

RES.#A258/21 - VAUGHAN HUMBER TRAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY

Moved by: Anthony Perruzza
Seconded by: Linda Jackson

WHEREAS Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) approved the TRCA Trail Strategy at Board of Directors Meeting #8/19, on September 27, 2019;

WHEREAS TRCA and the City of Vaughan identified the Humber Trail as a priority trail connection in the TRCA Trail Strategy *Implementation Plan Update (2021-2025)* (2021);

WHEREAS the City of Vaughan, in collaboration with TRCA, undertook the Vaughan Humber Trail Feasibility Study to examine the feasibility of connecting a 7-kilometre gap within the Humber Trail between Boyd Conservation Park and Steeles Avenue West;

AND WHEREAS the Vaughan Humber Trail Feasibility Study was endorsed by Vaughan City Council on November 16, 2021;

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT the Vaughan Humber Trail Feasibility Study be received.

AND FURTHER THAT staff work with the City of Vaughan, senior levels of government and stakeholders on advancing priority projects identified for implementation.

CARRIED

BACKGROUND

The Vaughan Humber Trail Feasibility Study (“the Study”) examines the feasibility of connecting an approximately 7 km gap in the Humber Trail between Boyd Conservation Park and Steeles Avenue West. The Study was undertaken by the City of Vaughan in collaboration with Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA).

The Study is based on recommendations of the City of Vaughan Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan (2020) to close gaps along key city-wide trails, and to further advance the Vaughan Super Trail and the TRCA Trail Strategy. It is in conformance with the following trail and active transportation policies and strategies: Tour by Bike: Ontario’s Cycling Tourism Plan (2017), York Regional Transportation Master Plan (2016), York Region Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan (2008), TRCA Trail Strategy (2019), City of Toronto Cycling Network Plan (2016), Natural Environment Trail Strategy (2013), and Toronto Ravine Strategy (2017).

The Study supports the objectives of the City of Vaughan Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan (2020) and is aligned with the objectives of the Vaughan Super Trail and the TRCA Trail Strategy: Implementation Plan Update (2021-2025) (2021).

In 2018, the City of Vaughan retained Schollen & Company Inc. to undertake the Study. TRCA provided a partnership contribution in support of the study. Schollen & Company identified trail alignments for the proposed Humber Trail between Boyd Conservation Park (note: Boyd Conservation Park is referred to as Boyd Conservation Area in the Study) and Steeles Avenue West.

The Study area is divided into the following trail segments:

- [Segment 1 – Pine Grove Road to Boyd Conservation Park](#)

- [Segment 2 – Thistlewood Avenue to Pine Grove Road](#)
- [Segment 3 – Highway 7 to Thistlewood Avenue](#)
- [Segment 4 – Highway 407 to Highway 7](#)
- [Segment 5 – Steeles Avenue West to Highway 407](#)

Within each segment, trail alignments were evaluated through existing conditions analysis and technical studies. The feasibility of trail alignments within each segment was evaluated against criteria such as environmental constraints, natural hazards, regulation and land ownership, infrastructure, and cost. The identification of constraint criteria contributed to the development and evaluation of alternative trail alignments for each of the five trail segments. The results of the feasibility assessment culminated with a Phasing and Implementation Plan to inform the planning and implementation of the proposed alignments.

The Study is intended to be a foundational plan to support a Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (EA) process for trail segments, where multiple alternative designs exist and where funding thresholds trigger an EA requirement. The EA process will result in an in-depth evaluation of each option to verify the potential to make key connections, protect natural heritage features and ensure public safety. The Study provides a summary of the landowners and stakeholders anticipated to be engaged in the EA process including Indigenous communities. Funding for the EA has not yet been secured but the City and TRCA will be advancing requests for EA funding to the Region and senior levels of government while focusing on implementing segments where EA approval is not mandatory.

The Phasing and Implementation Plan also identifies Phase 1 priority areas within each of the five segments of trails as “quick win” project opportunities for more immediate implementation. These areas feature short sections of trail alignments that may be able to be built sooner than other alignments, due to fewer constraints. These targeted areas would not require an EA to proceed with planning, design, and implementation phases of work. The City of Vaughan will prioritize project implementation based on available capital, maintenance, and operating funding as well as permit approval from TRCA and other external government agencies, where required.

Public consultation was undertaken as an integral component of the Study process. Following the completion of the draft Study, the City of Vaughan solicited public input through an online interactive “Have Your Say” platform and survey branded as “Building the Humber Trail – Boyd Conservation Area to Steeles Avenue West”. 240 participants visited multiple pages of the online project platform and approximately 130 individuals participated in the survey. The online platform and survey ran from June 8 to July 4, 2021. Overall, public response was positive. Specific trail alignments located within Segments 1, 2, and 5 were ranked highly by respondents as priority projects for implementation. For results of the public consultation process, see [Summary of Online Public Survey Findings](#).

The Study was finalized in September 2021. A report on the Study’s recommendations and the results of public consultation was approved in principle by the City of Vaughan’s Committee of the Whole on November 9, 2021. The Study was subsequently endorsed by Vaughan City Council on November 16, 2021. For the City Council Report, see [Humber Trail Feasibility Study](#).

RATIONALE

The Study recommendations are in alignment with the goals, objectives, and implementation priorities of the TRCA Trail Strategy. By partnering with the City of Vaughan to complete the priority trail areas identified in the Study, TRCA will complete a longstanding gap in the Humber

Trail and progress completion of the TRCA Trail Strategy network.

Priority Projects for Implementation (2022+)

The Study identifies two trail alignments within Segments 1 and 2 as priority projects for implementation, starting in 2022. These alignments are of interest to TRCA because they are located on TRCA-owned and managed lands through Boyd Conservation Park. Some portions of land where proposed trail alignments are located are managed by the City of Vaughan. Implementing the proposed trail alignment through Boyd Conservation Park to Langstaff Road represents a significant investment in the Conservation Park by the City of Vaughan. It will enhance the Park as a regional destination for trails and greenspace amenities.

The two priority projects are defined as Project 1: Boyd Conservation Park to Langstaff Road and Project 2: Doctors McLean District Park from Woodbridge Avenue to Clarence Street. Neither of these projects require an EA planning process as the scope of work involves formalization and/or improvement of existing trail alignments. A description of each priority project is outlined below.

Project 1: Boyd Conservation Park to Langstaff Road

Study Area: Segment 1 – Pine Grove Road to Boyd Conservation Park
Length: 1400 m

This proposed trail alignment extends the Humber Trail via the William Granger Greenway southwards through the entirety of Boyd Conservation Park, utilizing an existing maintenance road. At the south end of the Conservation Park, a new pedestrian bridge is proposed across the Humber River, allowing the trail to connect to and along the closed Don Eddy Road Allowance. The proposed alignment then extends south-west along the road allowance until it connects to the north-east corner of the Islington Avenue and Langstaff Road intersection. Routing the proposed trail over the existing Langstaff Bowstring Bridge is unviable. The bridge is unsalvageable due to structural deterioration and its location along the watercourse is unsuitable. The bowstring bridge will require removal; opportunities for commemoration will be explored. A map of the proposed alignment is provided in Attachment 2.

Project 2: Doctors McLean District Park from Woodbridge Ave. to Clarence St.

Study Area: Segment 2 – Thistlewood Avenue to Pine Grove Road
Length: 1150 m (excludes 390m segment constructed in 2021)

This proposed trail alignment is parallel to the driveway that extends from Islington Avenue into Doctors McLean District Park and continues along the Humber River. A new pedestrian bridge is proposed to cross over the Humber River upstream of the confluence north of Woodbridge Avenue. Approximately 390 metres of trail within Doctors McLean District Park was implemented by the City of Vaughan in 2021. A map of the proposed alignment remaining to implement is provided in 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

Strategy 7 – Build partnerships and new business models

FINANCIAL DETAILS

The two priority implementation projects located in Segments 1 and 2 are identified under the City of Vaughan's capital plan, with funding identified through the 2022 budget process and subsequent years under the Vaughan Super Trail Program, subject to Vaughan Council budget approvals. Should the City of Vaughan wish to retain TRCA as a project delivery partner, TRCA would undertake projects as fee-for-service works through a Letter of Agreement.

When Segment 1 is implemented TRCA will continue to manage the Humber Trail through Boyd Conservation Park. Regular maintenance costs are expected to have minimal impact on TRCA's park and trail maintenance budgets. The TRCA-managed section of the Humber Trail will be incorporated into TRCA's future trail asset management plan to account for the full life-cycle maintenance costs.

The City of Vaughan will continue to manage the Humber Trail through Doctors McLean Park, as per the existing land management agreement. Proposed trail improvements on TRCA lands that are managed by the City of Vaughan will be subject to relevant land management agreements.

DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE

- Work with the City of Vaughan and stakeholders on advancing priority projects identified for implementation.
- Execute agreements to implement projects, subject to City of Vaughan budget approvals.
- Initiate detailed design, permitting and approvals phases of work for funded priority projects.
- Work with the City, Region and senior levels of government and private sector stakeholders to identify partnership funding opportunities to advance the required EA for the more costly and challenging segments and for the priority projects identified for early implementation.

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Attachments: 3

Attachment 1: Vaughan Humber Trail Feasibility Study (2021)

Attachment 2: Project 1: Boyd Conservation Park to Langstaff Road

Attachment 3: Project 2: Doctors McLean District Park from Woodbridge Ave. to Clarence St.