

TORONTO STAFF REPORT

June 12, 2002

To: Economic Development and Parks Committee

From: Joe Halstead, Commissioner Economic Development, Culture and Tourism
Barry Gutteridge, Commissioner Works and Emergency Services
Joseph P. Pennachetti, Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer

Subject: History and Status of Proposed Multi-use Trail Associated with the Abandoned
CP PS LEAD Spur Line and the CN Weston Subdivision
Various Wards

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to respond to a request from City Council, Clause No. 22 of Report No. 6 of The Works Committee, for additional information on the acquisition of two abandoned railway lines in an area to the west and north of downtown Toronto and on the development of a multi-use trail on these lands.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

Funds in the amount of \$0.920 million were approved by Council for the acquisition of the lands known as CP PS Lead and acquisition is in progress. (Parks and Recreation Capital Budget, Project CPR115-5) No funding or approval to purchase has yet been requested for the acquisition of the abandoned rail line associated with the CN Weston Subdivision.

The costs of developing the lands for trail purposes have been studied as part of city-wide trail planning work but are only preliminary estimates to be informed by future planning and consultation, including possible third party funding. The preliminary estimate for the basic development of the PS Lead is approximately \$2 million; and approximately \$1.8 million for the basic development of the CN Weston Subdivision. These costs will be included in future capital budget submissions.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and concurs with the financial impact statement

Recommendations:

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

Background:

City Council, at its meeting of May 21, 22, and 23, 2002, referred Clause No. 22 of Report No. 6 of The Works Committee entitled “West Toronto Railpath – Memorandum of Understanding” and requested the Commissioner of Economic Development, Culture and Tourism, the Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services and the Chief Financial Officer submit a joint report to the Economic Development and Parks Committee on the history of the initiative, including the financial implications and the history of this initiative and related acquisitions of land in the former City of Toronto.

Comments:

The project, referred to as the “West Toronto Railpath” in Clause No. 22 of Report No. 6 of The Works Committee, involves the development of a multi-use trail on the abandoned CP PS LEAD spur line and the abandoned railway line on the northern edge of the CN Weston Sub corridor. Both of these abandoned railway lines are adjacent to active railway lines.

The “West Toronto Railpath” proposal is based on work contained in earlier studies undertaken by the City of Toronto, with the specific project known as “Project 10 -- Abandoned CP PS LEAD/CN Weston Sub.” The CP PS LEAD spur line is the segment between Cariboo Avenue (north of Dupont Street, west of Osler Street) and the Dundas/Lansdowne area, some 2.6 kilometres to the south. The CN Weston Sub segment runs from the Dundas/Lansdowne area to Strachan Avenue, some 2.9 kilometres. Attachment 1 shows the location and approximate end points of Project 10. The graphic is taken from a document entitled “Inventory of Cycling Trail Opportunities in Rail and Hydro Corridors” which was the subject of a report to Council in 1998.

In terms of the history of this initiative, the former City of Toronto identified the abandoned CP PS LEAD spur line as a desirable acquisition for trail purposes. The former City of Toronto Council authorized the acquisition of the CP PS LEAD in July, 1997, with the source of funds identified as “Capital Funds From Assets Sold.” Since amalgamation, City Council, at its meeting on August 1, 2, 3 and 4, 2000, in adopting Clause 32, Report No. 10 of Policy and Finance Committee, approved the acquisition and the identified funding source.

The feasibility of developing a multi-use trail involving these abandoned railway lines has been examined in two studies that looked at potential trails in all active and abandoned rail and hydro

corridors in Toronto. An initial inventory of potential trail opportunities was completed in 1998 and a more detailed pre-engineering study for some of the proposed trails was completed in December, 2000. Furthermore, this proposed multi-use trail is included as part of the Toronto

Bike Plan, which was approved in principle by City Council in July, 2001. Preliminary estimates for the development of the lands for pathways are approximately \$2.0 million for the CP PS LEAD section (Cariboo to Dundas) and \$1.8 million for the CN Weston Sub section (south of Dundas to Strachan).

On the basis of the work done to date, this proposed multi-use trail would be a strong addition to the city's trail system, attractive for both recreational and commuter purposes. The acquisition of the land and the development of the trail facility are of interest to both EDCT and WES, and may involve joint project development, as outlined in the Toronto Bike Plan. However, the implications of abandoning this rail property must be evaluated against the existing and future freight and passenger rail needs in this important corridor, including GO Transit service and a potential Union Station – Pearson Airport rail link.

The acquisition of the CP PS LEAD spur line is expected to be completed by September, 2002, subject to the completion of certain soil work that CP is doing in fulfilment of the purchase agreement. With respect to the acquisition of the CN Weston Sub segment, there have only been preliminary discussions with CN but the negotiations and acquisition have not been authorized by City Council to date. In addition to the abandoned railway lines, other property interests may be useful to the proposed project, including lands that will improve connections between the abandoned rail corridor lands (e.g., at Dundas and Lansdowne) and other points to improve access and provide connections to other pathways and cycling facilities, and work in this regard is ongoing by EDCT and WES staff.

The realization of the proposed project will require many steps beyond land acquisition, including more detailed project planning, design, community consultation and, of course, securing funding for the work. Ensuring the safety and comfort of trail users adjacent to a very active railway corridor will be a very important design consideration. Consultation with interested groups and communities will be important as the project proceeds. City staff are certainly willing to meet with West Toronto Railpath and any other interested parties to discuss the proposed project and the matters to be addressed in achieving this addition to Toronto's trail system. Fund-raising and partnerships to assist in the development of the lands for trail purposes could certainly be addressed as part of such discussions.

Conclusions:

The abandoned railway lines have been identified as future multi-use trails as part of the Toronto Bike Plan and earlier studies. The CP PS LEAD acquisition was initiated by the former City of Toronto in 1997 and is expected to close by September, 2002, subject to completion of certain soil remediation works by CP. To date only preliminary discussions have taken place with CN respecting the CN Weston Sub segment which could potentially provide a link between the CP

PS LEAD segment and Strachan Avenue. City staff are willing to meet with interested groups, including West Toronto Railpath, with respect to the proposed multi-use trail.

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List of Attachments:

Attachment No.1: “Project 10 -- Abandoned CP PS LEAD/CN Weston Sub”