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## PROJECT STATEMENT

### The Grand Concourse Walkway Network

The Grand Concourse is a 120 kilometre long system of walks and supporting services, extending throughout the St. John's urban region. The system integrates parks and green spaces, with the network of urban streets and the local transit system. The walks provide effective linkages among neighbourhoods and key destinations throughout the community, emphasizing access to educational, recreational and institutional settings, as well as shopping areas and the historic city core.

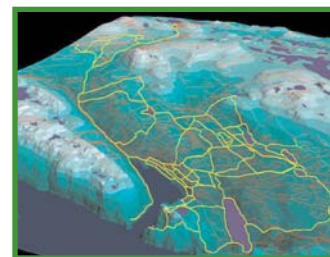
The vision for the Grand Concourse is the inspiration of local businessman Paul J. Johnson, who oversaw a series of eleven background studies to confirm the viability of the concept. The Grand Concourse Authority was recognized in provincial legislation in 1994, and charged with the responsibility to plan, design and construct the network of walks set out in the Concourse master plan. The organization is governed by a board of directors which has grown to 15 members, representing local environmental groups, and the three levels of government. By the end of the 2003 construction season the Authority will have expended over 500 persons year of labour and \$20 million to realize the Grand Concourse.



1989: Vision for a walkway network.



11 background studies articulate a vision and rationale.



The Grand Concourse: 120 kilometres of walks.

## Sustainable Urban Transportation...

The Grand Concourse forms an extensive network of pedestrian walks linking the cities of St. John's and Mount Pearl and the Town of Paradise, Newfoundland. Considerable planning for the Concourse has resulted in a system which successfully integrates park spaces, historic street-scapes of the urban core along with the municipal transit system and the existing pedestrian trail network. While more than 60 kilometres of new walks have been required to create the Concourse, improvements along the entire length have also involved substantial park upgrading along with interpretation and promotional efforts.

Creation of a safe and effective walkway system has been a key emphasis of design. Walk routing is tailored to link with bus stops, and our walking guides highlight connections with the transit system. Municipal and provincial transportation engineers have played a vital role in creating a safe interface between pedestrian ways and local streets and highways through consultation and the review of design proposals. Signing on the Newfoundland Trailway and at all street crossings conforms to the standards of the Transportation Association of Canada.

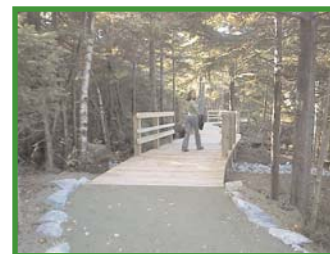
The Concourse is designed to provide access to a broad range of users. The system includes the eastern most 23 kilometres of the Newfoundland Trailway (Trans Canada Trail) forming a multi-use trail spine linking the three municipalities. Providing access to the mobility impaired in the rugged Newfoundland landscape can be a challenge, but our walks avoid barriers to wheel chairs and strollers in all but the most difficult conditions. Handrails and periodic rest areas are two simple but common measures used to allow more of the local population to enjoy our walks. Our typical walk surfaces are two to three metres wide, with smooth finishes of compacted fine gravel, asphalt or wood. Walk construction emphasizes sub surface preparation to ensure an even walking surface, along with grassed shoulders, gentle gradients and appropriate control of vegetation along trails.

Amenities along the Grand Concourse promote increased use of the walks. Park service buildings have been completed in five locations, with three others underway, and one more planned. These structures provide public washrooms and concessions in areas where services are lacking, as well as facilities to support park maintenance. Upgrading of local park spaces, school grounds and playgrounds along the network provides attractive neighbourhood destinations, increasing the motivation for walking.

Signing and interpretive materials further support the walkway system. Walkway markers identify routes and promote the identity of the system. Story boards at the ends of walks highlight the way and interpret natural and cultural history of the area. In recent years nearly 120,000 copies of the Walker's Map have been distributed to local homeowners free of charge, roughly one for every resident within walking distance of the system.



Signed ways in the city core allow for self guided experiences.



Safety and accessibility: design priorities.



Outdoor classroom created at Long Pond.

Almost 4000 people have purchased the detailed guide to the walks (included with this submission). Recently, the Grand Concourse WEB page (<http://www.grandconcourse.ca>) has also been launched to promote walking among the local population, and assist travellers in planning their visit to the area.

The Grand Concourse has become an integral part of the community, since the start of construction in 1993. A recent survey indicates that nearly 85% of the local population uses the Grand Concourse at least weekly during the summer months (please refer to the Telephone User Survey Summary and User Survey Summary). Of those who walk the trails, 47% do so on a daily basis, and 80% use the walks at least twice a week. Development of the Grand Concourse has also helped bring about heightened awareness of the importance of the local walkway system. 92% of telephone survey respondents indicated that spending on trail development should remain the same or increase. Provincial and national organizations have also recognized the value of the Grand Concourse:

Newfoundland Trailway Council  
**Trail Blazer of the Year 2001**

Canadian Parks and Recreation Association  
**Award for Excellence in Innovation 2001**

Canadian Society of Landscape Architects  
**National Honour Award for  
 Development of Grand Concourse Walkway Network 2002**

Canadian Society of Landscape Architects  
**Regional Merit Award for Walker's Handbook 2002**

Development of the Grand Concourse walkway system provides diverse benefits for the community, aside from increased opportunity to walk to destinations within pleasing surroundings. The local economy will benefit from over \$20 million in expenditures and 500 person years of employment; these are just the direct impacts of design and construction. Long term maintenance and use of the walks will provide a continuing stream of benefits, and help to support our growing tourism industry (please refer to the enclosed *Analysis of the benefits of the Grand Concourse in the St. John's Urban Region*).

The community benefits through improved human health and increased opportunity to gain access to their surroundings. Community bonds are strengthened as neighbours meet face to face on the trails. System use has tended to enhance neighbourhood security, as walkers informally police the public walks and parks spaces. Trails facilitate higher utilization of our park spaces, as runners, birders and people of all ages find new outlets for exploration and activity.

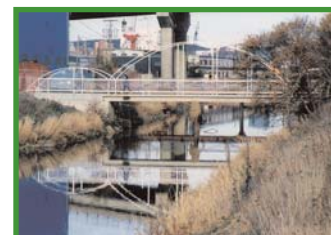
The development of walks has lead to a variety of environmental benefits.



Storyboards, maps, the *Walker's Handbook* and web based guides all support walk use.



Our walks: appeal for all ages.



Functional, durable and pleasing infrastructure.



The opportunity to walk or cycle reduces automobile use, resource consumption and emissions. Enhancements to park and green areas as part of walkway development have led to restored stream habitat, naturalization of park spaces, tree planting and increased awareness of environmental concerns among the public.

### Innovation...

Development of the Grand Concourse has been shaped by the partnerships formed as part of the planning and building process (see list of Authority member and funding agencies). This broad based group that has evolved to realize the Grand Concourse includes 15 member organizations, 3 key external funding agencies, and a number of other supporting organizations including private donors. The members of the Grand Concourse have come together to share abilities and resources to accomplish works no one organization was able to achieve alone. The large expenditure of human effort and capital that has resulted from building the Grand Concourse would not have been realized without the significant efforts of our members to work together for the greater good.

The broad base of support ensures that projects undertaken result in built works which satisfy a broad spectrum of needs. Along with providing sound and safe public amenity, the Grand Concourse provides economic, social and environmental benefits in line with the agendas of our membership. The healthy working relationships built by cooperative effort often times spill over to improve relations and effectiveness of members operating outside of the Grand Concourse Authority. Working together has often resulted in the articulation of plans for building that are well received by the community, and cause little controversy.

By working as a group, the Grand Concourse Authority and our members have gained through exchange of professional expertise among biologists, recreation and parks experts, engineers practising in a variety of specialities and landscape architects. Collaborative design has resulted in better design solutions and increased understanding across professional boundaries.

Realization of the Grand Concourse has emphasized the use of local materials and traditional building practices. The use of stone in the landscape, as well as rustic landscape carpentry, and native plant materials have been a priority in design and construction. While every effort is made to keep construction and long term maintenance and replacement costs as low as possible, where structures are required, the Authority works hard to design durable and attractive features that reflect the local environment.

The Authority has embraced technology as a valuable tool in the realization of the Grand Concourse, both in the field and the office. One of the final steps in building the Concourse, is the creation of a GIS based maintenance management system for all Grand Concourse walks and associated features, now



Team work: critical to success.



Training in use of traditional materials: 12 masons completed 30 week course.



GIS Inventory of walks and supporting features facilitates long term care.

underway. GPS and GIS technology will play an important role in the effective management of the assets created over the past ten years. The Authority has also built a fully networked office, and worked to extend the use of information technology to the control of materials and the work order systems in the field. Our dedicated network administrator plays a vital role in system maintenance, but also in continually expanding the abilities of our staff and technological resources to work harder and work smarter.

The task of building the Grand Concourse has required a substantial commitment of capital and resources, and involved years of ongoing design and construction activity. To ensure the wise use of our resources and the timely completion of quality products, the Authority relies upon projects management procedures and tools. Over the course of several seasons the Authority has tailored standard procedures to meet the needs of our organization, and successfully accomplished quality projects of increasing complexity on time and on budget.

The Grand Concourse Authority has also played a valuable in role for emerging design professionals and allied staff. In the past 14 years of planning, design and construction more than 100 students and recent graduates in engineering, landscape architecture, CAD, information technology and business programs have gained valuable first professional experience through employment with the Grand Concourse Authority. Construction of walks and the associated amenities and supporting tasks have presented youth with hands on experience to address design challenges, and see their designs built.

The Authority exists to create the network of walks and amenities, which are then to be maintained in perpetuity by our member organizations. To ensure a consistently high standard of care is achieved the Authority is producing three volumes to document the works we have created, and the procedures required to maintain and eventually replace all works. Many of the construction processes have been fine tuned for the local environment; this knowledge gained will be passed along to walk custodians in a landscape manual. A volume of maintenance specifications and a manual of construction details will also be critical components of the maintenance management system, as well as valuable resources for external organizations undertaking similar projects.

### Financing and Economic Impacts...

As mentioned above, the Grand Concourse Authority is supported by our membership and key funding agencies, and it is this continuing support which has allowed the creation of the walkway system. Our membership (particularly the province, three municipal governments and Johnson Family Foundation) have committed to provide seed money for projects, which is augmented by the support of the Human Resources Development Canada, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Nearly 50% of 2002 revenues were provided by the Federal



Over 100 young professionals have gained hands-on work experience.



3 manuals to support long term care and share lessons learned.



Concession at park service building provides new business opportunity.

Government (for more information see the financial summary in our 2002 *Year-End Report*).

This shared approach to funding projects maintains the interest of all parties, as each achieves its objectives through development of the Grand Concourse for a fraction of actual project costs. By responding effectively to the needs of members and funding partners, the Authority has drawn together a variety of interests to form an able organization.

Development of the Grand Concourse has also had a variety of indirect economic impacts which are substantial. Increased property, consumption, employment and income taxes contribute a 50% return on government support annually. Spending on walk related purchases by walk users contributes to the expenditure \$20 million dollars annually. Maintenance and continuing use of the Grand Concourse will create a stream of economic benefits long after the walks are completed. Development of the walk system makes a significant contribution to the local tourism base, by providing pleasing and safe access to local attractions and natural areas.

Construction of the Grand Concourse will also have provided more than 500 person years of employment for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Employment with the Authority has also provided many with the necessary skills to succeed in further employment. Appendix A of our 2002 Year - End Report identifies over 120 individuals who have gone on to find meaningful employment after contributing to the Grand Concourse. Five permanent seasonal positions have also been created within municipal governments, to assure the long term care of the system.

Social and environmental benefits following from development of the Grand Concourse are more difficult to quantify precisely, but are not to be discounted. By promoting healthier life styles, health care costs, lost productivity and human suffering are reduced (85% of our phone respondents indicated they use the system at least once a week, in season). Well executed walkway systems also strengthen communities and enhance public security by increasing personal contact among neighbours and promoting self policing of trails.

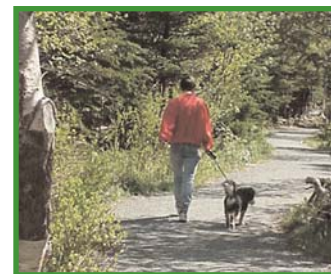
Restoration and protection of the environment resulting from development of the Concourse also provides real benefits for the community. Aside from direct restoration efforts, development of the Grand Concourse fosters increased human awareness of the value of green spaces within the urban environment, and greater support for their protection and wise management.



Walks provide youth with improved access to leisure facilities.



Fish ladder enhances habitat and facilitates migration.



Walks: an elegant and powerful solution.

## Lessons learned...

The development of walking trails addresses the most popular pass-time in North America - walking! The high levels of trail use in the St. John's region reinforce the fact that carefully planned, designed and built walkway systems are valuable transportation infrastructure, and may contribute significant economic, social and environmental benefits to the community.

The collaborative approach employed by the Grand Concourse Authority provided an effective means to realize an ambitious project. The effort required to forge the partnership was rewarded with a broad base of community support that facilitated development, and ensured built works provided a holistic solution to the challenge of developing the walkway network.

The original vision for the Grand Concourse was based in thorough background study. The creation of an extensive network of continuous walks requires early consideration of property ownership, opportunities for safe street crossings and linkages to the transit system, as well as the identification of key destinations and the reservation of space to facilitate access to new developments. Without extensive planning at an early stage the continuity of walks, and the utility of the entire network can be severely compromised. The Grand Concourse Authority was fortunate in finding many opportunities for walkway development existed in the developed areas of St. John's, Mount Pearl and Paradise.

The long term integrity of the system relies heavily on the commitment of the owners to protect and maintain the walks and amenities to walks a high standard. Considerable effort has been required to develop the information base for walk maintenance (designs, construction techniques and maintenance procedures) as well as the GIS based maintenance management system itself. This system will also assist communities to understand and manage the financial demands of the maintenance. Our member organizations are committed to provide long term maintenance for walks as a condition of participation in the Authority, and no walks or amenities are built without a commitment for long term care.

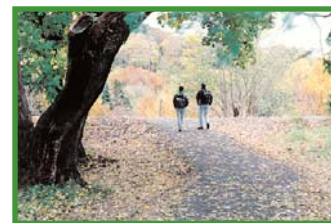
The membership base of the Grand Concourse Authority, and the support of funding agencies was built through articulation of a vision, followed by attention to detailed planning and two years of demonstration projects. Articulation of the vision provided an ambitious but realistic goal, as demonstrated in thorough background planning. Two years of building demonstration projects showed that the vision set out was truly achievable. Our early built works demonstrated a commitment and ability to achieve quality results, and inspired the confidence of our members and funding partners. Maintaining the continuing confidence of our partners has been essential to acquiring project support on an annual basis.



Engaging the public: a key to success.



Providing a mechanism for lasting care.



Grand Concourse walkway network: complete in 2003.



## **Members of the Grand Concourse Authority**

Canadian Heritage - Parks Canada  
St. John's Port Authority  
Province of Newfoundland and Labrador  
    Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation  
    Department of Works, Services and Transportation  
Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation  
City of St. John's  
City of Mount Pearl  
Town of Paradise  
Memorial University of Newfoundland  
C.A. Pippy Park Commission  
Bowring Park Foundation  
Friends and Lobbyists of the Waterford River (FLOW)  
Quidi Vidi / Rennie's River Development Foundation  
Virginia River Conservation Society  
Johnson Family Foundation

## **Key Supporters of Grand Concourse Authority**

Human Resources Development Canada  
Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency  
Province of Newfoundland and Labrador  
City of St. John's  
City of Mount Pearl  
Town of Paradise  
Johnson Family Foundation

# Telephone Survey Summary

March 2002

On March 3, 4 and 5, 2002 a telephone survey was conducted of 425 randomly selected residents at least 18 years of age, in St. John's, Mount Pearl and Paradise. The survey was conducted with a view to determining the importance that residents attach to walkways, their level of personal use; and their level of knowledge of the Grand Concourse. Approximately 69% of the respondents were from St. John's, 22% from Mount Pearl and 9% from Paradise. The survey was developed by GCA staff in conjunction with consultant Lorne Pike, and was conducted by Telelink – The Call Centre Incorporated.

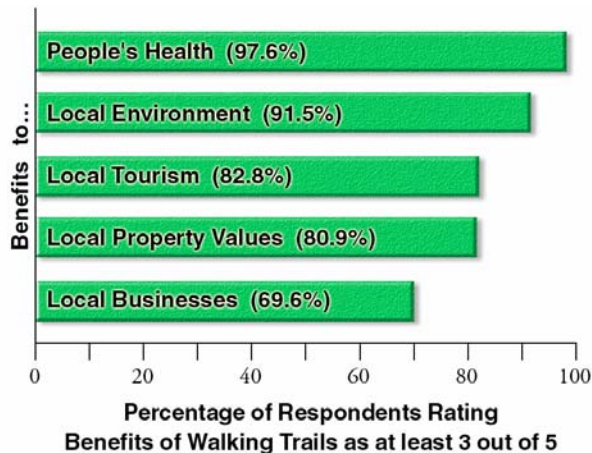
## Personal Use of Grand Concourse

Nearly 85 percent of the respondents say they use the walkways on at least a weekly basis during the summer months. During the winter months, the number using the trails at that level diminishes to around 22 percent.

## Benefits of Walking Trails

Respondents overwhelmingly recognized the value of the walkways. The number of people rating the Concourse as at least a 3 out of 5 was consistently high across all tested factors, ranging from 97.6% for benefits to people's health, to 69.6% for benefits to sales to local businesses.

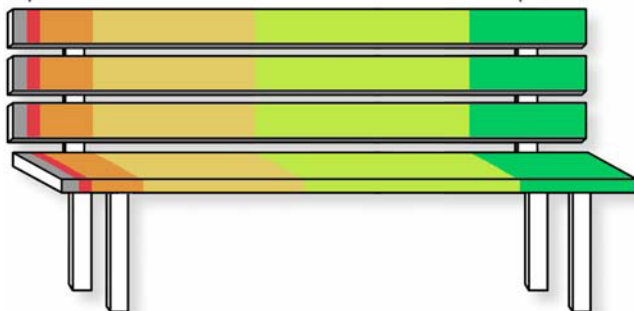
As well, 97.2% rated the walkways' scenery and attractiveness as a "3" or higher, while 89.9% rated the system's cleanliness and maintenance as a "3" or higher.



## Importance of New Investment

On a scale of 1-to-5...

1 2 3 4 5  
Not at all important Very important



Walkways compared quite favorably to other budget items for St. John's, Mount Pearl and Paradise. Again using a scale of 1 to 5, just over 20% of respondents ranked walking trails as a "5," while 86.1% rank them at least a "3."

When asked to rate the importance of various suggested improvements to the walkways:

- 88.7% rated “new signs, trellises and other structures” as a “3” or above;
- 94.4% rated “new benches and rest areas” as a “3” or above; and
- 95.1% rated “new walkways and green areas” as a “3” or above.

### Future Spending

92% of respondents indicated that we should spend either the same amount or more on the development of walking trails. Since no actual budget figures were discussed (which would have been well beyond the time limitations of this survey), these findings are not intended to support specific requests for increased funding, but do clearly indicate that the public overwhelmingly feels the Concourse is important and should be adequately funded. More precisely:

- 43.3% said we should spend more.
- 48.7% said we should continue spending the current amount.
- Only 1.6% said we should spend less.
- 6.4% had no opinion.

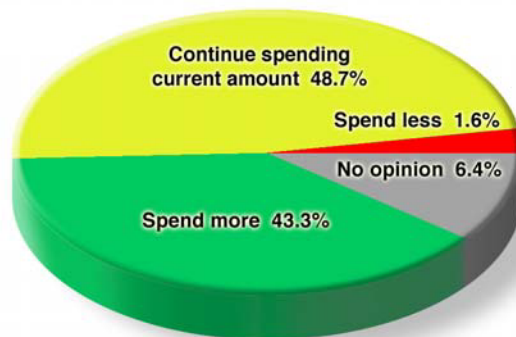
All users responded quite negatively to the possibility of spending less money on trail upkeep and maintenance. What is of particular concern, however, is that the more frequent the level of current usage, the more likely the respondents were to say that their usage would be heavily affected. 85% of daily or weekly users indicated their level of activity on the trails would be affected either somewhat or a great deal. However, “only” 66% of monthly users gave the same response — still a very large percentage.

### Knowledge of the Grand Concourse Authority

When respondents were asked who was responsible for various GCA projects, the GCA was consistently one of the least named of all agencies or government bodies. In three questions asking who was responsible for various walkway developments or types of work, only 28 respondents (6.6 %) named the Grand Concourse Authority.

Overall, although 55.8% of respondents said they were familiar with the term “Grand Concourse” when asked, more than one-third of them said they didn’t know what the organization did — even when prompted with possible answers.

With regard to the development and care of our walking trails, in the coming years, should we ..



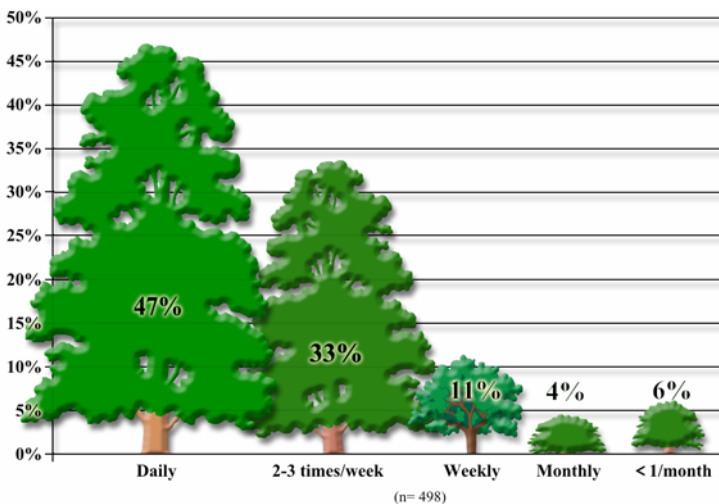
# User Survey Summary

August 2002

In August, 2002 a user intercept survey of Concourse users was conducted on walkways throughout St. John's, Mount Pearl and Paradise. This user survey was conducted primarily to determine levels of activity, gather insights on how to increase usage, and estimate the economic benefits derived from the Grand Concourse. Locations were chosen to provide what was considered to be a representative sampling of the overall system. The survey was developed by GCA staff, in conjunction with consultant Lorne Pike.

## Usage & Awareness:

83% of respondents lived in the St. John's greater metropolitan area —52% in St. John's, 22% in Mount Pearl, and 9% in Paradise. Another 4% were from elsewhere on the Avalon, 3% elsewhere in the province, and 11% from outside of the province. This survey was done in August, during the peak of the tourist season, and therefore the percentage of users from outside the St. John's area is likely to be more for this survey than it would be during other seasons.



Approximately 47% of users do so on a daily basis, 33% visit 2–3 times per week, and another 11% use a walkway on a weekly basis. Overall, 90% of the area's adult population consider themselves to be regular users of the Concourse, and the same range of people also see concrete benefits of the system. Such levels are unheard of for many types of community groups, but are not without precedent for well-developed walkway systems in North America.

However, while virtually all residents enjoy the walkway system that the

GCA has built, one in three does not recognize the organization's name. And, as seen in the Spring 2002 telephone survey, even those who do are not clear on its roles or activities.

## Increasing Walkway Use:

50% of respondents could not offer any suggestions on what might encourage them to use the walkways more often, while 73% could not point to any specific complaints. Of those who did offer comments, 3–4 times as many users would prefer to simply see better clean-up than any other enhancement to the walkways. With regard to suggested additions:

Washrooms were rated as "Important" by 65%, and "Very important" by 46%.

Trash cans were rated as "Important" by 60% and "Very important" by 40%.

22% rated food/drink kiosks as "Important" and 15% as "Very important."



A large majority (83%) said there were no places where they'd like to see new walkways. However, this should not be misinterpreted as a lack of interest in new walks. In the March 2002 survey, on a scale of 1–5, 95.1% of respondents rated adding new walkways and green areas as at least a “3.” People may not be able to quickly name specific sites for new walks, but they clearly do want to see more walks and green areas in place.

## **Spending Behaviour**

### **Spending on Day of Interview**

On average, the more often a person uses a trail or walkway, and/or the older the walkway user, the less that person is likely to buy food and drink per use. 74% of users said that they were spending nothing on food or drink on their current outing. 20% said that they'd spent up to \$5 on refreshments, while just 3% spent over \$5 and up to \$10 on food or drink.

### **Incidental Spending When Using a Walkway**

66% of trail users said they spend nothing when they use a Grand Concourse Authority trail or walkway. When money is spent it tends to be in small amounts. Up to \$5 was spent by 26% of users, but just 4% spent over \$5 and under \$10. A select group (4%) spends over \$10 and up to \$50 each time they use the trail. Walkers around Signal Hill and Harbourside Walk North were more likely to say that they spend money than do not. Although most of the time nothing is spent, on average \$1.93 is expended on incidentals (e.g., refreshments).

### **Fixed Expenditures**

The average amount spent annually on footwear by all users came in at \$66.07, and clothing expenditures was reported to be \$43.81. Spending on health foods and vitamins averaged \$18.49, and on binoculars, cameras, and film it came to \$9.79. Annual spending on maps and handbooks averaged \$1.12.

### **Potential Spending When Using a Walkway**

91% said that they would likely buy cold drinks, but only 5% said that hot drinks were desirable. Other small food items such as frozen treats (18%) and snacks (17%) were also given purchase consideration. A much smaller number suggested meals (5%) and pet supplies (4%).

## **Economic Influence of the Walkways**

The estimated number of users in all our calculations is relatively conservative, being based on the March 2002 telephone survey that did not include users from outside of St. John's, Mount Pearl and Paradise, and also did not include anyone younger than 18. As well, our calculations were based on population figures from Statistics Canada 2001 Census data, which only included residents 20-74 years of age. Thus any users younger or older than this group were not included. This is of particular interest since teens are likely to be frequent users and spenders.

Footwear and clothing are the larger annual expenditure categories for walkway users, with a much smaller amount being spent each year on items such as binoculars, cameras, film, health foods, vitamins, maps, and handbooks. Overall, the figures seen in this survey are consistent with those seen in studies done by systems across North America.

### Annual Economic Influence – Incidentals

In the Summer, there are an estimated 37,670 local daily walkway users, spending \$4,309,000 annually on incidental expenditures.

The 42,378 metro area adults who use the walkways 1–3 times per week spend \$3,449,000 annually. The 7,534 monthly users spend \$43,000 on walkway incidentals per year, while infrequent visitors spend \$24,000 per year.

This gives us an estimated total annual economic influence from incidental expenditures of \$7,825,000.



### Annual Economic Influence – Fixed Expenditures



Walkway users also annually spend \$5,957,000 on walkway footwear; \$3,906,000 on walkway-related clothing; \$1,592,000 on health foods and vitamins; \$901,000 on binoculars, cameras, and film; and \$102,000 on maps/handbooks. The total annual economic influence from walkway users' fixed expenditures is thus estimated at \$12,458,000.

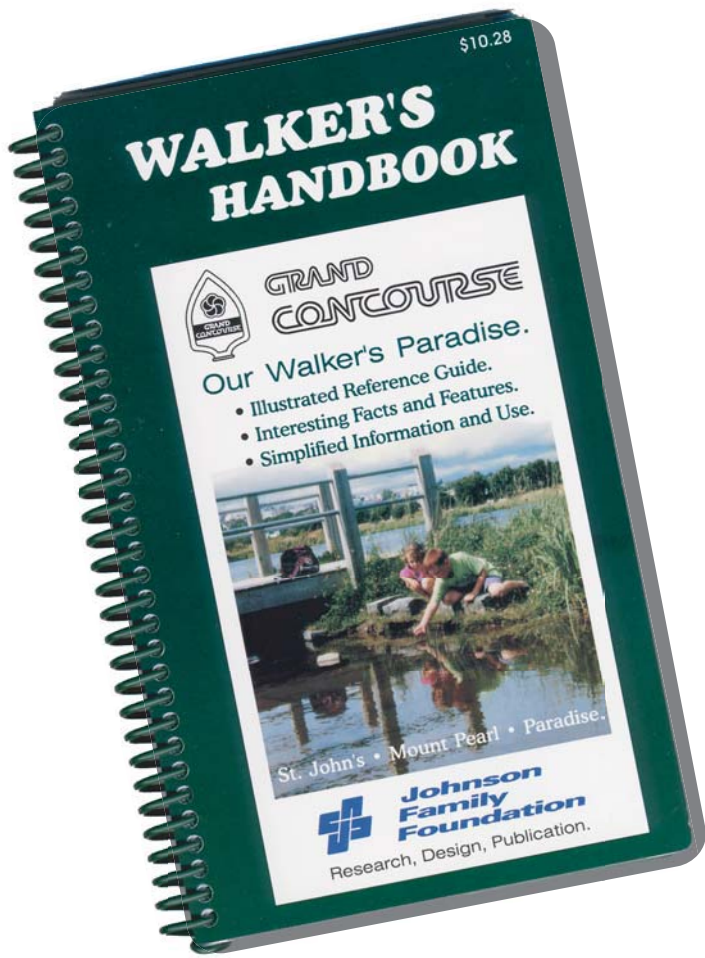
### Total Annual Economic Influence

A conservative estimate of the annual economic influence of the walkway system is \$20,283,000. Of course, such spending can never be attributed solely to the Grand Concourse... or any one element. Yes, the walkway system clearly contributes to that activity, but some consumer spending will always occur, with or without any given feature or attraction.

Nonetheless, the data indicates that the Grand Concourse is indeed a strong economic stimulant. The measured spending was seen to be coming from a number of different points, and sustained for extended periods. Thus, even though the average user does not spend a great deal during each outing, the sheer volume of users results in a very considerable economic impact on the region. As well, since the survey figures only include expenditures by area adults, once other spending is considered (e.g., purchases by youth), capital development costs are factored in, and non-resident spending is included, the total economic influence is likely to be much greater.



**Annual Economic Influence**  
**\$20,283,000**



# Way-finding and Interpretation

