

Frequently Asked Questions

BLUFFER'S PARK Recreational Trail and Restoration Opportunities January 2012

1. What is a multi-use trail?

Toronto has hundreds of kilometres of multi-use recreational trails in parks and natural areas across the city. Multi-use trails are typically 3.0 to 3.5 metres wide; generally paved or limestone screening surface; and are shared by people walking, in wheelchairs, pushing strollers, running, in-line skating and cycling.

2. Why is the City making this Trail connection now?

In 2010-11, Cycling Infrastructure and Programs staff undertook a city-wide audit to evaluate the conditions of the City's existing trail network, identify opportunities for improvements and to identify new trail opportunities. The audit of the Toronto section of the Waterfront Trail was completed in 2010; key areas identified for improvement included a new trail connection through Bluffer's Park. In 2011, staff from Transportation Services, Parks, Forestry and Recreation and TRCA began the planning process to investigate the site in more detail and to develop proposed route alignments.

In early 2011, the Mayor and City Council established new priorities for the City's Bike Plan, shifting the focus from expanding the on-street bikeway network to expanding the trail network to provide safer connections for cyclists to travel without using major arterial roadways. Council directed staff to prepare a plan to design and construct approximately 100 km of trails over the next several years. The Waterfront Trail is one of the most significant trails within the City's trail network.

3. Instead of having the trail cross Bluffer's Park, why not have it loop through local streets?

The Scarborough section of the Waterfront Trail is routed primarily along quiet residential streets south of Kingston Road. However, there are a few locations where these residential streets are discontinuous and the Trail is routed along Kingston Road. This is one of those locations; currently the Waterfront Trail signage directs cyclists onto Kingston Road between Chine Drive and Brimley Road. Many cyclists don't feel safe on Kingston Road due to the high traffic volume and speeds and there is no space to improve safety by providing bike lanes or a pathway along this major arterial roadway. As a result, some cyclists are using the informal trails through Bluffer's Park to make the connection between Chine Drive and Brimley Road. Establishing a more formal trail connection through the park, by upgrading an existing informal trail, will significantly improve safety for cyclists following the Waterfront Trail in this section of Scarborough.

4. How would the speed of cyclists, inline skaters and skateboarders on trails affect local pedestrian use such as children from the nearby school?

Trail width is an important design consideration in accommodating different types of trail users on a shared path. The trail improvements at Bluffer's Park are proposed to be 3.0 to 3.5m wide which would provide sufficient space for comfortable sharing. Additionally, signage can be posted at trailheads or key intersections to inform trail users of appropriate trail sharing etiquette. Signage can also be used in Bluffer's Park to encourage cyclists to stay on the "main trail" connecting Chine Drive to Brimley Road, maintaining the majority of the existing informal trails for walking only.

5. Are there different surface treatment options for the path?

The preference for multi-use trail surface is asphalt which requires less maintenance (less prone to erosion and rutting) and therefore reduces the ongoing maintenance expenses. Asphalt also allows better accessibility for individuals of limited mobility. There are, however, alternative materials which can be used instead of asphalt to complete trail improvements. These alternatives will be presented as a part of the design and public meeting process.

6. If improvements to the Park result in increased park use, how will garbage and other questionable activities be dealt with?

Currently Parks completes litter pick-up in Bluffer's Park an average of once per month in advance of cutting the grass along the informal trails. This schedule is aligned with current trail usage and park maintenance cycles. After trail improvements are completed Parks maintenance and operations will assess changes to trail usage and align their maintenance practices accordingly.

7. Will improvements to the Park affect bird migration?

As a part of the project design process, an environmental review of the upper area of Bluffers Park has been completed. This assessment has concluded that there is low potential for disturbance during nesting season and very low for disturbance of migratory birds. To avoid any potential impacts, no path construction will take place during bird nesting season from May 1 to July 31.

8. Will changes to the trail increase the weight of the trail near the top of the bank overlooking Brimley Road, and result in further erosion?

All proposed trail alignments are set-back from the top of bank on the west slope of Brimley Rd. These alignments have been designed to maintain and improve existing drainage patterns through the park.

9. How will trees be protected through the construction process of a path?

Urban Forestry By-Laws and policies for construction near trees apply to all construction projects within the City of Toronto. As a part of the proposed trail improvements at Bluffer's Park, a tree inventory has been completed to document the existing trees on the site. This tree inventory serves to inform the trail design and will be used to develop a Tree Protection Plan that will govern construction practices around trees and ensure tree protection. Tree protection is required for the duration of the construction project and can only be removed when the project

is completed. Additionally, Urban Forestry is consulted through the design and implementation process to ensure that Tree Protection and Tree health is managed and the City's Urban Forestry staff are committed to the providing a further enhancement planting of a variety of native trees and shrubs on this site.

10. Are there butternut trees on site?

As part of the tree inventory conducted by TRCA, one butternut tree was identified by a Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) forester within the survey area. This butternut tree was inspected by a Ministry of Natural Resources representative in August 2011, and TRCA was informed that there were no issues with the construction of the trail, as long as there is proper tree protection implemented throughout the construction period. The tree protection details would be included in the construction drawings, and provided to MNR to ensure the protection satisfies their requirements. Furthermore, TRCA would ensure these tree protection measures are implemented during site prep and throughout construction.

11. What are the next steps? What needs to happen before the multi-use trail is approved to be built?

The next step is to present the project and seek input from the community at the January 24, 2012 public meeting to be held at Blessed Cardinal Newman High School (100 Brimley Road South), 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. with a presentation at 7 p.m.

Following the January Public Meeting, Transportation Services will submit a report to the March 21 Public Works and Infrastructure Committee (PWIC) on this project and two other Scarborough Waterfront Trail upgrade projects. This report was requested by City Council at its meeting of July 12-13, 2011. Council has also directed Transportation Services to submit a report on expanding the City's Bikeway Trail Network; this report will also be submitted to the March 21 PWIC meeting. Public Works and Infrastructure Committee will make a recommendation to Council on whether to proceed with the Bluffer's Park trail upgrade project.

If Council directs staff to proceed with the Bluffer's Park Trail upgrade project, staff will commence the detailed design process and allocate funding for construction in the Transportation Services 2013 Capital Budget. Detailed design and construction would be managed by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority in consultation with Parks, Forestry and Recreation and Transportation Services.