



## Town of Carstairs Community Report

# WALKABILITY ROADSHOW



## **For more information:**

Graham Matsalla, Health Promotion Facilitator  
Health Promotion, Disease and Injury Prevention  
Alberta Health Services  
10101 Southport Road SW  
Calgary, AB T2W 3N2

Phone: (403)943-6781 Fax: (403)943-2211

Email: [graham.matsalla@albertahealthservices.ca](mailto:graham.matsalla@albertahealthservices.ca)

Web: [www.albertahealthservices.ca](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca)

# INTRODUCTION



## Acknowledgements

**Alberta Health Services would like to thank the following people and organizations for their contributions in preparation to the Alberta Walkability Roadshow in Carstairs:**

- Terri Sperle, Director of Community Services, Town of Carstairs
- Teree Hokenson, Alberta Health Services and Jen Awde on behalf of Carstairs Connection

**Alberta Health Services would like to thank that following groups and organizations for providing representatives to participate in the Alberta Walkability Roadshow in Carstairs:**

- Carstairs Town Council: Represented by Nathan Cooper
- Town of Carstairs Administration: Parks and Recreation Department, and the Planning Development Department
- Peace and bylaw officers
- Carstairs Connection
- Community members concerned about the walkability of their community
- Alberta Health Services-Health Professionals

**The expert team facilitating walkability workshops for the Alberta Walkability Roadshow (biographies can be found in the appendix):**

- Bronwen Thornton, Walk21, UK
- Rodney Tolley, Walk21, Honorary Research Fellow, Staffordshire University
- Jacky Kennedy, Canada Walks, Green Communities Canada
- Andrea Baker, Project Coordinator, Health Promotion, Disease and Injury Prevention, Alberta Health Services
- Graham Matsalla, Health Promotion Facilitator Health Promotion, Disease and Injury Prevention, Alberta Health Services

**Alberta Health Services would like to thank the Health Promotion Disease & Injury Prevention team for their support of this initiative. Specifically:**

Bretta Maloff, Executive Director, Health Promotion Disease & Injury Prevention, Alberta Health Services. Dr. Sandra Delon, Director, Chronic Disease Prevention and Oral Health, Alberta Health Services. Monique Assi, Manager, Chronic Disease Prevention, Alberta Health Services. Andrea Baker, Project Coordinator, Health Promotion, Disease and Injury Prevention, Alberta Health Services. Graham Matsalla, Health Promotion Facilitator, Alberta Health Services.

**Alberta Health Services would like to thank its funding partner:**

This one-year grant funded initiative is supported by a grant from Alberta Health and Wellness (AHW), through the The Alberta Cancer Legacy Fund (ACPLF). AHS would like to acknowledge ACPLF for their support and pursuit in the prevention of cancer and chronic conditions. Their belief in health promotion activities supporting the communities was instrumental.



# INTRODUCTION

## Walking is critical for Health

The Alberta Walkability Roadshow was undertaken to support change that improves walkability and encourages citizens to choose to walk. Walking has long been the most inclusive and popular form of physical activity. Not only is walking associated with improved health but the more opportunities you have for quality walking experiences the more likely you are to choose to walk.

The Alberta Health Services Strategic Direction 2009 – 2012 states that Alberta Health Services is “dedicated to improve the health of communities through strengthening prevention, preparation and response to public health risks”. Alberta Health Services is committed to promoting social and physical environments that enhance wellness and promote healthier behaviours as well as better access to programs that prevent disease and injury. The Walkability Roadshow was a perfect fit with Alberta Health Services strategic direction.



Physical activity has declined between 2009 (58.5%)<sup>1</sup> and 2011 (54.3%)<sup>2</sup>. Encouraging more Albertans to walk for short, local trips and to walk more often has the potential to reverse this downward trend. Being more physically active also helps the provincial economy as obesity is currently costing Alberta \$1.4 billion annually<sup>3</sup>.

Research has shown that 61% of Canadian adults and 26% of children are overweight or obese. In Alberta, it is estimated that 218,500 children and 1,732,000 adults are overweight or obese. No other chronic disease can begin to match obesity's prevalence or far-reaching health consequences to society. From 2000 – 2007 only 62.4% of Albertans were sufficiently physically active<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Alberta Centre for Active Living. 2011 Alberta Survey on Physical Activity: A Concise Report.

<sup>2</sup>Alberta Centre for Active Living. 2009 Alberta Survey on Physical Activity: A Concise Report.

<sup>3</sup>Alberta Health Services: Provincial Obesity Business Plan 2011 - 2016. Reducing the Burden of Chronic Disease in Alberta: Prevention and Management of Overweight and Obesity

<sup>4</sup>Alberta Health Services: Provincial Obesity Business Plan 2011 - 2016. Reducing the Burden of Chronic Disease in Alberta: Prevention and Management of Overweight and Obesity

# OVERVIEW OF WALKABILITY ROADSHOW



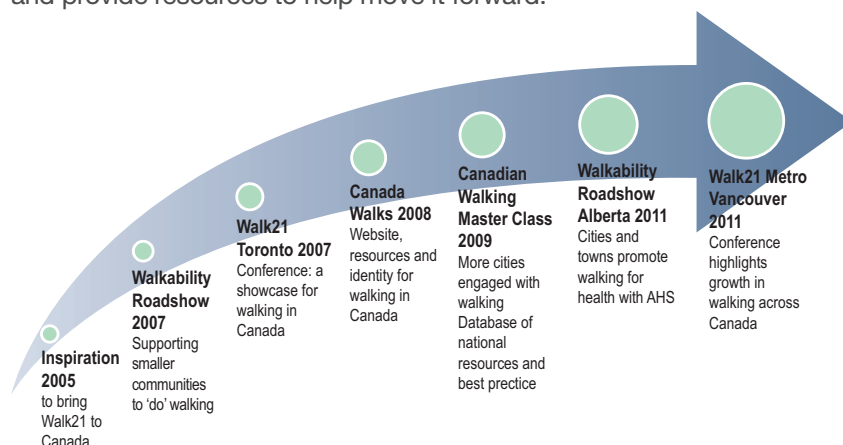
It is becoming well-accepted that walkable communities are both desirable and necessary. Residents focused on enhancing the walkability of their community may have participated in Sustainable Transportation workshops or maybe created municipal Active Transportation plans but there appears to be a gap between creating the plan and implementing the plan. The Walkability Roadshow aims to help fill this gap.

## The Alberta Walkability Roadshow

The Alberta Walkability Roadshow builds on the groundswell of interest in walking in Canada and follows in the footsteps of the successful Canadian Walking Master Class 2009 and the Walkability Roadshow 2007. These two initiatives, from Green Communities Canada and Walk21, have proven that a concise and concentrated process can enable municipalities to deliver communities where people choose to walk. These specific activities are supported by the development of Canada Walks and the Walk21 International Conference series and the growth in expertise and best practice examples across Canada which are resources this project continues to draw on.

The International Charter for Walking provides both the strategic direction and detailed descriptive actions for creating walkable communities around the world. The Roadshow uses the Charter to benchmark walking within the communities, to identify achievements, opportunities and challenges as the foundation for generating ideas, initiatives, inspiration and action for building more walkable communities in Alberta.

The Walkability Roadshow brings together a team of local and international experts to build a model framework of local strategies, plans, and actions to help create walkable communities. The Roadshow aims to complement the great work already being done in the community and provide resources to help move it forward.



### ***What is Walk21?***

Walk21 exists to champion the development of healthy sustainable and efficient communities where people choose to walk. This goal is accomplished through the Walk21 Conference series, consultancy services and the International Charter for Walking. Walk21 have a vision to create a world where people choose and are able to walk as a way to travel, to be healthy and to relax. Find out more about Walk21 at [www.walk21.com](http://www.walk21.com)

### ***What is Green Communities Canada?***

Green Communities Canada is an organization that is dedicated to:

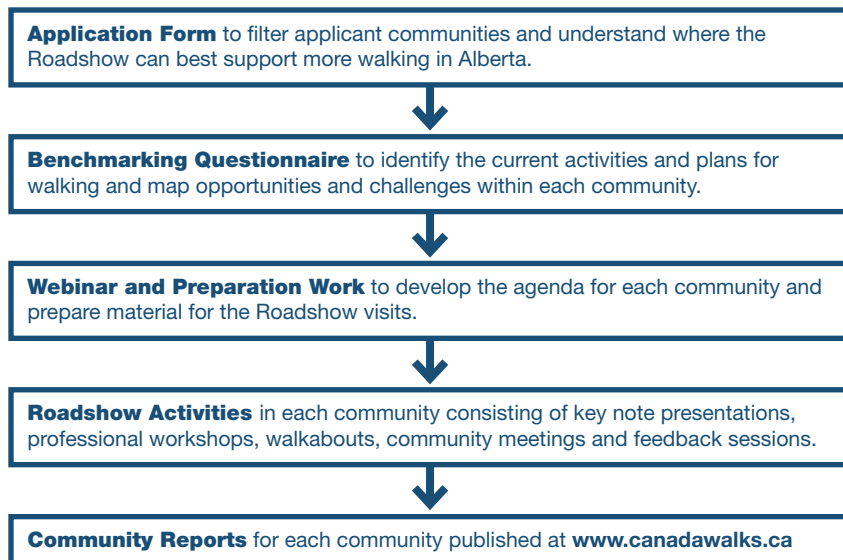
- Support sharing of program information and resources through: the weekly Green Communities News, conferences, meetings, the Green Room (a private online forum for members)
- Facilitate delivery of joint programs common to a number of our members (e.g., Active and Safe Routes to School, Home Energy Efficiency).
- Build capacity through the development of skills and the organizational capacity of Green Communities Canada members (governance, financial management, human resources, policies)
- Build the visibility of the organization through building of the reputation of our members, Green Communities Canada, and programs.

# OVERVIEW OF WALKABILITY ROADSHOW



## The Process

The project consisted of the following steps:



Alberta Health Services identified 17 communities as potential candidates for the Walkability Roadshow. Nine of these communities indicated interest in participating and completed an Application form. From this process, six were short listed to do the benchmarking questionnaire. Due to the high quality of responses and the variety of communities, the project team revised the Roadshow schedule to include 4 Roadshow visits and accommodate five communities. These were: City of Lethbridge, City of Red Deer, Town of Strathmore, Town of Carstairs and Plamondon. Representatives from Plamondon joined the Roadshow in Carstairs.



## *What is Canada Walks?*

Canada Walks is an initiative of Green Communities Canada. The mission of Canada Walks is to change the current social paradigm so that walkable communities are the cultural and social norm in Canada and to increase the number of Canadians walking, both for pleasure and for transportation. To achieve this goal, Canada Walks focuses on:

1. Supporting the creation of more walkable communities, i.e. changing the built environment to make walking a safe and inviting choice
2. Changing Canadians' walking attitudes and habits so that they choose to walk.

## *What is the International Charter of Walking?*

The International Charter for Waling was developed by a team of international experts as part of the Walk21 conference series and was formally launched at the 2006 Walk21 conference in Melbourne. Since that time it has been translated into several languages, and communities and individuals around the have signed the Charter including many from Canada. To view and sign the Charter visit [www.walk21.com](http://www.walk21.com).

# OVERVIEW OF WALKABILITY ROADSHOW



## Application Form

The Town of Carstairs became involved with the Walkability Roadshow because they want to make their community more walkable. Many young families are purchasing homes in the area because the town is within easy commuting distance from Calgary and they are promoting themselves as a caring and active community. The Town of Carstairs has doubled in land size in the last couple of years, and they are very aware of the need to include connecting walking paths in each new community that is developed. A walking track has been constructed upstairs in the skating arena and it is not utilized as much as they would like. They were looking for advice on how to motivate people to use it. The Town of Carstairs has great people in the community, and would like to keep them as healthy and as active as possible through all their stages of life.

The Walkability Roadshow complements and enhances what the Carstairs Connections Coalition, formed in 2006, is focused on – a healthier, more active Carstairs. In the past few years the committee has:

- installed motivational signs on the walking track at the arena;
- encouraged their residents with thought-provoking ‘get active’ advertisements in the local community newspaper;
- organized and supported an annual Summer Solstice Walk/Run;
- coordinated and supported their annual “Walk For The Health of It” program;
- hosted a walking challenge every winter Nov-April- log distances online (use walking track inside in the winter);
- initiated a ‘couch to 5k’ program;
- created a cartoon map with facilities listed.

Carstairs has a diverse population of young families and seniors. Carstairs is a popular community, not only is it close to Calgary but it is also seen as a caring and active community. Carstairs see the Walkability Roadshow as an opportunity to keep their citizens as healthy and as active as possible through all their stages of life.

The Alberta Walkability Roadshow would compliment and enhance what the community would ultimately like to achieve: a healthier, more physically active Carstairs.

### **About: AHS - Health Promotion, Disease and Injury Prevention (HPDIP)**

The mission of AHS is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans. AHS has a vision to become the Best Performing Publicly Funded Health System in Canada. Through the values of: respect, accountability, transparency, engagement, safety, learning and performance AHS formed a strategic direction that provides the foundation for all activity within AHS. The Strategic Direction is organization-wide and is a critical foundation for our planning, operations and accountability. The plan includes 3 goals, 8 areas of focus, 20 strategic priorities and 4 values. It defines the focus of all the departments with AHS including the Health Promotion, Disease and Injury Prevention (HPDIP) department.

The Health Promotion, Disease and Injury Prevention (HPDIP) department's intent is to enhance the health of the population and support Albertans to increase control over their health. HPDIP's focus on health promotion includes: fostering social, economic and material conditions (determinants of health) that promote health and reduce health disparities. HPDIP strategies both reduce and delay entry into the healthcare system and improve quality of life and societal productivity. This is accomplished through three broad objectives: increase protective factors within the population; reduce risk factors within the population; increase early detection and minimize downstream intervention in populations. HPDIP has five priority areas of action: social and physical environments, healthy development, cancer and chronic disease prevention, injury prevention, and addiction and mental health. Each area has a direct correlation to the strategic focus areas of Alberta Health Services (AHS), specifically the goals of quality, access and sustainability.

# OVERVIEW OF WALKABILITY ROADSHOW



The community has begun to promote walking through: the installation of motivational signs on the walking track at the arena; encourage our residents with thought-provoking ‘get active’ advertisements in our local community newspaper; organizing and supporting an annual Summer Solstice Walk/Run; coordinate and support our annual “Walk For The Health of It” program; a “How Many Steps To \_\_\_\_ Town” signage; involvement in the “Healthy U” provincial strategy; and several other initiatives to keep our residents moving. Carstairs would like the Alberta Walkability Roadshow to help their community become a more ‘walkable community’.

## Benchmarking Questionnaire

### Highlights from the Benchmarking Questionnaire:

#### What are you most proud of having achieved for people walking in your community?

Highlights from the benchmarking questionnaire are the strong achievements in health promotion and walking for health and recreation; events, facilities and campaigns related to health and health promotion.

The Town of Carstairs’ sustainability plan, published in 2009, has some references to walking, which shows that the town is already making walking a priority for the residents. Carstairs has developed new subdivisions that include planned walking connections. There is already some awareness of walking as a form of transportation.

The Town of Carstairs is a clean, safe community, but could benefit from more lighting, more vibrant public space, as well as street and traffic management. Snow clearing has been highlighted as an area for improvement for the town. Carstairs has no data collection in regard to walking, but has already established some stakeholder engagement.

#### The top 3 priorities for increasing walking in Carstairs, identified in the Questionnaire, were:

1. Increasing usage of the indoor walking track
2. Creating and implementing the “How Many Steps To...” campaign, a number of steps to your destination signage approach loosely modelled after the 10,000 steps initiative in Australia
3. Installing an outdoor fitness park at the Memorial Park walking trail

#### The top 3 barriers to more walking in Carstairs, identified in the Questionnaire, were:

In 2008, the Town of Carstairs conducted a stroke knowledge and awareness survey that was completed by 10% of the adult population of the community. A similar question was asked: what makes it hard for you to stay healthy? The top three barriers were:

1. Lack of motivation
2. Lack of time
3. Lack of child care



# OVERVIEW OF WALKABILITY ROADSHOW



The community was then asked, what changes in the community would make it easier for you to take better care of your health? The top three answers were:

1. Facilities
2. Recreation
3. Improved pathways/walkability

**Top 3 community services used to stay healthy are:**

4. Walking trails
5. Arena
6. Gym/fitness centre

## Webinar and Preparation Work

**AHS facilitated and attended the community webinars that were hosted by Green Communities Canada – Canada Walks and lead by Walk21. The goal of the webinar was for the team to:**

**Provide a summary of the results from the benchmark questionnaire with the community with regards to:**

- Any documentation that the community provided that supported walkability in their community.
- Any data that the community provided that supported walkability in their community.
- Any community engagement on walkability programs/initiatives that are occurring or have occurred in the past.
- The level of promotion of walking or support for walking culture and/or facilities.

**Review ideas and recommendations for the roadshow activities that were inspired by the response to the benchmark questionnaire.**

- Review any planning/policies around walkability and discuss if they are being implemented. Try to highlight walking from any planning/policies provided to ensure that the Alberta Walkability Roadshow takes cohesive approach in their community.
- Identify opportunities quick wins that can bring momentum to implementation.
- Determine if there is communication of a vision for walkability from the Mayor.
- Discuss the potential for promoting walking and supporting walking culture.

**Discuss the content and the structure of the Alberta Walkability Roadshow in their community.**

- Discuss a draft of the roadshow activities.

# OVERVIEW OF WALKABILITY ROADSHOW



**During the webinar the preparation work that the community needed to complete before the Alberta Walkability Roadshow activities began was discussed:**

## **Discuss the Invitations and preparation:**

- Who should be invited to the roadshow activities and how individuals should be invited (sample invite was provided).
- Media and community engagement (template of media release was provided).
- Suggest that the Mayor be invited to sign Charter as part of Roadshow .
- Provide key documents to the team (e.g. strategic plans, current project/proposals, weblinks or pdf's).
- Prepare a walking route for walkabout . Determine if maps and/or transportation to locations would be required.
- Determine a venue and catering for Feedback Lunch.
- Determine a time for a pre-event phone conference to finalize any details and answer any questions that have come up before the team arrives in the community for the Alberta Walkability Roadshow.

## **Roadshow Activities**

In September 2011, the Walkability Roadshow team visited each community. Each visit was unique, with activities and expectations being responsive to the size and needs of that community. For the cities of Lethbridge and Red Deer, the Roadshow was three days, for the Town of Strathmore, it was two days and for Carstairs (including Plamondon) it was one intensive day.

Every visit was an opportunity for the Municipality to inspire their politicians and senior decision makers, to train and develop professional staff and consultants and to engage members of the public. There was a variety of roadshow activities including:

- **Keynote presentations** about the importance of walking and walking initiatives from around the world and across Canada.
- **Facilitated workshop** discussions and groupwork to brainstorm ideas and issues for walkability in the local community.
- **Walkabouts of selected streets** and neighbourhoods to experience firsthand walking conditions and to provide on-street learning for both the visiting and local experts.
- **Feedback and wrap up sessions** to review the experience and identify concrete steps to take ideas forward.

# TOWN OF CARSTAIRS BACKGROUND



## Community Profile

The Town of Carstairs has a population of approximately 2,656 (based on the 2006 census). The population consists mainly of young families and seniors. Carstairs is located approximately 70km from Calgary and in the Highway 2 corridor. Due to the close proximity to the larger centres, Carstairs is growing at a very progressive rate.



# TOWN OF CARSTAIRS ROADSHOW ACTIVITIES



## Professional Workshop

For the Roadshow in their community, the Town of Carstairs had a half day professional workshop held in the morning with the afternoon devoted to a community walkabout and action planning with community members. Informed by the presentations throughout the day, participants worked through facilitated discussions to identify issues and opportunities for more walking in Carstairs.

### *Breakfast Presentation*

With 21 attendees present (members listed below), Jacky Kennedy of Green Communities Canada started the day out with an Introduction and background to the Walkability Roadshow. Following, Dr. Rodney Tolley inspired the group with his presentation of “Walking around the World: Getting in Step for the Future”.



### *Workshop*

With 18 professional staff from around Carstairs and community members, Bronwen Thornton presented the International Charter for Walking and explained the eight principles of walkability that it is based upon. See Appendix for Charter. Jacky Kennedy followed with a presentation illustrating ideas and inspirations from across Canada and around the world. See [www.canadawalks.ca](http://www.canadawalks.ca) for case studies of previous Canadian Walkability Roadshows.

The participants at the workshop worked in small groups to brainstorm ideas and opportunities for supporting walking in Carstairs against the International Charter for Walking. Small groups worked on each of the eight principles of the Charter, and then regrouped against a different principle to review the ideas proposed, expand on them and contribute new ones. Finally participants selected the best ideas to report to the larger group.



# TOWN OF CARSTAIRS

# ROADSHOW ACTIVITIES



## ***Participants***

**From the brainstorming, the ideas could be grouped into four key areas to refine, consolidate and develop them further. The areas are:**

- Town of Strathmore Council: Represented by Nathan Cooper
- Town of Strathmore Administration: Regional Public Health Services, Planning and Economic Development, Tourism, Engineering, Public Works, Community Development, Environment, Community Services, Academia, Parks and Recreation
- Carstairs Connection
- Community members concerned about the walkability of their community
- Alberta Health Services-Health Professionals

## **Media coverage**

The Carstairs Courier Newspaper ran an article on September 13 promoting the Roadshow. A follow up article was published September 27 sharing some of the information and ideas that were discussed at the Roadshow events. See Appendix for newspaper clippings.

## **Key Ideas Generated**

### **Increased inclusive mobility**

- Connected pathways; there are many existing pathways across town but they aren't all connected to each other or to downtown; the town should plan to do this
- Walking School Buses for families to increase safety and encourage active travel
- Well maintained sidewalks for everyone
- Ensure all sidewalks are accessible for wheels (mobility devices, strollers)

### **Well designed and managed spaces and places for people**

- Main street needs green space and seating between Post Office and the Co-op
- Promote 'beef and barley' days, Canada Day, Remembrance Day, etc. through open streets festivals; the Town of Carstairs does have some open streets days already so expand on these and do them more frequently
- Street closure to vehicles during certain hours and allow street vendors/buskers to be in this space

### **Improved integration of Networks**

- Wayfinding – better signage on paths along with maps; the town is creating a tourist fun map to identify all local interests
- Link all the existing trails and ensure connectivity

# TOWN OF CARSTAIRS

# ROADSHOW ACTIVITIES



## **Supportive land use and spatial planning**

- Green spaces and walking paths to be built before the housing – a planning level decision; currently they are installed after the housing and roadways;
- Currently in new developments green space is fenced off for the first year so it can mature, which is why there was a suggestion to install it first;
- Developers currently present their plans for future developments to the town and the town can advise where the proposed pathways should be installed, but this doesn't mean they will get built.
- The Carstairs Sustainability Plan does have recommendations for future trails and pathways.
- Connecting to the existing pathways (sidewalks and trails). Sidewalks are the first facility people use when they step out of their front doors; they have to be part of the development; they will connect to other walking places and routes including the local trails.

## **Reduced Road Danger**

- Reduce speed of vehicles, install larger signage in school zones – post warnings re entering 30 km/hr zone
- 30 km/hr in all residential areas. Enforcement is an issue with speeding; speed studies indicate that there isn't much speeding around the communities; perception of speed; some prefer 40 km/hr so they can enforce 50 km/hr
- Install a sign announcing this is a walking friendly town.

## **Less crime/fear of crime**

- Hold 'block parties' to engage with neighbours and get to know each other; reduce residents' perception of fear
- Install more lighting, especially near the fire hall.
- Plant grass and trees along boulevards to make it safer for children travelling actively.

## **More supportive authorities**

- Require more support from the Alberta Transportation Ministry and flexible funding; they have responsibility for some of the highways; municipalities need capacity to have the highways modified to balance the through traffic vs. local uses like schools that need to cross highways.

## **A culture of walking**

- Schools talking about walking/WSBs
- Encourage use of paths for commuting residents after work/school – relieve the stress of the day and connect them to the town; reduce isolation
- Pedometer clubs/walking clubs – track kilometres walked to reach a symbolic destination like Vancouver or Key West.

# TOWN OF CARSTAIRS ROADSHOW ACTIVITIES



## **Key themes to emerge were:**

- Events and activities to engage the community
- Networks and pathways need to be linked up and prioritized in new developments
- Information and promotion so people know about the network and opportunities
- Importance of school work to enable parents to allow their children to walk to school

## **Walkabout**

After lunch the group held a walkabout of the local neighbourhood from the curling rink which included local streets, main street and back through the park to the rink.



Rodney discusses how to avoid puddles in the base of curb cuts, as these puddles can prevent a person using the curb cut . Careful drainage needs to accompany curb cuts.

The group observed the new pedestrian facilities being built immediately across from the Centre and admired the work being done.

The back lanes in this part of Carstairs provide great short cuts for walkers and can be a critical part of the shortest route through town.



# TOWN OF CARSTAIRS ROADSHOW ACTIVITIES



Main Street has some lovely street trees, wide sidewalks, extra planters, bins and character light poles - which all create a very comfortable walking environment where installed.

The group discussed the issues of encouraging people to park and travel along the main street on foot, the need to make sure all planter dugouts are covered if not filled with a tree, and to ensure the environment is not hazardous.

The new works to create a pocket garden complement the street environment. Some signage along Main Street would invite people to explore the businesses off Main Street as well as those along it.



Pedestrians are affected by both large scale issues and small scale ones.

Vehicle movement throughout the town is very generous for both moving and parking vehicles. Pedestrian space can feel very secondary in this context and so it's critical to ensure it is of very high quality.

The broad streets create very large intersections and long crossing times for pedestrians. This intersection has a lot of vehicle and pedestrian movement through it and safer crossing facilities, particularly for students, would enhance it for walkers .

Attention to smaller details makes a big difference to pedestrians. This crack was highlighted by participants as a place where ice catches and makes the sidewalk a slip-hazard in winter and the unevenness a trip-hazard in summer . It was explained that this is also an area where senior citizens live and walk into town. It is critical to prioritize good walking facilities in these parts of town, to support their independence.

This crossing is well-placed and marked for this trail through the park . The visiting team wondered if, with the changes in vehicle movement in town, it might now be possible to return this road space to green space, narrowing it down to just one lane and connecting the park across its entire length, not just at the crossing point.



# TOWN OF CARSTAIRS ROADSHOW ACTIVITIES



## Additional Observations

Scale and attention to detail for pedestrians are critical.



It stunned the visiting team that new developments were being built with such oversized roadwidths. These will be expensive to maintain throughout the seasons and are completely unnecessary in a quiet residential neighbourhood. Many cities in Canada are reducing their standard roadwidths to reduce their seasonal maintenance budgets.

Hazards such as this enormous puddle on Main Street (even if the hazard is not permanent) can cause problems for walkers that people in vehicles just glide over. Ensure pedestrian environments are accessible in all weather by building out this potential with an at-level sidewalk and proper drainage.

Life at a walking pace means you can find and enjoy the details of your environment, such as the destinations on this enormous sign post. Shortening distances for people to walk and enabling them to access the impressive trails networks and each other.

## Walking, a way of life

Bev Esslinger of SHAPE Alberta gave a presentation on their Active & Safe Routes to School program to the professional staff and community members. SHAPE plans events for school age children such as walking school buses, walking buddies, action heroes program, International Walk to School days in October and they are disseminating the School Travel Plan model across Alberta. School Travel Planning works with school communities to identify barriers to active travel and create travel plans that encourage increased walking and cycling. SHAPE facilitates the creation of the action plans that allow schools to address their travel needs. Inclusion of the appropriate stakeholders is key including: municipal transportation and planning staff, school boards, Alberta Health Services, Alberta Transportation, local Police, AMA school patrols, school committee (staff, parents, etc.). Visit [www.shapeab.com](http://www.shapeab.com).

# SCHOOL SESSION AT PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Bev Esslinger, Raelene Lauzon and Jacky Kennedy met at the Carstairs Elementary school with the Principal, two local parents, a representative from the school council, the Community Wellness representative, and the Director of Community Services. An overview of School Travel Planning, information about SHAPE and potential for Carstairs students were discussed.

## **Key Points**

- The school is only two years old and built on the outskirts of the town. Challenges that deter active school travel (AST) are the age of the children, many students having to cross the busy highway, and many students coming on school buses.
- The school location is shared by the Bob Clark Public Library.
- Reference made to the benefit of AST in a small community – everyone knows each other so there are eyes on the street to keep a watch over the children.
- Many families will drive to the community centre just down the road and let their children walk from there.
- There are families who live in town who pay to have their children take the school bus; concerns that they may not be happy if students are dropped off part way and expected to walk the rest of the way. Comment that within two years even rural families will have to pay to take the school bus.

## **Next Steps**

- Present the concepts of AST and STP to the Parent Council; Raelene can attend and present.
- With the support of the Parent Council and Principal, schedule the data collection (family and student surveys, walkabouts and traffic observation).
- Report back results to school and prepare action plans.
- Set timetable to implement action items.
- There was interest to start off with a fun activity by organizing one day in October to participate in International Walk to School (IWALK) Month. Bev provided posters, stickers and other items for students and the school.



This session studied the ideas from the morning and the walkabout to discuss how to take them forward within the Town of Carstairs. The group focused on five dimensions through the facilitated discussion: Commitment, Data, Partnerships, Quick Wins and Celebrating Success.

Ideas under each of these aspects are captured below.



## 1. Commitment

Carstairs Connections is strongly committed to taking these ideas forward and were happy to take a lead. Areas for attention were identified as follows:

- The Sustainability Plan: needs to be read following the transition of leadership at the Committee level
- Good town representation and communication between departments to build on
- Town not yet ready to move from car centered to walking centered but it's not going to happen all at once
- Use multiple groups and organizations to help with the change
- Move from walking as recreation activity to walking as a mode of transportation
- Use grassroots method one step at a time

## 2. Data

There is already some data available but also some great opportunities to obtain more. The Stroke survey was undertaken two years ago and related to gym type activities.

- Survey response was low and there is a need for an alternative for future:
  - Looking to use online survey options
  - Representation may not be a random sample
- Neighbourhood party (in May) survey
  - Can be used for promotion and information gathering
  - Opportunity to distribute information
- Request for data in regards to the cost of short trips – does walking save money, how much, carbon footprint?
  - Probably look at health benefits of walking instead
  - Promote walking as a time saver because you are physically active while you are travelling
  - Walkers spend more time in stores and spend more money



### 3. Partnerships

It was agreed that Carstairs Connections was the perfect centre pin for building partnerships, as many were already in place and the people involved well connected. Others the group can look to reach out to include:

- Schools
- Chamber of Commerce
  - Partner with City (examples: hanging flower baskets on main street)
  - Possibility of bringing businesses out onto the street for a 'sidewalk sale' similar to Carstairs Crazy Christmas sale which doesn't take place outside
- Carstairs 20/20
- Older Adult Lodge
- Home based businesses
- Young Mothers
- Parent Link
- Peace Officers
- Tourism
- Youth Centre
- Alberta Transport
- Operational Services
  - Town department that could/should look at sidewalks

### 4. Quick wins

To build a sense of momentum and achievement, it is important to identify where some high profile, low cost actions can be done to inspire more engagement, commitment and walking.

- Signage was identified as key (and has a high benefit to cost ratio)
  - Should be visible and not expensive
  - Use time rather than distance
  - Use a different scale so that they do not look like road signs
  - Can use an image of a person walking
  - Promotional messages can be included
  - Can use the sidewalk
  - Signage can demonstrate that the community is walking focused



- Link to pathways
  - Pathway markers
- Identify a central parking lot for people who drive into town and can then walk
- Change speed limit but explain why
  - It would be important to identify if speeding is a deterrent for walkers
  - This would probably not be a quick win
- Develop walking routes and walking maps that include time to destinations
  - Walking loops
  - Great way for developers to tell potential home buyers that there are walking networks with maps to promote the town as a place to live
  - Can start with arena inside and promote pathways outside that loop back to arena for all-season walking

## **5. Celebrate Success!**

It's always important to remember to celebrate achievement and reward people for their effort, in either encouraging walking or actually walking. Opportunities for doing this in Carstairs include:

- Neighbourhood Party
- Carstairs Connections Reward
- Carstairs Inquisitor Calendar
- Local paper 3rd page

# KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



## In Summary

Carstairs is a small, vibrant town with new development attracting new families to the area.

It is very easy and quick to drive around the town, with plenty of parking and provision for vehicles. It is also evident that people are choosing to walk and the existing facilities are generally comfortable. However, the culture of car travel still exists and there needs to be motivation to entice people to choose walking over driving. Walking needs to be easy for adults and children.

Signage and mapping are great first steps to invite people to explore their town on foot.

Group walks, local activities and promotional events, linking into existing successes such as walking in the arena will also support more walking in Carstairs.

Attention to detail and care for those groups who need to walk, such as the senior citizens, can make a measurable difference in both the amount of walking and the quality of the walking experience in the Town of Carstairs.

Focus on areas that are conducive for walking and areas where people need to walk. Work with the willing by supporting young people, children and walking groups to walk more.



## Media reports

### Town chosen as one of six stops on walking tour

Tuesday, Sep 13, 2011 03:00 am | By Josh Skapin

Carstairs is one of six Alberta communities to be selected as a stop for this year's Walkability Road Show.

The event, bringing a team of international walking experts to Carstairs, will be held Sept. 19 at the Carstairs Curling Rink. This is the first time that the conference will be in Alberta. Carstairs joins Red Deer, Lethbridge, High River, Strathmore and Plamondon as stops for the conference.

"I think it's important to bring this to Carstairs to show the residents that it's OK to walk to places instead of going by car," said Terri Sperle, director of community services for the Town of Carstairs and member of Carstairs Connections, a healthy living program.

"We do have a bit of a challenge in our community because it is such a commuter community.

"I think the road show people will see that when they get here and give us some ideas as to how to change our lives when we're not commuting to work to get into the habit of walking more often."

According to Sperle, the speaking panel will not focus on the recreational aspect of walking.

"Their focus is on daily living," she said.

"Not thinking of it as an exercise but thinking of it as your regular routine."

The Carstairs stop will include different sessions, all free of charge to the public — the first being 7:30-9 a.m. and 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

"Everyone is welcome to come to the whole thing or parts of it or pop in and out," Sperle said.

Last week, a third instalment of the stop was added to the agenda with the speakers headed to Carstairs Elementary School from 3:30-4:30 p.m.

"They'll talk to the teachers and parents about how we can get our kids to start wanting to walk to school and do it safely," Sperle said.

"There are so many parents who drive their kids to school and it really isn't that far from anywhere in our town to walk to either school."

Carstairs was originally approached by Alberta Health Services as an ideal location for the road show because of the town's success with its 'Walk for the Health' of it,' program. The program sees participants log their walking time or steps taken with the goal of reaching the distance that it would take to get to a predetermined travel destination, such as Key West, Florida.



## Walkability Road Show inspires new health initiatives

---

Tuesday, Sep 27, 2011 03:00 am | By Johnnie Bachusky



Noel West/Carstairs Courier

Walkability Road Show experts spent a day in Carstairs discussing Canada's best practices in walkability and sharing expertise from communities around the world.

The Carstairs Walkability Road Show rolled into town and the community may soon see big changes in the downtown – especially in attitude.

Next summer there could be less cars and more walking and more getting to know your neighbour.

“I do feel it was well-received. We didn't know what to expect at first but we were pleasantly surprised at the ideas that came forward and the presentations,” said Terri Sperle, director of community services for the Town of Carstairs and member of Carstairs Connections, a healthy living program.

The all-day local visit on Sept. 19 at the Carstairs Curling Rink by Walkability Road Show experts was intended to showcase Canada's best practices in walkability and share expertise from communities around the world. Carstairs was one of three Alberta communities selected by Alberta Health Services (AHS). The other communities selected in Alberta were Red Deer and Lethbridge.

The goal of this pilot project is to support change in the communities, to improve walkability and encourage their citizens to choose to walk.

The event was attended by 25 locals from all segments of the community, including peace and bylaw officers, homebuilders, town councillors, representatives from the parks and recreation and the planning development departments, and members of Carstairs Connections Coalition.

*Continued on next page...*





# APPENDICES

“They gave us some tips and advice, to approach walking with lifestyle in mind and not just as recreation,” said Sperle, adding the roadshow included two presenters from the United Kingdom, one from Toronto and representatives from AHS.

She said some of the ideas were so good they could be implemented in the community next summer.

One change could be to a sign in town that currently says there is only 500 metres to the coffee shop.

“They suggested using time instead of distance,” said Sperle. “It is about changing the perception from how far it is to a place to how long it will take to get there.”

Sperle said the experts also connected lifestyle walking with economic development.

An idea was brought forward that Main Street could be closed off for one day a week in the summer and allowing only foot traffic. It was further suggested the town could bring in a farmers’ market for that day as well as inviting buskers to provide entertainment.

“This would stimulate people to stay in town longer and perhaps feel like exploring more,” said Sperle. “It all comes down to community. People might just start talking more to neighbours.”

As well, attendees at the roadshow were told about a ‘Doctor Map’, an idea where maps of the town are handed out by doctors to patients who are prescribed walking with specific distances.

The Walkability Road Show broke in the day to visit the Carstairs Elementary School and meet with representatives of the Parents Council, the principal and a wellness worker.

“We talked about ways to encourage parents to allow children to walk safely to school. We have a plan in place to get wheels in action to get this to happen,” said Sperle. “We have a large population of parents driving their kids to school. It is more feasible for them to walk.

“We are coming at this from a health standpoint,” she added. “In general there is lots of obesity in schools everywhere.”

Sperle said a report of the Walkability Road Show will be presented to town council this December. She said it will include a recommendation to close off Main Street for one day a week during the summer.

“We would work with the Chamber of Commerce on that,” she said.

Story URL: <http://www.carstairscourier.ca/article/20110927/CAR0801/309279966/-1/car/walkability-road-show-inspires-new-health-initiatives>

Copyright © 2010 Great West Newspapers Limited Partnership. All rights reserved. The contents of this website are protected by copyright and may be used only for your personal non-commercial purposes. All other rights are reserved and commercial use is prohibited. To make use of any of this material you must first obtain permission of the owner of the copyright. For further information, please contact the editor or publisher.



## Roadshow Evaluations

Participants in the Roadshow completed evaluation sheets to provide feedback about the process.

Many attendees indicated that they wanted to improve the walking areas and increase the number of walkers, to bring a plan of action back to the community, to promote healthy active living to all ages in the community, learn how to inspire the community to develop a sustainable community capacity building project and maintain it. Attendees also mentioned wanting to try to get commuters of the Town of Carstairs to begin walking in town, as well as children walking to and from school.

One of the evaluation questions was “What will you do differently as a result of attending the roadshow?” Responses are shown below:

- Create a more focused action plan to bring forward to our local county council to secure funding to meeting the community needs
- Take the information to all developers that come to Carstairs
- Try to encourage others to walk with me!

## Biographies

### **Bronwen Thornton:**

As Development Director for Walk21, Bronwen is working with communities and professionals around the world to promote walking, develop and deliver innovative projects and provide resources, tools and services to support more walking. Her current projects include advising the European Active Access project, leading the Walkability Roadshow in Alberta, Canada and delivering Making Walking Count and the International Charter for Walking to support local action, to underpin strategic directions and gain political support for walking.

Past projects such as the Walkability Roadshow Ontario, Canada in 2007 and the Canadian Walking Master Class 2009 proved a project model of policy analysis and community engagement that can genuinely support local governments to deliver real results for walking.

Prior to joining Walk21 she was the Consultancy Services Manager for Living Streets in the UK where she was responsible for developing and delivering Community Street Audits, bespoke training for local authorities and practical workshops on active transportation issues. This gives her a very hands-on understanding of walking environments and local challenges.

She is a strategic thinker and writer, expert facilitator and trainer with on-street experience of walking audits, transport design and urban planning. Originally from Australia, Bronwen now lives in the United Kingdom and loves nothing better than a muddy walk in the rain!



**Dr. Rodney Tolley:**

Dr. Tolley has taught and researched in the sustainable transport field at Staffordshire University for over 30 years. He has authored and edited a number of books, most notably “The Greening of Urban Transport: Planning for Walking and Cycling in Western Cities” and has published many papers over the years. He is Conference Director of Walk21, a global partnership of walking experts, and was a founder member of the Steering Group for Walk21. He provides a consultancy service to many clients in the UK and overseas including Australia and New Zealand. Through these activities he has a unique oversight of best practice in planning for walking in the UK, Europe and across the world.

**Jacky Kennedy, Director, Canada Walks, Green Communities Canada, [www.canadawalks.ca](http://www.canadawalks.ca):**

Since 1993 Jacky has worked in the non-profit sector to promote and encourage people to walk and she has worked extensively with municipalities to encourage them to create great walking environments. Jacky developed and implemented Ontario’s Active & Safe Routes to School program (in its 15th year) and is the lead on the national dissemination of School Travel Planning. Jacky has been involved in many successful, sustainable community projects: co-hosting Walk21 Toronto 2007 with the City of Toronto, the Canadian Walkability Roadshow, the Walk21 YWALK Global Youth Forum, the 2007 World Record Walk and the 2009 Walking Master Class. Jacky’s background is in project management but her children motivated her to join the environmental movement.

**Andrea Baker, Project Coordinator, Health Promotion, Disease and Injury Prevention, Alberta Health Services:**

Andrea led the Alberta Walkability Roadshow project on behalf of Alberta Health Services. She acted as liaison between the team and the communities to facilitate the implementation of the Roadshow in each community. Andrea worked closely with communities to provide them with any support required in preparation for the Roadshow in their community. During the Roadshow Andrea represented AHS within communities and provided support to the Roadshow process. She assisted in the development of the comprehensive reports provided to each participating community. Andrea’s passion for population health promotion continues in the workplace setting where she continues to positively influence modifiable risk factors for cancer and chronic disease prevention; specifically physical activity, healthy eating and healthy body weights.

**Graham Matsalla, Health Promotion Facilitator Health Promotion, Disease and Injury Prevention, Alberta Health Services:**

Graham has been working in health care for over nine years he has worked in the setting of communities and neighbourhoods which includes the promotion of active transportation and the adaptation to the built environment in an inclusive and accessible manor to support active living. Graham participated in the preparation of the team and the communities in the days leading up to the Roadshow. During the Roadshow Graham provided support to the team and to communities during the Roadshow process. He assisted in the development of the comprehensive reports provided to each participating community. Graham continues to support Alberta communities that wish to make their communities more walkable.

### **For more information:**

Graham Matsalla, Health Promotion Facilitator  
Health Promotion, Disease and Injury Prevention  
Alberta Health Services  
10101 Southport Road SW  
Calgary, AB T2W 3N2

Phone: (403)943-6781 Fax: (403)943-2211

Email: [graham.matsalla@albertahealthservices.ca](mailto:graham.matsalla@albertahealthservices.ca)

Web: [www.albertahealthservices.ca](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca)

