

Accessing BLT School property from BLT Trail- Summary

Goal: Create a trail that will connect the BLT Trail to school property.

- There is currently an unmarked (and unsafe!) trail but it is not accessible to use with bike, scooters, wheelchairs, etc.
- The trail could help improve students using an active mode of transportation.
- We could add benches, outdoor learning spaces, and include cultural significance.

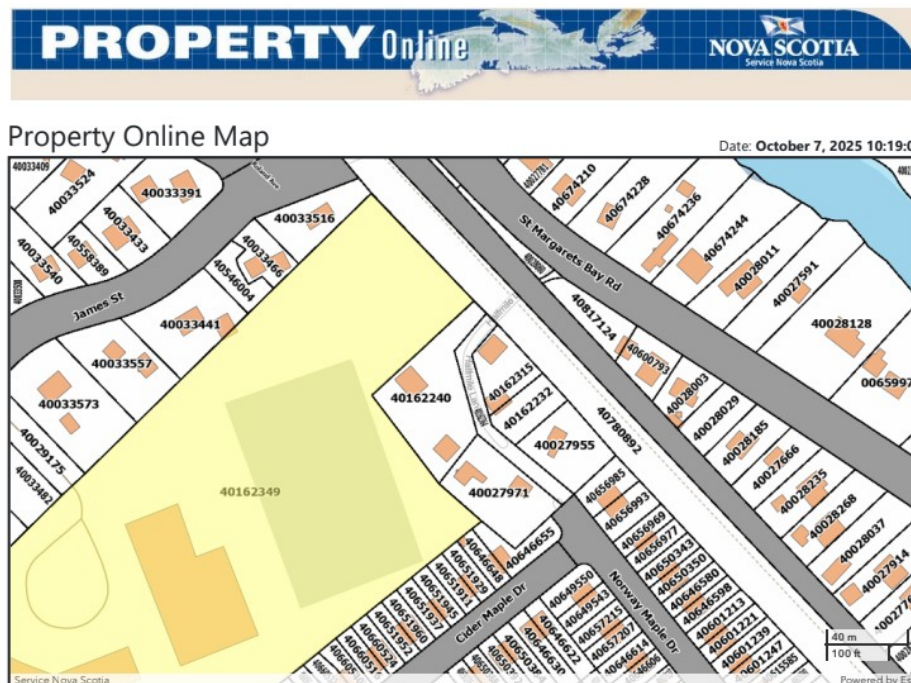
October 6th, 2025: First discussion at SAC Meeting. The following map shows where the current unmarked path is located.



October 7th, 2025: Ian Angus was able to provide the following map demonstrating that the proposed trail site is on provincial property.

10/7/25, 10:19 AM

MapView - Property Online



October 22nd, 2025: Reply from BLT Trails

As the association we only look after the maintenance of the trails. You would have to reach out to the province regarding your request. Our contact is Nathan and he can likely help point you in the right direction.

October 23rd, 2025: Reply from Nathan Pick (Forest Technician with Natural Resources).

A project like this would involve a few steps.

- supported by the BLT rails to trails, they hold the letter of authority for that section on the rail corridor and are responsible for maintenance and upkeep. Either the trail association would have to take on that project and agree to maintain it or the school would have too.
- supported by the landowner between the trail and the school. A written agreement would be the preferred route.

November 5th, 2025: Ms. Andrews reached out to Operations and received the following email.

Thank you for reaching out and for your continued advocacy for safe and accessible connections around BLT Senior School. We appreciate the thought that has gone into the proposed pathway and recognize the potential benefits it could bring to both students and the surrounding community.

That said, before moving forward, there are several key areas that would need to be fully reviewed and addressed:

Safety Considerations:

The pathway design must mitigate risks related to student safety and maintain visibility. The proposed route appears to run through a wooded area with limited sightlines, which presents concerns around supervision and personal security, especially during early morning and late afternoon travel times. Any design solution must incorporate lighting, clear visibility, and sightline improvements to ensure safety standards are met.

Maintenance and Upkeep:

HRCE Operations would not be able to support winter maintenance (snow clearing, sanding, or salting) of a newly constructed pathway. This presents a year-round accessibility issue and a long-term cost burden. In addition, there is currently no established direct pathway along the field area, meaning any new infrastructure would require clear ownership and ongoing maintenance responsibility.

HRM Partnership Requirements:

1. The area in question is considered HRM parkland, and any alterations would require engagement with HRM Parks and Environment for a full review. This includes:

- An Urban Forest assessment,
- A environmental / wetland and drainage review, and

- A tree restoration plan for any removals or habitat disruptions.
2. As this pathway would directly connect to an HRM asset (the field), HRCE's role would be as a coordinating stakeholder, not the lead builder. HRCE focuses on the school building and immediate asset management, while HRM oversees adjacent land development and park infrastructure.

Budgetary Costs and Execution:

To properly evaluate and implement this project, a consultant would need to be engaged to complete a topographical review and pathway design.

Preliminary cost estimate:

- Consultant review and design – \$8,000
 - Tree removal, grubbing, pathway creation, and compaction – \$50,000
 - Lighting and electrical - \$20,000
 - Tree and urban forest restoration – \$4,000
- Estimated total range: \$85,000 - \$100,000

Timelines:

The full process—from consultant review and HRM engagement to design approval and construction—could take up to 12 months depending on site conditions, environmental review, and seasonal construction windows.

Next Steps:

If the school community wishes to explore this further, the next actions would be:

1. Operations will engage HRM partners to determine viability and confirm their willingness to participate.
2. Identify potential funding, does the school, SAC, or community group have any resources set aside to support consultant review or preliminary design work?
3. Initiate internal HRCE review and approval to align with our capital and operations frameworks.

We truly appreciate the initiative and are happy to assist in coordinating the early stages of review with HRM. Our goal is to ensure any future pathway development is safe, sustainable, and appropriately supported for the long term.

November 13th, 2025: Note from Ms. Andrews

HRCE has confirmed that there are no additional funds available for this project at this time. However, please feel free when exploring funding options to note that you have been in communication with HRCE, and that both the centre and the school are supportive of this project.

November 28th, 2025: SAC Provincial Conference. We learned about many grants available to help with community projects.

“Let’s Get Moving NS” - NS Action Plan to create a more active, inclusive, and healthier population.

“CCTH” - NS Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism, and Heritage.

- Trail Funding Programs - “The Recreation Trail Expansion Program assists municipalities and not-for-profit organizations in developing new recreational trails, expanding recreational trails, and making capital upgrades to existing infrastructure and connectivity”.
- Healthy Students = Healthy Communities
- Active Mode of Transportation:
 - Sidewalks, trails, bike racks.
 - Use for outdoor education with benches along the trail.
 - Incorporate movement with class time.
 - Use for Excel program.

“Active Smarter Kids” (ASK) – Partnership based project working with schools to support the implementation of physically active learning in schools across NS. Reports show increased pupil engagement with curriculum, increased levels of physical activity, and increased cooperation and compassion among students. It is supported by NS Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Funding:

- Active Communities Fund (Example: Playbox).
- Recreation Community Development Fund.
- Community Recreation Capital
- Connect 2 in Partnership

Planning:

- Feedback and consult community. What is the need? Who will benefit? What is the sustainability?
- The need should be clear! Letters of support. Letter of awareness.
- Estimate cost.
- Develop timeline.
- Design. Accessibility? Risks? (Example: flooding).
- Get THREE quotes.
- Government grant programs.

Funders:

- Public. Municipal/ Provincial/ Federal. Community Grants. Community Fundraising. Local business.

Contact: **Andrea Redmond**- Regional Manager for HRM (Community Facilities Improvement Program)

November 18th, 2025: BLT Trails Association announced they will return the Letter of Authority to the Province of NS, effective March 31st, 2026. Therefore, this project was put on hold.

May-July, 2026: Major work being completed on the BLT Trail so I contacted Ian Rankin and Janet Steele.

May 27th, 2026: Reply from Janet Steele.

Following up on Raïssa's response, I wanted to let you know that I am forwarding your request to Nova Scotia Natural Resources officials based at the Waverly office. This group is overseeing the current BLT Trail work, so they'll be well positioned to advise their leadership on your proposal for connecting the trail to BLT Elementary.

Thanks again for your initiative and dedication to making active transportation safer and more accessible for students.

July 13th, 2026: Ian Rankin's office sent this email to Natural Resources.

I am writing on behalf of Iain Rankin, MLA for Timberlea–Prospect, to request the Department's consideration of clearing and formalizing a safe, accessible pathway from the BLT Trail to the BLT Elementary School.

This idea was previously raised by a constituent, who discussed it with both the former BLT Trail Association and the principal of BLT Elementary School. We understand that both were supportive of the concept. At present, there is an informal, unmarked path in this area; however, it is not accessible and does not provide a safe or reliable connection for students, families, or community members.

An image is attached to show the proposed path location.

Given the current maintenance work your department has underway in the area, this appears to be an ideal time to consider whether this connection could be completed as part of, or alongside, that work.

Adding this pathway could offer several meaningful benefits for the school community and surrounding neighbourhoods, including:

- Encouraging more students to use active transportation to get to and from school by creating a direct connection to the BLT Trail, which is already a valued community asset.
- Reducing vehicle traffic in the neighbourhoods surrounding the school, helping to improve safety for students and families during drop-off and pick-up times.
- Supporting outdoor education opportunities, including physical education activities and broader academic use of the trail and surrounding natural environment.

Iain would appreciate the Department's review of this request and any information you can provide regarding the feasibility of clearing and improving this connection.

If helpful, Iain would be pleased to discuss the proposed location further or provide any additional context from the constituent who brought this idea forward.

July 16th, 2026: Reply from Minister of Natural Resources to Ian Rankin's office.

On behalf of Minister Rushton, I am responding to your email of July 13, 2026, regarding your request for an accessible pathway connecting BLT Elementary School to the BLT Trail.

I appreciate you reaching out to the Department of Natural Resources. While the Department is the owner of Crown Lands, we do not manage the development of trails. Trails are developed, managed and maintained by community organizations. Our role is to provide authority as landowner.

The work currently being undertaken on the BLT Trail is anticipated to be completed next week. Although the Department of Natural Resources approved the work, the project is neither led nor funded by the department. As a result, it is not possible to incorporate additional work into the current project scope.

Establishing a new access route over Crown land requires authorization from the Department's Land Administration Division. This process involves applying for an easement. Information on the application process and requirements is available through [Applications to Use Crown Land, Sell or Donate Land to the Province | novascotia.ca](#).

If the school board, municipality, or community wishes to pursue the development of an accessible pathway, including securing funding for its construction and assuming responsibility for its ongoing operation and maintenance, an application for an easement may be submitted. The Department would be pleased to review the request.

July 17th, 2026: Reply from BLT Trail Association

The Beechville-Lakeside-Timberlea Trail Association was officially registered just yesterday at the Registry of Joint Stocks. Our next step will be to acquire the Letter of Authority from DNR to maintain the trail. Until we have that, we cannot start any projects on the trail. However in the meantime we would be open to discussing opportunities to fund a project such as this, and how the BLTTA can support the process.