



Trail Assessment and Tourism Opportunity Report on Select Trans Canada Trail Segments in Nova Scotia

INVITATION FOR REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

Submission Closing Deadline

September 26th, 2025 at 5:00 pm, (Eastern Standard Time)

Purpose of the RFP

Project Description

TCT is partnering with Nova Scotia Trails Federation, Discover Halifax, and Tourism Nova Scotia and community trail partners to assess 4 sections of the TCT network through the lens of tourism potential and existing challenges. This aims to guide enhancements to the user experience on these selected trails, with the ultimate goal of positioning each trail as either:

- Market Ready - suitable for promotion as an exceptional on-trail experience to national or regional audiences; or
- Export Ready - suitable for promotion as an exceptional on-trail experience to international audiences.

Project Scope

The successful proponent will deliver a comprehensive set of trail assessments (comparing previous assessments and updated 2025 criteria), recommendations on trail best practices, gaps and opportunities, mapping resources, and marketing guidance to improve infrastructure, visitor readiness, and awareness and visitor appeal (local, regional national and international traveller alignment). The four trails are:

- Rum Runners Trail (Halifax to Lunenburg)
- Harvest Moon Trailway (Grand Pré to Annapolis Royal)
- Celtic Shores Coastal Trail (Port Hastings to Inverness)
- Shearwater Flyer, Salt Marsh, and Atlantic View Trail corridor

The work will address physical trail amenities and product clusters—such as nearby dining, accommodations, attractions, hikes, and beaches—alongside digital and marketing elements. It will also consider trail governance and brand alignment across TCT, Blue Route, and Destination Trail. Together, these efforts aim to enhance the visitor experience and strengthen support for local tourism partners.

For detailed maps see below in Appendix A.

Project Deliverables

- Project kick-off meeting with TCT and steering committee
- 25%, 50% and 75% progress meetings with TCT
- Provide detailed timeline and strategy to complete the project

A comprehensive report which includes, at minimum, the following:

1. State of the Trail Assessment

For each of the four trail locations, the proponent will:

- Assess the current condition of visitor amenities and infrastructure.
- Provide **recommendations** to meet a high-quality standard for visitor readiness, including, but not limited to:
 - Repair work needed and suggested improvements
 - Recommended **signage frequency**.
 - Recommended **rest area frequency (include recommended facilities at rest area)**.
 - Recommended **bike repair station frequency**.
 - Any additional infrastructure or amenity recommendations that would improve visitor experience.
- **Prioritize** the order in which opportunities should be made for each trail, supported by clear justification.

2. Mapping and Supporting Documentation

The consultant shall build on the surrounding area to create a comprehensive mapping and opportunity framework that identifies existing conditions and future tourism opportunities including small and medium enterprises (T-SMEs). Existing data to be leveraged to help inform findings.

2a. Mapping and Supporting Documentation

- Determine ideal categories buffer zones, based on research, for users with respect to their likelihood to use:
 - Accommodations
 - Food and Drink
 - Trail/Bike Shops
 - Car parks
 - Rentals (bikes, snowshoes, & other)
 - Artisan and gift Shops
 - Outdoor adventure
 - Cultural attractions
 - Coastal and scenic viewpoints
- For each of the four trails, create a detailed map identifying all relevant features within these buffer zones.
- For each feature, provide supporting documentation including:
 - Business name
 - Contact information
 - Website link
- Ensure mapping is user-friendly and compatible with both print and digital formats.
- Assess the strengths of market-aligned product clusters, taking into account user groups and related business and economic opportunities.

2b. Gap Analysis and Economic Framing (Frame the trail as both an economic spine and a distributed marketplace.)

- Identify any service gaps of 10–15 km or more and treat these as missed opportunities for visitor spending.
- Highlight opportunities for authentic, local experiences such as culinary offerings, artisan crafts, farm stands, and cultural tourism.
- Connect with at least 10 local tourism operators and businesses (3-4 operators per trail network with a focus on bike rentals, accommodations etc.) to learn how often local users enlist their services and how this information can support more sustainable tourism opportunities.

2c. Placement Strategy

- Recommend a three-tiered approach to positioning new T-SME opportunities:
 - Anchor Hubs (every 25–40 km at major trailheads or villages, e.g., Hubbards on the Rum Runner): bike-friendly accommodations, cafés/restaurants, bike shops and rentals, cultural attractions, and farmers’ markets.
 - Mid-Trail Rest Nodes (approximately every 15 km in rural stretches): seasonal kiosks, guided tour meet-up points, farmgate or artisan stalls, and amenities such as lockers or e-bike charging.
 - Micro-Nodes & Scenic Spots (every 5–10 km at viewpoints or side trails): small-scale, experience-based micro-enterprises such as pop-ups, artisans, or cultural demonstrations.

2d. T-SME Prospectus

- Develop a T-SME Prospectus to serve as an investment pitch for trail towns and entrepreneurs. At a minimum, this should include:
 - An Opportunity Map highlighting service gaps and categorizing nodes as Anchor Hubs, Mid-Trail Rest Nodes, or Micro-Nodes.
 - Business Concepts per Node, illustrating viable enterprise types aligned with identified gaps.

3. Signage Plan

Develop a high-level tourism signage plan for trail tourism partners, covering:

- **Signage frequency** recommendations:
 - Standard placement intervals (e.g., every 20 km, trailheads/access points).
 - Adjusted placement in higher-density areas with multiple access points or diverse offerings.
- **Content guidelines** for signage, including:
 - High-level map of the full trail.
 - Icons or visual markers representing offerings and key features.
- **Digital integration:**
 - Use of QR codes linking to main webpages or partner resources.

4. Marketing Assets: Strategies for Enhancing Digital Profiles

- Provide clear, actionable recommendations on how to upgrade existing webpages to better showcase detailed offerings at a local level while highlighting gaps and challenges.
- Recommendations should address:
 - Information architecture.

- Integration of maps, photos, and visitor resources.
- Linking strategies between trail partners and tourism partner webpages.

Key Stakeholders

For the purpose of detailed planning, the following stakeholders will need to be considered and engaged. Additional stakeholders may be identified during project planning.

	Name or title of group	Interests or role in the project
1.	Greg Young	Nova Scotia Trails Federation (gt@novascotiatrials.com)
2.	Heather Yule	Tourism Nova Scotia (heather.yule@novascotia.ca)
3.	Brian White	Discover Halifax (bwhite@discoverhalifaxns.com)
4a.	Calie Schaefer - TCT	Project Coordinator (cschaefer@tctrail.ca)
4b.	Brenden Blotnicky - TCT	Project Manager (bblotnicky@tctrail.ca)

Tools available

TCT will provide the following information to support the work:

- Video of the trails via Go Pro to avoid any site visits and maintain the project as a desktop based study
- Stakeholder conversations/take-aways
- Trail Managers Concerns and Opportunities feedback
- Previous trail and sector insight assessments
- Additional information available upon request as needed (if available to TCT staff)

Limitations

- Recently the fire risk has caused trails to be closed, Go Pro video of each trail will be available after this has been lifted and sufficient time has passed to gather this information.
- Since TCT does not have access to a database of relevant businesses, a desktop study will be conducted to identify which businesses should be consulted or included as part of visitor offerings

- Ensuring that all necessary contributors are engaged in the process and implementation of recommendations.
- Ensuring that past assessments of each of the trails is leveraged and considered across the new report.

RFP Project Schedule

- Project to start by October 1st, 2025 and be completed by February 2nd, 2026.
- Project closure February 20th, 2026.

Above dates are subject to change.

Instructions to Proponents

RFP posted/advertised	September 9th, 2025
RFP – deadline for questions	September 15th, 2025
RFP submission deadline/closing	September 26th, 2025
RFP responses reviewed	Week of September 29th, 2025
RFP issued/awarded	Week of October 3 rd , 2025

Although every attempt will be made to meet the above-mentioned dates, TCT reserves the right to modify any and all dates at its sole discretion.

Proposals must be submitted by email before 5 PM, Eastern Standard Time, September 26th, 2025. Proposals received after this time will not be accepted. The proponent may request that their proposal be withdrawn only prior to the proposal closing time.

Submit to: Brenden Blotnicky, Manager – Network Development and Support
Trans Canada Trail
Email: bblotnicky@tctrail.ca

Questions and inquiries regarding this RFP, its process and format are to be directed by email to Brenden Blotnicky, Manager – Network Development and Support.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Trans Canada Trail background*

The Trans Canada Trail (the Trail) is the longest interconnected network of multi-use recreational trails in the world, spanning over 29,000 kilometres on land and water. Linking three oceans – the Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic – the Trail connects 900 municipalities across every province and territory. It is a ribbon that connects Canada’s diverse landscapes, seasons, people and experiences and fosters unity, collaboration and connectedness.

Trans Canada Trail is the organization that advocates for, stewards, and champions Canada’s nationwide trail system. It provides leadership and guidance, funding and resources, outreach, and engagement.

Our mission: Through collaboration and partnerships, we lead, develop and steward an accessible nationwide system of connected urban and rural trails.

Our vision: Everyone embracing the Canadian outdoors, connecting with one another, and experiencing the restorative power of nature along our trails.

Two legal entities work together to achieve the mission of Trans Canada Trail: to connect Canadians and visitors to nature and to one another, from coast to coast to coast, through accessible and inclusive outdoor activities. Trans Canada Trail (the organization) was established in 1992; it stewards and promotes the usage of the national trail in collaboration with community-based partners. Trans Canada Trail Foundation, a charitable foundation, was created in 2010 to raise funds to support the Trans Canada Trail. Trans Canada Trail (TCT) and Trans Canada Trail Foundation (TCTF) are each governed by an independent Board of Directors; however, they operate as a consolidated entity.

The organization has an enterprise risk system that is updated annually and should be used as a resource to help develop the annual risk-based audit plan. Imagine Canada also accredited the organization.

For further information, visit: www.tctrail.ca

1.2 *Project Lead*

Trans Canada Trail will designate a Project Lead to manage the overall relationship with the successful proponent. This Project Lead will assist the successful proponent in identifying key players to be interviewed, provide access to files containing previous reports and data sources, and assist the proponent in accessing information required to complete the audit plan for each assignment. The project lead will be the key contact for the successful proponent.

2.0 PROPOSAL PREPARATION

2.1 *Proposal Format*

All proponents are asked to organize their proposals in the same manner and order as shown in Section 4.0 – Evaluation of this document. Proponents are free to include additional material in appendices; however, only the main body of the proposal will be evaluated.

Proponents are to limit the size of their proposal to a maximum of 15 pages, including any attachments or appendices.

2.2 *Additional Information*

All documentation materials submitted as attachments to the proposals should be clearly indicated in a table of contents.

3.0 PROPOSED SERVICES AND QUALIFICATIONS

3.1 *Statement of Requirements - Scope of Work*

The successful proponent will provide the following services with defined deliverables, milestones and timelines

3.2 *Experience and Qualifications*

Proponents are required to provide an overview of their business' background and capabilities applicable to the needs and profile of Trans Canada Trail. Proponents should describe their knowledge and understanding of charities, small not-for-profit organizations operating with national scope. Proposals must include information on the range and type of services relevant to Trans Canada Trail and comparable clients and information on 3rd party vendors.

3.3 *Approach, Methodology and Innovation*

Proposals should describe the methodology used to develop to deliver the scope of work, including key activities and deliverables. They should also describe project types (assurance, advisory, etc.), coverage, performance measures, technology enablers, and other key elements of the plan.

Proposals should include an annual cycle of activities outlining major tasks, timeframes, resource requirements, and deliverables as part of their submission. In addition, the proponent should state all assumptions used in preparing the annual audit plan.

Proposals should describe key deliverables, including:

- Proposed approach, methodology and deliverables for each phase of projects (planning, execution, reporting)
- Senior management Engagement
- Samples of previous direct mail campaigns and other deliverables

3.4 *Professional Resources*

Specific information should be submitted with respect to all staff members who are proposed to have roles and responsibilities for Trans Canada Trail and should include the following:

- Name and professional credentials
- Position in the firm
- Experience and certifications
- Hourly rate where applicable

Describe the team structure and how this will align with the proposed approach.

3.5 *Proposal Price Details*

Proposals shall include a detailed description of all fees and the recommended method of billing and payment, including methods proposed for interim or phased billings, if any. Please note that any RFP submitted to TCT must include pricing details for the submission, otherwise, it may be subject to rejection.

3.6 *References*

Any proposal response should include a minimum of three (3) references. Reference contacts should be notified that Trans Canada Trail may contact them as part of the evaluation process. These references should include clients whose involvement with the responding firm is comparable to the services being proposed for Trans Canada Trail.

3.7 *Terms and Conditions*

The successful proponent will provide a template of acceptable contract terms and conditions to Trans Canada Trail within two (2) weeks after notification of acceptance of its proposal. Proponents should identify any revisions to terms that they require or provide alternatives where necessary.

4.0 EVALUATION

4.1 *Evaluation Criteria*

Trans Canada Trail will employ a structured, competitive evaluation process. All written proposals will be reviewed and scored based on how well they address the specific needs of Trans Canada Trail as outlined in this Request for Proposals. Trans Canada Trail will determine the firm whose proposal best suits its needs based upon review and selection criteria as follows:

Evaluation Factors	Weighting
Experience and qualifications	20
Approach, methodology and innovation	20
Team experience and competencies	20
Pricing	20
References	10
TOTAL	100

*Trans Canada Trail may choose, solely at its discretion, to conduct interviews/presentations with short listed firms.

4.2 *Assumptions*

Proponents must document any assumptions made in the preparation of their proposal.

5.0 TERMS AND CONDITIONS

5.1 *Description*

This Request for Proposal (the “RFP”) is an invitation by Trans Canada Trail to receive proposals from qualified proponents for xxxxxx

5.2 *Non-binding Procurement Process*

The process will be governed by the terms and conditions of the RFP, and that, among other things, such terms and conditions confirm that this procurement process, does not constitute a formal, legally binding bidding process or tender, and that no legal relationship or obligation, if any, regarding the procurement of any good or service shall be created between Trans Canada Trail and the proponent unless and until a fully executed contract between Trans Canada Trail and the proponent execute a written agreement for the Deliverables.

5.3 *Submission Closing Deadline/Delivery*

The RFP submission must be emailed in PDF format to bblotnickytctrail.ca prior to the submission date of September 26, 2025 (5:00 pm, Eastern Standard Time). Please indicate “RFP Submission” in the email’s subject line.

Submissions received after the closing date and time will be disqualified from competition. Trans Canada Trail will not make allowances for delays due to factors such as email server delays and power outages. Trans Canada Trail strongly encourages proponents to avoid waiting until the final calendar day to submit responses to mitigate any unforeseen circumstances.

Timeline and Milestones

5.4 *Enquiries*

Enquiries concerning this RFP are to be directed via email only to the attention of:

Please reference “RFP – Direct Response” in the email’s subject line.

Proponents and their representatives are not permitted to contact any employees or other representatives of Trans Canada Trail, other than the contact noted above, concerning matters of this RFP, unless the above contact has specifically directed you to another to respond. Trans Canada Trail reserves the right to disqualify any proponent that does not comply with this requirement and reject the proponent’s submission.

Anyone who believes the RFP contains any error, inconsistency, or omission should submit a written inquiry via email requesting clarification, interpretation or explanation to the Trans Canada Trail contact identified above.

Please submit all inquiries via email to the Trans Canada Trail contact noted above no later than

5.5 *Proposal Contents*

All proponents are asked to organize their submissions in the order outlined in Section 4.0. Proponents should include a Table of Contents in their response.

5.6 *Addenda*

It is the responsibility of proponents to ensure that they have all the necessary information concerning the intent and requirements of this RFP, and to seek clarification of any matter they consider to be unclear before forwarding a submission. Trans Canada Trail is not responsible for any misunderstanding of this RFP on the part of a proponent. No proponent can claim any advantage from any error, inconsistency, or omission in this RFP.

No information given verbally by Trans Canada Trail, or by means of telephone, will be binding, nor will it be construed to change the requirements of the RFP in any way.

Trans Canada Trail reserves the right to modify the terms of the RFP before the closing deadline, such changes to be communicated from Trans Canada Trail in the form of an addendum to all proponents.

5.7 *Confidential Information of Proponent*

A proponent should identify any information in its submission, or any accompanying documentation supplied in confidence for which confidentiality is to be maintained by Trans Canada Trail. The confidentiality of such information will be maintained by Trans Canada Trail, except as otherwise required by law (including, without limitation the requirements of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, S.N.S. 1993 (“FOIPOP”), as amended from time to time) or by order of a court or tribunal. Proponents should review and understand the effect of FOIPOP on their submissions, including the criteria related to third party confidential information. Proponents are advised that their submissions will, as necessary, be disclosed on a confidential basis, to Trans Canada

Trail's advisors retained for the purpose of evaluating or participating in the evaluation of their submissions. If a proponent has any questions about the collection and use of confidential information pursuant to this RFP, questions are to be submitted to Trans Canada Trail's contact.

5.8 *Taxes*

Applicable taxes of HST shall be included as separate pricing in the submitted price.

5.9 *Standard Clauses*

An incomplete submission and submissions that fail to comply with the specification documents will be rejected. If a submission fails to satisfy all the mandatory requirements, Trans Canada Trail will issue the proponent a rectification notice identifying the deficiencies and providing the proponent an opportunity to rectify the deficiencies. If the proponent fails to satisfy the mandatory submission requirements within the Rectification Period of one day, its proposal will be excluded from further consideration. The Rectification Period will begin to run from the date that Trans Canada Trail issues a rectification notice to the proponent.

The entire content of the proponent's submission should be submitted in a fixed form, and the content of websites or other external documents referred to in the proponent's submission but not attached will not be considered to form part of its proposal.

5.10 *Withdrawal of Submissions*

At any time throughout the RFP process, until the execution of a written agreement for provision of the Deliverables, a proponent may request to withdraw a submission. To withdraw a submission, a notice of withdrawal must be sent to Trans Canada Trail's contact and must be signed by an authorized representative of the proponent. Trans Canada Trail is under no obligation to return withdrawn submissions.

5.11 *Submissions to be retained by Trans Canada Trail*

Trans Canada Trail will not return the submissions, or any accompanying documentation submitted by a proponent.

5.12 *Contract Negotiations*

The selected proponent will be requested to enter into direct contract negotiations to finalize an agreement with Trans Canada Trail. The proponent shall accept and agree that only contracts or amendments signed by the Chief Executive Officer will be valid.

5.13 *Governing Law and Interpretation*

These Terms and Conditions of the RFP Process:

- are intended to be interpreted broadly and independently (with no particular provision intended to limit the scope of any other provision);
- are non-exhaustive and shall not be construed as intending to limit the pre-existing rights of the parties to engage in precontractual discussions in accordance with the common law governing direct commercial negotiations; and

- are to be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the province of Ontario and the federal laws of Canada applicable therein.

5.14 *Conflict of Interest*

Trans Canada Trail may disqualify a proponent for any conduct, situation or circumstances, determined by Trans Canada Trail, in its sole and absolute discretion, to constitute a Conflict of Interest. For the purposes of this, the term “Conflict of Interest” includes, but is not limited to, any situation or circumstance where: in relation to the RFP process, if the proponent has an unfair advantage or engages in conduct, directly or indirectly, that may give it an unfair advantage, including but not limited to: (i) having, or having access to, confidential information of Trans Canada Trail in the preparation of its proposal that is not available to other proponents, (ii) communicating with any person with a view to influencing preferred treatment in the RFP process (including but not limited to the lobbying of decision makers involved in the RFP process), or (iii) engaging in conduct that compromises, or could be seen to compromise, the integrity of the open and competitive RFP process or render that process non-competitive or unfair; or in relation to the performance of its contractual obligations under a contract for the Deliverables, the proponent’s other commitments, relationships or financial interests (i) could, or could be seen to, exercise an improper influence over the objective, unbiased and impartial exercise of its independent judgement, or (ii) could, or could be seen to, compromise, impair or be incompatible with the effective performance of its contractual obligations.

Proponents should disclose the names and all pertinent details of all individuals (employees, advisors, or individuals acting in any other capacity) who (a) participated in the preparation of the proposal; AND (b) were employees of COMPANY within twelve (12) months prior to the Submission Deadline.

5.15 *Notification of Successful Proponent*

Notification of the successful proponent will be via direct communication.

5.16 *Evaluation and Selection*

An Evaluation Team will review and score the submissions received in response to the RFP. Upon selection of the most qualified proponent, Trans Canada Trail will begin negotiations in order to secure a contract. Should Trans Canada Trail be unable to negotiate a satisfactory contract with the proponent considered to be most qualified, negotiations with that proponent will be formally terminated. Trans Canada Trail may then undertake negotiations with the next most qualified proponent. Refer to Evaluation Percentages in the Specification for details of evaluation and award.

Appendix A: Site Maps

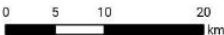
Destination Study Area 1 - Rum Runners Trail



Destination Study Area 2 - Harvest Moon Trail



Projection: Mercator Auxiliary Sphere
Sources: TCT/STC, ESRI Canada.
Production: Montréal, TCT/STC, 08/2025.



Harvest Moon Trail

- Roads
- Trails and Path - Mixed-Use Trail
- Trails and Path - Greenway

Destination Study Area 3 - Celtic Shores Trail



Projection: Mercator Auxiliary Sphere
Sources: TCT/STC, ESRI Canada.
Production: Montréal, TCT/STC, 08/2025.

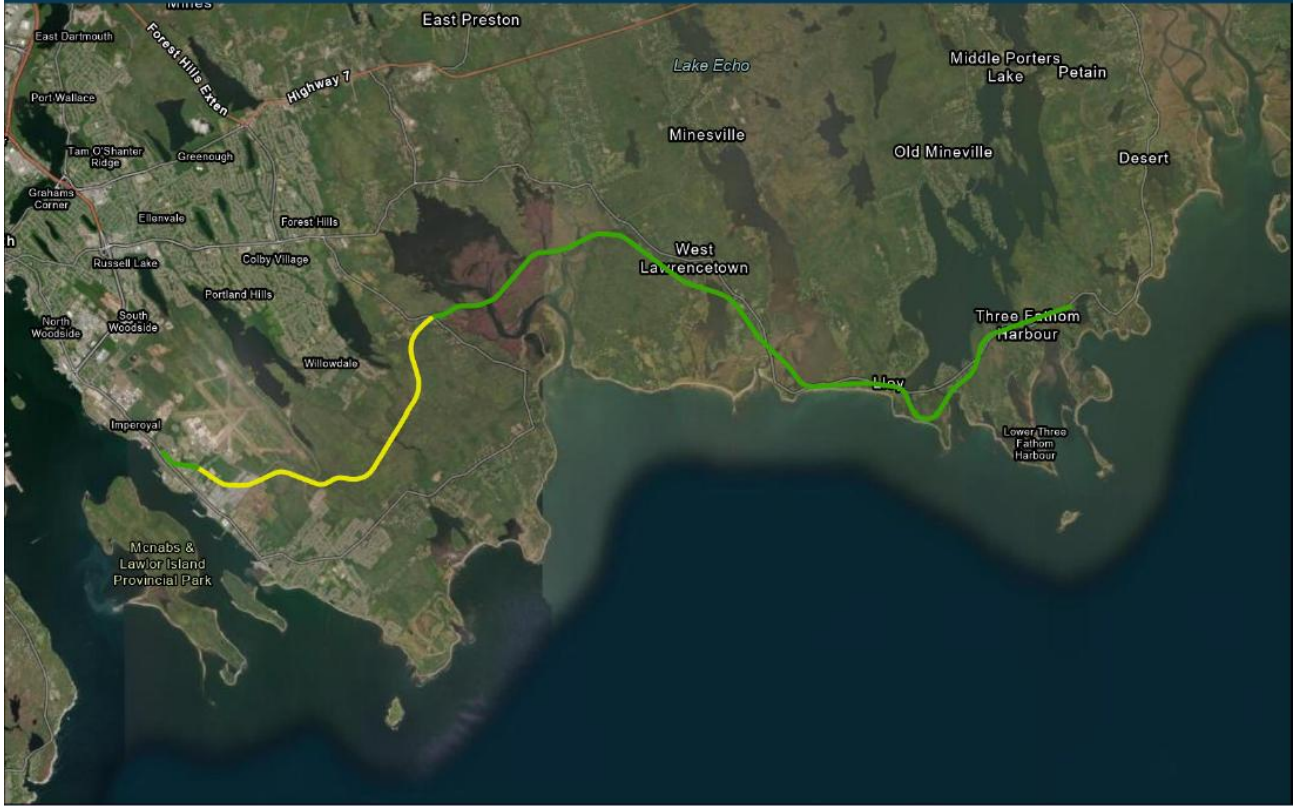


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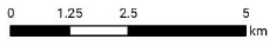
Celtic Shores Trail

Trails and Path -
Mixed-Use Trail

Destination Study Area 4 - Shearwater to Atlantic View



Projection: Mercator Auxiliary Sphere
Sources: TCT/STC, ESRI Canada.
Production: Montréal, TCT/STC, 08/2025.



Shearwater to Atlantic View

Trails and Path - Mixed-Use Trail

Trails and Path - Greenway