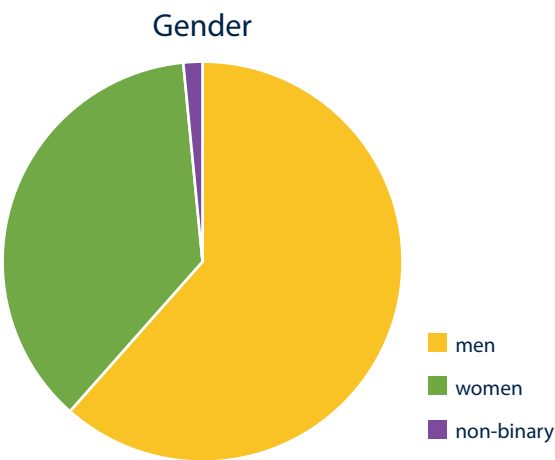
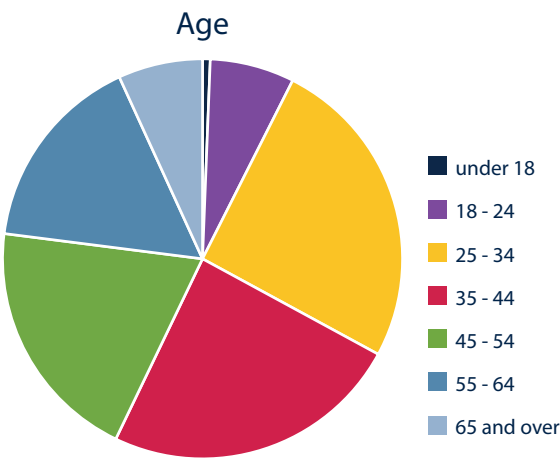
Demographics

Full demographic information for survey respondents (online and paper) was provided at the discretion of the participants, and was collected from approximately three-quarters of respondents.

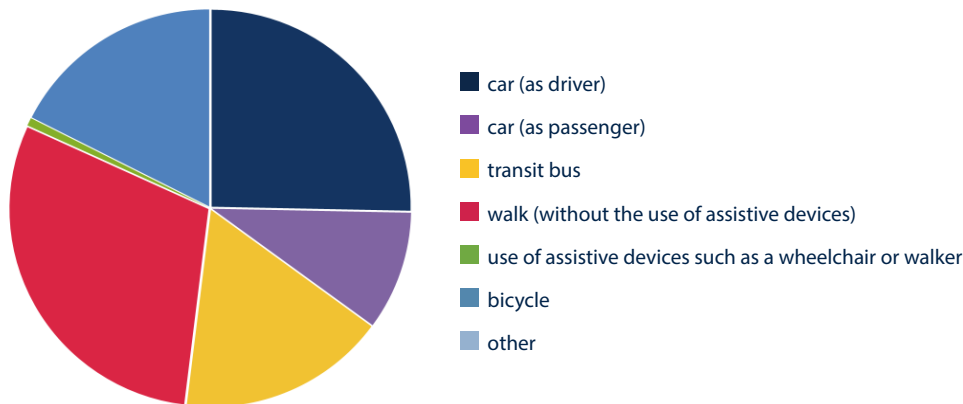
There were 65 responses with demographic information. Gender and age information was provided by most. Across all engagement methods the greatest proportion of respondents were between 35 - 44 years of age, or 25-34. More male-identifying people than female participated, the reverse of Phase 1.

Approximately 65% of respondents reside in the “B3A” postal code area, within the Circumferential Highway to Thistle Street.

Respondents indicated all the modes they currently use to get around their neighbourhood. The most common primary current mode of transportation is walking, followed by car. Biking and transit are also commonly used. Only 10 of .



Current Modes

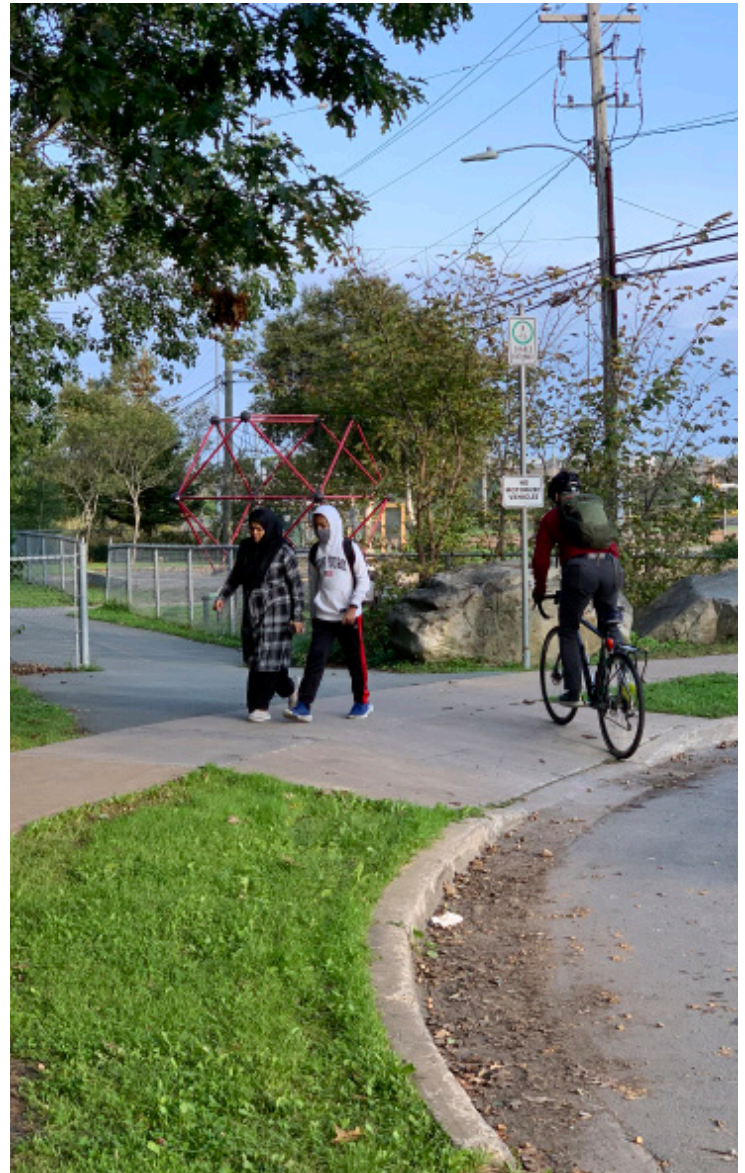


General Feedback

Overall, respondents indicated that active transportation improvements needed in Dartmouth North extend beyond a single designated cycling route. For some respondents, the dual objectives of this planning project were somewhat at odds. Many local respondents were clear that an outcome only serving regional goals would diverge from the stated intention to serve the needs of the local community. Meanwhile, some cycling advocates expressed concern that prioritizing the needs of the local community/ pedestrians would not lead to the fastest and most direct cycling route for commuter cyclists.

While there is a clear desire for an all ages and abilities route, there are many other roadway and path improvements that local residents have clearly articulated as interventions to improve roadway safety, comfort, and connectivity. Respondents expect HRM to find multiple solutions and projects that will achieve both objectives, or build out infrastructure in an incremental way, so that the experiences of current residents are respected while also ensuring a path for future change.

On the other hand some local residents have concerns that AT changes may be a sign of, or step toward, other community changes related to gentrification. There are fears of further housing cost increases, altered sense of place, and loss of belonging in neighbourhoods. There is an expectation that AT and roadway improvements are integrated with land use and housing policy, placemaking, and programming to ensure the benefits serve local residents.



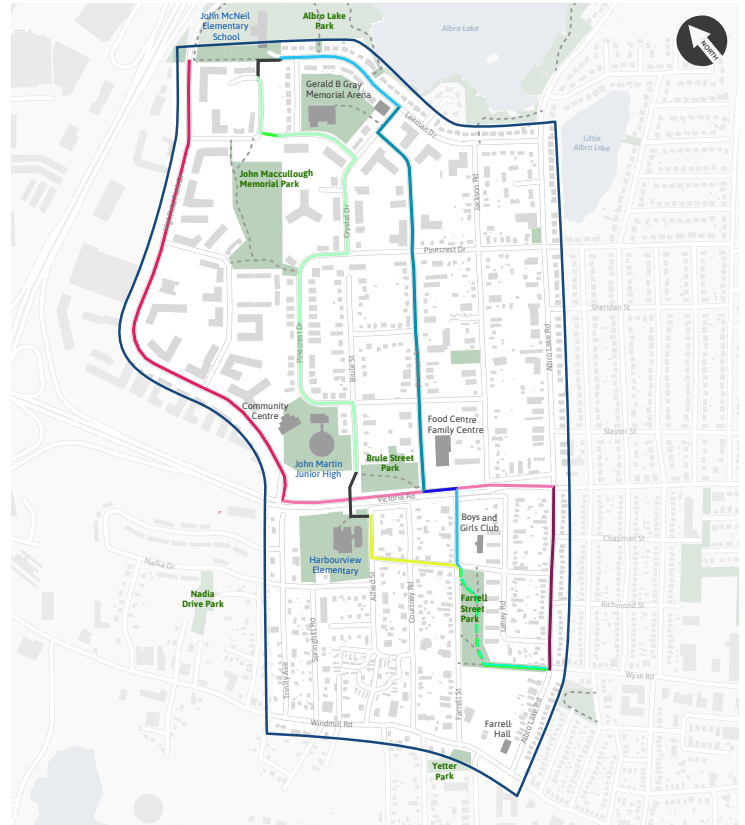
Preferred Route

Route 1 was the overall preferred route for cycling facilities to connect Wyse Road and the Burnside MUP, with modifications (detailed in the following sections).

Route 2 includes a crossing on Victoria Road at the top of Farrell Street. While the route was less popular, this particular features was highly preferred among participants.

Route 3 was the overall preference to improve AT conditions for local residents, again with modifications. (Route 3 but with Farrell Street crossing at Victoria).

A few respondents also felt that there are segments of these two routes that coincide well toward achieving the objectives of both regional and local benefit (Farrell Street Pathway, Farrell and Victoria crossing, Albro Lake Road intersection).



General Points for Implementation

A number of general points would apply to the preferred route, or and AT roadway changes:

Stakeholder respondents emphasized that diligence is needed in upcoming phases of work to ensure what is planned actually materializes on the ground, from detailed design through to construction.

Multi use pathways were generally considered “better than nothing” but for a wide range of reasons, many respondents have strong opposition to this type of infrastructure, in favour of dedicated cycle tracks that separate pedestrians. The section on Route 1 Feedback details these concerns.

Many comments called for more significant design measures on Victoria Road, to change the overall function of the roadway and traffic management. Further details are provided in the Route 1 Feedback.

Respondents suggested a campaign to teach roadway safety, and how to be considerate of others with the new types of facilities. Similarly, expanded localized programs to overcome barriers to cycling, like bike storage for multi-unit buildings and learning to ride for all ages.

Respondents would like to see transit stay the same, and ideally enhanced or aligned with pedestrian-oriented changes.

Respondents emphasized how much these improvements would affect their quality of life, and excitement to see progress to construction. Many people walk to get everywhere, take pride in it, and enjoy how it makes them feel connected to the community, but are strongly affected by the stress and fear of roadway user conflict, intimidation, and collision.

Respondents provided positive feedback on: the recent Wyse Road bikeway improvements; new bus stops on Albrow Lake Road are well lit; efforts to meaningfully engage the community.



Route 1

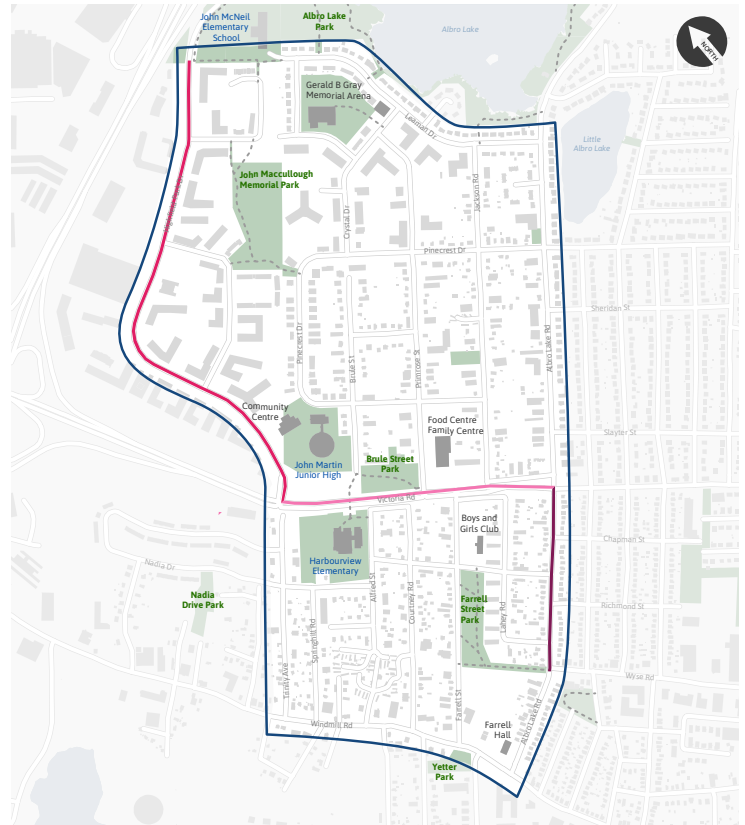
Overall Feedback

Participants indicated this route would most improve the overall Burnside-Dartmouth North-Downtown Dartmouth connection, as compared to other route options. It would benefit connectivity to the library and bus terminal, and the high density commercial/residential areas on Highfield Park Drive. However, it was noted the route is indirect for many other key destinations, most notably schools and many residential neighbourhoods.

While Route 1 was clearly the most popular option, respondents were divided about the pros and cons of the multi use pathway. Some felt it is appropriate to combine cyclists and pedestrians, or at least better than the existing and worthwhile in order to minimize impacts to trees and parking, or enable sidewalk on the opposite side. It was noted that the sidewalk on the opposite side provides pedestrians with a bikeless route option. MUP facility garnered many criticisms, for a few reasons noted below. The general preference was to consider protected cycle tracks, either on each side or with a 2-way dedicated cycle track, and sidewalk on both sides.

Respondents noted the following challenges with MUPs:

- The potential for user conflict between cyclists and pedestrians, especially more vulnerable individuals, such as people with visual impairments or other disabilities, or children who may be inattentive to cyclists and have a false sense of safety.
- Difficulty for cyclists to enter and exit MUP onto street, driveways, etc.
- Due to this potential for user conflict, cyclists would not be able to obtain the speeds required to make commuter cycling an attractive alternative to driving.
- Need to have proper program to teach etiquette, provide bells, enforce speed limits, education about sharing pathways with people who have disabilities (ie. guide dogs trained to follow side of pathway)



Victoria Road and Highfield Park Drive

- While many respondents are pleased with this option and feel a MUP would be a helpful improvement, others would rather see separated cycle tracks and sidewalks on both sides. It was felt that there is likely excess road width being used for vehicles that could be used to better accommodate people walking and cycling.
- On Victoria Road, most respondents felt that the proposed AT infrastructure would be inadequate to address the issues and challenges. Some felt the street is just too wide, exposed and vehicle centric to be comfortable for pedestrians, even with a MUP facility. There is concern that without more significant design measures to change the overall function, an AT facility would not really have much effect to encourage active modes. Respondents would like to see consideration for reduction of number of vehicle lanes, reduction of lane width, rapid transit lanes, trees and wide vegetated median, more trees, and intersections that establish cross-road connectivity.
- Respondents identified many opportunities for Highfield Park Drive. Combined with Victoria Road, it is already a preferred route due to a sense of safety, especially after dark, as it is relatively well-lit, has eyes-on-the-street, and open sight lines. A few specific details for needs on Highfield Park Drive were mentioned:
 - Section of Highfield Park Drive by Irving and Tim Hortons has inaccessible driveways and no sidewalk to the bus stop.
 - More lighting would be needed around the top of Highfield Park Drive, True North Crescent and the MUP.
- Pedestrian crossing on Highfield Park Drive at Joseph Young Street has high occurrence of quick stopping or not stopping; an overhead light and shorter crossing were suggested.
- Intersection of Highfield Park Drive and Victoria Road is a key access point to John Martin Junior High from residential streets to the south-west, via Trinity Avenue. Participants described multiple challenges with this intersection:
 - Pedestrian crossing and vehicle left turn are currently simultaneous. The left turning vehicles are not mindful, and lanes are so wide that sight lines are poor.
 - The pedestrian crossing time is too short to make it the entire way across.
 - Suggestions included a smaller intersection, advanced pedestrian light or no-traffic crossing time were suggested.
 - Connection to Trinity Ave is not accessible and doesn't receive snow clearing; road plows block the pathway.
- More trees, protect newly planted.



Albro Lake Road and Intersection with Victoria Road

Compared to the other segments in this route, respondents had more concern about changes to the Albro Lake Road stretch, and the Victoria Road intersection. The downhill slope would result in fast cyclists riding in close proximity to pedestrians. Loss of trees was identified as a big disadvantage for the streetscape. Opinion was divided though, as many respondents, including some drivers, were in favour of eliminating on-street parking for this section of Albro Lake Road. Regarding the intersection at Victoria Road, many respondents felt that the measures would not be quite right to address the turning/crossing conflicts. Removal of the right hand slip lane off Victoria onto Albro Lake Road was frequently suggested, as well as a no-traffic phase in the signal lights, regardless of whether a cycling route is implemented here. Questions were also raised about how cyclists would turn right off Albro Lake Road onto Victoria Road toward Downtown Dartmouth. While not on the 3 route options, a resident would like to see an additional pedestrian crossings at Sheridan Street.

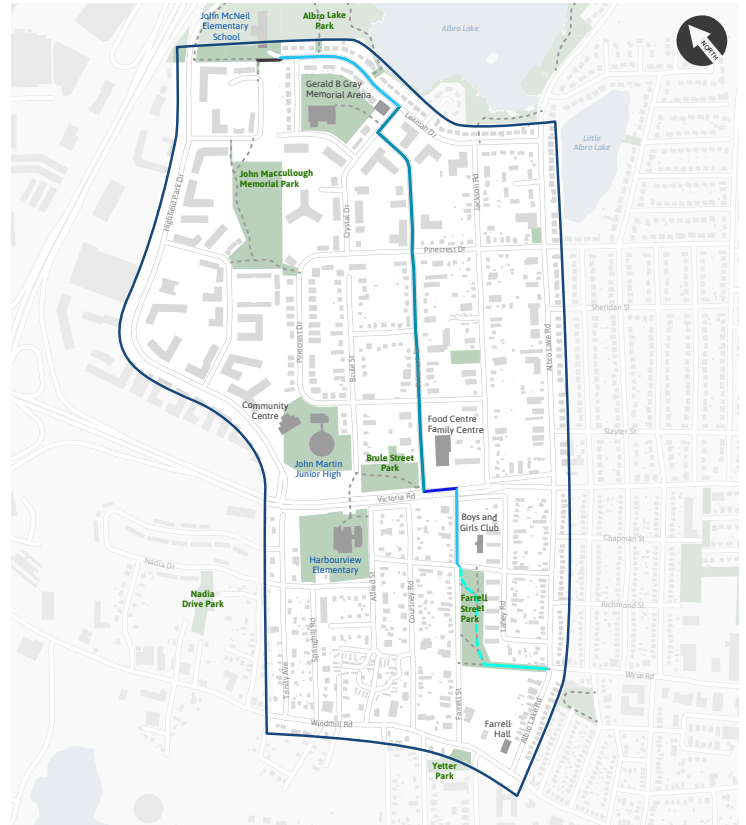


Route 2

Overall Feedback

Participants indicated this route would improve connection to the North Grove and pharmacy on Primrose Street, and to John McNeil Elementary and it would also benefit connectivity across Victoria Road from Farrell Street and the transit stop. However, it was noted the route is indirect for many other key destinations, including schools, library and bus terminal, and the high density commercial/residential areas on Highfield Park Drive.

Similarly to Route 3, respondents felt that this route would generally better serve the adjacent local residential neighbourhood as compared to Route 1. However, many disadvantages for cycling were identified in the facility type and route conditions.



Crystal Drive and Leaman Drive

While a few residents felt that no roadway changes are needed, it was widely indicated by respondents that this segment experiences traffic congestion and challenging road user interactions. Concern about parking loss was most significant in this segment, and it was felt that a more cohesive concept is needed in order to holistically manage flow of vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists, as well as parking (resident and visitor), school pick-up/drop-off, and 2-directional bus service. Key concerns were:

- Roadway or MUP conflict between users, especially children walking to school and commuter cyclists
- Lack of improvement for eastern end of Leaman Street
- Loss of parking for visitors to the mosque
- Loss of parking for residents and visitors of the apartment buildings

Respondents were divided about removal of parking on Leaman and Crystal Drives (and on other segments/ routes as well). Some felt that active modes should be prioritized, and were in support of removing on-street parking to accommodate the best possible walking and cycling facilities. At the same time, many respondents felt that roadway changes need to carefully consider the specific community context and livability of the study area neighborhoods. In particular, loss of parking would have negative impacts for the Muslim faith community, who rely on on-street parking to attend prayer at the Mosque. This segment was also often the jumping-off point for wider concern that the needs of local residents and institutions will be sacrificed for achievement of regional urban development goals.

Alternative suggestions were a “school street” design (car-free block near the school open to walking, biking, and rolling during pick-up/drop-off), and sidewalk on both sides with “bike street” facilities. Additionally, a few participants wondered whether parking could be accommodated at the Gray Arena site, or by requiring apartment buildings to provide more. Additional crossings and raised crossing were also suggested.



Primrose Street

The addition of sidewalks to both sides of the street was welcomed by respondents. However, two major concerns were identified with the proposed cycling facility. The slope of Primrose near the intersection with Robbie Burns Drive garnered some outrage from respondents, who indicated they would always avoid this steep route regardless of a facility. Jackson Street was suggested as a less steep option. Second, a painted bike route was not viewed as a real cycling facility that would improve cycling safety, and respondents were resoundingly not in favour of this type of treatment. Loss of parking also tended to be a concern on this segment.

Farrell Street Victoria Road Intersection

Most respondents were in favour of a new crossing at the top of Farrell Street, and identified the benefits to connectivity between key destinations. Inclusion as part of Route 1 or Route 3 was strongly suggested. Many noted that it would need to be very carefully designed to slow and stop traffic (raised crossing, overhead lights, speed humps on approach, narrowed lanes, etc). As noted in the feedback on Route 1, the main concern was that the fear of speeding vehicles will remain, and that that change to Victoria Road ought to be much more significant. Additionally, respondents noted the need for intersection design solutions to address potential conflicts or uncertainties with a shared pedestrian and cycling crossing.



Route 3

Overall Feedback

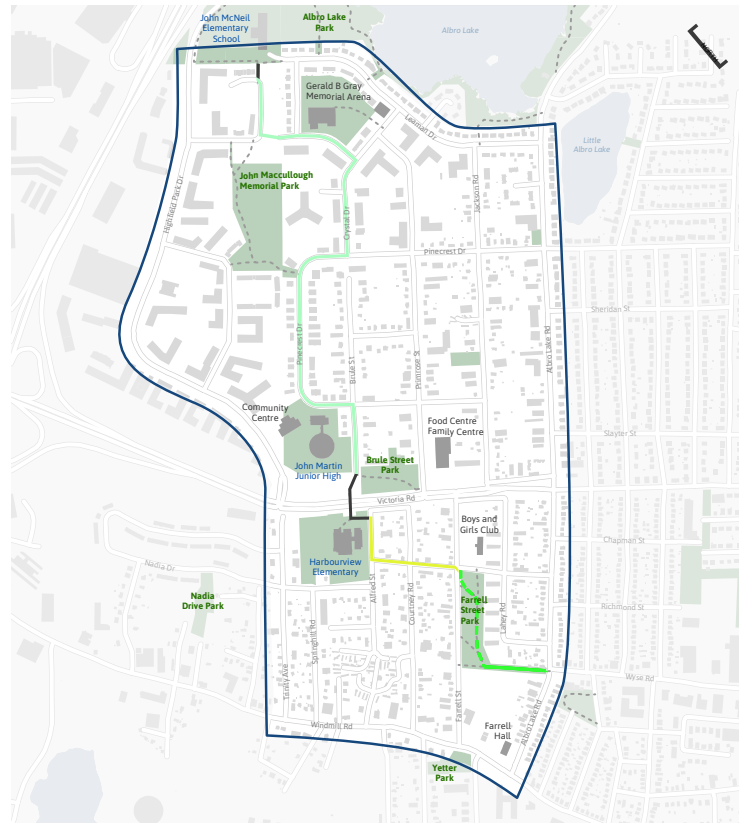
Participants indicated this route would improve connection to schools, library and bus terminal, but is indirect for some other key destinations including the North Grove and pharmacy on Primrose Street, and the high density residential areas on Highfield Park Drive.

Participants were generally in favour of the overall street improvements proposed in Route 3, however there was not strong enthusiasm or priority as a cycling route. Indeed, for a range of reasons, some respondents were opposed to separated cycling facilities, and chose this route specifically because it lacks them. It was noted that this route would have the greatest benefit to pedestrians, local residents and overall neighbourhood liveability, assuming it did not have significant parking impacts. Additional comments related to small localize improvements included:

- Adding sidewalk to reach the bus stop at Robbie Burns Drive and Primrose
- An advanced left turn from Victoria onto Primrose to reduce potential conflict with pedestrians/cyclist along Victoria
- Fixed sidewalks at the base of Jackson Rd and along the small one-way section of Victoria Rd; currently very uneven and inaccessible.
- More street lighting
- Landscaping and traffic calming; “school street” policy around the junior high school

Most of the concerns about Route 3 were in relation to cycling. There was not strong support for this option as a cycling route. It was generally felt that it would have minimal effect toward a Burnside-Dartmouth North-Downtown Dartmouth connection.

- Very indirect for getting to Burnside, “a ball of yarn” is difficult to navigate
- Lack of dedicated cycling facility
- Steep slopes on part of Pinecrest and on Crystal Drive
- Challenges of bump outs and shifting road widths
- Challenge of sharing with of a bus route



Farrell Street Pathway

There was strong support for improvements to this segment. In particular more lighting, and lighting of high quality that is visually appealing and pedestrian scale, providing both increased visibility and a beautifying element. Additional clearing of adjacent vegetation is also desired. As described in the Route 1 section of this report, a moderate number of participants are not in favour of combined facilities for pedestrians and cyclists (MUPs); however, given that the Farrell Street Pathway could be 4m wide and in a park setting, a MUP was more acceptable. A few participants indicated that they would not use the segment at night regardless of improvements, due to stigma and fear of crime, and that a greater community presence in the area will be needed in order for it to feel comfortable, including park features, route maps, and programs.

Catherine St. and Alfred St.

Many respondents felt that there was too little to comment on for this segment, but generally indicated that the traffic calming elements and intersection improvements are desirable. Some respondents wanted to see the design go further, whereby the streets around Harbourview School are primarily designed for pedestrians and cyclists.

Pinecrest Drive to John MacNeil Elementary

Respondents desired more detail about how this route design would look and function. From a pedestrian perspective, narrower roadway, shorter crossings and overall repairs were generally highly desirable. A few participants were pleased to see a roadway connection proposed between True North Crescent and Farthington. As a local street bike route, some participants felt that the proposed improvements would be ineffective half-measures, and that to increase ridership, more significant design interventions would be needed to create a true “bike street”. Hilly terrain was also identified as a barrier to cycling in this segment.



