

Section I – Items for Regional Watershed Alliance Action

TO: Chair and Members of the Authority
Meeting #1/18, Wednesday, May 23, 2018

FROM: Arlen Leeming, Manager, Flagship Projects and Partnerships, Watershed Strategies

RE: THE MEADOWAY: AN OVERVIEW

KEY ISSUE

An overview of The Meadoway for the Regional Watershed Alliance Members.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the background report on The Meadoway be received;

AND FURTHER THAT members of the RWA be engaged in the Meadoway project as opportunities emerge.

BACKGROUND

The Meadoway is a transformative, city-building initiative taking place in Toronto. Led by Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) in partnership with the City of Toronto and The W. Garfield Weston Foundation, The Meadoway is transforming 16 kilometres of transmission corridor in Scarborough into one of the largest urban linear greenspaces in Canada.

Formerly known as the Gatineau Hydro Corridor Revitalization, The Meadoway will provide a green, active, east-west link between downtown Toronto and Rouge National Urban Park, while creating urban agriculture opportunities and connecting greenspaces across Scarborough. The creation of a system that includes high-functioning meadow habitat on a scale never before seen in Toronto, combined with the development of active transportation connections, will help reduce greenhouse gases in our atmosphere and promote low carbon alternatives for the thousands of Torontonians who commute daily in Scarborough.

Toronto is home to some of Canada's most incredible urban parks, from High Park to Morningside. While these natural areas have well-established north-south connections, they lack the east-west connections that are required to effectively establish a connected natural system that is vital to the future of sustainable city building in the Toronto region. At over 500 acres, The Meadoway will provide a vital east-west linkage between the Don River ravine and Rouge National Urban Park to redefine how greenspaces can be connected in Toronto.

The Meadoway will also become a key segment of Toronto's cycling network, supporting overall cycling infrastructure and building a connected link between the East Don Trail and Rouge National Urban Park. It is an opportunity to transform the relationship between the built structure of an urban area and the natural spaces that are vital to the overall health of the system.

To assess the viability of a transformational idea like The Meadoway, two revitalization pilot projects completed by the TRCA with funding support from The W. Garfield Weston Foundation

Item 7.3

were implemented between 2012 and 2017. The first of these pilot projects, the Scarborough Centre Butterfly Trail, has been widely recognized as one of the most successful revitalization projects in Toronto. By transforming a 3.5 kilometre section of the corridor into a naturalized habitat for biodiversity, an active transportation route, and a beautiful wildflower meadow planted by community members, the Scarborough Centre Butterfly Trail showcases the immense potential of The Meadoway.

FUNDING

On April 11th 2018, Mayor John Tory along with the directors of The W. Garfield Weston Foundation, and representatives from TRCA and The Living City Foundation jointly announced The Meadoway at ceremony in Scarborough. As part of this announcement The W. Garfield Weston Foundation announced a pledge up to \$25 million to support the project as it evolves over the coming months, with a firm commitment of \$10 million available immediately. The City of Toronto has committed \$6.3 million in its capital budget and plan for infrastructure investments that will help to realize the shared vision for The Meadoway by supporting the trail and cycling infrastructure, and will continue its responsibilities for ongoing operations and maintenance in the corridor.

The project has a total proposed budget of \$85 million; nearly 40% of the budget has been pledged to date.

FUTURE OPPORTUNITY

With over 500 kilometers and 4000 acres of transmission corridors in the Toronto region, The Meadoway represents the first phase of what can become a world-class example of linear corridor revitalization. The expansion of The Meadoway concept throughout the Toronto region would not only assist TRCA and its municipal partners achieve the Regional Trails Strategy and associated Living City Strategic Plan objectives, it would also create one of the largest urban linear parks systems anywhere in the world.

Through the development of new partnerships, innovative management structures, as well as a unique funding model, The Meadoway will showcase a new reality for environmental collaboration and will redefine the meaning of a community connected through conservation.

WORK TO BE DONE

With the goal to break ground immediately after the announcement, implementation of The Meadoway has already begun. In 2018 work will focus on community engagement and communications, trail development, landscape designs and the initiation of a feasibility study (in partnership with the Ontario's Ministry of Transportation) to construct a bridge over Highway 401.

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