

# **Joint Regional Transportation Agency**

ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT – 2023-2024

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## Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Joint Regional Transportation Agency for the year ended March 31, 2024, is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. The reporting of the JRTA outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgements, and opinions by JRTA management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of JRTA management. The report is, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the 2023-24 Joint Regional Transportation Agency Business Plan.

Original Signed by

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Honourable Kim D. Masland  
Minister

Original Signed by

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Peter Hackett, P. Eng  
Deputy Minister &  
JRTA Board Chair

Original Signed by

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Mark A. Peck  
President & CEO

## Message from the Minister

We are pleased to present the 2023-24 Accountability Report for the Joint Regional Transportation Agency (JRTA or Agency). The JRTA was created as a Crown Corporation with the assent of The Joint Regional Transportation Act in November 2021. The Crown Corporation was created with the express mandate to guide the collaborative development and implementation of a Regional Transportation Plan for the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) and surrounding communities.

This important work will contribute greatly to create the right conditions to support our provincial goals in terms of economic prosperity, health, education, population growth and climate change.

In 2023-24, the JRTA made great progress to grow the organization, build their public presence (including two rounds of public engagement), and achieve key milestones in the plan's development, including essential background research, scenario planning, high-level analysis, and the completion of a new activity-based travel demand model.

At each step, the JRTA is collaborating regularly with their Technical Advisory Board, Technical Working Group, provincial staff, municipalities within the study area, focus groups, and connecting with traditionally underserved and underrepresented communities. This foundation of collaboration will be critical to the JRTA's success as development on the plan continues, working toward completion in late 2024.

Original Signed by

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Honourable Kim D. Masland  
Minister

## About the JRTA

To address the challenges associated with a multi-jurisdictional transportation system, the Government of Nova Scotia passed [The Joint Regional Transportation Act](#) in the fall of 2021 to establish the JRTA.

The JRTA is a provincial Crown Corporation, and the Minister of Public Works is the sole shareholder of the Agency. The CEO reports to the Deputy Minister of Public Works who is also the Chair of the JRTA Board. The Agency reports to a Board of Directors made up of the Deputy Minister/Chair and the Chief Engineer of the Department of Public Works.

To achieve the [JRTA’s mandate](#), a [Regional Transportation Plan \(the plan\)](#) is being developed in collaboration with Core Partners, interested parties and across government. The plan is in development and will be delivered to government in late 2024.

## Measuring Performance

In 2023-24, significant progress was made on the establishment of the agency and on Regional Transportation Plan development, further detailed below. As measured against the 2023-24 Business Plan, the JRTA has achieved several initiatives, with the rest well underway.

### Organization

In 2023-24, the JRTA established a public presence and developed the Agency’s core guiding framework.

Initiative	Status	Details
Develop the JRTA’s core guiding framework including the organization’s vision, mission, and values.	Complete	Through engagement with our board, working and focus groups, and the public, the JRTA developed <a href="#">a vision, goals, and principles</a> for the plan, finalized in early 2024.
Establish the JRTA’s brand, narrative, digital identity, and website.	Complete	A brand identity, logo, <a href="#">website</a> , and social media channels were established for the JRTA in May 2023 to further communicate the JRTA’s mandate and the importance of the plan.

Continue to build organizational capacity and right size staffing compliment, including organizational structure, policies, and procedures.	Ongoing	In 2023-24, the team was strategically expanded to include staff with planning, communications, policy, and transportation modelling expertise.
Complete the JRTA’s first multi-year corporate strategic plan.	Underway	Development of the multi-year strategic plan is in progress. As the JRTA works to confirm its future governance structure, the strategic plan will be an important component.

## Regional Transportation Plan

The JRTA has been tasked with addressing transportation issues associated with rapid growth in Halifax and surrounding communities.

To achieve this, the JRTA continued to work on the development of the Regional Transportation Plan in 2023-24. The plan is an important part of accomplishing the JRTA’s mandate and will:

- establish a long-term, coordinated vision for a regional transportation system that makes sustainable growth and development possible.
- play a critical role in advancing broader Provincial Government initiatives to tackle climate change, support growth and economic development.
- improve the health, well-being, and quality of life of Nova Scotians.

Initiative	Status	Details
Develop and execute a robust communication and engagement strategy.	Ongoing	For Stage 1 engagement, a thorough engagement strategy was prepared. The strategy included the approach to public and targeted engagement, media buy and communications details, considerations and risks, and the completion of a <a href="#">detailed What We Heard report</a> , summarizing feedback received.

		<p>During May 2023, Stage 1 engagement included twelve in-person pop-ups in Halifax and surrounding communities, an online survey with over 2,000 submissions, and virtual focus group sessions. The feedback received from Stage 1 helped to form the Vision, Goals, and Principles for the Regional Transportation Plan.</p> <p>A similar approach took place for Stage 2. An engagement strategy was prepared, with the goal of finalizing the plan’s Vision, Goals, and Principles, and to provide an update to the public of the work to date.</p> <p>In February &amp; March 2024, Stage 2 engagement included fourteen in-person sessions, a virtual information session, an online survey, and focus group sessions.</p>
<p>Develop a new activity-based travel demand model (ABM).</p>	<p>Complete</p>	<p>WSP Canada, working with University of Toronto, JRTA, and Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), completed development on the ABM in early 2024.</p> <p>The ABM is a flexible, realistic, policy-sensitive transportation demand modelling tool that the JRTA can use to evaluate transportation projects and policies in much more detail. The ABM simulates travel behaviour (where and how people travel) at a regional scale and will help determine the right combination of projects and policies to collectively support both a growing population and the provincial goal of net-zero by 2050.</p>

		<p>The ABM can be used by other provincial departments, assist with partner projects, and help municipalities in their transportation planning and decision-making.</p>
<p>Maintain progress towards plan completion by November 2024.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>In 2023-24, the JRTA, with HDR Corporation, made progress on the development of the Regional Transportation Plan, including:</p> <p><b>Existing Conditions and Foundational Analysis -</b> The HDR team reviewed and synthesized the existing plans, policies, and study materials to date as well as compiled and analysed data as part of the existing conditions and foundational analysis and provided a consolidated background report.</p> <p><b>Scenario Analysis -</b> HDR developed six scenarios to explore multiple possible futures for Nova Scotia and assessed various development and population patterns. Scenarios are fictional, but plausible descriptions of the future, and are designed to test the transportation system in different ways. They exist to help the plan cover a wider range of possibilities.</p> <p><b>High Level Analysis –</b> Using a Sketch Model spreadsheet tool, HDR analyzed how conceptual projects and policies impacted the transportation system across the different scenarios.</p>



## Partnership & Projects

[Collaboration is a foundational value](#) of the JRTA and a key success factor in the development of the Regional Transportation Plan.

Significant effort was made in 2023-24 to introduce the Agency to the public and other organizations, seek out interested parties, and build relationships with our core partners, municipal governments, provincial departments, and underrepresented and underserved communities.

Type of Meeting	Number of Meetings
Technical Advisory Board	4
Technical Working Group	5
Provincial Department	93
Provincial Collaboration Network	3
National Connections and Funding Alignment	9
Interest Groups	36
Municipal Working Group	4
Municipalities	13
Focus Groups	8
Additional Outreach	12

The focus of this collaboration is a multi-purpose approach to planning and infrastructure decision-making to maximize investments and drive sustainable growth.

Initiative	Status	Details
<p>Leading the execution of the Regional Transportation Plan through a collaborative process.</p> <p>Continue to champion regional collaboration to identify and support the implementation of regional transportation projects.</p>	Ongoing	<p>The JRTA continued to work closely with a <a href="#">Technical Advisory Board</a> (TAB) to help inform and guide the work.</p> <p>The TAB is comprised of senior leaders representing transportation authorities and agencies who are responsible for large transportation infrastructure and/or operations in the region:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nova Scotia Department of Public Works</li> <li>• Halifax Regional Municipality</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Halifax Harbour Bridges</li> <li>• Halifax International Airport Authority</li> <li>• Halifax Port Authority</li> <li>• Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency</li> </ul> <p>In October 2023, CN joined the TAB as an Associate Member.</p> <p>In 2023, the JRTA formed several other collaborative groups to further the work:</p> <p><b>Technical Working Group</b> – subject matter experts from the six above core partners.</p> <p><b>Municipal Working Group</b> – CAOs or senior planning staff from fifteen municipalities in the <a href="#">plan study area</a>.</p> <p><b>PNS Network</b> – staff from across provincial departments whose work intersects with the JRTA.</p> <p><b>Focus Groups</b> – participants from a range of organizations, including community groups, transit operations, major employers, etc.</p> <p><b>Additional Outreach</b> - <a href="#">supporting trusted, community-rooted organizations</a> that are already working in areas where transportation acts as an enabler or barrier for their members/clients.</p>
<p>Support the analysis, prioritization, and activation of</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>The JRTA Core Partners and municipalities are responsible for large transportation infrastructure and/or operations in the region.</p>

<p>key partner projects, including the pursuit of funding support.</p>	<p>The JRTA has taken a leadership role in working with Core Partners and municipalities to identify projects and policies that align with the work of the JRTA, have overlap between multiple partners or municipalities, or need a regional approach to planning, delivering or funding.</p> <p>The JRTA is reviewing plans, policies, projects or other initiatives for integration based on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence or are influenced by more than one of the JRTA partner jurisdiction or operations</li> <li>• Are of regional significance with an emphasis on major corridors and infrastructure that move a large volume of people and/or goods</li> <li>• Are seeking cost-shared funding amongst the JRTA partners</li> <li>• Are seeking provincial endorsement to secure federal funding</li> </ul> <p>The JRTA will continue to lead and participate as projects and policies are brought forward.</p>
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## Financial Results

<b>Crown/ Agency Expenses Summary</b>	<b>2023-2024 Estimate</b>	<b>2023-2024 Actuals</b>	<b>2023-2024 Variance</b>
Salaries and benefits	\$840,000	\$1,062,435	\$222,435
Professional services	\$0	\$1,122,797	\$1,122,797
Operating Expenses	\$1,106,000	\$266,911	(\$893,089)
<b>Total - Departmental Expenses</b>	<b>\$2,000,000</b>	<b>\$2,452,143</b>	<b>\$452,143</b>
<b>Additional Information:</b>			
Provincial Funding	(\$2,000,000)	(\$2,080,842)	(\$80,842)
Other Revenue Sources	(\$0)	(\$371,301)	(\$371,301)

**Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:**  
Increased staff and operating costs required during the year to help fulfill evolving mandate related to the development of the Regional Transportation Plan and additional studies.

**Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Variance Explanation:**  
Revenues higher than budget. Increased revenue received through cost share arrangement with HRM and ACOA grants.

## Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act

The following is a summary of disclosures received by the Joint Regional Transportation Agency:

Information Required under Section 18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2023-2024
The number of disclosures received	0
The number of findings of wrongdoing	0
Details of each wrongdoing	N/A
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing.	N/A