

Prepared by Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
In cooperation with Public Consultation Unit, City of Toronto
August 29, 2014

1 Introduction

On June 24, 2014 the City of Toronto (the City) and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) hosted the Final Public Event (Event #3) for the East Don Trail Environmental Assessment to gather feedback on the design concepts for what the preferred trail alignment might look like. Residents and interested individuals were invited to view display panels and talk with members of the Project Team. A presentation provided an overview of design concepts evaluated which was followed by a Question and Answer session. Participants were also encouraged to fill out comment forms. Overall, the event was well attended (71 participants signed in).

Prior to the event, the display panels were made available on the project web page:
www.toronto.ca/eastdontrail

2 Communications Received

Feedback and communications related to the public event were collected and documented for this summary report prior to and during the two (2) week comment period following the event (ending on July 11, 2014). The summary below includes information received from the following sources:

- Conversation topics between City, TRCA and consultant staff, and Open House participants
- Question and answer session
- Comment forms received
- Email and phone correspondence

All submissions have been acknowledged and documented.

All communications received from the public during the EA process are made part of the public record and shared with the project team on an ongoing basis.

3 Key Comments and Ideas Expressed

Below is a summary of comments received by stakeholders through the various communications listed above, have been amalgamated, summarized, and organized by topic.

Overall

The majority of public responses received agreed with the design concept recommended for the East Don Trail alignment. There was also some opposition and concern regarding potential impacts on the natural environment. The information below is a summary of the feedback received and is presented by theme.

Design Concepts for the Preferred Trail Alignment

Majority of responses were in agreement with the design concept moving forward into the next design phase of the East Don Trail Study. Comments received pertained to:

- Safety associated with locating the trail near rail lines
- Support for least number of rail and water crossings required
- Some requests for use of golf course lands for trail to reduce impact on surrounding natural environment
- Concern regarding placement of trail in flood prone areas

How you would use the East Don Trail

Top reasons people would use the East Don Trail (based on number of responses received, 1 = most)

1. To be close to nature and to exercise
2. Experience solitude/relax and wildlife/bird viewing
3. Socialize with friends/family
4. Commute
5. Dog walking and other

Most important things to consider during planning and design of East Don Trail

Overall Considerations

- Most important: Protection of Natural Environment and User Experience and Aesthetics
- Least important: Cost and Maintenance Requirements

Natural Environment Considerations

- Most important: Disturbance to Existing wetlands followed by Existing Native Trees
- Moderately important: Disturbance to existing meadows and habitat edge

User Experience and Aesthetic Considerations

- Most important: Provide a natural environment experience
- Moderately important: Opportunity for trail to run through different landscapes and provide access to river or lookout points

- Steepness of trail was of least importance to the half of the respondents. However it was also of most importance to a large number of respondents, resulting a split response

Other Comments

Accessibility

- Importance of accessibility for all users

Community & Recreation

- Trail perceived as a recreational asset to the community

Environmental Impacts/Aesthetics

- Concern about impacts to local deer population
- Concern about scale of project within the ravine system
- Support for using Flemington Golf Course lands for the trail to protect the natural environment

Flemington Golf Course

- Support for minimizing impact on golf course operations
- Support for using golf course for trail – current use not a natural use within the ravine system

Public Consultation

- Support for public consultation process undertaken
- Desire to implement trail as quickly as possible

Safety

- Concerns associated with proximity of trail to rail line
- Concerns with existing encampments within the valley lands

Trail Design

- Consider sight lines at rail and river crossings
- Aesthetics of infrastructure should be considered (e.g. design of bridges)

User Experience

- Provide two trails that run parallel to separate users
- Concern about impact on existing mountain bike trails

Other (Out of Scope)

- Request for repairs and improvements to existing trails
- Concern regarding steepness of existing access at Wynford Community
- Support for community connections to trail (e.g., Anewen, Flemington, Victoria Park, and Wynford)
- Support for providing connections to adjacent residential streets

4 Going Forward – How Key Comments will be addressed

This list above provides a summary of what was heard during the public event and in comment sheets submitted during the comment period. These key comments will be addressed through a variety of means including: Frequently Asked Questions that will be posted on the project website, project updates, and ongoing correspondence with City and TRCA staff.

To stay informed about the East Don Trail Project, please visit the project website at:

www.toronto.ca/eastdontrail

5 Questions and Answers

Maogosha Pyjor, Senior Public Consultation Coordinator with the City of Toronto welcomed everyone to the event and explained that there would be a presentation to provide an overview of design concepts evaluated for the East Don Trail.

A Question and Answer session followed the presentation during which the public had an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback about the information presented. In addition, questions cards were distributed to attendees to write down any questions they wanted addressed during this session. The project team grouped questions by topic and responded to questions from each of the topics. The project team included staff from the City of Toronto, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), and the technical consulting team (Aquafor Beech Ltd.).

Three (3) City of Toronto councillors (and/or representatives) attended the open house including Councillor John Parker, Councillor Janet Davies, and Councillor Denzil Minnan-Wong. Councillor Mary Fragadakis sent her regrets but met with the project team prior to the event.

Maogosha Pyjor added that there were comment sheets available for attendees to share their input. These forms could be submitted at the registration table after the event, or sent to the address provided by July 11, 2014.

Questions and Answers:

The following is a summary of the key questions and answers received after the presentation.

Q: If level crossings were chosen for crossing the rail lines, would trains have to whistle?

A: The project team needs to look at the by-law. If there is a by-law in effect, there will be no whistling. The level crossing would be fully signaled, which might also avoid the need for whistling to ensure user awareness of oncoming trains.

Q: How will people from the Wynford Concorde community access the trail? Right now there are accessibility issues due to steep grades.

A: The scope of the East Don Trail EA focuses on the main spine trail (from the existing East Don Trail to the Lower Don Trail making a connection to the Gatineau Corridor Trail); the design and implementation of community access points are out of scope. However in the final report, Environmental Study Report, the study will make recommendations for future potential community access points. In terms of accessibility, the design of the East Don Trail will aim to keep grades below 5% where possible.

Q: Will there be a connection to the Gatineau Trail?

A: Yes, there will be a connection to the Gatineau Trail, creating this connection is one of the main goals of the project as is stated in our project opportunity/problem statement. Based on existing conditions the EA process identified the Hydro One access route as a connection east to Bermondsey Rd. Other potential connections will be reviewed in the detailed design stage.

Q: The proposed trail deviates from the existing East Don Trail, does it not?

A: The proposed East Don Trail will connect to the existing East Don Trail. This is not indicated on the map shown on the slide, but a connection will be made through the implementation of this proposed trail.

Q: In the south end of the study area is it possible for the proposed trail to cross the river to access the Charles Sauriol memorial stone, and to restructure the parking lot to be a trail also?

A: The preferred bridge placement was discussed in the last Phase of the project, Phase 2. It is located just east of that area over Taylor Massey Creek, in an area already disturbed where a temporary culvert crossing was located. This access is the most ideal access for Toronto Water maintenance activities and is in an area already disturbed. However, we can look at other options for honouring Charles Sauriol. It might be possible to move the memorial or to offer interpretive signage at the south end of the trail; these options will be discussed at a later stage.

Q: Presently, there is a parking lot at the Lawrence Avenue access point, but there is no parking on Wynford Drive. How will the City provide enough parking for all users?

A: The project team will look at where there are opportunities for parking and access to the trail during the following design phase of this study.

Q: How will this trail prevent alternative trails? Other cases seem to suggest that informal trails still get used even when a formal one is constructed.

A: The continued use of informal trails does happen. However, providing infrastructure in the form of formal trails remains a good method to manage informal ones. The City tries to direct formal trails away from sensitive areas, but has also identified parts of the study area to manage these informal trails.

Comment: In my opinion, there has been more and more invasion of the natural area over recent years, and this trail project would turn the East Don Valley corridor into a sidewalk. I believe there is evidence that multi-use trails are not effective and that people cannot relax due to conflicts between different types of users. Taylor Creek Park has a roadway of a trail but people continue to use the informal ones for this reason.

Q: When will the trail be completed?

A: Construction of the trail could begin as early as mid to late 2015. Before construction can happen, the Environmental Study Report (ESR) will be filed with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change and there will be 30 days for public and agency review. If there are no concerns that have not been adequately addressed (Part II Order), the City can proceed to implementation. .

Q: Will existing informal trails be affected?

A: We are aware of the many informal trails in the valley – parts of the study area of this EA have been identified as priority areas for management of these informal trails (outside of this process). Management of informal trails can include rerouting or closing of these dirt trails.

Comment: I would like to note that the Charles Sauriol memorial could easily be moved so that it is along the proposed trail.

Q: What is the cost of this project?

A: The cost of the trail will be approximately \$17 million. Yes, it will be quite expensive to build, however it will fill a significant gap in the trail network that will connect downtown Toronto to the Rouge Valley to the east. It will be a valuable asset for the community and City.

Comment: The cost for the trail is minimal compared to the legacy it will leave for the community.

A: We agree.

Q: From a preliminary engineering point of view, what is the chance that the trail will be wiped out by floods?

A: The technical consultant, Aquafor Beech Ltd., did a complete hydrogeological assessment as part of the environmental assessment process. Flooding was also looked at during both the placement and the evaluation of the trail segments. Generally, we have been able to keep the trail out of the 2 or 5 year flood lines. Flood lines are estimates of how high and wide a flood will reach in the valley lands for a typical 2 or 5 year flood.

Comment: Staying out of the 2 year flood line is not adequate.

Response: We agree – where possible we are trying to keep it out of the 5 year flood line.

Q: Trails are already flooding and there are many strategies trying to prevent that. How are all the various projects across the Don Watershed going to be integrated? Is everyone talking and working together?

A: The study is focusing on mitigating flooding and erosion issues before they happen for the East Don Trail EA project. The project team is also aware of the surrounding projects and is in contact with representatives for the projects; this is often accomplished through Technical Advisory Committee meetings, in which TRCA and City staff are part of, including Toronto Water.

Q: Will there be switchbacks to enable access from Wynford Drive?

A: We are not looking at designing and implementing community access points as part of this process. Our scope is to address the main gap in the trail network, which only includes the spine trail. We can only make recommendations about other details.

Q: Will the trail be maintained for year-round use?

A: Presently, there is no winter maintenance planned on this trail.

Q: Why are the aesthetic criteria weighted as heavily as the technical criteria?

A: When we evaluated the design concepts, we used many criteria. Some of them were technical – for example, cost, grades – and some of them were social – for example, user experience, aesthetics. We weighted both types of criteria evenly. We are asking members of the public to let us know what they value most (regarding the types of criteria) by filling the comment sheets that were provided. This will assist the project team in determining the most appropriate design concepts where the evaluation results are close.

Q: If you put this trail in place, it will be a commuter route. It looks like the trail is going to be a single paved path all the way down. Can there be two separate trails instead? One could be for commuters and one for recreational use.

A: We are proposing a trail that will be 3.5 metres wide, two-directional, multi-use which meets accessibility standards. We will not use multiple trails in an effort to minimize this project's impact on the environment.

Q: How will deer populations be affected?

A: The natural environment is being considered as part of this project. Deer are generalists which means they can acclimatize to different environments. In the Humber there are deer everywhere despite formal trails. What you may see is a change in when the deer use the area, for example the deer may change to a more nocturnal cycle, in response to human activity. We don't expect negative impacts to deer populations as a result of this trail, but the times you see the deer may change.