

NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION
COMMISSION DE LA CAPITALE NATIONALE

Review of the Capital Pathway Strategic Plan

PUBLIC CONSULTATION REPORT
FEBRUARY 21 AND 22, 2018

Canada

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I - Project description

A. Background

The NCC has started the process of renewing the strategic plan entitled *Pathway Network for Canada's Capital Region (2006)*. The purpose of the revised plan will be to provide a framework for future planning and day-to-day management of the Capital Pathway.

B. Plan Objectives

The main planning objectives of the new Capital Pathway Strategic Plan are as follows:

- Renew the vision
- Set strategic directions and priorities for the next 10 years.
- Provide management tools.
- Harmonize NCC and municipal planning, where possible.

The new strategic plan will address various topics, including pathway design, new linkage opportunities, user safety, signage, and amenities.

C. Planning Process

The plan renewal will take place in four stages:

- Phase 1: Assessment, research and analysis of existing conditions (summer–fall 2017)
- **Phase 2: Review of vision and strategic directions (winter–spring 2018) – CURRENT PHASE**
- Phase 3: Drafting of the new strategic plan (summer–fall 2018)
- Phase 4: Approval of the final plan (early 2019)

II. Public consultation process

A. Overview

As part of Phase 2 of the project, a first round of in-person public consultations was held in February 2018, and will be followed by an online consultation to be launched in June 2018. The objectives of the first-round of in-person consultations—those on which the present report is based—are detailed below. A subsequent report will summarize the results from the June 2018 online consultation.

a. Objectives

- Evaluate the public's reception of the themes and concerns presented.
- Discuss possible measures to protect and/or reinforce certain public values and address concerns.
- Identify emerging major orientations.

b. Date and time

Wednesday, February 21, 2018

Thursday, February 22, 2018

6 pm to 8:15 pm

c. Location

The Urbanism Lab, 40 Elgin Street, Ottawa, Ontario

d. Format

Presentation, followed by a workshop-style discussion.

B. Consultation procedure and tools

a. Presentation

A bilingual presentation provided participants with an overview of the Capital Pathway's history, current conditions, and needs, as well as the overall plan's objectives and a summary of feedback received from the public.

b. Workshop

Upon their arrival, participants were introduced to the session's five overarching themes and associated topics of discussion. After the main presentation, participants were invited to participate in three rounds of discussions, each of which would focus on one of the five overarching themes. Participants thus selected the three themes about which they cared most and were most eager to engage. All were provided with comment sheets, and were invited to write down any and all feedback they wished to provide about the five themes.

Participants then convened around a set of tables organized by theme. Moderators assigned to each table then engaged the groups in three rounds of 25-minute discussions. After each round, participants moved to a new table, corresponding to a new theme and associated topics of discussion.

Moderators were instructed to move through a set of thought-provoking questions to frame the discussion, while allowing the conversation to proceed organically in new directions if participants wished to pursue different avenues of inquiry.

At the end of the session, a plenary was held during which either a volunteer or the moderator himself/herself shared the three most salient issues and ideas discussed at each table.

C. Invitation and promotion

An email invitation was sent using Public Affairs distribution lists which include the following stakeholders:

- Interest groups and user groups and environmental groups
- Residents' associations
- Individuals

Messages were also posted on social media (Facebook and Twitter) soliciting the participation of all interested members of the public.

D. Participants

a. Community

More than 150 people participated in the public consultation.

b. Elected officials

February 21:

- Riley Brockington
- Audrey Bureau
- Marianne Wilkinson

February 22:

- Mathieu Fleury

c. Media

February 22: CBC/Radio-Canada

III. Public consultation highlights

The proposed themes and framing statements at each table were as follows:

Theme 1: Integrated, improved network (tables 1-2)

- **Connectivity – Connectivity between the Capital Pathway network and other pedestrian and cycling networks fosters enjoyable, safe movement.**
- **Services, signage and wayfinding – The range of services offered on the Capital Pathway is currently limited. Also, a more integrated signage and wayfinding system would facilitate safe navigation and pathway exploration.**

Theme 2: Multi-use, user-friendly pathways (tables 3-4)

- **New uses and vehicles – The Capital Pathway offers many uses, primarily cycling, walking, jogging, inline skating and the use of motorized mobility aids.**

- *Separation and widening* – **The Capital Pathway generally follows a 3-meter wide route. To increase the users’ comfort and safety, the NCC is reflecting on how to separate the Capital Pathway in high-traffic areas and how to widen it where separation is impossible and in areas outside the Capital core.**

Theme 3: Greater public safety (tables 5-6)

- *Means of protection and monitoring* – **In the 2016 User Profile Survey, respondents suggested introducing public safety mechanisms on the Capital Pathway, and improving patrolling on the network.**
- *Awareness of rules* – **According to the 2016 User Profile Survey, respondents recommend improving user awareness of the Code of Conduct.**

Theme 4: Superior, resilient facilities (tables 7-8)

- *Pathway standards* – **Although high, the existing standards and methods for implementing them require review.**
- *Environmental challenges* – **Recurrent flooding and extreme meteorological events are increasing the vulnerability of some pathways. Riverfront pathways, sensitive ecological environments and invasive species are important concerns.**

Theme 5: Territorial and seasonal expansion (tables 9-10)

- *Greenbelt and other areas* – **In some locations, the pathway network is broken or less developed.**
- *Winter activities* – **The Capital Pathway’s winter potential is under-developed.**

Participant feedback focused overwhelmingly on issues related to making the Capital Pathway safer and more user-friendly. Much of the discussions also revolved around approaches to better consolidate the existing network, as well as adapt it to winter use. The most pressing areas of concern included:

- Finding better ways for pedestrians and cyclists to share the pathway.
- Improving pathway messaging, be it via signage, stencils, or online.
- Harmonizing, publicizing and enforcing rules.
- Improving existing facilities and services.
- Better adapting the pathway to seasonal changes and ensuring it can be used safely year round.
- Methodically consolidating the pathway within existing boundaries by focusing on adding connections before considering outward expansion.

The comments received from participants not only identified a broad set of concerns, but also—for the most part—put forward potential solutions to the issues mentioned above, which the analysis below delves into in greater detail.

IV. Analysis of results and main comments received

A. Methodology

In a first step, all the feedback provided on post-it notes during the consultation were grouped by theme and compiled in an Excel spreadsheet, where rows correspond to discrete comments made by participants. This means that a single participant's comments were likely to appear in multiple rows and thematic areas. The unit of analysis, for the purposes of this report, is thus discrete comments, rather than individual respondents.

Each comment was subsequently assigned a code corresponding to one of the evening's topics of discussion.

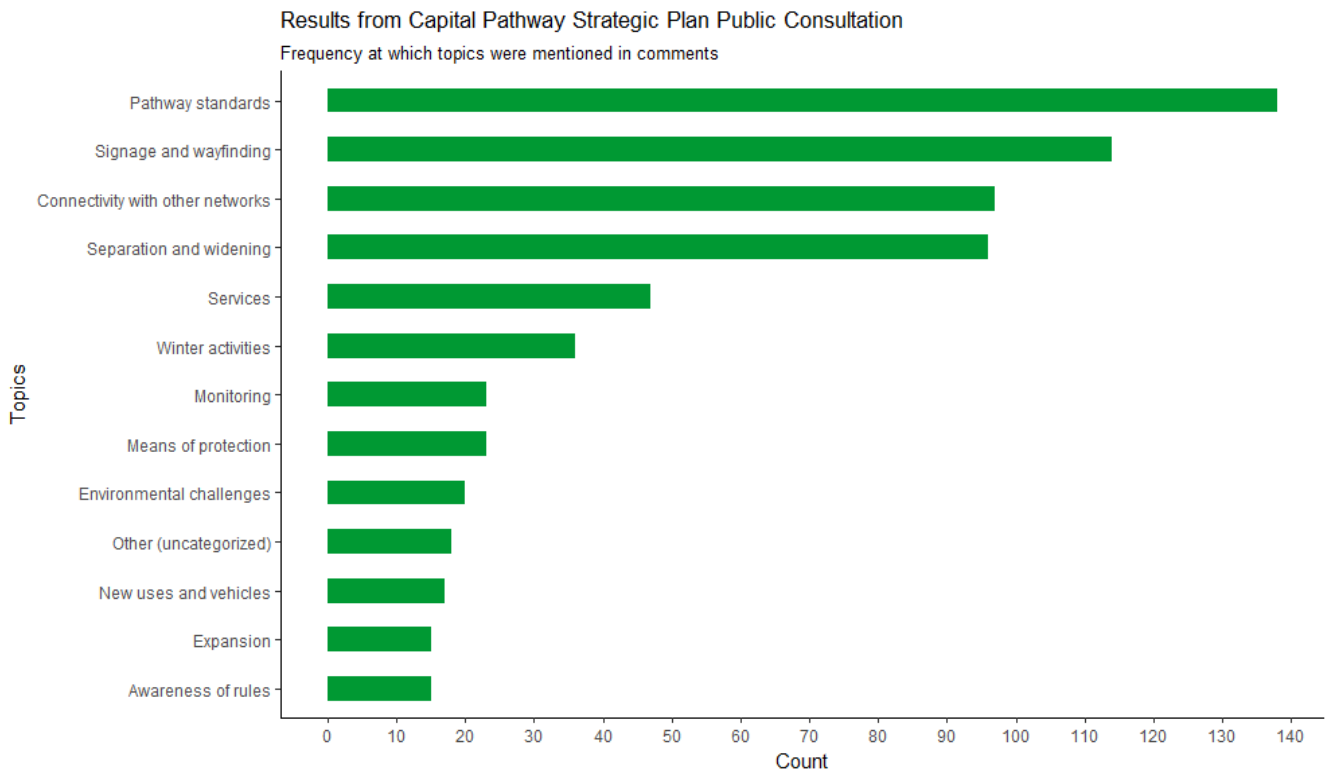
Comments were then graphed in order to illustrate the frequency of their occurrence. In a final step, all comments were reviewed line by line to give a fuller picture of participant feedback, including specific concerns, proposed solutions, references to international best practices, and the names of locations identified by participants as being especially problematic, among other comments.

B. Analysis of results

Figure 2 illustrates the frequency of comments (grouped by topics of discussion) made during the public consultations. As the graph demonstrates, the highest frequency of comments received during the consultation related to the following topics: pathway standards, signage and wayfinding, connectivity with other networks, and separation and widening.

It is worth noting that comments on these topics cropped up at a relatively high frequency at each table, which suggests that they were deemed pressing by participants regardless of the theme that framed their discussion.

Figure 2: Aggregated distribution of topics in participant comments



Theme 1 - Integrated, improved network:

Connectivity with other networks

Many participants expressed a desire to see the Capital Pathway network extended in such a way as to connect dead-ends to existing pathway segments. As one participant opined, pathway planners should “think like an electrician” and “connect the wires to circuits and make sure they connect and work before moving on.” This sentiment was echoed by others who lamented the closure of certain pathway connections in the winter season (e.g. the Experimental Farm), and who expressed a desire to:

- Have canal crossings be made universally accessible;
- Turn the Prince-of-Wales bridge into an active transportation link between shores; and
- Build better links to transit stations, in particular those hosting the new LRT.

Several participants emphasized the need for greater coordination with municipalities, particularly with regard to the integration of municipal and NCC multi-use pathway and cycling networks, and the harmonization of rules across jurisdictions. By the same token, participants stressed the importance of more and better collaboration with the tourism industry, and different communities of pathway users (e.g. seniors, volunteers).

Signage and wayfinding

Comments related to signage and wayfinding were among the most numerous collected, and touched on a variety of related issues. Participants placed a great deal of emphasis on the legibility and effectiveness of signage, particularly in relation to the promulgation of rules (especially speed limit and "keep to the right" messaging) and to wayfinding. In a similar vein, participants expressed a desire to see more signage related to cultural or historical amenities.

Participants also proposed numerous ways to improve signage, including making the text on signs larger, using colour-coding, using pictograms instead of text, and using ground markings in concert with signs. Participants similarly emphasized the need to better communicate information related to closures, detours, and pathway conditions. While some recommended better signage to this effect, a number of others proposed more digitally-gearred solutions to this problem, including the construction of wifi hotspots along the pathway and the development of websites and/or applications that would give users access to either centrally distributed or crowdsourced information about pathway conditions.

Services

Participants suggested a number of ways in which service amenities could be improved along the pathway. These included installing more public washrooms (in particular gender-neutral facilities) and dog waste bins; adding water, recycling, and bicycle repair stations; creating more scenic resting spots with sitting areas; and providing cyclists with more bicycle parking, secure storage locations, and park and ride facilities. Other participants expressed a desire to see more permanent or seasonal food and drink kiosks along the pathway, along with more pop-up commercial activities.

Topic	Sample comment
Connectivity with other networks	Connect to city cycling network, esp. around Parliament Hill, Supreme Court. Steps to integrate NCC and other networks are top priority. Think like an electrician. Connect the wires to re circuits and make sure they connect and work before moving on.

	Connection between QC/ON on the Prince of Wales bridge.
Signage and wayfinding	<p>Use painted signs for speed + signalling. On the pavement rather than on a post by the side of the paths.</p> <p>Signs that list the rules of pathway usage (like “yield to pedestrians”, “speed limit 20km/h”, “and “keep to the right”) should be large enough to be easily seen and read by moving cyclists and frequent enough to serve many entry points.</p> <p>Use an app to communicate the pathway conditions.</p> <p>Citizen-based up-to-date conditions on pathways. App? Radio?</p>
Services	<p>Encourage pop-up commercial opportunities along paths.</p> <p>Add kiosks for: info, food & drink, rest areas with benches & tables.</p> <p>Park and bike lots (more).</p> <p>Service areas for users : water, bike repair tools, washrooms.</p> <p>Plentiful gender neutral washrooms!</p>

Theme 2 - Multi-use, user friendly pathways:

Separation and widening

One concern loomed particularly large in the comments made by participants: of the need for infrastructure and for awareness and enforcement of rules to accommodate the shared use of pathways by, on the one hand, pedestrians, and, on the other, cyclists—in particular those who may cycle at higher speeds. Participants put forward a number of solutions, among which:

- Separation of pedestrians and cyclists (by far the most frequently mentioned solution).
- Separation based on speed rather than on mode of use.

- Keeping multi-use pathway but adding an adjacent pedestrian-only pathway.
- Widening the pathway.
- Building a middle passing lane.
- Adding bicycle lanes on parkways to accommodate faster cyclists and displace them from the pathway.

New uses and vehicles

Participants also frequently commented on new vehicles on the pathway, including electric bikes, mopeds, and cargo bikes, among others. Broadly speaking, participants were tolerant of electric bikes (pedelec), but opposed the use of gas-powered vehicles on the pathway.

Topic	Sample comment
Separation and widening	<p>Concern with respect to width given the multi-use. There are issues with interaction of the different users.</p> <p>Separate pedestrian + bicycle space, especially in high volume segments.</p> <p>I would support two separate pathways for cyclists, and for pedestrians.</p> <p>Consider introducing middle “passing lane” when paths are widened.</p> <p>Bike lanes on the parkway for fast cyclists.</p>
New uses and vehicles	<p>Accept e-vehicles if they respect the speed.</p> <p>Electric bikes ok, mopeds and larger no.</p> <p>Scooters or any vehicle requiring a licence should not be allowed they are too much potential for hazards.</p> <p>Electric-assist bikes are going to increase in numbers. It’s feasible they could become a tourism attraction & they will expand presence on entire network.</p>

Theme 3 - Greater public safety:

Means of protection

When prompted to think specifically about safety issues on the pathway, participants identified a number of needs, among which:

- Installing mirrors in curves so that pedestrians and cyclists can see oncoming traffic around the bend.
- Installing blue light and call stations in the event of an emergency.
- Removing physical obstacles like P-gates that can pose a danger to cyclists at night, especially in low-light areas.

Several participants again expressed a desire for better and more digitally-gearred mechanisms to track and report safety issues, including applications that would allow pathway users to upload and submit issues as they encounter them and a dedicated twitter account at which users could tweet issues in real time.

Monitoring and awareness of rules

Many participants discussed the need for more stringent enforcement of pathway rules, especially with regard to speed limits. Participants by and large advocated a two-pronged approach that would, on the one hand, see an increase in the presence of enforcement officers on the pathway, and, on the other, launch regular educational and public awareness campaigns to bring pathway safety issues and rules to the attention of current and future users.

Topic	Sample comment
Means of protection	Convex mirrors – safety ones – in tight curves. Study of safety issues - connected with logging data, number/website to collect, find trends to concentrate efforts. Share data, information with public + users. Blue light for emergencies. Emergency call stations well placed + maintained! Open data for safety issues tracked by

	NCC.
Monitoring and awareness of rules	<p>Enforcement of 20km/h speed limit.</p> <p>Help remind/reinforce road safety.</p> <p>Enforce speed limits (roads + paths). Bikes are allowed on the roads, should share with cars. Slower movers get priority.</p> <p>More policing of pathways (speed).</p> <p>Need a public awareness campaign on speed limits.</p> <p>Communications events about educating on code of conduct - social media, face-to-face messaging, etc.</p>

Theme 4 - Superior, resilient facilities:

Pathway standards

Among the discussion topics, pathway standards was the most frequently commented upon during the public consultation. Speed, usage type and safety again loomed large in these discussions, with participants making a number of suggestions on this front:

- Several participants suggested that pedestrians should walk facing oncoming traffic for safety reasons.
- Clearer and more user-friendly intersections, particularly in light of problems determining who has priority.
- Designing the pathway in a manner that would encourage cyclists and other high-speed users to slow down.
- Establishing rules according to which all must yield to slower users.
- Improved, environmentally-friendly lighting, with particular attention paid to ensuring that pathway signs are illuminated at nighttime to avoid accidents and collisions.

Conversely, some participants suggested that the speed limit should be increased or abolished altogether, while others recommended that electronic signage be installed such that the speed limit could be varied according to congestion and time of day (e.g. during commuting hours).

Participants also commented, in more general terms, on the sustainability, aesthetic, and accessibility of the pathway’s physical infrastructure. Some participants expressed a desire to maintain the pathway’s natural look and feel and to increase tree coverage, while others stressed the need to pay more attention to the trimming of vegetation in order to improve user lines of sight. Several participants commented on the importance of making pathway maintenance a priority on par with that of road rehabilitation, while others debated the merits of various pathway surfaces. Stonedust was identified as being better for the environment and pedestrian-friendly; asphalt was deemed superior for cycling and other wheeled vehicles. Some participants highlighted the need to better prioritize accessibility and inclusive design, singling out the Rideau Canal locks as a facility in particular need of improvement.

Environmental challenges

Many mentions were made of the challenges posed by flooding, with participants putting forward a number of solutions to this seasonal problem:

- Building alternative pathways that deviate from existing ones threatened by the encroachment of the river to be used in the event of flooding.
- More careful use of flood-related signage, to be removed as soon as the pathway can be safely accessed again.
- Floating boardwalks.
- Re-designing pathways with permeability and water-resistance in mind.

In more general terms, participants stressed the need for pathway plans to take climate change into account with a view to ensuring that new infrastructure will be more resilient in the face of changing environmental conditions. A number of participants also expressed a desire to better manage the presence of geese along the pathway.

Topic	Sample comment
Pathway standards	<p>Improved treatments at intersections w/ roadway (point, signals, etc.)</p> <p>Reminder lights that are motion activated + uses red/green to indicate your speed.</p> <p>Overhead lighting particularly in areas where car headlights blind cyclists (along the SJAM near Westboro beach is quite bad).</p> <p>Influence speed by design – make it natural e.g. gathering areas – but consider</p>

	<p>traffic flow + safety.</p> <p>Visual line of sight – open up landscaping to avoid accidents/collisions that happen.</p>
Environmental challenges	<p>Construire sur pilotis dans les zones inondables.</p> <p>Options to asphalt: If the paths erode from flooding, can alternatives be made? - Piles + floating boardwalks -Wood? Replaceable opposed to cracking/shifting asphalt -Permeable path materials? - Something to resist displacement from roots/trees.</p> <p>Flood adaptation re-routing in specific areas (targeted focus).</p>

Theme 5 - Seasonal and territorial expansion:

Expansion

While some participants commented on the desirability of growing the Capital Pathway beyond its current boundaries and building more commuting routes, many stressed the importance of improving the existing network and its connections before expanding the pathway into peripheral areas.

Winter Activities

Participants saw many opportunities to make the pathway more winter-friendly. Several participants proposed more extensive and frequent snow clearing on pathways during winter months to facilitate all-season usage for cyclists and pedestrians alike. Others mentioned that they would be keen to see the pathway accommodate skiers and snowshoe enthusiasts, including winter-specific signage.

Topic	Sample comment
Expansion	<p>Prioritize expansion of network based on data re: most heavily used trips and origins VS destinations.</p> <p>Prioritize fixing poor sections <i>b4</i> adding</p>

	<p>new paths.</p> <p>Links from Greenbelt Pathway to Ottawa neighbourhood pathway network. Link to Barrhaven + Greenbelt Pathway.</p> <p>Limited resources don't expand too much focus on maintaining standard.</p> <p>Safe before expansion & accessible.</p>
Winter activities	<p>Expand XC skiing on pathways.</p> <p>Winter plowing of the Experimental Farm roads: an essential connection in winter.</p> <p>Integrate with city snow cleaning.</p> <p>Maximize use of paths with winter maintenance for cycling (in some locations) multiuse (other locations). See Helsinki + Oulu in Finland for how to maximize winter/seasonal use of multi-use paths.</p> <p>Expand winter facilities. Got walking, ski, snowshoe.</p>

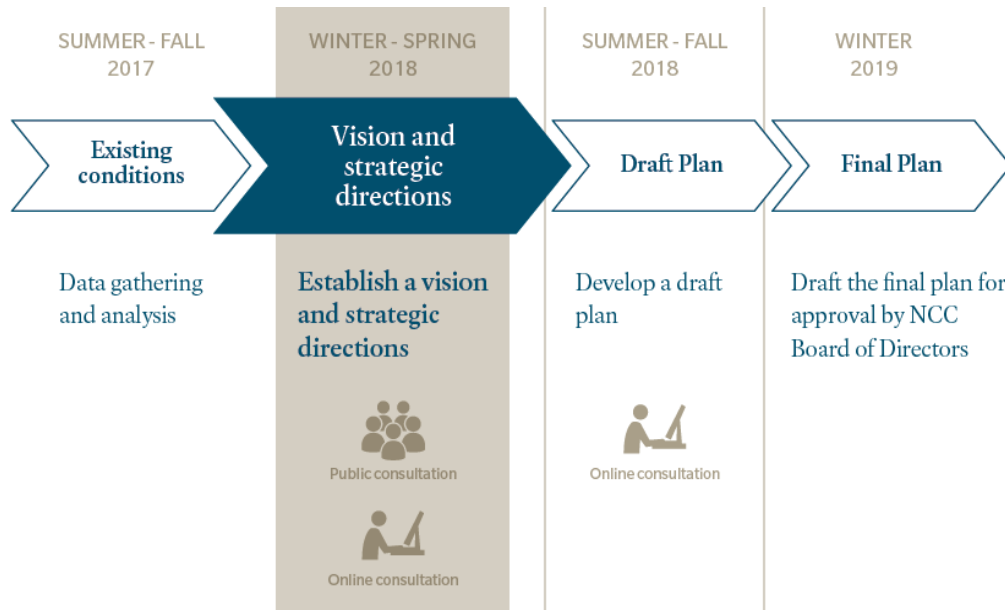
V. Integration of results

This public consultation provided the public with the opportunity to put forward their concerns with regards to the Capital Pathway and possible measures to improve the existing network. The results from this public consultation will assist the project team in developing the vision and strategic directions for the new Capital Pathway Strategic Plan. The results will also guide the concrete strategies that will be incorporated in the draft plan.

VI. Next steps

The next step in the planning process is to develop a preliminary vision and strategic directions for the new plan, guided by the results from the February 2018 consultation. Public feedback on this content will be sought via an online consultation in June 2018.

The project team will then begin developing the draft plan, which the public will have an opportunity to comment on via an online consultation in the fall 2018. The final plan is expected to be completed in early 2019.



VII. Appendix 1: Presentation



Plan Objectives

- Vision for 2029
- Objectives and priorities
- Standards
- Management tools
- Partnerships

A small circular logo with a ring of white stars and the number "2" in the center is located in the bottom right corner of the slide.

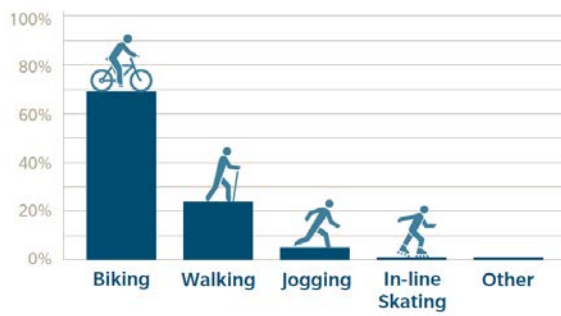
Public Engagement



The Capital Pathway



Uses

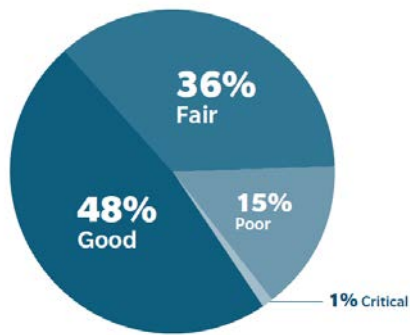


Satisfaction Rate



Pathway Condition

Asphalt Pathways



Key Achievements since 2006

- 20 km of new pathways
- Rules on electric-powered vehicles
- 20 km/h speed limit signage
- Collaboration with volunteer patrols

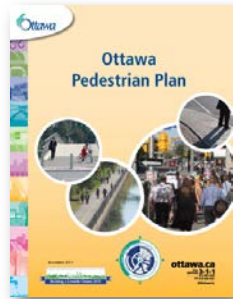
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Public Feedback

- Pathway condition
- Excessive speed
- Presence of prohibited electric vehicles
- Behaviour of dog owners
- Improvement of signage

9

Regional Planning



Themes

1) Integrated, improved network

- Connectivity with other networks
- Signage and wayfinding
- Services

4) Superior, resilient facilities

- Pathway standards
- Environmental challenges

2) Multi-use, user-friendly pathways

- New uses and vehicles
- Separation and widening

5) Territorial and seasonal expansion

- Greenbelt and other areas
- Winter activities

3) Greater public safety

- Means of protection
- Monitoring
- Awareness of rules



Agenda

- | | |
|---------|-------------------|
| 6:20 pm | First discussion |
| 6:50 pm | Second discussion |
| 7:20 pm | Third discussion |
| 7:45 pm | Plenary |
| 8:15 pm | End |



VIII. Appendix 2: Blog: The Future of the Capital Pathway: Let's Talk

Whether cross-country skiing just to enjoy being active, biking around to discover the National Capital Region, or walking to get from point A to point B: there are lots of good reasons to take the Capital Pathway, one of the largest networks of multi-use paths in North America. In summer and in winter, tens of thousands of Canadians — residents and tourists — use the pathway, including me. And because I'm working on its future development, I need your help.



I enjoy exploring Canada's Capital by bike.

I'm Sophie Acheson, and I'm a senior land use planner at the National Capital Commission (NCC). Part of my job is to manage the review of the [strategic plan for the Capital Pathway](#), a plan that defines a clear and common vision for the Capital Pathway, and which was completed in 2006.

The NCC is responsible for the Capital Pathway, a 236-kilometre network of multi-use paths in Canada's Capital Region. The NCC ensures that the Capital Pathway is and remains an exceptional Capital discovery route connecting large natural areas, cultural landscapes and symbolic points of interest in the Capital.

Our achievements: 2006 to 2018

The vision and directions in the [2006 strategic plan](#) provide us with a frame of reference for developing and improving the NCC's network of multi-use paths. Here are a few of our major accomplishments over the past 10 years:

- Addition of 20 km of pathway
- Improvement of Capital Pathway intersections with the roadway network
- Installation of 20 km/h speed limit signage
- Support for and collaboration with volunteer patrols (Ottawa and Gatineau)

- Improved process for communicating problems related to safety and maintenance
- Development of new rules regarding electric-powered vehicles on multi-use paths under the NCC's responsibility



Cyclists and pedestrians sharing one of the multi-use paths in summer.

New trends

Since the plan's publication in 2006, we are starting to observe new trends:

- New vehicles have appeared on the market (e-bikes, fat bikes and so on).
- Use of the pathways is increasing.
- There is a growing interest in winter use of the pathways.
- The people using the pathways are older.

In short, user priorities — your priorities — have changed, and that's why we need you. What will the pathway network look like in 5, 10 or 15 years? It's up to you to let us know.



A cyclist riding a fat bike, alongside pedestrians on the Alexandra Bridge in winter.

We'd like to hear from you!

Having completed the first stage of assessment and analysis of the 2006 plan and current conditions of the Capital Pathway, we will now begin the second stage of the plan's renewal, [the process of reviewing the plan](#), specifically, its vision and strategic directions. This stage will begin with two consultations in the form of a workshop, and end with an online consultation. Public input will contribute greatly in developing the content of the new plan.

The first public consultation will be held on Wednesday, February 21, from 6 pm to 8:15 pm, in the NCC's Urbanism Lab and the second on Thursday, February 22, at the same time and place. Everyone is invited.

These consultations will help us to understand what participants think of the themes and issues presented, as well as to explore possible solutions that could address these issues. Below are the five themes that participants will be invited to comment on:

1. Integrated, improved network
2. Multi-use, user-friendly pathways
3. Superior, resilient facilities
4. Territorial and seasonal expansion
5. Greater public safety

Ideas proposed during the discussions will inform the review of the strategic plan. This is a unique opportunity for people to help shape the future of the Capital Pathway.

According to our schedule, the new strategic plan should be approved in early 2019. Before that time, we have a lot to do — and we need your help, your opinion and your ideas.

The NCC began building this network of paths along the historic Rideau Canal between 1971 and 1973. The vision was to create a sort of outdoor urban paradise in the Capital Region. Since then, the network of multi-use paths has been expanded 20 times, needs have changed, people change, and now it's our turn, you and I, to develop a new vision for the Capital Pathway. I'm proud to be working to develop the Capital Pathway of tomorrow — and I hope you are too.