

Dartmouth North Active Transportation Planning Project

Phase 1 - What We Heard Report

What We Did

Phase 1 consultation activities were carried out between June - August 2021. The purpose of this phase was to gather information about the existing conditions and experiences with mobility in the study area. It focused on key destinations, gaps and barriers to walking and cycling, and speeding. Respondents also provided suggestions and ideas for improvements.

The following activities were undertaken:

- **Stakeholder Interviews:** Initial scoping interviews were held with representatives from 8 community stakeholder groups.
- **Lived Experience Interviews:** Interviews were held with 6 long-time residents of Dartmouth North, including 5 women and 1 man, 1 youth, 2 seniors, and 2 people living with a disability.
- **Online Survey:** There were 130 respondents to the online survey.
- **Paper Survey:** 32 paper surveys were completed.
- **Pop-Up Events:** Three pop-up events were held, at the library (Farrell Hall temporary location), at the North Grove, and at the Ecology Action Centre bike repair pop-up. Approximately 30 people engaged in discussion at the pop-ups.
- **Promotion:** The engagement activities were promoted locally with art bike installations, a library display, and through stakeholder network communications. Activities were also promoted online through targeted HRM social media and stakeholder social media shares.



Demographics

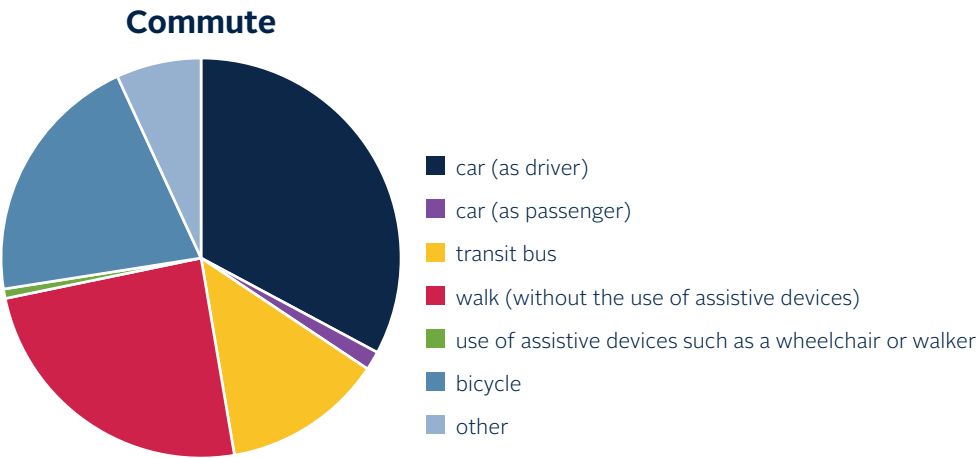
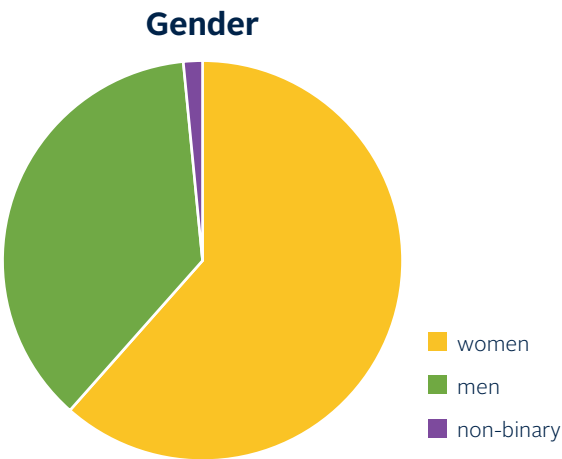
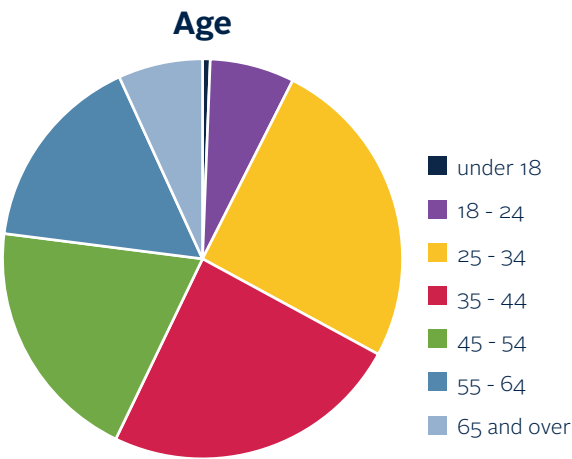
Full demographic information was provided at the discretion of the participants, and was collected from approximately half of respondents.

Gender and age information was provided by most. Across all engagement methods the greatest proportion of respondents were between 25 - 44 years of age, and identified as female.

Information about disability, Aboriginal, and visible minority identity was only provided by 40 people but was proportionate with provincial demographics (22% have a disability, 5% Aboriginal and 7% visible minority).

At least 75% of respondents reside in the “B3A” postal code area, within the Circumferential Highway to Thistle Street.

The most common primary current mode of transportation is driving a vehicle, but all active modes combined outranked driving.



Major Themes

Destinations

Many of the key destinations are located outside the study area. Local residents are leaving their neighbourhood to access goods, services and employment, or residents from other areas are passing through the study area. By far, the most common destination among respondents is the shopping area on Wyse Road, from Sobeys to Nantucket Avenue. Parks and trails are the second most common type of destination, with Albro Lake being the most popular.

Dartmouth Crossing and Mic Mac Mall are identified as an important desired destinations, but difficult to reach by any mode other than car, so less common among respondents. Dartmouth Crossing in particular has entertainment, shopping and restaurants, as well as employment, that are desired by many. Despite being geographically nearby, currently it is nearly impossible to access Dartmouth Crossing without going all the way through Burnside. A walking and cycling route is widely desirable by respondents.

The Lawtons and North Grove on Primrose Drive is a very common destination within the study area. The bus terminal on Highfield Drive and food bank on Farrell are also important destinations. The mosque on Leaman Drive is a busy destination at certain times, especially Friday afternoons.

Secondary destinations (within and outside the study area) were Downtown Dartmouth, Dartmouth Common transit terminal, the library/community centre, schools, and the Tim Hortons on Highfield Drive. Burnside was identified as a destination among online survey respondents who are commuting there for work.



Transit

Transportation to employment destinations is primarily by transit. Retail jobs in Dartmouth Crossing are potentially good options for residents of the study area, but poor options for transportation renders these positions difficult to manage and maintain. Many respondents describe a strong desire to obtain, or continue to own, a vehicle (or two) per household, in order to travel to work. Transit is the best option for employees who are leaving work late at night.

Despite experience with transit not being the focus of the engagement questions, it came up frequently among respondents. Walking is closely linked to transit use, and the two modes are woven together in personal mobility decisions. In some cases, people will walk longer distances (30+ minutes) because it is faster than transit. A few respondents describe frustrations with needing to travel to the Dartmouth Common terminal in order to transfer buses and back track toward Dartmouth North.

Many respondents experience small but significant barriers along walking routes to bus stops, primarily crossings that are too far away from stops and common destinations, or disconnected sidewalks. For some people, these barriers severely limit their mobility. Some specific details about bus stops are described in the Street-by-Street Summary, below.



Poor Connectivity

Lack of connectivity and indirect routes is one of the most significant overall barriers or challenges for walking and cycling. Respondents describe lack of connectivity at a broader community scale, and at a localized neighbourhood scale. Most of the connectivity barriers are physical blocks in the built environment, and a few are mental or social barriers.

The Circumferential Highway has hemmed in the study area, and there are very few access points for vehicles, let alone for walking or cycling. Respondents describe a general inability to reach the following highly desirable destinations and routes:

- Burnside itself, but especially Burnside as a route on to Dartmouth Crossing.
- Dartmouth Crossing via Lancaster Ridge is understood to be the most direct route, equally or more desirable than a route into Burnside at Highfield Drive. Some elderly respondents still feel the loss of historic footpaths to the land Dartmouth Crossing occupies, for blueberry picking and other recreation.
- Across the Circumferential Highway, to Shannon Park and Ocean Breeze apartments.

Victoria Road is the major physical barrier within the study area neighbourhoods. Interventions to control pedestrian flow (such as the pedestrian overpass, chain link, concrete barriers) are often counter to the desired routes and destination. Respondents describe taking dangerous, inconvenient and inaccessible shortcuts in order to avoid long routes. Respondents feel that social connection between neighbourhoods on either side of Victoria Road have suffered, and that a lack of intuitive pathways is the main reason. Specific details about Victoria Road are described in the Street-by-Street Summary.

The other point of disconnection within the study area is from Highfield Drive through to Pinecrest Drive and Farthington. While there are informal footpaths, these lack safety and accessibility and are areas of concern at night. It is unclear whether respondents would like to see roadway links, but there is a desire for good walking and cycling connections.

There are also social barriers in the vicinity of Pinecrest Drive and Farrell Street walkway, where fears of crime and violence deter people from travel in these areas, even though they would enable more direct routes to desired destinations. Specific details about these locations are described in the Street-by-Street Summary.



Sidewalks and Crossings

The state of sidewalks and crossings was a major challenge for many respondents. It was felt that on multiple streets sidewalks are too narrow, are fragmented, or in a state of disrepair. There are also reports of sidewalk user conflict, whereby cyclists feel biking on the street is dangerous, so they use the sidewalk, and then pedestrians feel unsafe and crowded by the cyclists. Respondents also frequently reported that crossings are too far apart or too far from desirable destinations.



Recreational Trails and Greens Spaces

Albro Lake Trail boardwalk is in disrepair, and the trail does not create a complete loop. People are therefore hesitant to use it and do not have the benefit of developing their comfort and reducing fear with cycling and walking in an off-road environment. Respondents perceive the clear disparity in the amenities in Dartmouth North compared to other neighbourhoods, and it is felt that this is part of systemic discrimination against low income and BIPOC communities.

Similarly, some respondents describe how overgrown bushes and poorly maintained green spaces / landscaped areas around community facilities lead to a general discouragement to use adjacent streets. For many respondents, uncared for public spaces indicate risk (both real and perceived) and imply that the people that use these spaces are also uncared for or unworthy of a good quality built environment.



Road Use Conflict

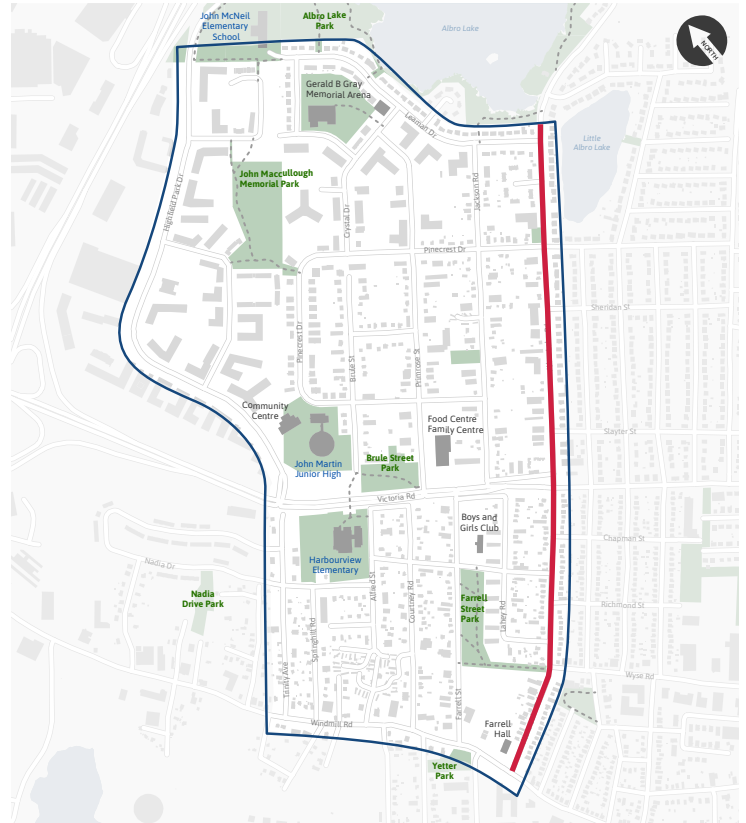
Many respondents told of experiences of frustration, anger and aggression in roadways. The most common experience is from pedestrians and cyclists who feel threatened and intimidated by hostile drivers through speeding, quick braking and revving, as well as verbal assault. Drivers also expressed frustration with cyclists that are unpredictable, take the lane, or “hog the road”.



Street-by-Street Summary

Albro Lake Road

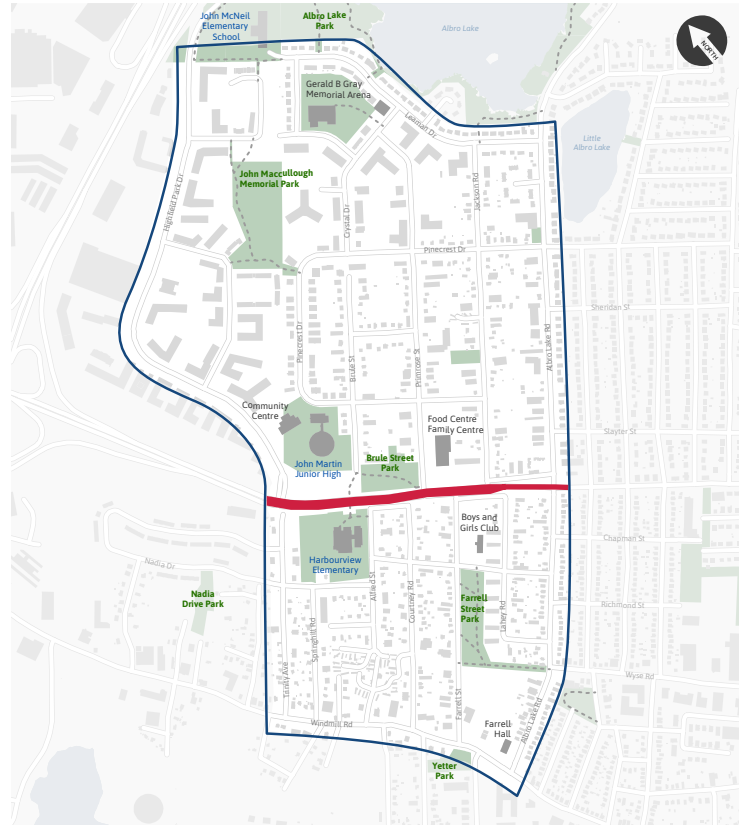
Albro Lake Road is currently used for cycling, as a primary route for connecting to Leaman Drive and on to Burnside, approaching from Victoria Road and from Sea King Drive. It is not used because it is actually good for cycling, but it is generally preferred because it is flatter and wider, and avoids less desirable streets like Pinecrest and Victoria. There are major concerns among respondents about all the intersections on Albro Lake Road (Windmill, Wyse, and Victoria Road). As is also the case on Victoria Road respondents report fast traffic flow, wide turning radius and quick right turns, prone to rolling stops. Respondents also describe speeding along straight aways, especially as it transitions to Sea King Drive.



Victoria Road

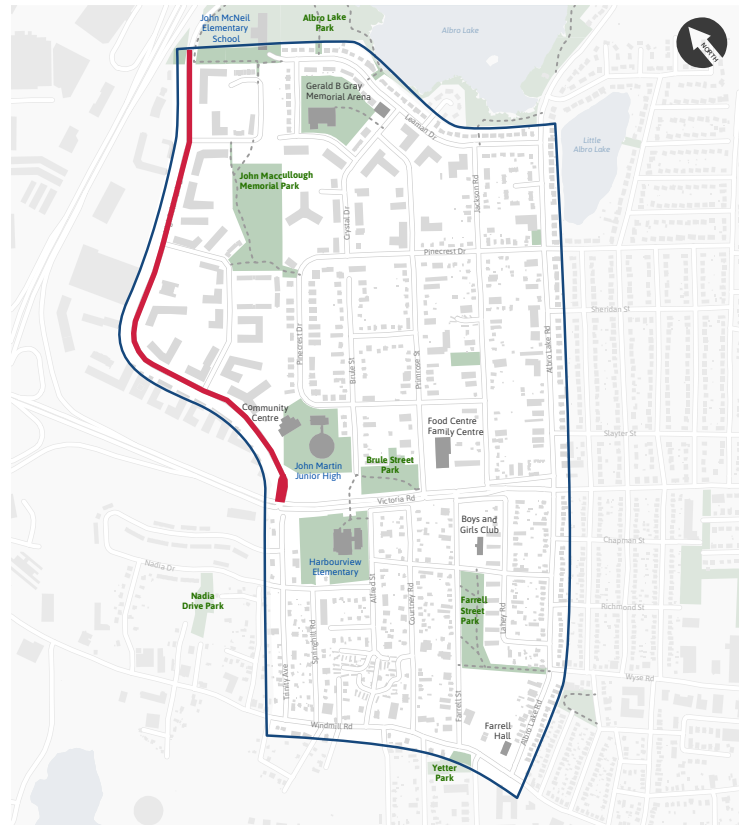
Respondents report many challenges with Victoria Road:

- Indirect and wide crossings that are too far apart and inconveniently placed.
- Formal pathways and crossings are desired at 1) Trinity Drive, where there is currently a worn path, to improve access to Nadia Drive, Harbourview School, Catherine Street, and on to Wyse Road; 2) Mid-block at the top of Farrell Street and across to the bus stop, North Grove and Lawtons. The Primrose and Albro Lake Road crossings are too far away from these desired destinations. There is also a food bank on Farrell Street, so people are often carrying heavy bags.
- Speeding vehicles are very common; the roadway feels like a highway and drivers are unaware that they are going through a dense residential area with schools on either side.
- Particularly difficult to walk or bike in winter, wind is harsh and snow clearing is done at a highway standard, not the standard people see in dense residential or downtown areas (e.g. sidewalk intersections uncleared, icy, etc.)
- Particularly difficult for anyone with an assistive device or with a stroller.
- Intersection at Victoria Road and Highfield has fast traffic flow, wide turning radius and quick right turns, prone to rolling stops.



Highfield Park Drive

Highfield Drive is generally less congested and less prone to road user conflicts. In addition to the issues with the intersection at Victoria Road, the main challenges are related to walking routes between bus stops and important destinations. In particular, the bus stop on the roadway curve is directly across from a drug store that is a key destination; people tend to jaywalk because the crossings are at an inconvenient distance. More crossings or traffic calming is desired. The second pain-point is at the top of Highfield, where the last bus stop just beyond the Tim Hortons and Irving has no sidewalk. This span of properties also has large access ways and no sidewalks.

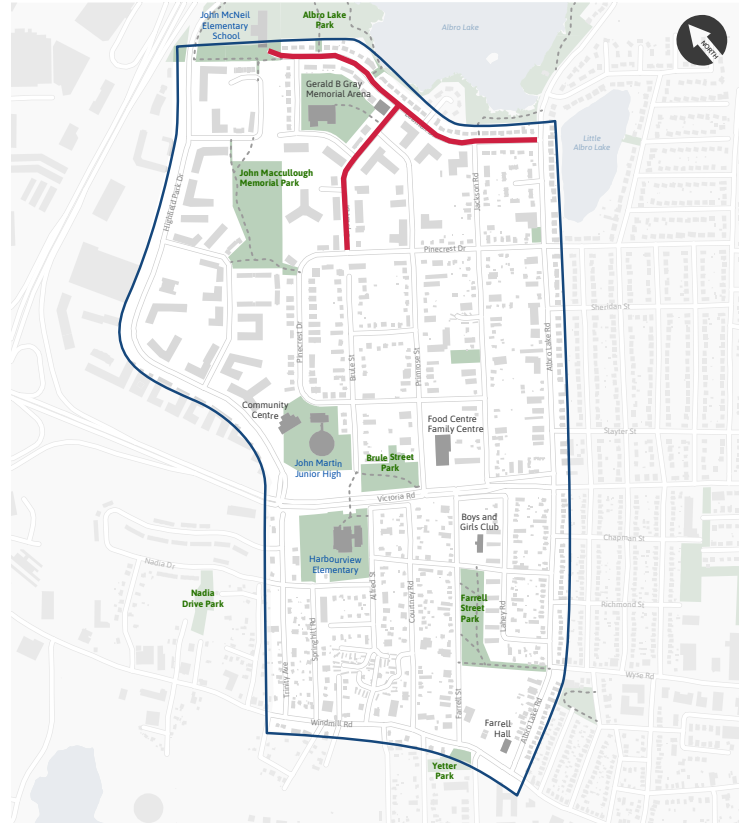


Leaman Drive and Crystal Drive

Residents of Leaman Drive and Crystal Drive describe overall congestion on the street at certain times of day, and that the street is heavily used for walking, cycling, driving, parking, drop-offs, and children playing. There are a number of specific factors:

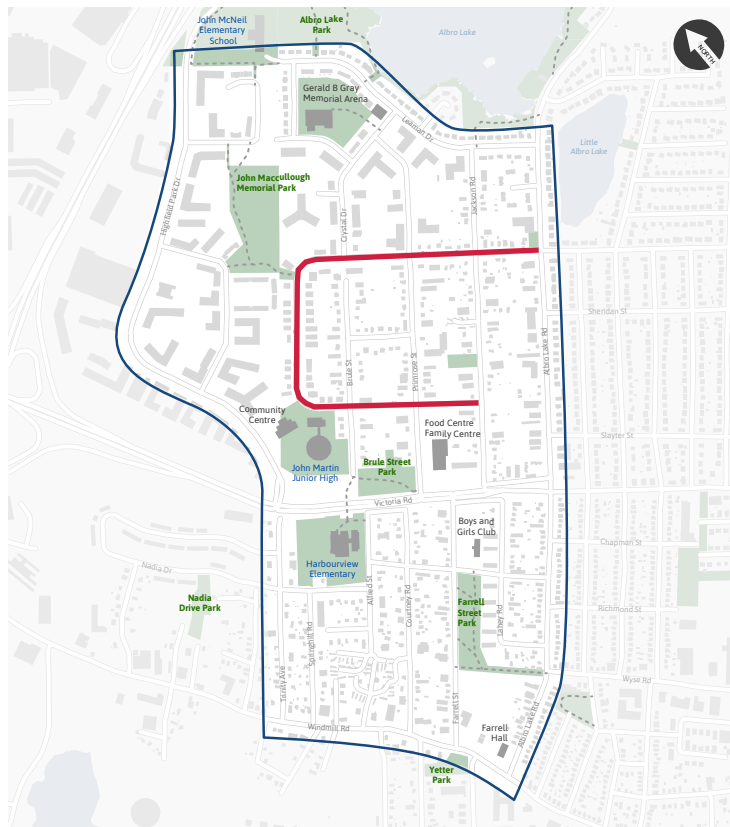
- There are lots of families living on Leaman and Crystal Drive, so there are more children present than in a typical street, playing on bicycles and moving around between homes and open spaces.
- The mosque located at 42 Leaman has a large weekly prayer on Fridays from approximately 1:00-3:00. At this time many people require on street parking as nearby as possible. Overall the neighbourhood is supportive but it is already a bit stressful for attendees. The mosque community is hopeful this need can be maintained.
- The John MacNeil Elementary School creates a back-up of traffic in the mornings.
- The larger multi-unit apartment buildings provide one parking space per unit, but many residents have two or more vehicles in a family. This has resulted in demand for on-street parking evenings after 5:00, overnight, and on weekends.
- There is only sidewalk on one side, resulting in jaywalking.
- The community in this neighbourhood is quite concerned and curious about the plans for the Gray Arena. Many provided input in an engagement process in 2019, and are wondering why there has been no action. Given the family composition and the density of multi-unit homes, there is a strong demand for recreation. The mosque community has also suggested that a section of the property

could be used for parking during Friday prayer, to help reduce on-street burden. There is also a desire for a mid-block pathway from Leaman to the Gray Arena property.



Pinecrest Drive

There is increased grief and fear associated with one block in the centre of the community. Pinecrest Drive, and the blocks of Brule, Primrose and Jackson within it, are very underutilized and stigmatized, and are also challenged with steep slopes. Respondents also reported low utilization of Jason MacCullough Memorial Park. Support for an active transportation corridor passing through this area is unlikely to be high among the Dartmouth North community. However, infrastructure improvements in this area are highly desired to improve mobility and quality of life for local residents. Recent accessibility improvements to intersections have been of benefit, but improvements mid-block are still needed. Respondents feel that the disrepair of roadway and sidewalks is severe. There has been at least one incident of a person using a wheelchair who tipped over on a pothole and was injured, as well as other reports of difficulty using other mobility aids on this street.



Woodland Drive

While outside the study area, the intersection of Woodlawn, Lancaster, and Micmac Boulevard was identified as a specific barrier for walking and cycling. Fear of safety at this intersection limits respondents' ability to access the mall walking or cycling.

Farrell Street Pathway

Respondents indicated that the pathway is poorly lit and has overgrown bushes that reduce visibility and create a sense of fear. There are reports of high risk activities occurring along the pathway, and respondents avoid night time use.

