

### Section I – Items for Authority Action

**TO:** Chair and Members of the Authority  
Meeting #6/18, Friday, July 20, 2018

**FROM:** Carolyn Woodland, Senior Director, Planning, Greenspace and Communications

**RE:** **OAK RIDGES CORRIDOR CONSERVATION RESERVE TRAIL PLANNING PROJECTS**  
Approval of Management Plan Addendum

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#### **KEY ISSUE**

Approval in principle of an Addendum to the Oak Ridges Corridor Park Management Plan describing a conceptual trail plan to connect the Macleod's Landing neighbourhood to the Oak Ridges Corridor Conservation Reserve trail network.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

**WHEREAS** it was resolved at Authority Meeting #10/17, held on January 5, 2018 that Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) staff initiate a public planning process for two related trail planning projects within the Oak Ridges Corridor Conservation Reserve (ORCCR): an Addendum to the Oak Ridges Corridor Park (ORCP) Management Plan – the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage, and an Update to the Oak Ridges Corridor Park East Management Plan – Cycling on Secondary Trails, subject to confirmation of funding (Resolution #A231/17);

**AND WHEREAS** it was resolved at Authority Meeting #10/17, held on January 5, 2018 that staff report back to the Authority for approval on the final draft plans of the Addendum to the Oak Ridges Corridor Park Management Plan and the Update to the Oak Ridges Corridor Park East Management Plan;

**THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT** the Addendum to the Oak Ridges Corridor Park Management Plan be approved in principle;

**THAT** the Addendum be circulated to the Province of Ontario, for endorsement;

**THAT** following the endorsement of the Addendum at the provincial level, that staff report back to the Authority to confirm final approval of the Addendum;

**THAT** following the endorsement of the Addendum at the provincial level, the agreement between TRCA and the Province of Ontario for the management of the Oak Ridges Corridor Park be updated to reflect the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage;

**THAT** TRCA staff proceed to work with project partners to develop an integrated funding strategy according to the Addendum budget;

**AND FURTHER THAT** TRCA staff work to enter into an Offer of Service with the Town of Richmond Hill to implement the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage.

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### BACKGROUND

The ORCCR is a large area covering two formerly separate properties: the ORCP (428 hectares) owned by the Province of Ontario (Infrastructure Ontario) and managed by TRCA, and the Oak Ridges Corridor Park East (ORCPE) (175 hectares) owned and managed by TRCA. The two sites were integrated following the completion of the ORCPE Management Plan in 2011. Together these properties form 603 hectares of prime Oak Ridges Moraine landscape on the border of the Humber River and Rouge River watersheds in the Town of Richmond Hill, Regional Municipality of York. The ORCCR is located west of Leslie Street, south of Bethesda Sideroad, east of Bathurst Street, and north of Jefferson Sideroad and Stouffville Road.

The ORCCR is a rich natural area that includes wetlands, kettle lakes and forests, supporting many unique wildlife and plant species. The Reserve includes a significant network of popular recreational trails including a section of the main Oak Ridges Trail, connecting this trail network to the regional Oak Ridges Trail system, and a portion of the Lake-to-Lake Trail, York Region's active transportation trail initiative to connect Lake Simcoe to Lake Ontario.

The Macleod Estate, located at 16 Macleod Estate Court, is one of the most historically significant homes in Richmond Hill, and is connected to the broader history of western Canada. The Macleod Estate is a rare example of a large mid-19th century residence within the Town of Richmond Hill, and the architecture of the original house is well-preserved as part of the existing home. James Macleod, who grew up at the Estate, served in the Volunteer Militia Field Battery of Kingston as a lieutenant and served during the Fenian Raids (1866) and the Riel Rebellion (1869-70). James Macleod was also made commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in 1877. Under his leadership Forts Macleod, Walsh and Calgary were established. He is credited as a founder of southern Alberta who brought law and order to the Canadian West during this period of settlement.

The management of the ORCP property is guided by the ORCP Management Plan (2006). A key objective of this plan was to enable passive recreational uses that welcome and accommodate local residents, supporting the development of Secondary Trail linkages for neighbouring communities to link to the main Spine Trail which runs through the ORCP.

The management of the ORCPE property is guided by the ORCPE Management Plan (2011). As part of the trail plan component of this Management Plan, cycling is permitted on the main spine trail but not on any secondary trails. At the time of the plan, cycling on secondary trails was considered and the need for an organized group to assist with management of the trails was identified. No such group stepped forward to assume these responsibilities. Therefore, cycling on secondary trails was excluded as a permitted use.

TRCA has conducted ongoing engagement and outreach within the ORCCR and in the surrounding communities to promote environmental stewardship and build community relations. This has included guided walks, restoration plantings, and signage.

Two distinct yet related trail planning needs for the ORCCR have been raised through community advocacy. TRCA's completion of these trail planning projects will further ensure that the trail network on the ORCCR can meet the needs of a growing community, providing sustainable options for trail use that are supported by the community and will discourage informal and unauthorized trails.

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The MacLeod Estate Trail Linkage project addresses the need for a Secondary Trail connection near the MacLeod Estate and Philips Lake, from the main Oak Ridges Trail within the ORCP property to a neighbourhood of approximately 1,000 homes, as well as MacLeod's Landing Public School. This new neighbourhood was not fully established when the ORCP Management Plan was developed in 2006. During the management planning process, options for trail connections from this development to the main ORCP trail were evaluated, including the option to connect near the Macleod Estate. This option was eliminated during the planning process because of the private occupation of the residential home on the Macleod Estate property. However, the sales brochure for homes in this development indicated trail connections from the residential development and these never materialized. Current access to the main ORCCR trail from the Macleod's Landing community is via Yonge Street where there are limited to no sidewalks. Local residents have expressed that this is a dangerous access route.

As the Macleod's Landing neighbourhood was being developed, the Province of Ontario declared a parcel of land that includes the Macleod Estate as surplus and advised that the land would be sold to the highest bidder if there was no identified public buyer. The Town of Richmond Hill secured a portion of land along the remnant silver maple carriageway associated with the Macleod Estate to construct a trail from Silver Maple Road to Macleod Estate Court, and a private family purchased the remainder of the surplus land so that the Macleod Estate would remain intact. This series of events triggered the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage project as a partnership between TRCA, the Town of Richmond Hill, and The Gordon and Patricia Gray Foundation.

The Cycling on Secondary Trails project will plan for cycling uses on secondary trails within the ORCPE property. At the time that the ORCPE Management Plan was approved in 2011, there was no organized mountain biking or cycling club in the area that was willing to manage cycling trails and the cycling users. Therefore, cycling was restricted to the primary trail in the trail plan. Since the management plan was approved, the Durham Mountain Biking Association (DMBA) has expressed a desire to steward mountain biking trails on the TRCA lands in the ORCCR. An update to the ORCPE will assess appropriate cycling routes on secondary trails within the property. This project is being undertaken in partnership with the Town of Richmond Hill and the DMBA.

It was conceived that these two projects would be undertaken concurrently. The projects have similar internal and external key stakeholders, and the surrounding community would likely be interested in both projects. At Authority Meeting #10/17, on January 5, 2018, Resolution #A231/17 was approved and provided direction for TRCA staff to initiate these trail planning projects.

### **ORCCR Trail Planning Projects Process**

While the ORCCR Trail Planning Projects were initiated as concurrent projects to be undertaken under one overarching planning process, it became clear that the Cycling on Secondary Trails Project should progress on a longer timeline as this project covers a larger geographical area and broader scope of work than the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage. While the planning process for the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage is now complete and the [Addendum to the ORCP Management Plan](#) has been prepared, the planning process for the Cycling on Secondary Trails Project shall continue into the Fall of 2018.

The Macleod Estate Trail Linkage was developed through a collaborative process that engaged TRCA staff, municipal partners, stakeholders and community members. The planning process for the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage comprises three stages, and the approval in principle of the Addendum to the ORCP Management Plan is a component of the final stage of this process.

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### Phase 1: Initial Site Scoping and Evaluation

- Inventory ORCCR physical environment, natural environment, land use context in the study areas
- Inventory existing ORCCR trails in the study areas

### Phase 2: Trail Planning

- Establish a TRCA staff Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) concerned with both projects, host meeting
- Establish a Public Advisory Committee (PAC) concerned with both projects, host meeting
- Initiate on-line engagement ([TRCA YourSay Engagement website](#))
- Develop and evaluate trail alignment alternatives for the MacLeod Estate Trail Linkage, including trail connections to the ORCCR main Spine Trail and supporting trail amenities, such as signage and rest areas
- Host a Public Engagement Session
- Consult on pedestrian and cycling trails with the Town of Richmond Hill Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Host meeting with the TAC and the PAC
- Develop management and budget recommendations for the MacLeod Estate Trail Linkage
- Draft and finalize the Addendum to the ORCP Management Plan

### Phase 3: Trail Plan Endorsement

- Obtain Authority approval in principle for the Addendum to the ORCP Management Plan
- Obtain ORTA endorsement of the Addendum to the ORCP Management Plan
- Circulate the Addendum to the ORCP Management Plan to the Province of Ontario.

Engagement with TRCA staff and the public was critical to the planning process for the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage. Public engagement was undertaken through a multidimensional approach. A smaller PAC sought focused input from key external stakeholders, and broader public engagement techniques enabled more general feedback from the broader community. The Province of Ontario was engaged regarding the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage on February 13, 2018. On-line, traditional media, and face-to-face communication methods were employed to provide information about the project and seek relevant input.

A Public Engagement Session held at the Oak Ridges Community Centre on February 22, 2018 drew an estimated 70 people including local residents and trail users. Feedback forms were distributed to session attendees, inviting them to identify the conceptual trail alternative alignment they preferred (and explain why), and to describe the trail amenities and features they would like to see along the proposed new trail linkage. There were also large-format maps of the trail alternatives available for attendees to annotate with their comments. Broadly, there was community interest and support for the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage, with questions as to how the trail would interact with Philips Lake, what type of landscapes the trail would pass through, and what type of trail would be built. Local residents were generally supportive of the direct trail connection into the ORCCR. There was concentrated, rational, yet firm opposition for either proposed trail alignment from a few residents whose properties are situated adjacent to the location of the proposed trail, citing concerns over safety, privacy, environmental impact, and constructability of the proposed trail. These neighbours also raised concerns over the impact this trail would have on the value of their properties and historical political decision-making to re-open the approval of the Town of Richmond Hill trail along the remnant silver maple carriageway from

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Silver Maple Road to Macleod Estate Court. An on-site meeting was held with these residents, TRCA staff, and Town of Richmond Hill staff on May 15, 2018 to discuss their concerns. A summary of this site visit is included as Attachment 1.

### **Macleod Estate Trail Linkage Goals, Trail Design, and Amenities**

#### **Goals**

The goals of the ORCP Management Plan (Section 2.0) are the overarching goals for the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage. These goals are:

1. *To support the implementation of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act by contributing to the protection, restoration and enhancement of the Moraine's ecological functions, protecting water quality and quantity, maintaining the integrity of the continuous natural system and fostering partnerships for stewardship.*
2. *To address the challenge of sustaining a sanctuary for nature in an urban setting by including public uses that provide opportunities for passive recreation, linkages to the Oak Ridges Trail, and experiential learning, while protecting the environmental integrity of the park.*

Within Section 6.0, the ORCP Management Plan provides direction as to the purpose of Secondary Trails (Section 6.3), and how these trails can contribute to the goals of the ORCP Management Plan:

*"Secondary trails are proposed to link the neighbouring communities to the spine trail; the total length of proposed secondary trails is 2.8 km. People living adjacent to open space have a natural desire to access these areas. If formal access points are not provided, residents will make their own paths which can be much more detrimental to the sensitive environments than a formalized path in a pre-determined location."*

When the ORCP Management Plan was approved in 2006, the MacLeod's Landing neighbourhood was not fully established. This new neighbourhood now contains approximately 1000 homes and MacLeod's Landing Public School. The neighbourhood residents have expressed eagerness for a trail linkage into the Reserve within the study area. The lack of a direct trail connection coupled with the identified desire for access to the ORCCR trail network creates the risk of informal trails. The proposed new Secondary Trail connection is intended to function as a neighbourhood connection and will serve a wide variety of users, providing enhanced access to the natural beauty of the Moraine landscape within the ORCCR in a direct and sustainable manner. It will also provide access to the Macleod Estate, a site of national historical significance in Richmond Hill.

#### **Trail Alignment**

Because a trail connection between the Macleod's Landing neighbourhood and the ORCCR trail system was not included in the construction of the neighbourhood, the area that can now accommodate a functional trail linkage is constrained by the limits of the built environment. The neighbourhood's proximity to Philips Lake also requires appropriate buffer distance from the ecologically important wetland and forest habitat. The conceptual alignment of the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage (Attachment 2) provides a direct connection from the ORCCR trail system to the Macleod's Landing neighbourhood while avoiding the environmentally sensitive habitat around Philips Lake.

From the ORCCR spine trail, the new trail will pass eastwards through meadow area and

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new-growth conifer plantations, before turning southwards through thicker plantation forest and reaching a fence that surrounds the majority of Philips Lake. The trail will continue past this fence along a corridor of open meadow between the forest that surrounds Philips Lake and the fence-line of neighbouring properties. An artistic rendering illustrating the trail within this area east of Philips Lake is included as Attachment 3. The trail will then pass near the Macleod Estate residence before turning sharply eastwards along the historic silver maple carriageway and connecting to Silver Maple Road. An artistic rendering illustrating the trail within this area along the historic silver maple carriageway is included as Attachment 4. The new approximately 800 m trail connection provides a link from the Macleod's Landing neighbourhood to the main spine trail, which runs for approximately 9.5 km through the Oak Ridges Corridor Conservation Reserve from Bathurst Glen Golf Course near Bathurst Street in the west to Bethesda Sideroad in the northeast. The Macleod Estate Trail Linkage alignment is as direct as possible within the various constraints of the site so that community residents can have fast, easy access into ORCCR. The creation of shortcuts and additional unauthorized trails should be limited by this quick access to the main ORCCR trail.

The majority of the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage alignment is located on ORCCR lands owned by the Province of Ontario. The portion of the trail which passes along the remnant silver maple carriageway is located on land owned by the Town of Richmond Hill. Finally, the section of trail which passes nearby to the Macleod Estate residence is owned privately, however it is anticipated that public land for a trail corridor will be secured to accommodate the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage.

### **Trail Design**

The trail design standards for the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage are consistent with the trail design standards for Secondary Trails within the ORCP Management Plan, and are also based on the as-built design details of precedent Secondary Trail linkages constructed since the approval of the ORCP Management Plan. The Macleod Estate Trail Linkage is intended to have a trail tread 1.8 m wide, a clearing width of 2.4 m, and be surfaced with compacted limestone granular fines.

It is anticipated that the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage will fulfill the accessibility standards for recreational trails set out by Regulation 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards, under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005). Opportunities to go beyond these design requirements, including mitigating the longitudinal slope of the trail and providing rest areas, will be investigated during the detailed design of the trail.

### **Trail Amenities**

The suite of amenities associated with the Macleod Estate Trail linkage are based on guidance provided by the ORCP Management Plan, precedent trails within the ORCP built since the approval of the ORCP Management Plan, and the input of public and stakeholder engagement. The exact nature, design, and location of these amenities will be determined during the detailed design process.

A trailhead kiosk will be incorporated into the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage. This structure will be designed to match the existing trailhead kiosks throughout the ORCCR trail system. It is recommended that the trailhead kiosk be sited at the entrance to the ORCCR in the portion of the trail along the remnant silver maple carriageway.

Postmarkers will be incorporated into the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage. These postmarkers will be designed to match the construction of existing postmarks along the broader ORCCR trail system.

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Benches and/or rest areas will be incorporated into the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage. These benches will be designed to match the construction of existing benches along the broader ORCCR trail system. The siting of benches and/or rest areas along the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage shall be designed to enhance trail accessibility for a wide variety of users, including young children, seniors and persons with disabilities. Benches and rest areas can also be located at viewpoints or places of interest.

Interpretive signage is recommended to be incorporated into the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage, highlighting the ecological importance of Philips Lake and the cultural heritage value of the Macleod Estate and the associated silver-maple lined carriageway.

A substantial vegetated buffer will be ensured between the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage and the surrounding Macleod's Landing neighbourhood. This will be provided through existing vegetation and through the creation of additional planted buffer area where needed. To help prevent trail users from attempting to access Philips Lake, the vegetated buffer between the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage and Philips Lake will also be enhanced. Visual screening and dissuading trail users from entering the planted area are design priorities, in an effort to address some of the immediate neighbours' concerns relating to privacy and security. Additional fencing may be implemented between the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage and the surrounding Macleod's Landing neighbourhood and/or between the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage and Philips Lake to supplement planted buffers.

### **Trail Management**

The management, maintenance, and oversight of the section of the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage within the ORCCR property will be undertaken by TRCA staff, as per the agreement between TRCA and the Province of Ontario. The Macleod Estate Trail Linkage will be incorporated into this agreement via an amendment.

The management, maintenance, and oversight of the sections of the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage within private lands or within lands owned by the Town of Richmond Hill will be negotiated between TRCA and individual landowners. If these activities are to be undertaken by TRCA, a formalized agreement or addendum to an existing agreement will be necessary.

### **RATIONALE**

The Macleod's Landing neighbourhood now includes over 1,000 homes and the Macleod's Landing Public School, however it is the sole neighbourhood adjacent to the ORCCR without direct trail access. Currently the closest trail access points to the ORCCR trail system are the entrance from Jefferson Sideroad near Lake Forest Drive and from Yonge Street near Bond Lake. It was expressed by a number of local residents during the public engagement process that these access points are too far to be useful to them, and walking up Yonge Street to the Yonge Street trail access is not safe due to high volumes of fast-moving motor vehicle traffic, with limited to non-existent sidewalks. The Macleod Estate Trail Linkage will provide this desired connection, fulfilling the intention of the ORCP Management Plan which proposes Secondary Trails to link the neighbouring communities to the Spine Trail and fulfilling the needs of many residents who have been advocating for a direct trail connection. It will also improve safe access into the ORCCR for local residents and students at Macleod's Landing Public School.

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The residents of the Macleod's Landing neighbourhood have expressed eagerness for a direct trail linkage into the Reserve, and an online petition for a direct trail connection to the Reserve has garnered over 400 signatures. The other neighbourhoods that border the ORCP between Bathurst Street and Yonge Street that were being developed at the same time as Macleod's Landing all have at least one authorized direct community access into the ORCCR via a trail connection from the neighbourhood to the main ORCCR trail. The lack of a direct trail connection creates the risk of informal trails.

The Macleod Estate Trail Linkage will provide a trail that has been designed intentionally and sustainably within the constraints of the surrounding ecological features and the limits of the existing built environment and property ownership. Because a trail connection between the Macleod's Landing neighbourhood and the ORCCR trail system was not integrated into the original construction of the neighbourhood, the area that can now accommodate a functional trail linkage within the ORCCR is constrained between the limits of the built environment and the appropriate buffer distance from ecologically important wetland and forest habitat around Philips Lake. Also, due to the fact that the Town of Richmond Hill purchased a portion of the land declared surplus by the Province of Ontario for a trail connection along the heritage silver maple carriageway, and the private family who purchased the balance of the Macleod Estate property is amenable to a trail connection, there is now the opportunity to extend trail access from the edge of the ORCCR to a public right-of-way at Silver Maple Road.

The Macleod Estate Trail Linkage has been designed in partnership with the Town of Richmond Hill and in consultation with TRCA staff, the local community, and key stakeholders. The trail connection has been designed in an effort to provide an important overarching benefit to the neighbourhood while attempting to mitigate impacts to the adjacent neighbours. The Macleod Estate Trail Linkage provides direct trail access to the ORCCR in a centralized location within the neighbourhood, and allows users interpretation opportunities to experience important natural and cultural heritage features. Because of the constrained nature of the trail corridor and concerns raised by adjacent neighbours, the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage includes design features such as buffer plantings and the opportunity for additional fencing.

### **FINANCIAL DETAILS**

The total cost to implement the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage is projected to be \$375,000 plus HST. This amount includes an administrative surcharge and a contingency of 10%. The final budget for project implementation will be determined through the detailed design process.

The Town of Richmond Hill has agreed to contribute \$160,000 to the implementation of the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage and The Gordon and Patricia Gray Animal Welfare Foundation has committed to provide \$100,000 towards project implementation. Considering the \$260,000 committed to date, the estimated shortfall is \$115,000 plus HST. Work on construction of the trail will not commence until the shortfall is addressed - The Town of Richmond Hill and The Gordon and Patricia Gray Animal Welfare Foundation have agreed to work with TRCA to develop an integrated funding strategy to secure additional funding sources.

Once the trail is built, maintenance costs related to the portion of the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage on TRCA-managed lands will be included in the existing agreement between TRCA and the Province of Ontario.



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### DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE

The successful implementation of the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage will require the efforts of TRCA and its partners.

TRCA will take the following actions:

- Circulate the Addendum to the ORCP Management Plan with approval in principle to the PAC.
- Obtain ORTA endorsement of the Addendum to the ORCP Management Plan with approval in principle.
- Circulate the Addendum to the ORCP Management Plan to the Province of Ontario.
- Circulate the Addendum to the ORCP Management Plan with approval in principle to the Region of York.
- Report back to the Authority to confirm the endorsement of the Addendum to the ORCP Management Plan by the Province of Ontario, and to receive final approval.
- Develop an integrated funding strategy with the Town of Richmond Hill for the implementation of the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage.
- Pending the securement of public land for a trail corridor, finalize a TRCA Offer of Service with the Town of Richmond Hill for the implementation of the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage.
- Prepare an amendment to the agreement between TRCA and the Province of Ontario for the management of the Oak Ridges Corridor Park to include the Macleod Estate Trail Linkage.

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Attachments: 5 – Attachment 5 is link to the full [Addendum to the ORCP Management Plan – Macleod Estate Trail Linkage](#).