

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **BACKGROUND**

The Cape to Cape (C2C) is a proposed long-distance trail (LDT) extending from Cape George to Cape Chignecto, Nova Scotia. The C2C is intended to be a continuous footpath for human-powered outdoor recreation and will be the first of its kind the province. The C2C is in the preliminary stages: county trail associations have been developed and are collaborating, funding has been acquired from a variety of sources, there has been cooperation between government departments, and proponents have identified trail routes and blazed several trail sections. The actual route has not been finalized. C2C proponents envision a variety of accommodation and shelter alternatives along or connected to the LDT.

This study examines the key considerations to develop a sustainable C2C LDT. This research initially focussed on the key considerations for developing a network of shelters along the C2C ranging from wilderness huts to bed and breakfasts. The study evolved to focus on the actual C2C trail more broadly with shelters as a sub-component of any LDT developments.

### **BRIEF PROBLEM STATEMENT / PROPOSAL**

Initial development stages of the C2C have commenced under the direction of several proponents. The C2C is a challenging undertaking in a province with limited LDT development experience, no LDT literature and no precedent for community-developed LDTs. C2C proponents require guidance in identifying the key considerations to facilitate the development of a sustainable LDT. This study is both timely and relevant because it describes the key considerations for developing a LDT as identified by C2C key-informants and as determined from a review of the environmental planning and outdoor recreation literature.

### **RESULTS**

This study indicates that C2C key-informants identified similar key considerations for sustainable LDT development as those in the literature. However, it appears the current C2C development process, although in its initial stages, is not following standard planning guidelines or addressing key considerations, potentially threatening the C2C's feasibility and viability.

This study suggests that C2C proponents cease physical trail implementation until proper LDT assessment, planning and evaluation are completed.

Specifically, proponents need to develop a common vision, consult stakeholders, acquire local communities and landowner(s) support, and develop a management plan that outlines roles and responsibilities and considers long-term funding and maintenance. Furthermore, proponents need to address potential conflicts around the roles of commercial accommodation and/or wilderness shelters and the role of off-highway vehicle (OHV) users and existing OHV trails.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***1 - ESTABLISH C2C LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE***

C2C proponents should self-identify so that other proponents are clear who else is involved. Other potential proponents should be identified and invited from other trail and recreation organizations and from provincial departments that are actively involved in the C2C, including Nova Scotia Department of Health Promotion and Protection (NSDHPP), Nova Scotia Environment (NSE), Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources (NSDNR) and Nova Scotia Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage (NSDTCH). Relevant municipal organizations and employees should be identified and invited as well. The outcome should be the establishment of a C2C committee to lead the LDT assessment, planning and evaluation processes.

### ***2 - CREATE A COMMON VISION***

Proponents should meet with relevant communities and stakeholders to articulate a common vision and purpose of the C2C. Goals and objectives should be defined and assessed. A visioning workshop should be organized and be led by a professional facilitator. NSDHPP should finance this session because the department funds trail development and has already supported the C2C. The workshop should focus on consensus, avoid details, and establish a big-picture vision. Aspects that should be addressed include whether the C2C should be end-to-end, to what degree it will be a footpath, to what degree it will use existing roads, what timeline proponents envision, and whether the C2C will be inclusive of motorized and human-powered (e.g., mountain-biking, cross-country skiing, and horse-back riding) activities. Proponents must address the role of OHVs and the use of existing OHV trails in conjunction with the C2C. The outcome should be the articulation of a common vision.

C2C proponents must take care to avoid the most common recreation planning pitfalls: taking criticism personally, carrying grudges against other stakeholders, being rigid and conservative in identifying problems and evaluating alternative strategies and policies, and failing to be enthusiastic about the process and the possibilities it creates for building a quality and desirable community. Instead, differences of opinion should be anticipated and embraced, and skills and processes such as conflict resolution and negotiation should be fostered to ensure progression.

### ***3 - ASSESS THE COMMUNITY TRAIL MODEL AND DEVELOP A MANAGEMENT PLAN***

Roles, responsibilities and accountability of volunteers and governments should be articulated by C2C Committee members in consultation or collaboration with relevant government, stakeholder and community groups. It is critical that the proponent team be diverse and include expertise in project development. A management component of the C2C Committee should be developed, and measures should be taken to review the Vision to determine whether it is still accepted by all proponents. The Committee should identify political and community leaders to spearhead

greater county-collaboration and possibly create a ‘Cobequid Council’ with the C2C as a symbol of county partnership.

Provincial governments should establish an over-viewing LDT secretariat, develop policy on easements on crown land for LDTs (provided trail associations can provide stewardship and maintenance plans), and explain in writing to all relevant departments the purpose of supporting LDTs. These suggestions apply to relevant provincial and county/municipality departments.

#### ***4 - CONFIRM LIABILITY COVERAGE, AND DETERMINE FUNDING SOURCES AND MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS***

The C2C Committee must confirm liability coverage under Nova Scotia Trail Federation (NSTF) and communicate and clarify to private landowners what is and is not covered. Long-term private and public funding sources should be identified. Maintenance requirements should not be underestimated, and should be determined on the basis of the C2C vision and what is realistically feasible of a community-led LDT.

#### ***5 - CONDUCT LOCAL COMMUNITY, PRIVATE LANDOWNER AND STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS***

The C2C concept must be communicated to and tested by proximate communities, private landowners, and other stakeholders. Avoiding citizen involvement in the planning process is one of the most common recreation planning pitfalls. Proponents must be transparent, well prepared, and anticipate and address concerns. Community champions and leaders should be invited to join the C2C Committee. LDT-associated benefits should be marketed by showcasing the East Coast Trail, the Bruce Trail, the Fundy Footpath and the Appalachian Trail as regional LDT precedents. In addition, C2C proponents should identify past LDT development errors and provide avoidance or mitigation plans.

#### ***6 - DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS***

Proponents should develop partnerships with a diverse group of provincial and local organizations. Potential organizations should include other recreation groups, youth organizations, universities and colleges, conservation organizations, and the tourism industry. In addition, C2C proponents should establish a high profile mechanism for volunteer recognition and study other LDT models to understand, and subsequently foster, factors that motivate volunteer-membership.

#### ***7 - ASSESS C2C ANTHROPOGENIC AND BIOPHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS***

The C2C vision must address commercial accommodation and/or wilderness shelters, and whether shelters be connected/developed concurrent to the physical trail or after trail completion. Furthermore, proponents should identify which biophysical and anthropogenic features the C2C will connect. Proponents must conduct environmental, services, amenities and shelter assessments.

C2C proponents could lobby for various greenbelt or greenway designations to gain support and recognition of the C2C as a concept and a LDT. One example is the Cabot Trail's 'Scenic Travelway' designation. Proponents should make the LDT fit into existing policies and plans, unless a right-of-way is required, because policies are hard to change. C2C proponents may consider lobbying for hiking greenway designation on crown land. Appropriate policies will both depend upon and influence the C2C vision.

Three innovative trail designs may have potential application on the C2C depending on the vision. The first option is the development of thematic trails that include natural, cultural and historic resources such as a Mi'kmaq and/or Acadian component. The second option is a historic structure shelter-to-shelter system which could link historic towns, bed and breakfasts and/or farm-stays. The last option is to tie a non-motorized trail system to the Scenic Byways Program (roads). For example, the C2C could be routed along Nova Scotia's Glooscap and Sunrise Scenic Travelways which are situated along the belt of land extending from Cape George to Cape Chignecto.

## ***8 - DEVELOP A C2C PROPOSAL***

The C2C Committee and all relevant stakeholders should develop a C2C proposal and decide to either re-plan, abandon or implement the proposal. Proponents should use Hugo's (1999) Comprehensive Trail Development Model as a guide, available in Appendix E.

## **STUDY ORGANIZATION**

This study is organized into seven chapters. Chapter 1 is an introduction to the study. Chapter 2 discusses the Nova Scotian context within which the C2C is being developed. Chapter 3 situates the LDT concept within the planning and outdoor recreation literature. Chapter 4 describes the methods by which the study was conducted: a quantitative content analysis of key-informant interviews used to derive the key considerations for developing the C2C. Results are found in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 is a comparative analysis and discussion of key considerations identified by key informants and those derived from the literature; the meaning of the results of the interview content analysis in the context of the current literature is elucidated. Finally, Chapter 7 offers conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

## **CONCLUSION**

LDT development is a procedurally and physically long and large undertaking. This research supports the literature's assessment that developing a sustainable LDT requires more than building the physical trail and illustrates that the C2C is no exception. Proponents might feel disillusioned about the study's assessment of and recommendations for the C2C. However, the C2C is still in its infancy and has the opportunity to learn from the mistakes and successes of other LDTs, and the potential to become a successful and sustainable LDT, should the key considerations outlined here be addressed.