

APPENDIX M

2006 WATERFRONT TRAIL SIGNAGE AUDIT

The following appendix is new to the 2007 edition and provides a manual for implementing a signage audit - an excellent tool to detect signage deficiencies along a trail.



Waterfront
Trail

2007



APPENDIX M - 2006 WATERFRONT TRAIL SIGNAGE AUDIT



2006 Signage Audit

Waterfront Trail from Niagara to Brockville: Striving for Clarity and Continuity

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1. Purpose and Background for the Signage Audit

Purpose

The purpose of the 2006 Waterfront Trail Signage Audit was to identify and report deficiencies in the existing Waterfront Trail signage, and recommend where new signs should be installed. Clear, consistent directional signage was identified by Waterfront Trail users as being a problem on the Trail. The goal of the audit was to provide each waterfront municipality with a comprehensive list of the locations in need of signage along the Trail, with the expectation that recommendations would be implemented by the local municipalities.

The audit encompassed the section of Waterfront Trail between Niagara-on-the-Lake and Brockville. There are plans to continue the audit east of Brockville to the Québec border once an alignment has been finalized. To ensure the recommendations were unbiased and reflected a trail user's perspective, the Trust turned to local trail users to conduct the audit.

A secondary goal of the signage audit was to ground-truth the actual Trail route against the Waterfront Trail web maps to identify any discrepancies in these documents.

Background

In 2005 the Trust undertook a full signage program on the Waterfront Trail designed to enhance signage in two main areas: trailhead signs and directional signs. The signage audit was seen as a necessary planning tool in the work to improve directional signage along the Trail.

The need for a signage audit of the Waterfront Trail became evident through feedback received from Waterfront Trail users, through emails from End-to-Enders as well as from comments collected at the 2006 Toronto Bike Show. The common criticism



was that signage along the Waterfront Trail was inconsistent and deficient.

Directional signage is a critical component of trail development. From a trail user's perspective, signage contributes to a positive recreation experience by enhancing safety and accessibility to the trail. Clear signage builds user confidence to explore beyond their local neighbourhood, and in this way increases inter-municipal travel on the Trail.

From a tourism standpoint, signage is a promotional tool that can be used to generate public awareness. From our 2005 poll at the Bike Show we found that 33% of the respondents said they found out about the Trail from seeing the signs. A 2002 Marketing Committee identified a complete, clearly marked Trail as the basis for a successful marketing campaign of the Waterfront Trail.

2. Volunteer Recruitment and Training

In order to provide objective information about signage, the Trust enlisted volunteers from the local communities to perform the review. To cover distances along the Trail in an efficient amount of time, we focused on the cycling community for volunteers.

i. Volunteer Recruitment

Launched in February 2006, the following methods were used to recruit volunteers:

- Postings on cycling club message boards and websites across Lake Ontario's Region
- Announcement in WRT's monthly electronic newsletter (900 monthly subscribers)
- Sign-up sheet for volunteers at the WRT booth during 2006 Toronto Bike Show

Trust staff attempted to recruit at least one auditor for each Trail section, however occasionally there were two groups doing the same section. This worked well in case one group was not able to fulfill their commitment.

ii. Volunteer Training

The Trust staff organized a series of training/orientation seminars held on various weekday evenings. The sessions were grouped by region (one session per region) and held at locations provided by the local municipality. Audit regions included:

- Niagara Region
- Hamilton to Toronto
- Pickering to Port Hope
- Cobourg to Quinte West
- Prince Edward County to Loyalist
- Kingston to Brockville

In the event that an auditor could not attend the meeting, Trust staff would email/mail a package to the auditor. However it should be noted that the best audit results occurred when an auditor was able to attend an orientation session.

At these sessions auditors were given a brief overview of the program and instructions on how to conduct the audit. The group would also review each audit section for that region and identify who would do which section. The auditors were also provided with a reference guidebook (see Appendix A of this document) and copies of maps for their section.

At the training sessions:

- Trust staff provided an overview of the Trail and the purpose of the signage audit
- Staff gave an overview of the routes, including parking suggestions and access points

- An *Auditor's Reference Guide* was distributed (see Appendix A of this document); content was reviewed and discussed, including Types of Signage, Signage Guidelines and Reporting Requirements
- Potential problems were discussed such as gaps in the trail and trail twinning
- Each auditor was assigned a route and provided a map(s)
- Deadline for submission of results was given
- Reassurance signs should be placed on stretches of on-road trail over 1 km to identify the continuity of the Waterfront Trail
- Text signs should be used to identify gaps in the Trail
- Text signs should indicate and direct users to a side trail, including number of km of route
- Auditors were asked to look at the Trail from a non-local's eyes (i.e. signage should be clear enough to guide users who are unfamiliar with the area)

3. Design of Signage Audit

i. Performing the Audit

Auditors were provided with maps of their audit section and asked to travel the Trail in both directions (eastbound and westbound). The auditor was asked to record locations of signage deficiencies as well as recommend the type of signage required. Each auditor was able to choose the length of section they wanted to do, as a general rule the average section was 20 km (40 km return). Auditors in the densely urbanized sections of Trail often took on shorter lengths because there were a higher number of critical signage locations (i.e. turns, surface changes, etc.). It was recommended to auditors that they conduct the audit with at least one other person.

Criteria:

The following criteria were used to help auditors determine what constituted sufficient signage:

- Signs must be legible and visible to Trail users
- Both directions must be adequately signed
- Trail should be clearly marked at decision points, both in advance and on the other side of the decision point

Taking notes:

Signage auditors were asked to include the following information at each location reported as deficient:

- Direction of Travel (eastbound or westbound)
- Type of deficiency (missing, damaged, larger sign required, other)
- Type of sign required (designation sign, arrow, flashing, text sign)

In order to ensure consistency of results from different auditors, a system of reporting codes was developed by the Trust to denote various signage issues. Auditors were asked to circle the deficient area directly on the map and include the corresponding codes (see Appendix A of this document for a list of reporting codes).

Auditors were also advised to bring along extra paper to make notes, such as additional comments about a location or suggestions for possible text signs.

ii. Submission of Results

Results were submitted using an online form set up by the Trust. (For a template sample see Appendix A of this document). Auditors sent hard copies of their maps and applicable supporting material to the Trust to aid in the interpretation of their results.



iii. Analysis of Results

Results from the signage audit received by the Trust were divided by municipality based on municipal boundaries and entered into spreadsheets. Each local municipality received the audit results including:

- Cover letter providing an overview of the signage audit, the name of the auditor(s), and a listing of the types and number of signs needed to implement the audit recommendations
- Complete signage audit results for their stretch of Trail, in spreadsheet format (see Appendix B of this document)
- Maps of the relevant stretch of Trail showing the location of each signage deficiency described in results spreadsheet
- Pricing information for ordering signs from the Trust's inventory

4. Analysis of Success of Signage Audit

Volunteer Recruitment

The methods for volunteer recruitment described above (section 2, part i) proved successful. The response by the volunteers indicated the enthusiasm and interest in the Trail in the local communities. In total, over 30 volunteers trail-wide participated in the audit.

Response from Municipalities

The waterfront municipalities share the goal of clear, consistent signage on the Trail. As a result, they have been very supportive, providing venues for orientations and in addressing audit results. Hundreds of signs have been installed based on the audit so far. The Trust anticipates that the majority of partners, if not all, will install signs based on the recommendations of the signage audit

by Spring 2007. The audit provided objective information to assist and facilitate local partner implementation.

Second Objective: Ground-Truth Maps

A small number of discrepancies between the actual Trail and the Trust's maps were discovered by auditors and reported to the Trust. This resulted in corrections to the Trust's map artwork.

Additional Benefits

The signage audit provided the Trust with a means to connect with local cyclists about the Waterfront Trail. In addition to signage, the Trust received comments and suggestions from auditors about various issues relating to the Trail, including Trail routing, surface, upkeep, etc. This feedback will be used in the future to improve and enhance the Trail user's experience.

5. Recommendations

The following is a list of recommendations/suggestions to assist in future audit programs. Over the course of the 2006 Audit, volunteers provided excellent feedback that was incorporated (where possible) into the program.

- Provide current maps clearly detailing the route with distance markers and municipal boundaries;
- Organize audit sections by municipal boundaries to simplify the reporting and analysis process. Remember to audit signage that directs users into the next community. When assigning sections, staff should be specific, identifying the street name to ensure all sections are covered. If an auditor chooses to do multiple sections, they should report their results by municipality, identifying the correct municipality on the online form.

- Encourage volunteers to attend the orientation sessions - provide the incentive of a light meal. Attendance to the orientation reduced the number of errors or difficulties with the reporting process.
- Devote an adequate portion of orientation session to defining the types of sign problems. For example, 'sign missing' means there is no sign at all. The "replacement sign" category means there is an existing sign on site and that it is either damaged or too small. This seemed to cause a lot of confusion for the auditors.
- Push for consistency in reporting. Insist that the volunteers use the online form to submit results. Impress the importance of using the form to the volunteers and try to address issues/ concerns with using the online form at the outset.
- Insist that they record areas of deficiencies directly on the maps in the field and that they return maps to the Trust. Again, this simplifies the analysis and facilitates installation of the new signs for the municipality.
- Instruct auditors to give exact locations of signage deficiencies. In sections where there was little or no signage, it is critical that the auditors make specific recommendations about where signage should go - rather than report the fact of the deficiency.

6. Acknowledgements

The Trust gratefully acknowledges the following for their help in designing the audit:

- Mississauga Cycling Advisory Committee
- Richard Roberts, City of Mississauga
- Bruce Trail Club
- Hike Ontario

The Trust would like to thank the following municipalities for providing meeting space:

- Regional Municipality of Niagara
- Town of Oakville
- City of Pickering
- Municipality of Port Hope
- City of Kingston

The Trust would especially like to thank all of the auditors who took part in the signage audit.



2006 Waterfront Trail Signage Audit

Auditor's Reference Guide

The Waterfront Trust would like to thank you very much for your participation in the 2006 Waterfront Trail Signage Audit! With your help, users of the Waterfront Trail will be able to navigate their way along the route relying on the clear, consistent signage.

OVERVIEW

The Waterfront Trail and Greenway

- Opened in 1995
- Encompasses 650 km from Niagara-on-the-Lake to the Québec border
- A multi-recreation Trail - walkers and cyclists main users
- 30% of route is off-road, dedicated path; 70% on-road
- The ultimate goal of the Trail is to be all off-road and as close to the water as environmentally possible
- The Trail is unique because of the opportunity it provides for people to experience the waterfront communities along the Canadian shores of Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River

Importance of the Signage Audit

Signage is one of the most important aspects of a Trail for people's safety, accessibility and enjoyment. Feedback and comments from users of the Waterfront Trail indicate that signage along the route is inconsistent and deficient.

The main goal of the 2006 Signage Audit is to ensure clear, consistent directional signage is installed along the entire 650 km so that users can navigate their way from end to end relying on signage. A second goal is to ground-truth the Trail maps to ensure accuracy.

We turned to local users in the community to get a Trail user's perspective of where the signage deficiencies are along the route. We chose to use cyclists because the mode of transport enables them to cover a long distance in a shorter period of time.



HOW TO COMPLETE THE AUDIT IN 4 STEPS

1. Choose the route you'd like to ride
2. Conduct the Audit:
 - Ride the chosen route eastbound and westbound
 - Be sure to bring the Trail webmaps and the local maps provided in this kit to confirm the route - please follow the main route of the Waterfront Trail only
 - Record all locations and details of signage deficiencies directly on the webmaps provided and make any extra notes as needed
 - Record any inaccuracies in the trail maps directly on the map
3. Submit the Results:
 - Use the online form at: <http://data.waterfronttrail.org>
 - Submit one form per location of deficiency
 - Deadline is Monday July 31st, 2006
4. Once Complete:
 - Please mail in to the Trust offices all hard copy information used in recording the deficiencies (i.e. maps, notes) to ensure accurate interpretation of the results and corrections to the maps

SIGNAGE GUIDELINES:

The following guidelines will help you identify conditions along the route that require directional signage.

Remember:

Signs must be legible and visible to Trail users; and both directions must be adequately signed.

1. Decision Points:
 - Intersections:
 - Signage should direct people to a change in direction of the trail (DA)*
 - Signage should be placed in advance of the decision point and followed with a confirmation sign on the other side of the decision point (D)*
 - Minor Access Points:
 - Signage should indicate connections to the Waterfront Trail, such as at T-intersections of major routes connecting to the Trail (DA)*; i.e.:
 - connections to other trails
 - municipal bike lanes
2. Reassurance Signs:
 - Installed on stretches of on-road trail over 1 km to identify the continuity of the Waterfront Trail (off-road paths need only be signed at each entrance point (D)* or (F)* if local trail signs are already in place
3. Text Signs:
 - Identify Gaps:
 - Signs should indicate when the Trail ends and resumes, where and how many kms in between (TS)*
 - Use webmaps as guide to where gaps are located on the route
 - Identify Side Trails:
 - Signs should indicate and direct users to a side trail, including number of kms of route (TS, A)*

* For a description of these acronyms please see Table 1

REPORTING CODES:

Please use the following codes to record each deficient location. The codes will make it easier to record several items of information in a small space. Circle the deficient area directly on the map and indicate the code for each category.

Please bring extra paper to make notes, such as additional comments about a location, and for possible text signs - must include number of kms, and for gaps - location of where the trail ends / resumes.

Table 1: Types of Signage

CATEGORY	CODE
Location ID	Assign the deficient location with a number – in geographical order
Direction of Travel (instead of east and west)	(N) – Niagara bound (Q) – Québec bound
Type of Deficiency	(M) – missing (D) – damaged (R) – replacement (to the larger version) (O) – other
Type of Sign Required	(Des) – designation sign (A) – arrow (DA) – designation and arrow (F) – flashing (TS) – text sign and record number of kms

ONLINE REPORTING TEMPLATE SAMPLE:

Form is available at: <http://data.waterfronttrail.org>

- please do your best to describe the location of the deficiency
- the results will be submitted directly to the Trust office

1. Municipality:
(pick from drop down list)
2. Location ID #: *required field
(blank numerical box)
3. Location of the Deficiency: *required field
(blank box to fill in street name / intersection)
4. Direction of Travel: * required field
(pick from drop down list - choose Niagara bound or Québec bound)
5. Type of Problem:
(pick from drop down list)
 - ✓ Sign missing
 - ✓ Sign damaged
 - ✓ Replacement sign required
 - ✓ Other
6. Type of Sign Required:
(pick from drop down list)
 - ✓ 18 x 18 Designation
 - ✓ Arrow
 - ✓ Both 18 x 18 Designation and Arrow
 - ✓ Disc Flashing
 - ✓ Text Alert Sign - if you pick this option:
Describe the Text for the Sign:
 1. Blank text box to add in suggestion for the text



7. Do you Have Any Additional Comments About This Location?:

(blank text box to add in any message)

8. Date of Audit

(blank text box to add in date)

9. Auditor Name

(blank text box to add in name)

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Important Reminders:

- ✓ Be sure to conduct your audit both east and west bound
- ✓ Stick to the route of the Waterfront Trail as is referenced in the Waterfront Trail maps and the local Bicycling Map
- ✓ Remember you are on a multi-recreational trail. So you need to share the route. Be sure to observe trail etiquette principles at all times while on the route.
- ✓ It is important that the entire route is covered. If you conduct your audit over multiple visits make sure you re-start at the same spot where you ended
- ✓ To ensure clear interpretation can be made of your results be sure to mail in all hard copies of maps and any applicable supporting material to Nikki Rendle at the Trust office.
- ✓ Deadline for submitting results is Monday July 31st, 2006.
- ✓ Have FUN!!

APPENDIX B - SAMPLE OF RESULTS SUBMITTED TO PARTNERS

Sample of Results Submitted to Partners

LOCATION	LOCATION ID	SIGN PROBLEM	SIGN REQUIRED	COMMENTS
ONTARIO STREET & LAKEPORT ROAD	QB-1	Replacement sign required	Both 18 x 18 Designation and Arrow	
ONTARIO STREET & EARL STREET	QB-2	Replacement sign required	Both 18 x 18 Designation and Arrow	EARL STREET HAS NO STREET SIGN PRESENT. SMALL ROUND ARROW HIDDEN IN BUSHES

APPENDIX C - NOTE ON OMISSIONS FROM ORIGINAL PROJECT SCOPE

The 2006 signage audit did not include the following trail sections for reasons indicated below:

- Port Hope – significant section of the Trail was under construction.
- Brighton – an audit was conducted by the Trust in the previous year. Recommended signs were purchased by the municipality in the summer of 2006.
- Greater Napanee – at the time of the audit the official route was undetermined.
- Quinte West – staff was not able to find auditors available for this section.
- Belleville – significant section of Trail under construction.



Stretching over 900 km along the Canadian shores of Lake Ontario and the Ontario Shores of the St. Lawrence River, the Waterfront Trail and Greenway is a major multi-use trail that connects parks, natural areas and centers of activity. The Design, Signage and Maintenance Guidelines were developed to assist in constructing and signing new Waterfront Trail sections, and managing existing sections, but can also be applied to any trail.

The MMM Group revised and updated the Guidelines in 2007 to reflect current information and best practices from across North America and internationally. The update contains an expanded section covering options and guidelines for on-road sections of Trail, as much of the Trail currently follows on-road routes. Two new appendices provide a manual for implementing a trail signage audit - an excellent tool to identify signage deficiencies, and an overview on the state of the Waterfront Trail based on research gained through the 2006 Trail Manager's End to End Tour of the Trail.

The Guidelines include helpful advice on how to:

- Plan for the differing needs of pedestrians, cyclists, in-line skaters and people with disabilities;
- Identify appropriate widths, surfaces and grades for off-road and on-road trails;
- Minimize the potential impact of trails on wildlife and habitat;
- Choose signs that help trail users to find their way easily and safely; and
- Manage maintenance tasks so that everyone gets maximum enjoyment out of the trail

Community groups, trail clubs, municipal and parks staff, landscape designers and others will all find these Guidelines indispensable both for managing existing trails and for building new ones.

Here's what people are saying about the Waterfront Trail

"My wife and I are traveling by bicycle through the U.S. and Canada for the past 4 months and enjoyed the Waterfront Trail at the shore of Lake Ontario. Thank you for the nice trail."

- Urs Rybi, Trail user from Switzerland, summer 2007

"Thanks to all the volunteers on putting this trail and the maps together! It's one of the best trails I've been on for cycle touring. Thanks!"

- Trina Larsen, End-to-Ender, summer 2006

"The waterfront trail is a such a great way to connect from one city to another with spectacular views. I would have to say that this was one of my BEST trips ever, in my travels. GREAT website with lots of information and trail layouts. What an amazing well-maintained trail! Keep up the good work!!"

-Pat Ferguson, Trail user, 2006

"a memorable and exciting journey"

Raphael Sammut, End-to-ender, summer 2005

"Total Enjoyment, best vacation ever"

Jim Attard, End-to-ender, summer 2005

"The Trail, as we hoped, took us into communities and parks that we would never have discovered any other way."

Pat Elliot-Moyer, End-to-ender, summer 2005