



East Don Trail Environmental Assessment (EA) Study
Public Event #2
Thursday September 12, 2013
The Estonian House 958 Broadview Avenue
5:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Two presentations were held during Public Event #2. At the beginning of each presentation **Maogosha Pyjor**, Senior Public Consultation Coordinator with the City of Toronto, welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that there would be a presentation to describe the trail route options (also referred to as alternative trail alignments) for the East Don Trail.

A Question and Answer session immediately followed each presentation during which the public had an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback about the information presented. Staff from the City of Toronto, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), and the technical consulting team (Aquafor Beech Ltd.) were available to answer questions.

Three (3) City of Toronto councillors attended the open house including Councillor John Parker (for the first presentation), Councillor Janet Davies (for the second presentation), and Councillor Mary Fragadakis (for the open house).

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 meeting, or sent to the address provided by September 27, 2013.

Questions and Answers after 1st presentation (6:30 pm):

Q: With respect to Area 2, why are there no alternative trail alignments going along the east side of the railway tracks, in order to avoid the golf course?

A: If the Rail Trail were selected based on the evaluation criteria as the preferred alternative for Area 2, the next phase would be the design concept phase. At this time, there would be a more detailed look at the area to determine which side of the railroad the trail should be placed on. It has not yet been decided whether the trail will be on the east or the west side of the railway tracks.

Comment: There does not appear to be any thought put into preserving the important historic golf course to the west of the rail line, which services the public and provides activities for many members of the community. More consideration should be given to putting the trail on the other side of the tracks, so that the golf course is not disrupted.

Q: Has a wildlife assessment been done?

A: Yes, a full ELC¹ has been completed and ecologists at TRCA have identified the flora and fauna within the study area.

Comment: In Area 2, the Rail Trail Alternative proposes fencing along the rail line. This fencing would pose a significant problem to herd animals.

A: The fencing has been taken into account in the evaluation under the section looking at the Natural and Physical Environment, where one of the criteria is Wildlife Habitat and Connectivity. The Rail Trail Alternatives scored low in this criteria due to the barrier the fencing would create.

Comment: The fencing would pose a problem for wildlife migration, and also affect the accessibility to the area for people walking their dogs.

Q: Have there been any studies done on how people are currently using the area and whether or not they value preserving the natural landscape? The area is a unique part of the city and the natural parts should be preserved; putting in concrete and asphalt would take away from this.

A: There is currently an informal trail system in the area. However the EA process is only looking at the multi-use trail alignment. A separate study has just been completed and published by the City of Toronto called the *Natural Environment Trail Strategy*. The informal trail system in the East Don was identified as a priority area for management within this Strategy. This information is available online at: <http://www.toronto.ca/parks/engagement/trails/>

¹ ELC is an acronym for Ecological Land Classification

Q: For the rail crossing shown in Area 2 (where an at-grade crossing or a bridge was identified), would the at-grade crossing have a signal? Are there any other examples of multi-use trails crossing rail lines in a similar way?

A: The detailed design for this has not yet been done, however it would be safe to say that yes, there would probably be a signal put in if the rail crossing is an at-grade.

Q: If a bridge were to be put in at the rail crossing, it would need to be quite tall. Would this bridge be like the one on the Gatineau Trail crossing over the Scarborough Rapid Transit (SRT) line, which has a high ramp on one of the sides and switchbacks on the other?

A: The consultant explained that they would be working with the topography of the valley slope on the east side to minimize the incline². The tie-in on the west side would have some form of turn down, and switchbacks would probably be considered as a potential option.

Q: During the conceptual design phase, will there be any consideration given to the trail in terms of stormwater management and perhaps building some additional stormwater storage capacity? Additionally, the floodplain boundaries have not been updated in 30 years, and this seems like a good opportunity to update the area and potentially reduce flooding. This would also be important for public safety along the trails.

A: The EA process for this particular project is only looking at the trail alignment, its impact on the environment, and any mitigation that would be necessary; the EA does not look at additional items such as stormwater. However, an assessment of the flood levels has been done specifically for this project and will be used during the conceptual design phase.

Q: It is unlikely that the golf course will want to sell to accommodate this project, so if the City chooses to build a trail through the course, they will have to expropriate a privately owned business. Are any other privately owned businesses identified for expropriation to accommodate the trail?

A: At this time, members of the project team involved in the EA process are not aware of any discussions about expropriation of the Flemingdon golf course. Aside from the golf course, there are no other private properties in the Study Area. Hydro One owns some of the land in the area and the City has already spoken to them about using their existing access route.³

Q: In terms of capital costs, are the alternative trail alignments presented in Area 2 equivalent or is there a preference for one?

A: Capital costs are one of the criteria that all of the alignments have been evaluated against. The Road Link alternatives in Area 2 came out to be the most expensive because of the amount of infrastructure that would need to be relocated.

² It should be noted that stairs are not being considered along any part of the main trail route (spine trail).

³ Other property owners within the area include Hydro One and Metrolinx/Go rail line

Q: If the golf course were to be expropriated, what would be done with the rest of the land?

A: At this point, a number of options are still being considered and only one of them would impact the golf course. The goal of tonight's meeting is to gain an understanding of the public's opinion and preferences about the alternative trail alignments. Area 2 is the most complex and challenging area of the trail because Flemingdon golf course, Hydro One and Metrolinx would all be impacted and these varying interests would have to be negotiated. Once the feedback from the public is received, the preferred alternative will be summarized and there will be ongoing discussions with the stakeholders who might be impacted. There is a long due process that must take place under the EA, which requires the participation of all impacted property owners. If an agreement cannot be negotiated, City Council and the TRCA may be required to provide direction. Hopefully a trail alignment will be chosen that has the least amount of impact on the interests of landowners. At the next public meeting in early 2014, there will be more to report on the discussions with the stakeholders and how the project will be moving forward in terms of agreements and property acquisition.

Q: Usually a trail is not paved and covered with asphalt. Why will this trail be paved? What materials will be used for the trail and how wide will it be?

A: In order to make the trail an accessible multi-use trail that can be used by a broad spectrum of users, it will need to be asphalt and approximately 3.5 to 4.0 meters in width.

Q: Does this project affect the taxes paid by the community?

A: The budget for this project has already been established.

Comment: How much of the taxpayers money is being held for this project? It is suspected that the City is holding 60 million dollars to build this trail.

Questions and Answers after the 2nd presentation (7:30 p.m.):

Q: What evaluation criteria are being used to determine the preferred trail alignment?

A: The broad evaluation criteria include Functional Value, Natural and Physical Environment, Social and Cultural Environment, Cost and Technical. Further details for each of these is available in the handout provided as well as online.

Q: Are the existing conditions published anywhere?

A: All of the information will be published as part of the Environmental Study Report (ESR). A Baseline Environmental Inventory (BEI) will be part of the ESR and will include a detailed inventory of existing conditions within the Local and Regional Study Areas. The BEI is currently in the final draft stages, and will be sent to the Community Liaison Committee (CLC) for review hopefully by the end of 2013. Once completed and filed with the Ministry of the Environment (MOE), the ESR will be made available for public review on the project website.

Q: What is the estimated time line after tonight's meeting?

A: After the comments and input from the public are received over the next two weeks, a preferred trail alignment will be selected. The next step after that will be the design concept phase where details of the preferred trail alignment will be determined. The design concept is then taken through an even more rigorous evaluation process, which will be presented to the public in early 2014. From there, the preferred design concept will be chosen. If all goes well, implementation would ideally begin in late 2014.

Q: How long will it take to build the trail?

A: The duration of construction will not be laid out until the design concept phase is completed. However, it is estimated that it will take between 3 to 5 years, depending on which options are chosen and the technical challenges associated with them.

Q: What is the estimate for the capital cost of the project?

A: The evaluation of the cost for each alternative was done relative to each other. The final cost will depend on how much infrastructure needs to be built and/or relocated, as well erosion work and other details that have not yet been determined. The cost of the design concepts for the preferred alternative will be completed in the next phase and will be made available at the next public meeting.