

BEDFORD HIGHWAY FUNCTIONAL PLAN

Settlement History



The Mi'kmaq people occupied the lands of the Bedford Highway for more than 6,000 years, until their way of life was greatly disrupted through British colonial expansion. The original Bedford Highway path was constructed in 1749 following traditional routes along waterways, enabling overland travel to Fort Sackville (site of Scott Manor House) and onward to Windsor and the Bay of Fundy.

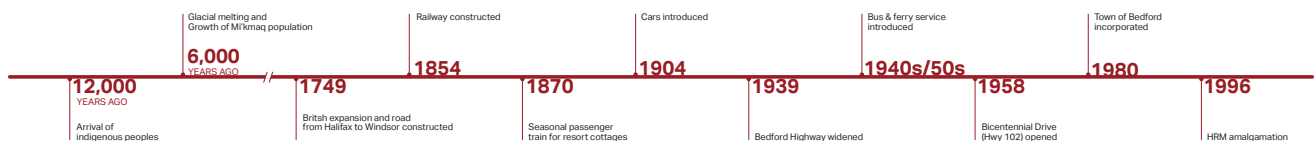
Following the road's construction, European settlers began to inhabit the landscape. In the late 1700s The Prince's Lodge estate was constructed, and occupied by colonial elite as a rural escape. A stagecoach service from Halifax to Truro began in 1816 and the railway was introduced in 1854, with stations in Bedford and Rockingham (formerly named Ten Mile House and Four Mile House for their distances to Halifax). During this early period of horse and train transport, Bedford became known as the traditional stopping place for travellers coming to and from Halifax. The Sisters of Charity also founded the Mother House Convent and Mount Saint Vincent women's finishing school, two major institutions.

By the late 1800s Bedford was a true resort community with a local population of only 450, and passenger trains running to the community and beyond before the introduction of cars. In 1921,

The Bedford Ratepayers Association was formed, reflecting a growing base of permanent residents. Mi'kmaq people also continued to have seasonal encampments at Birch Cove until around this time.

The Bedford Highway was widened in 1939 as a means to encourage investment, and the harbour continued to be active through both world wars. The population of the area grew to around 4,000 residents in the mid 1900s, and transportation networks expanded to include bus service and special occasion ferries. During the post-war boom the development pattern spread rapidly outward from the waterfront, public investments supported the freeway system, and car culture dominated.

In 1980 Bedford incorporated as a town, the beginning of another period of major population increase that continues today. Interest mounted to rejuvenate the Basin and Highway lands, and provide public waterfront access. In 1996, the communities along the Bedford Highway became part of the Halifax Regional Municipality. While the communities continue to embrace a small-town identity, by 2016 the population had grown to over 62,506 residents. Today, vehicle movement is supplemented by Highway 102, but the Bedford Highway remains the backbone for these suburban communities.



Cyclist and pedestrians use the early Bedford "Highway", undated.



Bedford train station, sometime soon after 1845.



The motor car, and traffic congestion, were introduced to the Bedford Highway in the 1920s.



Commercial development of Bedford in the 1980s.



African Nova Scotian travellers heading to market in Halifax with a cartload of goods to sell. Robert Petley, Bedford Basin Near Halifax, 1835.



Escaping the city to Bedford for picnicking and other leisure pursuits were popular in the mid to late 1800s.



Arthur Lismer, Convoy in Bedford Basin, 1919.