



# SHORELINE

C O N S U L T I N G   G R O U P

## CBAP-001 v1.0 FINAL - Public

---

Cape Breton Mountain Bike Tourism Action Plan

*Attention*

Terry Smith - Destination Cape Breton

Patrick Austin - Cape Breton Partnership

Dan Coffin - Victoria County





## Introduction

Mountain Biking is a lifestyle, sport and healthy outlet. Mountain Biking is growing into a cornerstone of major economic growth in regions which are leveraging it properly. Communities all over the world are seeing economic and community revival, quality of health on the rise, and influx of new faces bringing tourism dollars and a desire for quality experiences. Clustered communities featuring well engineered Mountain Bike experiences will keep tourists and locals exploring, thus spreading their spending throughout the region.

Cape Breton offers a unique opportunity on the world stage. As part of this study, at the time of writing, well over a dozen sites have expressed enthusiastic desire to participate in, and develop mountain bike parks and trails. This includes a glove-in-hand match with Parks Canada's long term trails master plan.

A clustered approach offers visitors a true adventure-rich vacation experience spread throughout the island leveraging the various trail systems. Clusters will serve as hubs for mountain biking and adventure sports. Being in close enough proximity to one-another, visitors will be able to easily travel between clusters, spending vacation time touring the various locations, and immersing themselves in local culture.

This approach spans all four seasons and opens many new opportunities for businesses and services to participate in accommodations, food and beverage, programming, sponsorship and events.

Our successful Mountain Bike culture involves cultivating multiple cluster regions throughout Cape Breton. These assets are made for locals and will create massive tourist draws. Marketing campaigns, promotion and rich media directed at drawing former out-migrants home, will bring new population into the region. Focus reach, and target markets will comprise a mix of the Atlantic Provinces, Quebec, Ontario, the New England region of the U.S., and various European Countries as an organic result of Destination Cape Smokey's marketing efforts overseas. Through successful marketing campaigns, we will also reach riders in Western Canada, who are oftentimes looking for reasons to visit our coast.





With the demand and popularity of Mountain Biking, and Mountain Bike culture continually on the rise, visitors will be looking for new, authentic, unique experiences and there is nowhere in the world that can put these opportunities together so beautifully than Cape Breton.

Families are embracing lifestyle and culture around mountain biking and adventures. They're often relocating to experience-rich regions as a result. Regions like Sea-To-Sky Highway in British Columbia have seen massive growth in visitors, and visitors relocating their lives around available outdoor lifestyle. Here in the Maritimes, it's been commonplace to lose wonderful people to other regions based on economic, employment and lifestyle choices primarily.

The diversity of the land for Mountain Bike Parks and Trails development in Cape Breton is simply incredible. It is what makes the Cape Breton region a mountain biker and adventurer's world-class paradise. Our ability to produce truly world-leading Mountain Bike Parks and destinations while connecting communities via trails and trail experiences in such a culturally rich region is a formula for success.

The essence of Cape Breton Mountain Bike culture should leverage the region's rich culture and heritage and highlight the beauty of the land and its majestic views. Experiences should be rich with offerings of music, food, fishing, ocean adventures and all that the region has to offer. Cape Breton Mountain Bike Culture should speak to the beauty of adventure during all four seasons.

Our winters in more northern areas of the region bear amazing snow conditions, and with proper grooming, our trail systems will be used, and programmed extensively for fat biking. They will offer more accessible terrain for other winter activities. Summer into shoulder season is perfect for mountain bike adventuring, and taking advantage of the mountain bike parks in the region.

This action plan includes definitions of key terms, and based on these, we describe tactical steps in order to build and promote Mountain Biking as an industry driver for economic growth. We identify new job opportunities, and the opportunity for new business opportunities. This plan also highlights successful communities and case studies from the industry throughout the years.

Design and creation of properly built, sustainable and safe mountain bike parks infrastructure is the foundation of this action plan. Initial interviews and discussions have been conducted with enthusiastic landowners and key stakeholders in various cluster locations. Various notes, and





stages of conversation are documented in Appendix A.

With what's really a brand new and perfect canvas for mountain bike culture development and fostering tremendous economic benefits, we are able to look around the world at successful communities. We will leverage the best aspects of the best mountain bike communities in the creation of an economically viable mountain bike tourism industry in Cape Breton.

As curators of this action plan, we are hoping to work with cluster holders in building trails, and programming. We are hoping to work with various stakeholders, facilitating private investments in supporting businesses, opening new opportunities for the area.

A dedicated team has to be formed and deployed who will forge these opportunities. This team will manage communication between communities, prepare and submit grant proposals and work with sponsors to fund these projects.

Advertising and marketing efforts need to be targeted at an enormous existing market of riders. At the onset of development, proper professionally photographed and video recorded promotional material will be crucial. Working with Destination Cape Breton, and the Cape Breton Partnership as well as the various counties to promote a cohesive product in MTB Culture will help anchor our story.

MTB Atlantic is an ACOA Based Community of Interest style platform dedicated to promotion of trails and MTB Culture in the Atlantic Provinces. We will want to lean heavily on their platform, and offer an early experience to advocates who will collect, produce and promote quality material. Dedicated platforms like Pinkbike will be pivotal in us directing the largest audience of dedicated MTBers in an online community towards our anchor content whether it be directly on Destination CB, a new sub-site of Destination CB or its own website dedicated to MTB in Cape Breton. It is our recommendation that in order to communicate a cohesive product, and illustrate the cluster concept that there be a dedicated web resource be created.



## TERMS OF REFERENCE

**MTB- Mountain Bike** - generally equipped with gears, and often equipped with suspension, typical defining characteristics of a mountain bike are a flat/minor sweep handlebar, trail-specific geometry and 1.5-2.8" wide knobby tires. A mountain bike almost always has front suspension, and many mountain bikes are available with rear suspension as well.

**FAT- Fat Tire Mountain Bike** - Primarily a Winter Bike for many in Atlantic Canada. Tires up to and over 5" wide, knobby or studded tires. I have yet to see a Fat bike with rim brakes and it is safe to say they all have disc brakes. Similar to a mountain bike you can purchase a fat bike with front or front/rear suspension. Oftentimes, fat bikes are configured with extremely low tire pressures for climbing virtually anything as well as offering some compliance on the trail.





**Trail** - A MTB Trail is typically singletrack or doubletrack in width. Typical MTB Trail would be either a loop trail, or point to point destination. Trails should have parking, basic amenities like change rooms and garbage cans. Trails should be well signed, with a concept map at key intersections and choke points. Trails should be built to a common MTB standard for safety and sustainability.

Similar to ski hills, we typically rate trails with the same color/rating system especially when it comes to more gravity-oriented trails.



**Green Circle:** Typically a smooth trail tread consisting of little to no challenging rocks or roots. Typically these trails have very gentle slopes and are accessible to all levels of rider. Oftentimes, these trails are wider to allow for learning and instructional opportunities.

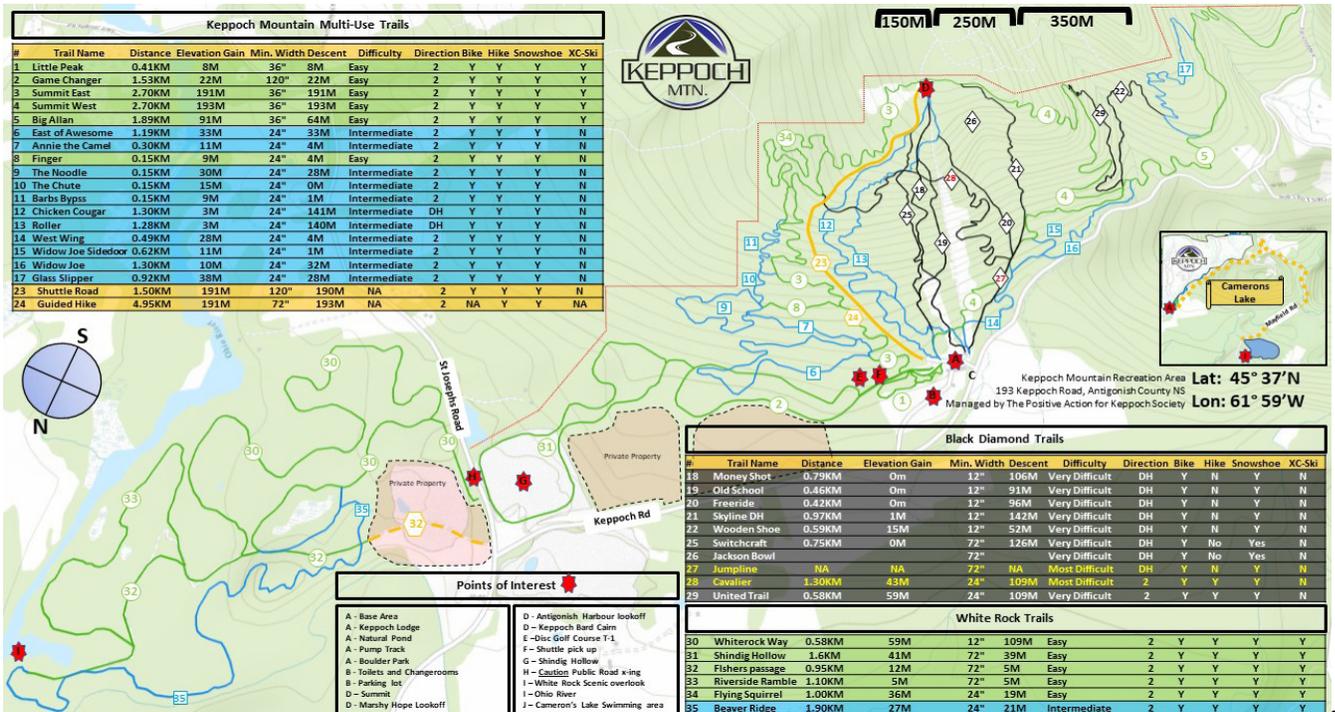
**Blue Square:** On these trails, you will still generally less difficult tread surfacing, however these trails will present some challenges for the rider. These trails will entertain all levels of rider and offer places for riders to try new and more challenging moves. These trails will often include berms and rollers with options to jump for more advanced riders. These trails will offer steeper slopes and oftentimes more exposure for the rider. Blue trails might introduce more challenging wooden features for the rider. It is important to note that these wooden features are often mimicked in adjacent MTB Parks (see below) for practice purposes allowing the rider to practice progression in a safe zone.





**Black Diamond / Double Black Diamond:** Black Diamond trails will generally present more challenging moves, steeper slopes and include berms, tabletop jumps and drops. Double Black Diamond trails will introduce everything the rider will encounter on Black Diamond plus gap jumps, more consequential drops, steeper lines and much more exposure. It is important that adjacent bike parks offer areas for riders to practice these skills and moves in safer, controlled environments.

**MTB Park** - A MTB Park typically consists of a variety of trails servicing riders of different levels and desires. Some trails would be more cross country (flatter, no jumps or high consequence \*TTFs). A MTB Park should have key parking locations, and basic amenities such as change room, garbage, trailhead signage and concept map. Trails should be signed minimally at all intersections and choke points. Oftentimes, MTB Parks will be intertwined with other parks and services, and provide on, and off-grid shelters and amenities, offering true destination camping experiences.



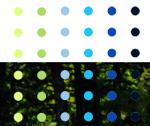


A MTB Park typically has a warm up area, or skills park which typically offers isolated \*TTFs, \*Dirt Jumps and perhaps most importantly a \*Pump Track.

**\*TTF: Technical Trail Feature** - for MTB this typically means a jump, berm shaped turn, ladder bridge, skinny bridge, rock armored crossing/bridge or teeter totter.

**\*Dirt Jumps:** Bicycle oriented jumps built and designed with safety and rider progression in mind. Riders use the jumps to learn air-awareness, and build confidence on their bikes. Some riders learn tricks, while others simply add jumping to a repertoire of skills often translated to features on the trail.

**\*Pump Track:** Sine Wave dirt (or asphalt) with large berms designed to allow riders to ride without pedaling at all. Speed is made by pumping up and down the sine wave dirt “rollers” and through the berms. Pump Track Riding has recently become an international sport with a Pump Track World Championship. Pump Tracks offer an amazing coaching opportunity where coaches can isolate rider skills, and help them learn in a controlled, and safe environment.





**Cluster:** A grouping of trails, bike-friendly services and supporting amenities within a close geographical proximity. Schools and other educational facilities to be named as part of clusters as well where applicable. Each cluster starts with a MTB Park with trails for all levels, and learning. Clusters must offer nearby food and beverage services. Clusters must also offer lodging and camping nearby. Cultural, sports, adventure and retail events and services round out the cluster experience. Within, and around clusters - many supportive bike-friendly businesses have offerings of unique experiences. These experiences, offerings and services provide world-class experiences for our tourists and locals alike.

**Scope:** While the scope of this document is limited to selected businesses, landowners and potential stakeholders on Cape Breton Island, it is our intention that each stakeholder type in the various vertical markets within each cluster will be able to follow repeatable steps in order to grow the cluster, and promote the growth of MTB culture.

The same abstraction is recommended for new areas on the island as they reach adequate density of trails, support and interest such that the area will support being a MTB cluster in and of itself.

We will work with local, provincial and federal funding sources and sponsors in order to support such growth and activity on Cape Breton Island. Each cluster and landowner situation is unique. Some clusters will self-fund, while others will fund-raise, and seek grant assistance. This action plan needs to support all methods of creation of world-class trails as the key - and primary driver for MTB Tourism.

This document will present a common set of standards in order to create a collective of communities (clusters) participating in the growth of Mountain Bike Tourism as an Economic Driver on Cape Breton Island, as well as a particular set of actions for various verticals. A community of clusters which bolster and support each other, create economic and job opportunities, and bring healthy options for locals. These options will draw in both tourists and permanent residents prioritizing lifestyle as they make decisions around residency. This economy is designed to stretch well into, and through shoulder seasons into winter, providing a whole new audience with which to leverage.



## Outcomes and Goals

To build a thriving Mountain Bike Tourism Economy. This includes offerings of world-class bike parks and trails, experiences and culture, adding value for both locals and tourists.

To extend and bolster the tourism season by offering and promoting activities into, and through shoulder & winter seasons with a strong presence of Mountain Bike and Fat Bike events and programming. Programming to include competition, fun events, private training and guides, and in-school opportunities.

To build revenue streams through the creation and promotion of complimentary infrastructure opportunities such as rentals, retail, trips, experiences, new business, programming, education etc.

To create new jobs in the region and help retain youth, talent and passion in the area. To draw talent back home, and new talent to the area in order to foster further community development in the region.

To identify missing cluster components, and provide insight on how communities can scale to having them.

To identify action steps from funding through construction and delivery to promotion of the Mountain Bike Experience in Cape Breton and its ultimate success.

Building the region as a mountain bike mecca won't happen overnight. A smaller trail network consisting of 8-10km of cross country trails could be built in 8-10 weeks where a bike park with 9 trails will take 2-3 years of building during the prime months. Then it's a matter of maintenance, and continuing to build based on user feedback and emerging trends. Areas like bicycle skills parks can be built in 1-3 weeks including asphalt pump tracks. Mountain bikers are itching to export Cape Breton, and being proactive with marketing will be crucial in successful development.

It is realistic for us to focus on two parks and 1-3 trail systems per year. Goals include scaling and training trusted locals, developing a strong force of professional builders. Off season projects for builders will include sighting and scouting new trails, grooming trails and working together to build, execute and promote events.



## Understanding the Numbers

Through the examination of some of the more successful Mountain Bike clusters we have extrapolated key metrics from data collected over the years. Mountain biking as an industry is on the rise. The industry was in such high demand at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, that it has experienced a 70-80% growth and hold pattern. Many of the study conclusions involve mention of being virtually incalculable as forecasts were often exceeded by 3-6x.

Study highlights listed below are based on a 2014 cumulative study performed by Mountain Bike Advocate, Lawyer and Spokesperson Lee Lau identifying top level metrics around who the average mountain biker is:

Predominantly male (approx 75%)

25-45 years old (approx 65-70% on a bell curve distribution with tails dropping off dramatically on each end except in Moab and Whistler where there were a significant amount of younger travelers). 19-29 year olds are generally the second largest category at approx 27%.

A majority (55%) had household income levels greater than \$80,000. As a data point 31% of all BC outdoor recreationalists had household income levels greater than \$80,000. Mountain biking visitors were generally in line with all tourists to Canada going on guided tours (59% had incomes of greater than \$100,000)

Average stay at each location 3 to 5 days (longer if the visitor is from far away; shorter if the visitor is from close by)

Average spend per day \$60-\$100 (inclusive of accommodations food, recreation, etc but exclusive of travel costs to get to a destination)

A few key changes since this time have occurred. Families are participating in Mountain Biking much more, and there has been major growth of sport among Women. Women's Groups in particular breaking down a key barrier the industry had been facing since its inception.





In a much more recent 2018 study performed by IMBA (International Mountain Bike Association), Travel Oregon, the state's tourism authority and home to Bronze Level Ride Center, Oakridge has reported the following:

**17.4 M people visited Oregon**

**4.5 M visitors rode a bike while visiting**

**1.5 M planned on riding before they came**

**Overnight cycling visitors spend 8X more than day travelers**

This highlights a high priority which needs to be placed on accommodations and services participating in various levels of bike friendly business practice. Stretching that day trip around the Cabot Trail into a vacation full of memorable adventure experiences is key for this process.

This same study highlights how strong of a component Mountain Biking is of a successful adventure tourism economy:

**6.1 million American jobs**

**\$646 billion in outdoor recreation spending each year**

**\$39.9 billion in federal tax revenue**

**\$39.7 billion in state/local tax revenue**

This is in a region where a *\$12.3 billion (US)* adventure tourism industry has created over *115,400 jobs*.

A 2014 Economic Impact Study (EIS) from Squamish, BC highlights 40% of the visitors staying overnight with an average length of stay of 2.5 nights. This average overnight user was spending approximately \$215 per person per trip while a day user would spend avg \$37/day. This highlights the needs for accommodation and evening entertainment and programming options among other service offerings. Based on those 2014 numbers in the region of Squamish - Weekend MTB Tourists injected a calculated over \$4M.





A 2019 report by Bhudak Consulting focused on the Northern Highlands region including portions of Victoria County and Inverness County which includes much of the surrounding area. The focus of this report highlights the varying areas with a focus on the Northern Region as being a potentially world-class destination for outdoor adventure. The absolutely stunning backdrop for adventure tourism has the potential to support many activities - mountain biking being a primary activity among those with large tourism draws. With specific reference to the East-Side facing slopes above Bay St-Lawrence Road, the Bhudak report highlights this area in particular as a potential mountain biking destination for the area. The Bhudak report then delves deeper into general trail locations, and how trail construction might happen with access from various points. The report also highlights the North Highlands Nordic Ski Club area would be a fantastic location for more gentle MTB trails with access to basic amenities in the various buildings on campus. This area is also highlighted in Appendix A.

The Bhudak report highlights the importance of timing and other opportunities being provided currently and into the future as a result of the development of Cape Smokey. This product in the region is an anchor which will be marketed internationally, and all of the proponents of this project stand to gain economically, perform adequate renovations and updates, and gain an ability to stay open profitably through all four seasons.

“Tourism as a whole is one of the largest and most important industries in the world. According to [investalberta.ca](http://investalberta.ca), in Canada (2018) tourism has generated CAD 6.4 B[1] in traveler expenditure (33 M travelers). Tourism is frequently overlooked as a country’s export. Memories and experiences people bring back from their holidays stay with them for a significant period of time and shape their view of the country itself. As the old saying goes, there is no second chance to make a first impression. Cape Breton - with its stunning scenery is a real gem in the heart of Nova Scotia. It is one reason why many families visit Nova Scotia every year (2.43 million[2] visitors annually). The Cabot Trail itself attracts around 300 thousand visitors in the summer with limited infrastructure and major attractions in the area.

*These tourists come from all around the world. Looking at the statistics of Cape Breton Highlands National Park of Canada, we can say with certainty that around 30% of these tourists were not Canadian citizens. This number is somewhat stagnant.”*



We are seeing similar patterns in all of the studies with the economic impacts having ramped up more over the past 3 years with so many regions investing heavily in MTB infrastructure. Every report we have studied shows a distinct commonality: properly built and programmed MTB and adventure tourism clusters coupled with terrain and culture and proactive marketing and promotions are sure fire anchors for successful economies. Properly executed, this action plan will net massive and direct gains in opportunities for all parties involved from private landowners through to Parks Canada.

Our clustered approach will retain visitors for longer periods of time, participating in more activities spreading more visitor spending throughout the region. We are seeing similar successes in New Brunswick, Vallée Bras-Du-Nord - Québec, Blue Mountain - Ontario and throughout multiple regions of the Rockies and British Columbia. Cluster regions doing it right have been on the rise, and constantly exceeding economic and participatory expectations in studies.

This surge in mountain bike infrastructure and participation will drive further success with other adventure tourism opportunities, give businesses of all types around the Cabot Trail the opportunity to stay open all year and drive new economic success in the region.



*The Sedona MTB Festival is a Family-Friendly Mountain Bike Festival which takes place annually in Sedona, Arizona. In 2017, the festival brought in \$2.8M USD for the city of Sedona.*





## Why here, and Why Now?

Coupled with a steady surge in popularity for outdoor experiences and cultural events in the region, the current developments happening within Cape Smokey have included the announcement of mountain bike trails as an addition to their offering of 50 adventure experiences on the hill.

Timing is more important than ever for the region to cultivate MTB experiences. Having multiple clusters, and making the whole entire region a destination is not only great for tourism, but local communities will thrive. Mountain biking will breathe a healthy and vibrant breath of vitality into the region.

Many of the forecasted residents of the new Cape Smokey will be coming from European countries. In many European countries, it is common culture to travel by bike, or travel from destination to destination to ride trail systems. This is an experience we are essentially building through this process. By clustering communities within close enough reach of one another, and tying them together with rich cultural, adventure and retail experiences it is all types of MTB riders, groups and families who will spend their vacation time, and often purchase real estate or move their entire families to the region. MTB is a very accessible activity, and riders from all walks of life and age can participate.

It is at this time that we know other international investor eyes are on the region. These opportunities will breathe further life, and help to improve or supply new aspects of outdoor culture opportunities to the region. Mountain biking is on the rise, and done properly, this is about much more than building a park or a trail, it's about building a sustainable thriving economy rife with opportunities for new employment, and investment.

We are seeing immense growth of the sport in the region in facilities like Keppoch, Wentworth, Ski Poley, Campbellton, NB, Rockwood Park NB and Fundy Park. There is a rise in MTB as a cultural phenomenon in the region, and with the trails and clusters to support staying local, we will provide years of experience for our own Atlantic Travelers. The Cape Breton, and Cabot Trail experience is unparalleled in the region. This is more than the cliché saying "if you build it, they will come" - based on every encounter we have had within this project from potential landowner to MTB advocate to hobby rider, racer and everyone in between. It's decided that Cape Breton IS the place for MTB.





All of the interviewed cluster stakeholders have expressed a resounding interest in participating in this program.

One land-holder has already extended an offer for a land-use agreement, and another has expressed that this would be their number one choice in how to utilize a large amount of their land and subsequent on-site infrastructure. Another has expressed this as their #1 interest for what to do with their land. Another has suggested they will be requesting quotes for their first trail(s) in the late-winter/spring. Another has suggested extreme openness, a desire to see this plan and have an external business partner manage the MTB business. All have agreed that this will be amazing, especially when it becomes cultural in the region.

## What's Working Where, and Why?

Looking across Canada in particular, there are various levels of success for mountain biking. Canada contains arguably the most successful mountain bike park in the world. Why is that?

### Whistler

Arguably and statistically the most successful bike park in the world, Whistler has fostered and anchored growth of MTB in so many ways. In 2011, Whistler reported that MTB overnight visits had exceeded those of golf visitors with more than 100,000 MTB visits<sup>1</sup>. This is an important comparison to note in this study. With MTB being such a family oriented activity, areas like Whistler often see those same individuals who may have come to the village with one group of four friends to golf now taking their whole family to the village to golf and mountain bike. This shift in how groups often travel, coupled with exponential growth in the industry now sees Whistler's summer business representing 60% of their years' business with winter at 40%. Consumer spending in Whistler is currently measured at \$1.44bn annually.

A similar 2016 economic study states MTB being attributable to \$46.6m in visitor spending and supported \$75.9m in economic activity in the province of BC.





**Crankworx** is a 10 day festival hosted in Whistler village. The festival features several internationally acclaimed riding events culminating in a massive slopestyle stunt course riders perform absolutely mind-boggling tricks on their bikes and are ranked.

*This keystone event (2015 Data) generated total net economic activity (GDP) of \$16.1 million for Canada as a whole; \$13.7 million for B.C. and \$8.6 million for the Regional Municipality of Whistler. Crankworx began in 2003 (originally called Whistler Summer Gravity Fest).*

*Crankworx has the largest economic impact of all the events in Whistler.*

Contrasted with Crankworx 2016, the festival saw 533,000 rides taken in Whistler and 102,500 visits to Whistler from out of town mountain bikers. It pegged the total net economic activity (GDP) generated by mountain biking in Whistler at \$46.8 million for Canada as a whole: \$39.3 million for B.C. and \$25.2 million for the RMOW.

The year over year growth of the festival alone is staggering. Crankworx Whistler 2020 has been canceled due to Covid-19.

Below is a quick overview of data for the festival from 2019:

Crankworx Whistler by the numbers (2019):

- Days: 10
- Spectators: 310,000+
- Red Bull Joyride spectators: 35,000
- Pro Athletes: 1324
- Kidsworx Competitors: 946
- Volunteers: 360
- Events: 22



With key metrics measured in room-nights per visit, the region has exceeded its occupancy goals of 60% year over year. A key factor is demand and the sought-after quality experience of Whistler. Growth of accommodations along with their platforms for rental has fostered a huge surge of independently owned opportunities for visitors to not only stay in hotels, but rent houses, condos, trailers, vans and whatever it is their experience desires. Summer operations and vacation plans are much less dependent on things like snow conditions which really helps when it comes to comfort of investment or investment in infrastructure, retention of staff as well as program offerings.



Whistler has been successful in offering off-peak programming and events such as wine tours and community events. It's maintained a strong focus on its loyal tourists from the region and was experiencing some challenges with this particular tourist profile primarily due to pricing. 2019 saw a slight decline in locals, however 2020 through the pandemic, local support has been soaring for the park.

The village has always had a strong focus in international marketing with contingents from Switzerland, Netherlands, Singapore, Taiwan, Mexico and Indonesia complimenting an always-strong U.S. tourist presence. With the potential bonus of Cape Smokey marketing to European and Czech tourists, all stand to immensely broaden their draw by working together and marketing a cohesive product across the Cape Breton region.

Everywhere you go in the village is bike-friendly. People love the vibe + experience combined with customer service. They're participating in kayak tours, hikes, zip-lining and helicopter tours. They're visiting and staying in the village and in neighboring areas depending on pricing and availability. It is extremely common to see pockets of, or even professional riding teams congregating in the park or ripping down trails. This creates even more of a draw through organic marketing and social media and is common-place in particular around events.

*Crankworx has the largest economic impact of all the events in Whistler contributing \$16.1 million to Canada's GDP (2015 Data)*

*Image: <https://daily-hive.com/vancouver/crankworx-mountain-bike-whistler-2019>*





A challenge for the park has been perceived increase in costs vs value of offering. As prices go up, that regular customer has to see the value in renovations, upgrades and new trails. This is absolutely necessary in order for the customer to repeat their experience.

As a bike park, a massive factor in Whistler's success is location. The Sea to Sky Corridor is abundant in world class MTB experiences all the way from Vancouver to the world-famous North Shore (of Vancouver), Squamish, Whistler and Pemberton. A perfect example of clustering, offering something in all seasons, but really capitalizing on the rich offerings of MTB and various economic spin off activities. Whistler offers a plethora of trail and park experiences from beginner to pro and everything from cross country through to some of the steepest, gnarliest trails one might seek out.

#### Sources:

<https://www.destinationbc.ca/content/uploads/2018/08/Mountain-Bike-Tourism-TBE-Destination-BC.pdf>

<https://www.mbta.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/2016-Whistler-Mountain-Biking-Economic-Impact-Study.pdf>

## Kingdom Trails

Burke, Vermont - USA. Kingdom Trails is a network of trails spanning four counties, and land owned by 97 different landowners. There were issues due to potential liability recently solved. A swath of landowners smack dab in the middle of the trails had halted access based on liability and land-use agreements. An active community and locals banded together to bring the landowners together and offer insurance (additional named) for all of the individual landowners.

This highlights the importance of land-use agreements at the onset of discussions for trail construction.

Kingdom Trails (USA) now boasts over 100 miles to roam. Trail users represent \$10 million (USD) estimated economic impact and/or direct spending, with an average of \$115 per day per person staying just under 3 days. With Quebec, Ontario and New Hampshire so close by, there's a real draw to, and then away from Kingdom Trails once you're done. The trails are managed by a Non Profit group. The group puts in thousands of hours in maintenance, new trail development and winter grooming making the region a year-around success.



The region has been bursting with growth. A 2016 economic study shows that these four trail systems alone (Kingdom Trails) generated \$29.6 m (USD). These numbers include sales of trail tickets, rentals, etc., and the activities recreationalists love doing before and after hitting the trails, such as visiting a nearby brewery or grabbing a bite to eat. This same study shows that the trail networks are directly attributable to 325 jobs and \$5.6 million is spent on food and drink annually in local communities along the various local trail systems.

#### Sources:

<https://vtdigger.org/2016/11/30/new-study-shows-trail-networks-add-millions-state-economy/>

## Clusters and Categories

For the purposes of this planning document, the reference to a cluster is meant to include an area with one or more key Mountain Bike Parks or Trails, and needs to have all or many of the amenities and services, infrastructure and supports close by. Each will work the other clusters to promote a cohesive regional experience. For the purposes of fostering

MTB Culture in the Cape Breton region, it is suggested that we cross-promote and embed Cape Breton culture in our flavor of MTB. With road-trip styled travels in mind, our geographical layout of initial suggestions for clusters opens up so many opportunities for day trips, overnights, and multiple day adventures in and between cluster regions. Keeping the regions close, also lessens the average driving time between locations. This becomes ultimately important as clusters cross-promote each other, and help engineer experiences for visitors spanning multiple days into weeks.

Clustered regions attract riders first for the ride, then for the food and cultural events





Each cluster should offer on-trail, food + beverage, social experiences as well as accommodations. Each cluster should promote both its own, and complimentary local offerings, coupled with the experiences and services of other clusters. It is important for each cluster to offer the basics at very least. Well signed trails, well informed locals, quality retail and service for equipment. It is key for the culture to communicate the camaraderie of supporting one another as a tight-knit region. Cohesive messaging around keeping the region clean, and riding responsibly should be part of the core messaging.

Regional Cluster Preparation: Throughout the region, there is a clean slate to begin with. While certain more populated areas within the cluster offer more services, food and accommodations - there is a distinct pattern which needs to be applied regionally.

The first and most crucial element to balance in this action plan is the creation of trails and parks in the clusters in tandem with service and programming development. Regionally, to deploy the action items in this plan, each cluster has similar obligations to perform. With the creation of these assets across clusters, programming has to begin from schools through recreation and tourism programming in to events both competitive and non competitive. Supporting this growth and shift it is imperative that visitors have ample and updated accommodations, entertainment, food, education, rental and retail options. Much of these items need to happen in tandem across regions, and some will require additional financial investment in infrastructure and staffing resources. Each cluster must be able to serve itself as a stand-alone MTB destination while bolstering other clusters by way of promotion and proximity.

It is crucial that keystone programming events cross physical clusters and share audience across the region. It is critical that each cluster promote the concept and therefore other clusters as a holistic product.

Put in action, each cluster requires design of trails and systems. Implementation of each highlighted action item as the region is essentially starting with a blank canvas where MTB and MTB tourism are concerned. Direct economic benefits like trail fees, goods and services, accommodation and equipment rentals, and linking communities will help drive further development. Execution of this action plan will foster many new economic and positive lifestyle spin offs in the region, bringing new visitors and permanent residents.



**Infrastructure: Trails** - Assessment of existing trail infrastructure and potential new trails needs to be considered as a cornerstone of this project. Trails need to be constructed sustainably, risks professionally mitigated, and the trails need to be well maintained.

Trails need to cater to varying skill levels from the family of riders and beginners through to skilled riders seeking variety and challenge. Most importantly, many riders coming to our region will be seeking our destinations and spectacular views.

There is a relative split between the destination tourist rider, and the rider looking for riding challenges. Properly developed trail systems will be planned around all of these varying levels of rider, and rider expectation.

Drainage, and ability for trails to be used in all weather conditions is necessary. Destinations should be designed into the trails and give the ability to market the journey to the destination as part of the experience.

Networks of interconnected trails will be referred to as MTB Parks throughout this document. Distance trails connecting points will be referred to as connector trails.

They are multi-use and these trails are often built by and maintained by volunteer groups. MTB Parks and dedicated MTB trails carry more risk and therefore potential liability and should be designed and primarily built by an insured experienced professional team.

**TrailHead** - Development of destination locations requires properly developed trail heads which include parking and safe places to change. As a bonus, water / toilets, food / beverage,





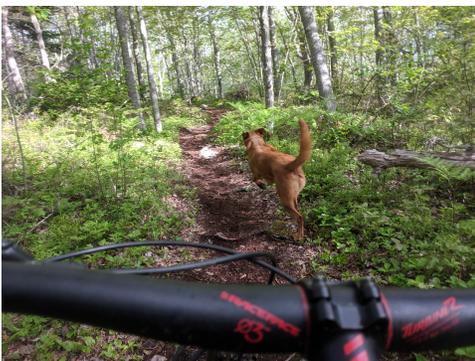
entertainment etc are present on site. Recommended at all trailhead locations are a basic tool caddy/corral structure providing the basics of bike repair. If there is the ability for a bike cleaning station, it is highly recommended that trailheads include a mechanism for riders to easily clean their bikes. Oftentimes, trailhead locations will include warm up and skills zones including but not limited to jumps and ramps, drop offs in controlled environments and pump track(s).

**Trail Signage** - Trails should be signed, and well maintained. Proper signage provides a safe method of way finding for users through and between trail systems. Trails will often be located in remote areas and it is in these areas, or in areas with intersecting trails that extra focus must be placed on signage and safety. Signs offer a chance for communication. All communication within trail signs should lead with a message related to “pack it in pack it out”, as from the onset we want to maintain clean environments. Signs also offer sponsorship opportunities especially at trailheads, and key locations.

**TTFs** - Technical Trail Features include jumps, drops, rolling grade changes and oftentimes wooden boardwalks of varying degrees of challenge. At most major trailheads we recommend building bicycle skills parks which will include TTFs and Pump Tracks where riders can practice, and coaches can work with riders on specific skills. It is typical that TTFs designed in parks are similar to those challenges riders might find on their trails.

### Cluster Locations

As indicated, there have been numerous meetings with potential public and private stakeholders including Cape Smokey and Parks Canada. The following is a map denoting the potential cluster locations.



## Key Cluster Regions

**Parks Canada** - Cape Breton Highlands National Park (Ingonish & Cheticamp + Community Connector Trails) - CB Highlands National Park offers diverse terrain throughout the region, and the ability to connect various MTB Park locations by trail due to its location. It is important to note that trails built by the parks staff will be multi-use and largely double track. Alternate solutions for building and maintaining singletrack trails will be required. Funding these trails as their own operational units will be key for longevity.

**Baddeck** - The lowland region offers exceptional views of the Bras D'or Lakes. Extensive ATV trail networks already exist and connect the region to the highlands. Once riders reach Baddeck, they are able to enter the highlands via the Baddeck Bridge and Hunter's Mountain service roads. Baddeck will serve as a key cluster, offering a wonderful tourist experience rife with local amenities and rich cultural experiences including festivals, acting as an anchor for events like the Cabot Trail relay. As a gateway to the highlands Baddeck needs to offer guiding, retail, educational and community riding experiences. With so many levels of accommodations, food and beverage - Baddeck is a likely stop for road tourists in both directions. Bolstering the area with a keystone bike park and skills area is necessary and will be programmed by schools as much as it will be used by tourists.

### **Iona/Baddeck/Whycocomagh/Wagmatcook**

We have some land owner interest in the Iona region for usage of lands in a more sustainable and quiet manner. This would be a fantastic fit for destination style trails in the region directed at singletrack experiences for MTB and hikers looking for a more rugged experience. Access to Margaree area through the highlands via Whycocomagh is also possible. This region features rich cultural heritage which needs to be highlighted. Business opportunities need to be seeded right in the region complimenting what is already there, and proving to be a success. Post ride experiences like Big Spruce offering entertainment, food and beverage need to be fostered. The combination of first nations cultural and heritage experiences with mountain biking via trails promoting exploration of the area in such a sustainable and healthy manner .





**Ingonish** - Cape Smokey will be offering up to 50 different adventure and recreational activities - MTB being one of the core offerings in all seasons including winter events. It is highly recommended that the town itself take advantage of its ability to connect directly to Cape Smokey via community trails eventually complimented by a network of singletrack trails offering the same commute. This will help tie the town and the hill together, and offer low traffic options all year round with ski/skidoo in the winter, and hike/bike in the summer months. The town of Ingonish needs to commit to the process of working with Parks Canada and situating a progressive bike park in the area. This will offer visitors and locals a place to practice, and help with cultural links between the town itself and the new destination at Cape Smokey which is poised to drastically ameliorate the region.

**Aspy Region** - Perhaps the most understated cluster opportunity in the whole region, the Aspy region is an absolute wonderland. With the North Highlands Center as an anchor, the opportunity to join areas through the park, and into the Aspy fault area will truly breathe four seasons of awesome into the region. Aspy stands a chance to be an adventure capital of the world. Careful conversations need to happen with established landowners, moose guides and hunting families. This region will be the most complex in political nature, but it is past time for these complex discussions to happen, and the appropriate people brought to the table to discuss the future of the next generations where it comes to land-use and the growth of MTB as a culture and industry in the region.

**Cheticamp** - With the National Park as an anchor and the ability to connect to Cheticamp via the Highlands Roads network, Cheticamp is a real destination offering a true CB experience with a rich Acadian flare. Placement of a robust MTB Park in the area is key to help with cultural integration. This park needs to connect to trail systems.

**Inverness/Margaree** - There are numerous amazing offerings from top-notch golf and pub experiences through to entertainment in the area. With deep roots in fishing and a large focus in the Margaree area on the river itself, there is a huge adventure-oriented audience already passing through. Complementing their desired offering with a MTB Park and connector trails will breathe a whole new dimension of life into the area. This area sees good traffic in the winter months with Skidoo adventurers and is rife with opportunity for





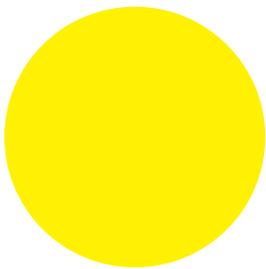
MTB/Fat and events in the winter.

**Sydney** - CBRM has openly said they're looking to participate in the growth of MTB and outdoor adventure culture as a regional offering. Early-stage conversations are happening around the building of a MTB Park in the core of the city. Ben Eoin as a host site stands the most to gain in the region. With the ability to offer everyone in the family something to do in all four seasons it's a sure-fire formula for success. Unfortunately there are some deep political issues we hope that the realization of MTB as a solution can help to fix.

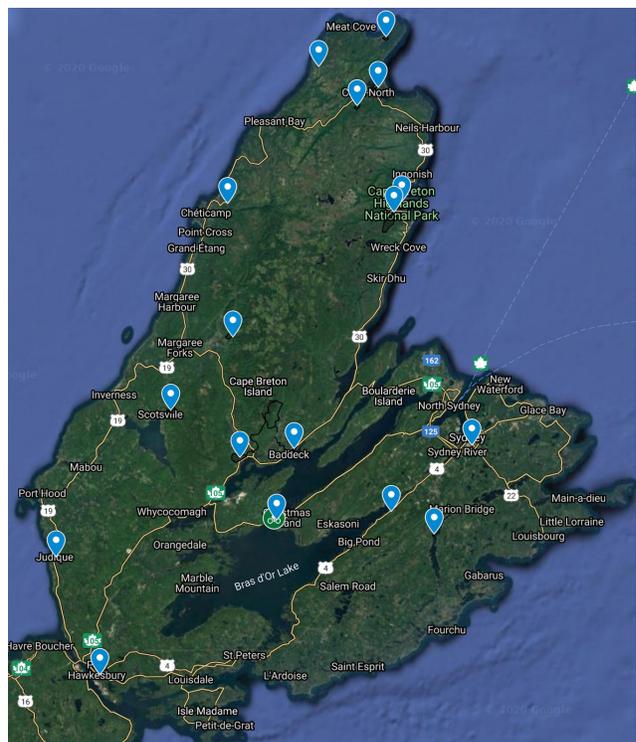
## Amenities & Services

**Lodging** - MTB riders are riding hard, and generally playing hard. At the end of the day, they're looking for comfortable and clean accommodations and healthy meal choices. Lodging should be bicycle friendly and either offer a ground level secure storage area, or lockers. Riders should be presented with a space to clean and perform basic service on their bikes. Staff should have an understanding of local trails, and other bike friendly businesses.

Parking should be well lit, and there should be an easy transition from vehicle to cleaning to storage for bikes. Transition from vehicle through check-in and in to room should be smooth and allow for a potentially "dirty" rider to not feel unwelcome. Simple things like washable mat or even a welcome spot to sit and remove dirty footwear are extremely welcome and



*A clustered approach in Cape Breton for Mountain Bike Tourism presents enormous opportunity for healthy lifestyle and strong tourism additions which will keep people in Cape Breton for more of their vacations, spending more and seeing more places.*



supportive.

Inside the rooms should be maps depicting what some ideal day-trips might look like in the region, and how to link communities together best for best experience.

Having supportive, pleasant and unique experiences with regards to lodging is key to bringing back repeat visitors.

**Food** - It's got to be good. MTB/FAT riders are working up healthy appetites, and often traveling in families or groups. Typically riders are snacking during rides. Often on trips, groups who are riding together will eat together, and this is often where subsequent plans manifest.

Groups will want healthy choices, and where possible to have options for cultural classics (i.e. In-Season Lobster or Fish meals). It is important that hospitality be extended to groups even if they're still in riding gear.

Having a well-visible, and safe bike rack or parking with reasonable visibility to cars is key. Having good beer / drinks on the menu is crucial. Riders of age will often want to sample local beer and drinks after a good ride.

**Culture and Entertainment** - Cape Breton Culture is unique. Warm, hospitable, and memorable. We need to lift culture and entertainment up, and get locals involved. Having our locals excited for these opportunities will foster that cultural resonance which creates the authentic experience.

Being welcomed in a region often comes with cultural experiences. Whether focused around music, food or entertainment - these experiences anchor the trip, and help seal the deal when it comes to planning subsequent trips, sharing or referring a trip to others. Those on-trail and in-store experiences with locals are as culturally relevant as a kilt and bagpipe morning serenade. The culture has to embrace those coming in, and help to guide them to the right experiences outside their riding as well.

Experiences round out the trip. The group or individual has come to ride, and be immersed in the culture and beauty. The experiences on this trip need to allow people to be themselves, and find what they seek. The adventure seeker needs to kayak, hike, zip-line and visit the Tree Walk when they're not riding, being entertained or sleeping. The experiences need to be authentic and safe. They need to speak to, and exceed expectations.

**Retail** - The typical MTB/FAT Tourist will have retail requirements. Those might be replacing a bike part, or buying souvenirs for people back home. It's key for tourists to be able to find





things they want and need. Various facets from bicycle and clothing shops to souvenirs, music stores and museums will offer retail experiences. These experiences should be complementary and connected to the cluster.

If a particular area has a signature trail, view or brewery then tourists might want a T Shirt or Post Card or a box of beer as a souvenir.

## Required Supports

**Marketing** - A key component of successful execution is establishing a cohesive brand for Cape Breton + Mountain Biking which fits in and compliments other adventure tourism verticals already in place, or being introduced in the region. From robust online reach and strong brand recognition through actual roadside signage - the marketing needs to be consistent, and world-class.

Presenting the region as a cohesive offering of adventure tourism zones helps capitalize on individual marketing spends. We need to be able to join similar experiences in the adventure tourism realm together. Ideally with one key website that helps all operators function on somewhat equal footing when it comes to pre-sales, packaging, group promotion and cross-promotion of MTB Adventure Tourism and Adventure Tourism Culture in general on Cape Breton Island.

**Branding** - A cohesive brand to present to the audience is key. This message has to be portrayed as a cohesive offering where travelers can participate in world class MTB trips, adventures and vacations. These need to be tied together with jaw-dropping drives, food, entertainment, cultural experiences and exciting retail offerings. Fundamentals of the brand should include pack-it-in-pack-it-out messaging and how the region is amazing in all four seasons.

## Employment and Career Opportunities

Marketing the region not only to attract visitors, but to attract business operators and service providers. As a result, there are opportunities to create many new jobs, adding to new





economic opportunities and oftentimes bringing former locals home.

**Ride Guide (day trips)** - Mechanically competent, and effective in keeping a bike running smoothly. These individuals will be First Aid and PMBIA Certified or equivalent and have an excellent understanding of the region they're working within. Ride Guides are regional marketers and ambassadors. Ride Guides have the opportunity to assess and understand client needs and provide the guidance they might require after the ride. In a cluster environment, it's important that the guides are included in communications, and have a solid understanding of social and other events in the region.

**Trip Planning/Trip Guide (endurance / multi day)** - Multi-Faceted individuals with all of the skills of a ride guide, plus abilities to entertain and prepare meals. Trip guides should be familiar with other offerings within their cluster and surrounding regions. Trip guides are on the ground marketers with the ability to make or break a guided experience. Valued assets, they will assist in marketing their own offering as well as others in the region. Guides will be focused on safe, epic experiences. This offering caters extremely well to an international audience once travel sanctions are lifted. Guided experiences can be marketed with varying levels of support from fully supported and catered to self-sufficient. Lodging, meals and entertainment can be a part of this offering, and really help tie the around the island experience together.

**MTB Skills Coach** - Generally have a background or past in racing with good depth of experience as a rider. PMBIA Certification or equivalent is highly desirable if not a requirement. Coaches should be working together in order to prepare similar itineraries which prepare riders for local trails. In each cluster, coaches will need some form of skills zone to help assess riders. Skills zones are often built near trailheads, and offer wooden bridges and drops, jumps and often pump tracks all built in a controlled, safe environment with coaching in mind.

**Trail Designer** - These trails need to be the best. Trails will be a key differentiator for this action plan. Trails need to be designed in a safe and cohesive manner bearing in mind the varying levels of riders. A trail designer needs to bridge the gaps between concept





and ideas when it comes to trail design. The designer builds the overall concept for trail alignments and should be part of the build crew. Trail designs should all compliment each other when it comes to trail systems in the various clusters. In order to stand on the world podium as a MTB Tourism Destination, the trails have to be as memorable as the views and experiences. This starts with solid design and understanding of the larger picture to eventually link clusters via trail wherever possible.

**Trail Builder** - On the ground, builders and teams of builders will construct sustainable trails to, and beyond specifications. Many specifications have been developed around the world. Our teams have had great success implementing a hybrid of Whistler Trail Standards and International Mountain Bike Association's IMBA Trail Standards.

**Trail Maintenance** - This is where so many parks and trail systems fall behind and it really can negatively impact user experience, and ultimately desired return rates. Trails need to be maintained and routinely inspected and inventoried for deficiencies. Trail maintenance crews need to be able to communicate closures, construction and potential on-trail concerns to users whether it be via signage, information available at check-in centers or regular trail updates on a centralized website.

**Bicycle service and Sales** - The creation of MTB Clusters will need to include service and sales. Bike shops are integral parts of MTB communities which need to help plug patrons in to the local trail experiences available.

**Bicycle Rentals** - Bicycle rentals need to be available throughout the island. Oftentimes, bicycle service and retail locations provide rental options. As an example business opportunity, a Bicycle Rental service will require competent service-people and easy access to trails unless delivery/pick up service is to be offered. A bicycle rental center would be responsible for fitting and equipment quality as well as keeping fleet equipment in top maintained condition. Each bicycle rental center should have great knowledge of the local trails and guide services available (if not, offer them). Bicycle rental centers can be hubs of interest. Each center would employ 1-4 individuals scaling more around busier times. During winter months, these same outfitters should be offering fat bike rentals and guide services + other adventure equipment. Bicycle rental centers should stock up-to-date inventory, and cycle through it by way of annual sales.



**Event Host** - An integral part of the action plan is concept and execution of events. There will be opportunities for both competitive events both large and small. In many communities studied, well hosted and executed events can make up for the lack of direct monetization for trail systems. It is imperative that communities realize that events are key to the success of these projects.

**Partner & Event Promotion** - There is no shortage of talent in the region. Instagram influencers, media producers and content creators will play key roles in promotion of events and partner services throughout the region. Complimentary to more traditional marketing opportunities, Cape Breton has seen tremendous growth in tourism interests regionally already through similar campaigns. Similar strategies need to be scaled in order to reach international markets. Partnering with these influencers and producers in various stages of these projects creating an ongoing awareness of progress.

In successful cluster regions, combinations of other adventure tourism service and food/beverage opportunities have made for some statistically successful business models.

Coffee shops, pubs and simple hang-outs with solid choices for food and beverage near trails are seeing fantastic results year around with bicycle and snowshoe/ski rentals. These compliment a solid food and beverage service and possibly rentals and retail offering.

Indirect beneficiaries of this additional traffic will include accommodations, food, sporting opportunities, other adventures and other attractions. To give businesses which would otherwise be closing in the winter the opportunity to thrive through the season will be a massive benefit of year around MTB/FAT experiences.

Turning Seasonal Destinations into Year Around MTB/FAT Destinations : Events

## Events and Programming

**Festival Series** - Throughout different seasons, this is an ongoing annual point series which would include multiple disciplines of riding and even potentially other sports for cumulative points and an eventual set of crowned victors every year. This promotes regular participation in events throughout the region and brings awareness and further expertise to the other adventure disciplines like kayak, climbing, long-distance hike & run and even ski/snowshoe in winter time.



**Gravel** - distance rides, fondos, social and competitive - various levels of support. Can be everything from Across Highlands 1,000,000 ways to around the highlands. Demographics will desire food, lodging, in-event support and guiding. Shopping and authentic local experiences should be provided as routes join with communities. (NOTE: These events are typically done on drop-bar bicycles which are considered more “road” than MTB with light off-road abilities. There is a lot of cross-over in this particular category, and it is a very interesting demographic of more mature “challenge type” athletes of all abilities and levels.)

**Winter FAT - Bikes and Beer** - With season one as a great success at Ski Cape Smokey, we know there is an audience who will not only attend, but attend in extremely questionable conditions. This indicates strong commitment to off-season events and social opportunities.

**Cross Country** - social and competitive - A wonderful opportunity to join landowners and opportunities for large crowds, and event focused traffic.

**Enduro - social/competitive** - By all rights, Enduro is a competitive facet of MTB, and growing. The format typically involves several downhill routes at a location with timed runs down, and only a time deadline for self-propelled climbs. Cluster destinations can be partnered together in order to create epic multi-day enduro events.

Poker Runs / Social Rallies - with a focus on social and destination exploration - events like poker runs and point to point rallies can offer fun challenges for teams or individuals and really offer event designers the opportunity to craft an experience for the rider. Longer distance events can combine riding clusters, and shorter events can showcase particular cluster destinations. Fantastic for winter series, opening social opportunities for the region.

Trip Club & Marketing Concept (Locals and Tourists) - Discount program for people who

*Once the region has trails, it's ready for events and festivals to be built around MTB and MTB Adventures. Bringing people together, and sharing the region is key to the success of MTB in the region*



eat, rent bikes, pay to ride parks and trails or do tours. For people who partake in club-centric activities such as food, comedy, music, or arts programming. An island-wide social club for mountain bikers interested in getting to know each other, and experience the region in a whole new way. Regular weekend events, GPS driven (goals and leaderboards) and in person events. Challenges, social media contests and lifestyle integration.

**Races** - Races and race series are fantastic ways to test rider skills, push fitness to new levels and introduce a new level of social to riding. Races can happen all year around.

Lessons - Between private lessons and school scenarios, there are so many different opportunities for interested riders to learn. Similar to the skiing world, lessons for MTB are great and safe ways to build skills on the bike and learn how to ride trails etc.

Community Challenges - these are more social and built around fun. Pump track challenges or jump jams, trail sprints and skill session challenges are excellent ways to build interest in riding, and foster lasting friendships.

## Other Destinations / Business Opportunities / Festivals / Culture

### *“A rising tide lifts all boats” - JFK 1963*

There are many Cultural Experiences, Entertainment and Festivals to cross-promote and



*Friendships and healthy outlets make for better communities. Better communities make for healthier people, tourism draws and let's face it - more fun.*





celebrate during all four seasons in the region. MTB Visitors will sometimes spend all day on the bikes, but at the end of the day or between ride days will always be looking to experience the region's culture and other festival type events. MTB Community should be reaching out to all of these existing destinations and festivals to assist with cross promotion and cultural integrations:

- Lobster Suppers
- Kitchen Festivals
- Celtic Colours Festival
- Whale Watching and Sightseeing Boat Charters
- Fishing Boat Charters
- Kayak / Canoe Tours
- Tubing and SUP Experiences
- Bike and Beer Winter Festival
- Trivia at Ski Cape Smokey
- Winter Fat / XC Ski Twonella and North Highlands Nordic Ski Club
- Golf
- Distillery / Brew Tours
- Tree Walk
- Archery
- Distance Hikes/Runs including supported
- Native Tours - biology / myto culture / healing herbs
- ATV/SkiDoo Tours
- Epic Coastal and Highland (offroad) Drives
- Heli Tours
- Night Hikes/Tours
- Campgrounds/Camping
- Entertainment/Music
- Hostel Experiences
- Beaches
- National Parks
- Lighthouse Tours
- Sailing Tours
- Horseback Riding
- Endurance/Distance Rides - Around the Trail / Across the Highlands (Supported+Non-supported) connecting clusters with epic rides, meals and experiences



The IVANY Report clearly states that Nova Scotia is not on track for tourism growth in particular.

MTB Tourism as an economic driver will help greatly in shining a direct light on opportunities to leverage some of Canada's finest resources in a sustainable way and helping to grow the industry as a whole. The report cites metrics around Job Creation, bringing immigrants to settle and make the region their home, and has a strong focus on Tourism Income/Creation.

## Roles

**Cape Breton Partnership:** Where we have highlighted many business opportunities, it is now pivotal to engage new and prospective businesses as well as existing businesses to plan their additional offerings for the success of the MTB culture. It is important that each cluster receive assistance in creating business plans and understanding the potential of the economy we are building. Without the support of these businesses and services, the end client will be left with a lackluster experience, and much less time will be spent enjoying those particular clusters.

**Cape Breton:** One of the core pillars for the success of these clusters is marketing. This project will need to rely heavily on well-produced, well formed content with great reach. By great reach, it should be clear that participation with other key players in the industry such as Pinkbike and MTB Atlantic will be important as echo chambers for content hosted on a DCB related platform. Discussions around whether the MTB culture should have its own web presence or be a sub-site of DCB need to happen - with the outcome of reach, ability to produce content and ability to partner with key industry members need to lead the conversation.

**Victoria County and other Municipalities:** Key roles for the municipalities to play include assistance with land-use agreements, and ability to offer seed funding in situations where applicable. These situations will present themselves mostly in the form of community parks such as pump tracks and dirt jump parks as well as community connector trails. Where private entities are concerned, assistance with land-use, deed access and community marketing opportunities will be important areas we need the municipalities to help with. If municipalities are leading the charge with fostering culture, the trickle down effect will be so much more effective.





**CB MTB Trail Association:** To have an entity working with this project which is based on a non-profit structure with the passion to help compliment the MTB offering. This MTB Trail Association should be laser-focused on trail development in the area. When organizations require assistance, it should be this organization which helps with securing funds and opportunities. This organization should have a member from each local cycling group/club as well as a key stakeholder from each MTB Park or Trail network. This organization will work with trail builders and volunteers to facilitate various projects over time.

**MTB Atlantic:** An absolutely amazing initiative aimed at the promotion of trails and MTB Culture throughout the Atlantic Provinces. This is an ACOA funded community of interest and has been doing amazing work covering trail networks, and helping identify deficiencies etc. Once projects are in progress developing MTB Parks, it will be important to plan a road-trip style event with MTB Atlantic and work together to build another base of content, and popularity with a rapidly growing audience.

## Funding The Trails

There are various methods and combinations of funding as well as designations of land ownership or stewardship. This action plan does its best to identify funding opportunities for both public and private landowners.

## ACOA

**Public / Non-Profit:** Within certain conditions, it may be possible to leverage up to 75% non-repayable funding. Some of these conditions include being on crown land, or the NFP owning the land itself. In this situation, the 25% of raised capital may be formed with in-kind donations, land lease agreements. In these situations, we would be suggesting external forming and management of peripheral support businesses. This ensures that the NFP avoids profits, and moves the organization into a loan-repayable status.

**Private / For Profit:** For Mountain Bike Parks owned and operated by private / for profit entities, ACOA may offer assistance in the form of 50% funding of an interest-free repayable loan. Generally, terms of these loans extend to 10 years of amortization, thus keeping payments for infrastructure desirable, considering the economic benefits these trails and infrastructure will bring.

It is recommended that we create an Island-Wide MTB Trails Association to act as a single voice for the MTB Organizations.



It will be advantageous for the first 4-6 cluster regions to apply for their funding together, signifying true development of the clusters and ability to exercise tactics for success outlined further in this document.

It is important to note that presenting multiple grant applications for MTB Parks and Trail development in tandem or as a strategic presentation of multiple entities together in one application has been suggested as highly favorable. This demonstrates our goals of creating an economic anchor with mountain biking as opposed to simply building some parks or trails.

### **Community, Culture and Heritage Trail Funding Programs**

There are various funding programs from community leadership, engineering assistance, trail maintenance and expansions available through programs which Nova Scotia's Community, Culture and Heritage Programs have to offer. Applications to the various programs need to happen through various links and program offerings on the website.

### **Other Funding Opportunities**

Other funding options for more community-connecting trails include smaller assistance for community builds. Help from ATVANS, SANS during construction and potential access to funding assistance from the Victoria County Trails Federation for maintenance of multi-use connector trails created.

Connector and community trails will bring communities together, and allow for more active biking and hiking lifestyle options. Well connected communities take traffic loads off of main streets and anything to lower tourist traffic on the Cabot Trail during tourist season, and diverting through rich cultural experiences and local business areas would be very beneficial to those stakeholders themselves.

Private business and landowners who are able to directly measure increases to their business activities will be encouraged to participate in creation of new MTB infrastructure. Where possible, private investment will be possible, however participants in this study have all indicated that even though they share an interest in potential assistance through private funding or investor opportunity, they are not willing to trade land ownership. For many, there is an open desire to form land-use agreements, and in every case there are



business opportunities on-site or indirectly involved with MTB nearby which may be part of private investment opportunities. These opportunities come in the form of food, drink, retail, rental and complimentary services which will all also be monetized, and need to be available on-site or nearby.

Volunteer efforts are always welcome, and oftentimes when coupled with non-profit funding can be used as in-kind donation dollars. These efforts are best kept to building and maintaining non-technical commuter and connector corridors and trails. Any volunteer efforts on technical trails need to be overseen and approved by professionals.

## **Taking Action**

This presentation represents an action plan for the region to become a Mountain Bike Destination. This document is based on research, interviews, data collection and feedback from potential landowners / lease-holders in particular.

For its initial concept, we have focused on multiple interested parties, and actions to reach the goal of creating a world-class MTB destination in Cape Breton. Some of the key steps to manifest this plan include the following:

### [Identification of Clusters and interested parties\(Appendix A\)](#)

This portion of the study has been completed, and notes from each cluster location are available in Appendix A.

## **Land Use Agreements**

Public and Private Landowners who are participating in MTB will either dedicate specific regions of their lands to MTB and potentially mixed-use. Other arrangements will include land use agreements which include permission for trail design and development and in most cases business opportunities to balance investments and further monetize trail experiences.



## Funding

We have approached prospective funders both public and private. As we are able to secure land use arrangements and present clusters, we will apply for funding en-masse for the first 5-6 locations. Plans will involve 2-3 year roll outs for park development as well as prospective programming and marketing.

## Trail design and development

With land arrangements and funding in place, we proceed to trail design and development. With the concept of a consistent product with lots of variation for users, the clusters should be approached as a whole system and designed appropriately. Each destination will offer its own unique flavor, all participating in the single vision of building amazing trails.

### Community Education

Getting our communities involved is key. To have a sense of pride and ownership of the trails is very important and helps to foster positive stewardship. Basic clinics for trail maintenance will be offered, and communities learning about what it is that's happening is key. Getting members out is important, and by starting with a foundation of solid education around what MTB culture really means will put us on the path to ultimate success.

## Community Integration, Marketing, Programming and Promotion

Bike-friendly businesses offering basic wash stations, trailhead water and tool stations are great assets for communities. It's imperative that MTB participants are welcomed, and ample provisions are made with accommodations for safe storage etc.

Marketing and promotion should happen on all levels from local businesses sharing welcome experiences with riders, to riders coming off-trail and experiencing everything the region has to offer.

## Scaling and Events

As we notice certain demand for specific offerings, trail styles and levels of difficulty or suggestions of new trail alignments, operations need to be ready to evaluate and scale to add new trails. Where trails may be worn and require too much maintenance, they may require decommissioning and diversion of efforts to other locations.



## Maintenance and Training

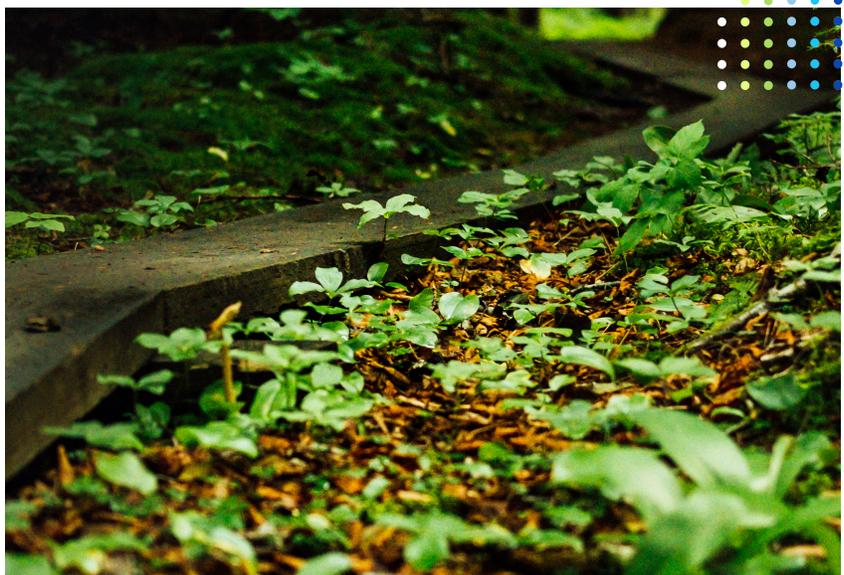
A world-class product will require regular maintenance. It is important to begin each project with this in mind: who / how will the asset(s) be maintained? We building happens in each region, it is important to foster new interest and expertise in trail maintenance. To employ interns and help to train volunteers in everything from identification of potential issues to remediation will help sustain these standards.

## Conclusion

Mountain Bike Culture is in our region. Participating players are realizing success in healthy communities, and well used tourism offerings. Cape Breton, and in particular the Highlands Region and Victoria County offer unique terrain including beautiful mountains and unparalleled views. Coupled with the Cape Breton experience, the Cabot Trail, the local culture, and participation on an Island-Wide level - Mountain Bike Tourism stands to deliver one of the most successful injections into Cape Breton well-being ever. Trails are the beginning.

Leveraging our best resources in a sustainable way, and highlighting our assets, we will create a culture rich, thriving economy. These benefits will span from landowners offering and hosting new businesses to indirect beneficiaries offering accommodation, food, entertainment, retail and other adventure tourism offerings.

Every single candidate we have spoken to throughout this conversation whether it be a landowner in Cape Breton, or an influential MTB Community Member in B.C., the response has been resoundingly positive. Cape Breton is ready to thrive in this new economy. We need to engage our land owners, and get planning and funding projects so we are able to start deploying resources as early as Summer 2021.





# Thank you

We look forward to making magic.

## Appendix B - Bike Park Tool Kit: The Anatomy of a Bike Park

This document outlines concepts for key steps, and milestones in the actual development of a profitable bike park. The Park must consist of a variety of trails which are scored similarly to ski trails by level of difficulty. Different to ski terrain, there needs to be access to the top of the park by way of at least one trail designed primarily for climbing. Where possible, if shuttle/uplift access is to be provided, a safe and well engineered roadway must be created and maintained.

When it comes to the primarily downhill offerings in the park, a minimum target of 6-8 trails need to be built in order to provide variety and combination of routes and ample challenge for every member of the family. All of the parks need to offer basic green level trails in order to tie in with coaching, school programs and bringing youth interest into the fold.

It is safe to suggest that certain parks will be more technical in nature and known for their challenging trails. The nature of these assumptions are generally due to steep, exposed and rockier terrain. These areas will require more engineering to create more inviting routes for more novice users.

Anchoring a well balanced park is a skills area consisting of jumps, technical features (TTFs), pump track and drops. These areas need to be designed with coaching, athlete development and safety in mind, while creating ample challenge to challenge riders and match what they'll be finding on the trails.

Among the downhill offerings, there needs to be 1 - 2 signature gravity trails in each park. These trails need to be professionally built offering a plethora of gravity oriented features such as berms, jumps and drops and flow very nicely. These trails should be rated Blue / Black. Trails like these generally also incorporate features like natural rock-drops, wooden drops and signature builds like wooden wall rides etc. These trails get used more often for videos and other social media sharing.

There should be at least one machine built Green trail which consists of berm turns, jump-able rollers and simpler features riders can roll through.

3-4 more trails of varying singletrack widths will be key for the park. Some of these trails should be hand-made with signature features present. Where applicable, a strong focus on design-around-media needs to happen. That is designing features and destinations on-trail around photo/video opportunities and views.

Not to be overlooked is the importance of more XC/Enduro style trails. Target for each park should be 30-40km of trail. These trails may be constructed in stacked loops or regular style loops, or branch out connecting with other trails and destinations. Ultimately, riders will be able to commute between all destinations via trail.





Part of the action plan needs to include connecting bike parks with the Highland road system, and eventually inter-weaving singletrack through the road system creating a trip across the highlands using similar routing as the main Highland road systems. This is key for anchoring this product as an international offering where travelers will simply ride point to point with varying levels of support.

Typical staffing for the bicycle-side of a bicycle park (depending on services being offered):

- Check in / Welcome staff
- Guides/Instructors
- Rental / Equipment Maintenance
- Trail Maintenance
- Shuttle Driver

A properly built MTB Park will be able to operate from Early Spring to Late Fall (based on snow/thaw conditions). This same park will be able to offer many of its trails to winter users on ski/snowboard. Throughout the winter it is important to note that MTB Parks need to follow an events and grooming schedule in order to foster a proper FAT Bike culture. A combination of gravity and endurance events to be offered in the winter months as well as summer.

Events can consist of many different styles from competition to fun and family-friendly. Traditional races in Enduro, XC, Downhill as well as more gravity-oriented competition including dirt jump and slope style (tricks and stunts) can round out a solid competition series. Offerings like Poker-Runs and Funduros bring out the non-competitive participant and really help introduce participants to the more social side of pseudo-competitive riding.

As trail development can vary in complexity, we are suggesting a wide range of budgets for development of a MTB Park. For trail infrastructure, it is suggested to roll out a three-year development plan where user-ship is constantly measured and feedback incorporated into successive builds. Trail development costs will vary depending on location and terrain. It is assumed that budgets of \$250,000 - \$500,000 will be required for each cluster to roll out over their 3 year build periods. It is important that each cluster being considered explore their potential budget requirements early in the process, and assembly of 5-8 initial cluster plans and budgets be presented together to funding partners thus illustrating our creation of an industry and economy vs a trail or park.



## Peak Season Data Assumptions

### *Gondola Lift Access Bike Park*

(Gravity & Cross Country Trails, Terrain Park, Pump Track)

- High Season Average Daily MTB Users: 300 (based on Winter predictions of 650/day)
- Estimated Daily Lift Ticket Price: 50
- Estimated Daily Lift Ticket Income: \$7,500
- Estimated Monthly Ticket Income (MTB Only): \$225,000
- Coaching / Clinics: \$150 / Day / Person
- Other Concessions: Rent, Food, Accommodation, Entertainment

### *Shuttle or Rider Access Bike Park*

(Gravity & Cross Country Trails, Terrain Park, Pump Track)

- Daily Trail/Park Pass: \$20
- Riders: 100/day
- Est Monthly (Day) Trail Pass Income: \$60k
- Season Pass: \$100
- Bicycle Rentals: \$100/day per bike. (Assets to be sold annually at best price). Min 2 of each size trail bike (sm, med, lg) - with a successful terrain park offering, the park may want to also offer a small range of bike park bikes for rent as well. Many bicycle manufacturers offer rental fleet purchase discount programs or special terms on purchase of rental fleet bikes.

## Marketing / Web

All of the bike parks and trail systems should be marketed via the same channels, via one website entity promoting MTB in the region, feeding marketing into and through channels like MTBAtlantic and Pinkbike. Where possible, clusters should be combining efforts and where any cluster is marketing internationally all clusters should participate thus creating more draw for more people for longer as they'll travel to explore more.

## Operational Seasons

Based on elevation and how early snow comes, transition from summer to winter seasonal operation will come at different times. General summer operations which include providing professionally built, groomed and maintained trails and where applicable: uplift access. Winter operations will include regular grooming of trails for fat bike and where applicable cross country and back-country ski experiences.

Provision of support and amenities for users like hikers and snowshoers as well as riders need to be present year-around with a possible proposal of existing tax incentives for seasonal operations to be altered to provide the opposite: benefits for operators



maintaining year-round services.

Seasonally, keystone events need to be planned and marketed appropriately for the season itself. Winter Fat Bikes and Beer festivals, summer multi-sport festivals, cross-country, downhill and enduro races as well as leveraging pump tracks for competition and rider development.

Proper planning for rentals, events, food, amenities and services regionally will allow for an astounding positive impact culturally and economically especially in what would have previously been regarded as typically low, or non-existent business and tourism seasons.

### **Hours of Operation**

Hours of operation should be congruent with other local amenities operating during typical business hours. Where off-trail amenities are available: services should be provided into the evening hours, offering social, musical and cultural experiences. Trail services need to be provided at minimum during daytime hours. Riders may still opt to ride and use trails unsupported with their own lighting systems, generally trails would be unsupported in the dark hours.

Winter operations should include daylight operations where possible, and offer an equally robust calendar of events with social, school and cultural programming opportunities as summer / shoulder seasons where grooming and amenity support are possible. Special programming around evening events is also crucial in Winter months offering unique experiences with varying levels of adventure and support.

In a situation like Cape Smokey where the Gondola will be supporting a very wide user base, uplift services could be operational as early or before 8am during summer hours and typically end service based on daylight, or 6pm.

Winter uplift services for MTB are likely to be relegated to special events.



## Events

Each bike park needs to have its own schedule of events and work together with other destinations to compliment other schedules. Schedules will offer multiple event weekends at multiple locations, and also events spanning multiple weeks in summer months. More localized point or social series events can occur weekly with a series fee while having at least one keystone event per major season in the region (not per cluster) where the host site has various criteria to meet in order to host an appropriately appointed event.

Events can include Cross Country, Enduro or Downhill races, pump track events, jump events, poker runs and team challenge events. Events can also include things like community skill building or training events.

Events can also include coaching certification training so the region will be able to have its own roster of trained coaches who will leverage and create new employment opportunities. Coaching training typically costs anywhere from \$350-\$1,000 based on which level of training, and certain additional designations possible in training. Typically these training sessions are done in groups and require both classroom and on-trail training time in order to complete.



## Appendix C - Shoreline Dirtworks: Highlights

After 3 years operating as a volunteer organization, Shoreline Dirtworks was incorporated in 2008. Shoreline Dirtworks focuses on community development with an emphasis on Mountain Biking, related mountain bike consultation, mountain bike trail and park design and building.

Shoreline Dirtworks has consulted with projects across Canada, and has built both trails and parks in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Dirtworks has built some of the key infrastructure at Keppoch Mountain in Antigonish County including 3 of the key trails, pump track and jump lines all of which help attract sell out shuttle groups all season-long including helping to bring riders from around Atlantic Canada.

Lead by Adam Shore - a passionate rider and community enthusiast, Shoreline Dirtworks aims to continue working with and growing healthy mountain bike clusters particularly in the Cape Breton Region where he aims to relocate his family.

Adam and Shoreline Dirtworks have been involved with some amazing projects over the years. Some of the highlights for us are:

***Creation and Maintenance of [ecmtb.com](http://ecmtb.com)*** which was originally the mountain bike community online peaking at 17,000,000 hits per month during peak times as hosts of the **2003 Martock Canada Cup**. This event featured cross country, downhill and dual slalom competition, BMX Short Track, a Freeride Park and Dirt Jumps in quite possibly the best-attended mountain bike event ever held in Atlantic Canada.

**2006** - Creation of the first bike park in Halifax. We currently have 14 including 1 of 2 Asphalt Pump Tracks in Atlantic Canada.

**2012** - Creation of the first mountain bike coaching program in Atlantic Canada with Downhill Bike School at Sugarloaf Mountain in New Brunswick (PMBIA Certified Coach)

**2012** - Creation of first machine-made trail in Nova Scotia with Chicken Cougar at Keppoch Mountain in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. Our team partook in some of the general planning meetings forecasting the next 7 years of planning for Keppoch Mountain and a large-scale Capital Project with ACOA.

**2014** - Keppoch: Kinsmen Pump Track construction. This is the first properly constructed pump track in Atlantic Canada featured at a bike park.

**2017** - Founding Member: Mountain Bike Halifax - a volunteer lead organization aimed at supporting singletrack mountain bike projects in Halifax. A key success of MTB Halifax is the fund-raising and helicopter delivery of 16,000 lbs of lumber which was used in the fabrication of a major bridge crossing the McIntosh Run.





**2017** - Design / Build / Community Liason : Port Hawkesbury Asphalt Pump Track. This is the first asphalt pump track in Atlantic Canada. It has become a widely used community asset with users from age 2-70+ including scooters, skateboards, bikes and even wheelchair users.

**2018** - Founding Member, Advocate, Website Developer : Mountain Bike Atlantic. MTBA is an ACOA funded community of interest aimed at promoting market-ready mountain bike parks and trails across Atlantic Canada.

**2018** - Design / Build SwitchCraft and Riverside at Keppoch Mountain. Two very progressive, machine-built premiere level tourist attraction trails featuring varying levels of jumps, berms, rollers, drops and other on-trail challenges.

**2019** - Initiation of, and creation of Cape Breton Mountain Bike Tourism Action Plan. Working with Destination Cape Breton, Cape Breton Partnership and Victoria County to gather data, solicit potentially interested sites and compile this report.

**2020** - Design / Build Rockwood Park, Saint John NB Enduro Park Trails 1,2,3. Working with the Saint John Cycling Club, we have designed 3 trails, one of which will be opened in early Spring 2021. Overall park design concept to support major events with progressive trails offering something not otherwise available in this well established 10 square KM park inside the city of Saint John.

**2020** - Design / Build Shubie Park Pump Track : Working with Councilor Tony Mancini and other project sponsors. Designed and built the first competition-ready Asphalt Pump Track in Atlantic Canada. This has been one of the most successful infrastructure projects in the city besides the new skateboard parks. To quote the Councilor "I'm almost happier about this pump track than I am about winning the re-election"

