



OAKVILLE

REPORT

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

MEETING DATE: MAY 21, 2019

FROM: Parks and Open Space Department

DATE: April 24, 2019

SUBJECT: Recreation Trail Accessibility Audit and Strategy

LOCATION:

WARD: Town wide

Page 1

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the report from the Parks and Open Space Department dated April 24, 2019 titled "Recreational Trail Accessibility Audit and Strategy" (RTAAS) be received.
2. That \$10,000 be reallocated from the 2019 Parks and Open Space Pathway Rehabilitation capital account to implement a pilot project for the newly developed accessibility signs.

KEY FACTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- The Town of Oakville is committed to the development and support of an accessible trail system for the whole community to enjoy.
- The Recreational Trails Accessibility Audit and Strategy encapsulates the findings of a completed study which inventories and assesses the current condition of 240 kilometers of trails and amenities town-wide.

The highlights include:

- An audit and analysis of the town's recreational trails and identification of areas for improvement;
- Development of standards for trail development consistent with the Design of Public Spaces Standard component of the Integrated Accessibility Standards of the AODA;
- Prioritization of trail replacements or enhancements representing health and safety risks;

From: Parks and Open Space Department
Date: April 24, 2019
Subject: Recreation Trail Accessibility Audit and Strategy

- Update of local design standards to ensure they meet or exceed applicable regulations and standards; and
- Creation of a unified and easy to understand signage system for the trail network.
- Implementation of the Recreational Trail Accessibility Strategy will be phased over a number of years and funding requirements will be submitted through the annual budget process.
- Parks and Open Space staff is recommending a reallocation of existing funds from the 2019 Pathway Rehabilitation capital budget to implement a pilot project for the newly developed accessibility signs. The estimated cost of this work is \$10,000.00

BACKGROUND:

In 2005, the Province of Ontario passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). Its goal is to make Ontario accessible by 2025 by creating and enforcing accessibility standards that address key areas of daily living:

- Customer Service
- Information and Communications
- Employment
- Transportation
- Design of Public Spaces (DOPS)

The DOPS:

- Will help eliminate physical barriers to promote access to a variety of outdoor recreational experiences.
- Is now law and requirements are being phased over time.
- Standards only apply to new public spaces or when redeveloping existing.
- Applies to outdoor play spaces, outdoor public eating, beach access routes, and exterior paths of travel, accessible parking, and recreational trails.

The Town of Oakville strives to develop and support an accessible recreational trail system with the direction articulated in the town's Accessibility Policies including the Design of Public Spaces Procedure (MS-ACC-001-006), intended to address the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards (Ontario Regulation 191/11) set out in the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA). However, a plan to identify shortfalls, physical barriers and development of a sign strategy did not exist. The Parks and Open Space Department took a proactive step and put forward a budget to Council to undertake this work.

From: Parks and Open Space Department
Date: April 24, 2019
Subject: Recreation Trail Accessibility Audit and Strategy

Following the approval of the capital budget to conduct the recreational trail accessibility audit, the Parks and Open Space department retained Paradigm Transportation Solutions and Accessibility Experts Ltd. and began the project in December, 2016.

The project was supported by a corporate team of town staff from several departments, including:

- Park Planning and Development, Parks and Open Space;
- Strategy, Policy & Communications;
- Engineering and Construction;
- Park Operations, Parks and Open Space;
- Asset Management, Financial Operations; and
- Strategic Business Support

The team was instrumental in the development of this plan by providing information and support through the course of the project. Through input from the study team, opportunities to partner on initiatives and develop a strategy that aligned properly with other town plans and corporate goals was gained.

The final Recreation Trail Accessibility Audit and Strategy (RTAAS) report and sign strategy were completed in November 2018 and presented to the Accessibility Advisory Committee on January 10, 2019.

COMMENT/OPTIONS:

The RTAAS has already created opportunities within the town to improve facilities and services. In early 2018, the town launched its online accessibility map. This tool was developed with the Oakville Accessibility Advisory Committee. It provides easy to access information on accessible town features for parks, playgrounds, trails and parking and will help people of all abilities plan activities and travel around town. The accessibility information collected from the audit was included in this mapping. Over time, additional accessibility information such as the level of difficulty for each trail and elaborate on physical barriers will be included.

The inventory and audit component to this project was completed last year and the information gleaned from the findings was shared with the Parks and Open Space, Park Operations group. Staff are currently using this information as a means to prioritize operational and maintenance efforts. Due to the commitment of the Park Operations group, many of the deficiencies noted within the report are now remedied.

The audit report is organized as follows:

- Chapter 2 presents the findings of a survey conducted to determine the current practices of nearby municipalities pertaining to recreational trail accessibility;
- Chapter 3 details the data collection methodology used to inventory the accessibility and condition of the recreational trail network and its amenities;
- Chapter 4 summarizes the present state of the recreational trail network, with statistics related to trail characteristics, accessibility and condition;
- Chapter 5 outlines the accessibility audit findings and the recommended strategy to enhance the accessibility of recreational trails within Oakville;
- Chapter 6 outlines the signage audit findings and the recommended strategy to enhance the clarity and consistency of recreational trail signage;
- Chapter 7 presents the recommended Level of Difficulty Rating System to clearly and quickly communicate the anticipated conditions of a recreational trail to users; and
- Chapter 8 provides the audit summary and final recommendations.

The report also includes four appendices which summarize the municipal current practice survey results, details the prioritization process, and expands upon the design and signage standard recommendations.

The findings of this report validate the ongoing work the Town is currently performing to support their diverse and extensive recreational trail network including planning, design and maintenance. Therefore, many of the recommendations contained within this report are in support of continuing many existing practices and initiatives, which include:

- Continuing to maintain a dialogue with local municipalities on best practices for recreational trail development, maintenance, monitoring, signage and wayfinding;
- Continuing to update the recreational trails inventory database as it changes through capital improvements, new development or regular maintenance. Information that should be updated through these changes includes: surface type, width, typical cross slope, typical running slope, maximum running slope and maximum cross slope;

- Continuing to monitor and maintain the existing recreational trail system network and providing trail users with safe and enjoyable experiences;
- Continuing to build hard surfaced limestone screening pathways as part of the recreational trails system;
- Continuing to build recreational trails to a minimum width of 2.1 metres (North Oakville Trails Plan) with a recommended trail width of 2.4 metres;
- Continuing to develop trails with park and trail features in frequency equal to or better than what currently exists, and consult with the Town of Oakville Accessibility Advisory Committee to determine minimum standards and frequency for park and trail features (benches, bike racks, garbage receptacles);
- Continuing to provide pedestrian lighting in new park areas, but not lighting recreational trail systems within natural areas. Pathway and walkway block lighting should be considered on a case by case basis, and only where lighting will extend the hours of use by the entire community (i.e. trails to Community Centres or major destinations);

In addition, the Town is committed to eliminating barriers and providing accessible programs, services and facilities towards achieving Council's vision to be the most livable town in Canada. This includes building an inclusive community where all individuals have equal access to the town's services, programs and facilities in a manner that is integrated and promotes dignity and independence. The RTAAS delivers a means of implementation that is practical, fiscally responsible and goals that are measurable. These goals can be achieved by putting into action the recommended initiatives developed through this study, which include:

- Undertaking a maintenance initiative to resolve any current deficiencies as noted in Table 4.7;
- Endorsing and implementing the ten-year Rehabilitation Improvement Plan to remove physical barriers and improve safety and security by addressing those items identified in this report;
- Undertaking a public awareness campaign to promote the town's recreational trails system and accessibility standards;
- Updating the town's master plans, design standards and guidelines and by-laws to reflect current accessibility requirements;
- Adopting and applying the proposed Accessibility Checklist in Appendix E when planning or designing new or redeveloping existing trails to ensure compliance with the Integrated Accessibility Standards of the AODA;

From: Parks and Open Space Department
Date: April 24, 2019
Subject: Recreation Trail Accessibility Audit and Strategy

- Exploring opportunities to collaborate and coordinate with other town plans, to develop a comprehensive wayfinding strategy. Connectivity between the recreational trail network and active transportation network should be promoted through wayfinding and network signs;
- Adopting and implementing the proposed Trail Signage Strategy, which will consolidate multiple sign types and formats, ensure consistency in sign application and meet the requirements of the AODA; and
- Adopting the proposed Level of Difficulty Rating System, which will enhance the trail user experience and help users select trail routes that best meet their skills and abilities.

Staff are recommending a pilot project for the recreational trail accessibility signs based on the proposed Trail Signage Strategy. This project would be the first use of the newly developed accessibility signs. It is recommended that the project be conducted within a new subdivision / trail system in North Oakville since it eliminates the need to remove existing signs and the condition of the trail will be new to the neighbourhood. In addition, there are potential cost savings and cost sharing opportunities from the development community as they may wish to use these advanced trail upgrades as promotional or marketing features for their purchasers. With support from members of Council, we anticipate this project could be completed in 2019. These trails will be promoted within the town to gather input and feedback to provide the opportunity to refine the design (if necessary) for future projects.

The Parks and Open Space Department is committed to this initiative and would like to begin implementation of some of the recommendations within the report such as education of the new trail sign features and continued promotion of the town's recreational trail system.

The Recreational Trail Accessibility Audit and Strategy provides the framework for improvements to facilities and services within the town. A plan to remove many physical barriers is a leap forward in providing outstanding service to residents and demonstrates the town's ongoing commitment to building an inclusive community.

CONSIDERATIONS:

(A) PUBLIC

The Parks and Open Space Department met with the Accessibility Advisory Committee at three key milestones during the project to provide information and seek input on the audit and strategy. The input received from the committee proved very supportive and beneficial in developing and finalizing the plan. Staff will continue to meet with the Accessibility Advisory

Committee and engage the public for future decision-making projects and initiatives related to implementation of this study.

(B) FINANCIAL

Implementation of the Recreational Trail Accessibility Strategy will be phased over a number of years and funding will be developed through future capital budget requests to Council. Parks and Open Space staff is requesting reallocation existing funds (\$10,000) from the 2019 Pathway Rehabilitation capital budget to implement a pilot project for the newly developed accessibility signs.

(C) IMPACT ON OTHER DEPARTMENTS & USERS

Various departments were instrumental in the development of this plan by providing information and support through the course of the project. Opportunities to partner on initiatives and develop a strategy compatible with other town plans and corporate goals was gained.

(D) CORPORATE AND/OR DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC GOALS

This report addresses the corporate strategic goal to:

- be innovative in everything we do.
- continuously improve programs and services.
- provide accessible programs and services.
- provide outstanding service to residents.
- be the most livable town in Canada.

(E) COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY

The Recreational Trail Accessibility Audit and Strategy provides the framework for improvements to facilities and services within the town. A plan to remove many physical barriers is a leap forward in providing outstanding service to residents and demonstrates the town's ongoing commitment to building an inclusive community.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Recreational Trail Accessibility Audit and Strategy

Prepared by:

Frank Loconte,
Landscape Architect, Parks and
Open Space

Submitted by:

Chris Mark
Director, Parks and Open Space