Background

In May 2023, a 788-hectare wildfire swept through the communities of Upper Tantallon and Hammonds Plains, destroying over 150 structures and causing damage to significantly more. Mandatory evacuation orders were put into place and this area expanded geographically as the fire continued to burn out of control. A local state of emergency was declared in the Upper Tantallon and Hammonds Plains area, impacting approximately 16,400 residents.

Although no serious human injury or fatality resulted from the wildfires, residents fleeing the area were exposed to life threatening conditions.



Jeorge Sadi / CBC (2023)

Constraints in the roadway network made evacuation a significant challenge:

- limited subdivision access points from Westwood Hills, Upper Hammonds Plains, and Highland Park North; and
- roadway capacity on Hammonds Plains Road as the primary route away from fires for most residents.



Communications NS (2023)

Council actions and timelines

June 2023	Regional Council requested a staff report on developing egress options for the Westwood Hills subdivision.	Staff worked with consultants to review potential access improvement options, including assessment of routing options, utility, feasibility and phasing.
November 2023	Regional Council directed staff to further investigate an emergency-only connection between Westwood Hills subdivision and Highway 103, as well as some potential community connector routes between Westwood Hills and the Upper Hammonds Plains and Highland Park North communities.	Additional technical assessment and 30% design work was conducted to consider feasibility of four routing options for emergency access to/from Highway 103. Report also included concept exploration (10% design) of three community connector roads from Westwood Hills to neighbouring communities.
March 2025	Regional Council approved construction of recommended emergency access road (Option 1) and directed staff to conduct additional community engagement on community connector roads, particularly to align with community action planning in Upper Hammonds Plains. Additionally, Council directed staff to complete a regional-level subdivision egress review aimed at highlighting communities vulnerable to access/egress challenges and prioritizing areas for potential remediation.	Emergency access road to Highway 103 has gone through detailed design process and construction is targeted for completion in late 2026. Staff completed the Regional Connectivity Study and presented findings in July 2026. Public engagement for long-term community connector roads is underway in October 2026 and will inform next steps recommended to Council in 2027. The engagement will align with parallel community action planning process in Upper Hammonds Plains.

Project scope

The scope of this project is to further investigate and engage on two potential community connector road options as directed by Regional Council:

(1) between Westwood Hills and Upper Hammonds Plains
(2) between Westwood Hills and Highland Park North

The objectives of this project are to:

- gather public feedback on these potential connector roads based on factors such as routing, connectivity, traffic flow and design features;
- investigate high-level traffic impacts of these potential connection(s); and
- determine any policy changes necessary to enable the road(s) to be built.



Halifax Regional Municipality: Upper Hammonds Plains community action planning (August 2026).

Next step

The next steps for this project are as follows:

- Engage community on connector road options (this meeting)
  - two open house sessions
  - online survey
- Evaluate routes based on a range of criteria including (but not limited to):
  - cost/length;
  - property impacts/implementation timing;
  - environmental and feasibility considerations; and
  - public feedback
- Present staff report to Council with a recommended approach and required next steps (target: early 2027)

If the recommended approach requires changes to planning policy to allow for construction of new roadways, the plan amendment process will include additional public engagement. A public hearing is required before Regional Council can approve any plan or policy changes.

Policy review/technical analysis

Community engagement

Route evaluation

Staff report to Regional Council

2025 functional design: emergency egress to Highway 103

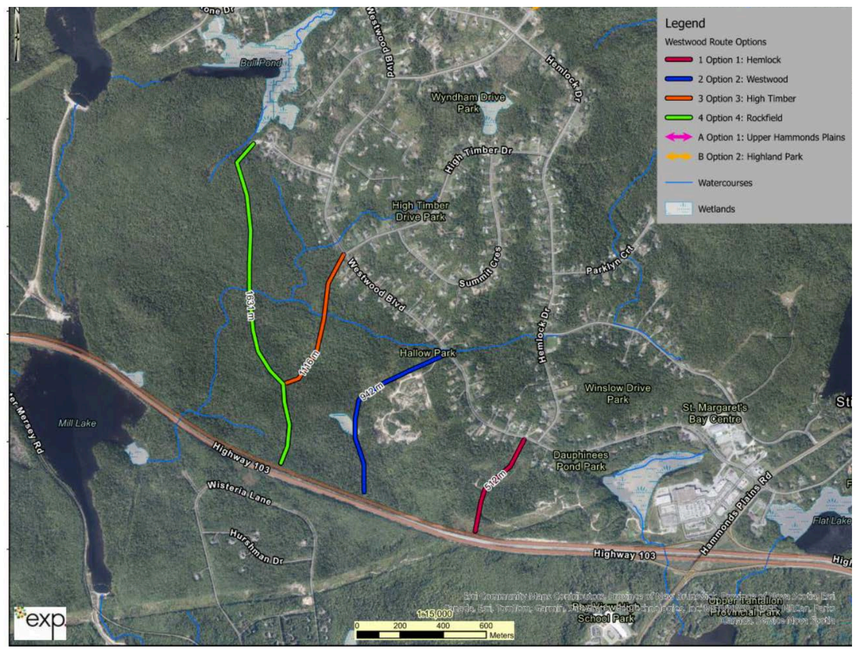
In early 2025, functional design was completed to investigate emergency egress options between Westwood Hills and Highway 103.

Four roadway options were investigated for this connection to consider length, cost, feasibility, property ownership and environmental sensitivities (e.g. brooks and wetlands).

Option #1 ‘Hemlock’ was recommended by staff and approved by Regional Council for detailed design and construction in March 2025.

The connection will be a gravel two-way road connecting Westwood Blvd. (near Hemlock Dr.) to Highway 103. It will be gated and available for emergency access/egress only.

Construction is set to begin in early October and is targeting completion in December 2026.





2025 conceptual design for community connector road options

Also as part of this planning process, staff and consultants considered potential community connector road options between the communities of Westwood Hills, Upper Hammonds Plains, and Highland Park North.

These were investigated at a conceptual (10% design) level and additional engagement is proceeding as part of this event.

Two alignments were considered between Westwood Hills and Upper Hammonds Plains:

- connecting Westwood Blvd. to Anderson Rd.; and
- connecting Westwood Blvd. to Pockwock Rd.

One alignment was considered between Westwood Hills and Highland Park North:

- connecting Wyndham Dr. to Hummingbird Ln.

Westwood Hills to Upper Hammonds Plains	
Westwood Blvd. to Anderson Rd.(yellow)	• Shortest route, lowest cost • Fewest impacted landowners • Moderately challenging topography (slopes, terrain, dense forest) • Connects to road network via existing local road
Westwood Blvd. to Pockwock Rd. (orange)	• Moderate length and cost • Several impact landowners • Moderately challenging topography (slopes, terrain, dense forest) • Connects directly to collector road
Westwood Hills to Highland Park North	
Wyndham Dr. to Hummingbird Ln. (pink)	• Longest route, highest cost • Several impacted landowners • Moderately challenging topography (slopes, terrain, dense forest) • Connects to road network via existing local road • Ecologically important area in Green Network Plan

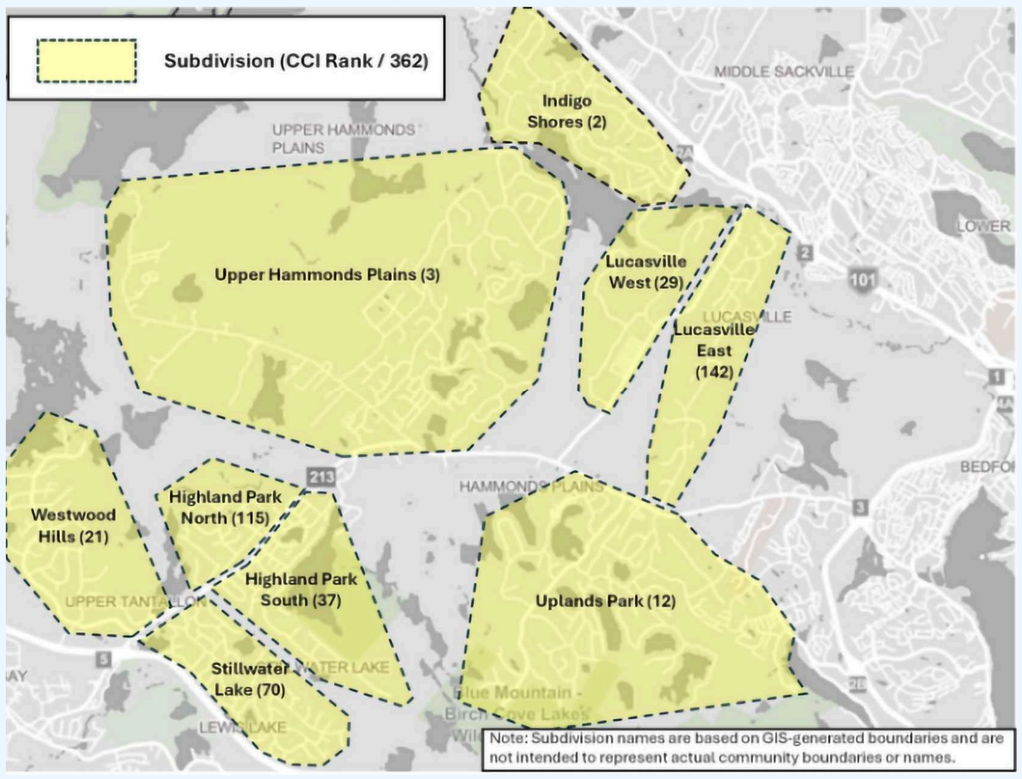
Regional Connectivity Study

A methodology was developed to identify and prioritize risk in communities with limited connectivity and emergency access/egress across the municipality. Additional details on this study can be found on the project webpage.

A GIS tool was created to assess the road network and subdivisions based on:

- road network connectivity;
- geophysical factors influencing hazard exposure; and
- social factors influencing mobility.

The study found that multiple communities surrounding Hammonds Plains Road ranked relatively high for vulnerability to access/egress challenges in comparison to other subdivisions across the municipality. In particular, Upper Hammonds Plains ranked third highest for vulnerability, whereas Westwood Hills ranked 21st and Highland Park North ranked 115th out of 362 communities.



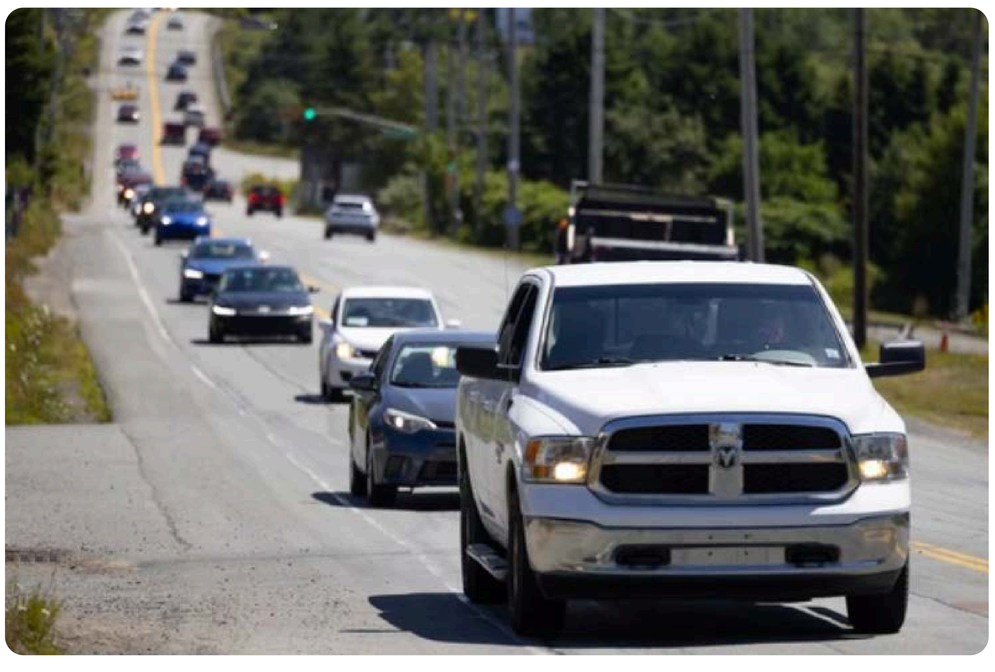
Complete: July 2026

Hammonds Plains Road Corridor Study and Connectivity Review

Initiating: fall 2026

Public engagement: early 2027

Target completion: summer 2027



As a result of the Regional Connectivity Study (see above), Council has directed municipal staff to undertake a larger assessment of the Hammonds Plains Road including how to improve transportation efficiency now and into the future. The study will also look at the surrounding communities and how to improve road network connectivity (including emergency access/egress) between them.

This larger study of Hammonds Plains Road is expected to get underway in late 2026 and be completed in 2027. The project will include community engagement, which is expected to take place in the winter/spring.

Where Council has separately directed staff to assess community connectivity options between Westwood Hills, Upper Hammonds Plains and Highland Park North, the **Upper Hammonds Plains – Upper Tantallon Community Connector Roads** project is proceeding separately in advance of the wider road network connectivity review.

AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN
COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM

Community action planning is currently underway in Upper Hammonds Plains through the African Nova Scotian Community Action Program (ANSCAP). This process works with the community to create a shared vision for UHP's future, and determine what changes are needed to municipal planning policies and services.

Improvement to transportation options, including considering new access/egress routes for the community, was identified as a priority municipal action through this process.

Project staff have been working with the ANSCAP team to integrate engagement on these potential access/egress routes for the UHP community.



Photo by Haley Ryan, CBC News

Municipal actions completed in Upper Hammonds Plains

- ✓ Installation of eight fire hydrants
- ✓ Enhanced water pressure
- ✓ Improved traffic light system at English Corner

Municipal actions underway in Upper Hammonds Plains

- Upgrade to water pipe size and extension of the water service boundary
- Exploring transit service options
- Community connector roads
- Installation of street lighting along Pockwock Rd.
- Exploring sidewalks along Pockwock Rd.
- Municipal assumption of existing private lanes
- Transfer of municipal surplus properties to the UHPCLT

Process timeline

Municipal action items

Plan review

- Part A
- Part B

1. Focused engagement
2. Feedback synthesis
3. Developing products
4. Revision one
5. **Engagement with broader public**
6. Revision two
7. Approval process



Photo by C.R. Brookbank (1949), Afro-Canadian Communities in Halifax County, Nova Scotia, page 16

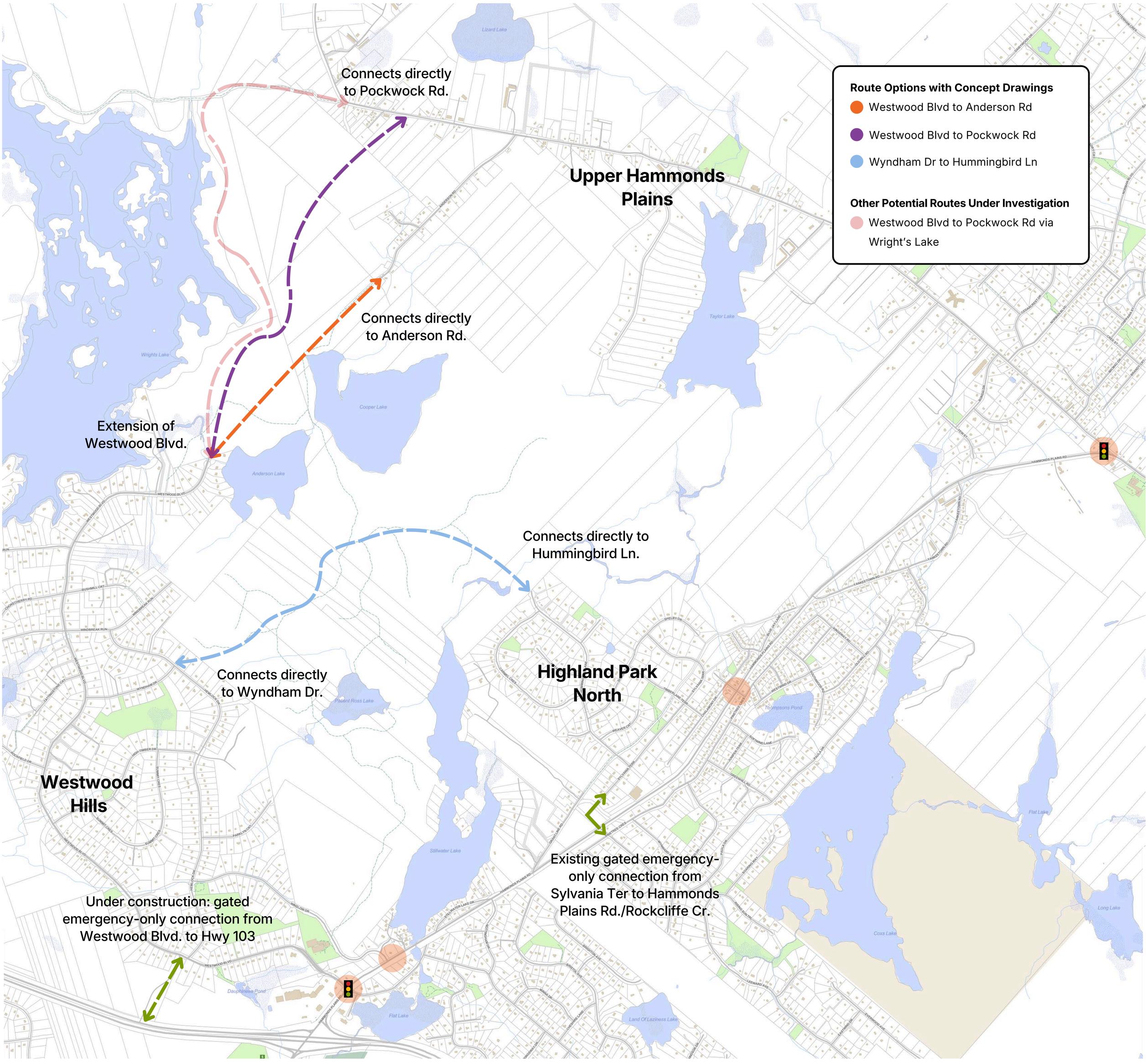


Photo by C.R. Brookbank (1949), Afro-Canadian Communities in Halifax County, Nova Scotia, page 17

Community connector roads: potential routing options

(1) Westwood Hills to Upper Hammonds Plains

(2) Westwood Hills to Highland Park North



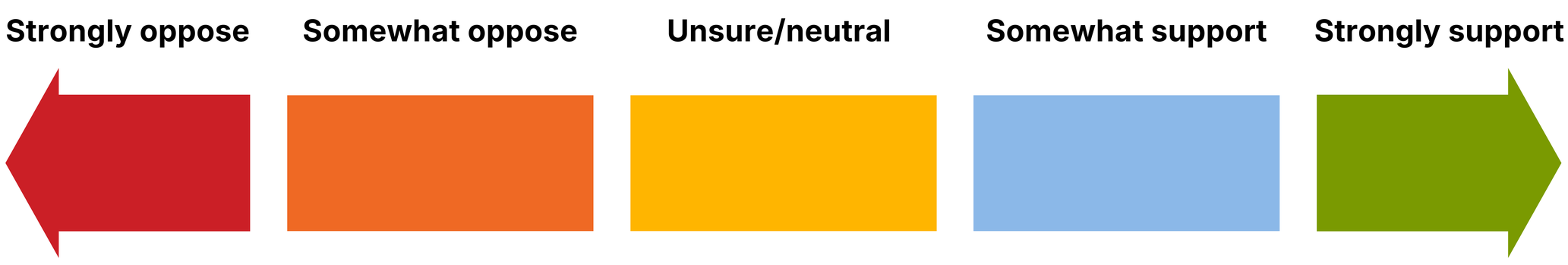
Things to consider:

- Roadway length (impacts to cost, routing, traffic)
- Property impacts (impacts costs, implementation timing)
- Road classification (collector roads vs local roads)
- Full-time use vs. gated (for emergencies only)
- Environmental factors (impacts to lakes and wetlands)
- Nearby destinations
- Other important factors – you tell us!

Connector road routing:
Multiple routing alignments have been explored to date. Are there others that should be considered?

Westwood Hills to Upper Hammonds Plains

I am generally supportive of a connection being constructed between **Westwood Hills** and **Upper Hammonds Plains**



Please indicate which key issues are most important to you for this connection:

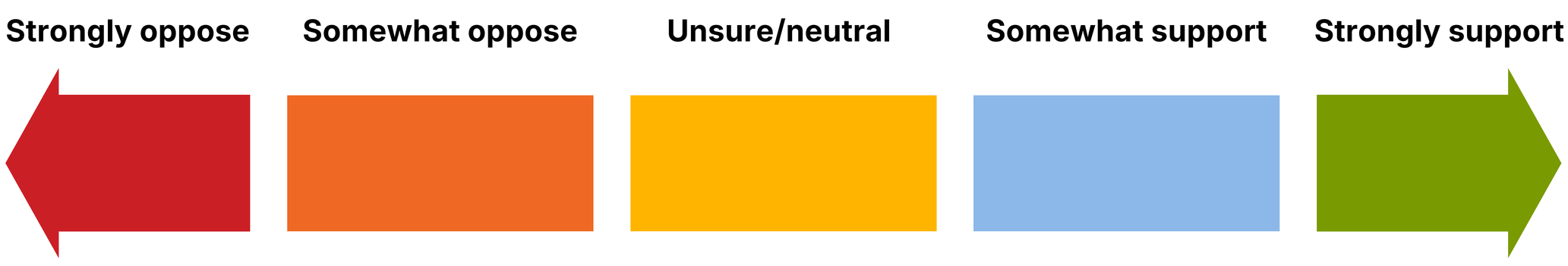
Emergency egress	Traffic impacts	Property impacts	Environmental impacts
Community connectivity	Project cost	Implementation timing	Recreational access

Sticky note questions:

- Do you have any ideas about routing? Where is it important to connect to in the community?
- How do we balance overall length/cost with impacts to local roads?
- What else should be considered in the design for this connection?

Westwood Hills to Highland Park North

I am generally supportive of a connection being constructed between **Westwood Hills** and **Highland Park North**



Please indicate which key issues are most important to you for this connection:

Emergency egress	Traffic impacts	Property impacts	Environmental impacts
Community connectivity	Project cost	Implementation timing	Recreational access

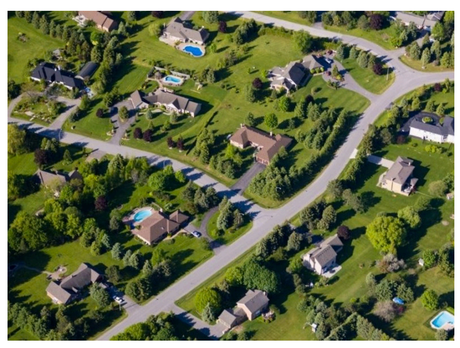
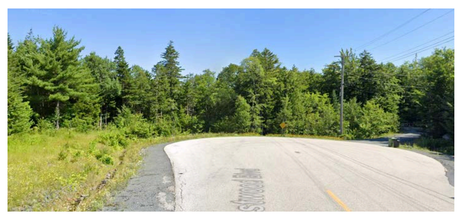
Sticky note questions:

- Do you have any ideas about routing? Where is it important to connect to in the community?
- How do we balance overall length/cost with impacts to local roads?
- What else should be considered in the design for this connection?

Connector road options

The potential community connector roadway could take a range of forms, from gated gravel road accessible only in emergencies, to an asphalt roadway with adjacent homes. Each has its own list of design considerations captured in the table below.

Use a sticky dot to indicate which type of roadway you prefer.

SPECTRUM OF POTENTIAL ROADWAY CONNECTIONS	SAMPLE PHOTOS	WESTWOOD HILLS – UPPER HAMMONDS PLAINS	WESTWOOD HILLS – HIGHLAND PARK NORTH
Full-time community connector (no development) **Features:** • Asphalt surface • Full-time vehicle access (not gated) • Recreational uses permitted • No additional development • Cost estimate between $3M - $5M per km plus property acquisition • Municipality responsible to fund, build and operate	 		
Full-time community connector (with development) **Features:** • Asphalt surface • Full-time vehicle access (not gated) • Recreational uses permitted • Additional development • Cost estimate between $3M - $5M per km plus property acquisition • Opportunities to cost share with developers; municipality responsible to operate • Introduces additional residents and travel demand	 		
Emergency-only connector **Features:** • Gravel surface • Gated, vehicle access only permitted during emergencies • Recreational uses permitted • No additional development • Cost estimate between $2M - $4M per km plus property acquisition • Municipality responsible to fund, build and operate	 		
No connector **Features:** • No community connector or emergency-only connector			

General feedback

If you have any other general feedback you'd like to share about these community connector roads, please share it below: *(use sticky notes provided)*