

Section I – Items for Board of Directors Action

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Directors
Meeting #6/20, Friday, September 25, 2020

FROM: Anil Wijesooriya, Director, Restoration and Infrastructure

RE: **ADVANCING CYCLING CONNECTIONS IN THE CITY OF TORONTO WARD 6**
Downsview Green Loop

KEY ISSUE

Staff report on feasibility of a four-metre wide multi-use trail along the east side of Black Creek between Downsview Avenue and Wilson Avenue.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the report on the feasibility of constructing a four-metre wide multi-use trail along the east side of Black Creek between Downsview Avenue and Wilson Avenue be received;

THAT TRCA staff work with City of Toronto staff to evaluate the route of the Downsview Green Loop within the Jane Street and Keele Street Major City-wide Cycling Corridor Study, upon request from the City of Toronto;

AND FURTHER THAT TRCA, upon request from the City of Toronto, investigate how flood remediation measures in this area could enable further recreational uses, in addition to reducing risk to life and property.

BACKGROUND

At Board of Directors Meeting #4/20, held on May 22, 2020, Resolution #A75/20 was approved as follows:

THAT the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority staff advise the Board of Directors on the feasibility of constructing a four-metre-wide multi-use trail along the east side of Black Creek between Downsview Avenue and Wilson Avenue.

The proposed multi-use trail is between Downsview Avenue and Wilson Avenue, and is located within the Black Creek hydraulic floodway owned by Toronto and region Conservation Authority (TRCA) and managed by the City of Toronto. The land parcel falls inside TRCA's Jane-Wilson flood vulnerable cluster within the City of Toronto's Black Creek Special Policy Area (SPA). A flood vulnerable cluster is an area within the floodplain with a high concentration of buildings and roads that could be impacted by riverine flooding. A map identifying the property, TRCA Regulated Area and SPA is included as Attachment 2.

RATIONALE

TRCA staff investigated the issues and opportunities for trail development to provide advice on the feasibility of the proposed project. A map indicating the general study area and conceptual trail alignment in the Notice of Motion is included as Attachment 1.

The following is a brief overview of the issues and opportunities related to constructing a trail in the proposed parcel.

Flood Risk

- Issue: This section of the Black Creek is within the the Jane-Wilson flood vulnerable cluster. It is ranked as the second highest flood risk area in TRCA's jurisdiction because the dense urban development within the Black Creek floodplain and drainage area is particularly susceptible to flooding. This cluster is known to experience flash flooding during sudden, intense thunderstorms.
- Opportunity: TRCA staff would be supportive of investigating how flood remediation measures in this area could enable further recreational uses, in addition to reducing risk to life and property. While current flood depths and velocities present risks to personal safety, this can be revisited in the future as flood remediation options are evaluated.

Erosion Risk

- Issue: There are significant limitations due to spacing concerns, which increase the risk of any trail in the area being impacted by toe erosion and the resulting undermining of both the east and west banks. This is particularly important to consider if the concrete liner of the channel deteriorates in absence of regular maintenance and channel repair.

General Risk

- Issue: As a general principle, encouraging the public to interact or approach flood control infrastructure is discouraged by TRCA, as there is concern with the chance of drowning or injury due to a high flow or flood event in the area. The Black Creek Channel is a concrete-lined flood conveyance structure which TRCA considers a high hazard worksite due to its limited access, as well as its susceptibility to sudden increases in water volume and velocity.
- Opportunity: People are using an informal path in this parcel. A safe formalized trail would help address some of this concern. Features could include fencing, warning signs and gates to restrict access during flood and storm events.

Constructability

- Opportunity: A desktop review indicates that a trail in this parcel is generally feasible to implement. In-field confirmation of obstacles and barriers would be required before proceeding.

TRCA Trail Strategy

- Opportunity: The TRCA Trail Strategy for the Greater Toronto Region (2019) does not identify the proposed trail as part of its Greater Toronto Regional Trail Network; however, nearby Jane Street (north of Wilson Avenue) was adopted because it was identified in the City of Toronto's Cycling Network Plan (2016) as a Major Corridor Study Area that proposed bike lanes or cycle tracks between an area just south of Highway 401 and Steeles Avenue West. Jane Street was again identified in the 2019 Cycling Network Plan update for consideration as a Major City-wide Cycling Corridor Study, concurrent with Keele Street. City of Toronto staff confirmed that it is their intent is to review both parallel routes to determine which is the most viable. No study work has been initiated on either route as they are not in the short-term implementation program (2019-2022).

Future bike lanes or cycle tracks along Jane Street are proposed to be part of the larger Black Creek Trail system identified in the TRCA Trail Strategy which continues north from Wilson Avenue through several parklands along the Black Creek Ravine system. Black Creek Trail connects to several amenities and facilities such as the Finch Hydro

Item 8.11

Corridor Trail, TRCA's new head office location, York University and Black Creek Pioneer Village. The Trail Strategy further identified the need to continue the Black Creek Trail system north to the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre, providing additional connectivity to TRCA's Black Creek Pioneer Village North property, Highway 407 Subway Station, the southern section of the Vaughan Super Trail, and York Region's proposed South Greenway Corridor Trail. A map identifying existing and proposed trail connections associated with this area is included as Attachment 3.

Relationship to Building the Living City, the TRCA 2013-2022 Strategic Plan

This report supports the following strategies set forth in the TRCA 2013-2022 Strategic Plan:

Strategy 4 – Create complete communities that integrate nature and the built environment

FINANCIAL DETAILS

Financial details will be determined if a proposal for formal review is submitted to TRCA.

DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE

- Upon request from the City of Toronto, complete a formal review of a detailed proposal for the development of a multi-use trail in the proposed TRCA-owned parcel as part of the Downsview Green Loop.
- Upon request from the City of Toronto, TRCA will work with the City of Toronto to evaluate the route of the Downsview Green Loop within the Jane Street and Keele Street Major City-wide Cycling Corridor Study if options on TRCA-owned lands are being considered.
- Upon request from the City of Toronto, investigate how flood remediation measures in this area could enable further recreational uses and reduce risk to life and property.
- In support of TRCA's Trail Strategy, TRCA will continue to meet with the City of Toronto to discuss coordinate trail project implementation plans, seek opportunities for partnership, secure land and easements, and address trail ownership and management. Collaboration will ensure that trail-related activities are coordinated within TRCA and with our municipal partners and partner agencies, and allows TRCA and its trail partners to develop, prioritize, and manage collaborative trail projects. These efforts are supported through existing Service Level Agreements and Memorandums of Understanding that allow TRCA and its partners to deliver trail projects of mutual interest quickly and effectively. This coordination facilitates TRCA staff to provide technical advice and recommendations for proposed trail facilities to member municipalities and partner agencies prior to trail-related reports being brought to the Board for approval.

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Attachments: 3

Attachment 1: Downsview Green Loop Proposal

Attachment 2: Site Context

Attachment 3: Local and Regional Trail Connectivity