THE BELTLINE TRAIL

PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

WITH NOTES ON THE PARK DRIVE RESERVATION AND THE VALE OF AVOCA

Cycle Toronto

Submitted:	Jan. 29, 2013
Edition:	Second
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report has drawn upon the work of hundreds of people over many decades, but we are especially grateful to the following for their input and contributions:

Kay Gardner
Ontario Trails Council, especially Patrick Connor
Matthew Sweig & Victor Ford – Victor Ford Associates
Wendy Strickland, Garth Armour & Alex Shevchuk – Parks, Forestry & Recreation Department, City of Toronto
MPP Mike Colle
Christina Bouchard & Jennifer Hyland – Transportation Services Department, City of Toronto
Bianca Wylie – Swerhun Associates
Jason Diceman – City of Toronto
Dr. Chris Cavacuiti – St Michael's Hospital
Gary Miedema – Heritage Toronto
Michael Mesure – Fatal Light Awareness Program
Derek Boles – Toronto Railway Historical Association
Peter Henry – Toronto Police 53 Division
Ulli Rath – Friends of Oriole Park
Joe Cooper

The helpful librarians at the Deer Park Library, the Toronto Reference Library and the Toronto Archives.

We also wish to thank all the petitioners who signed our petition, our endorsers, and the many trail users who attended the public consultation meetings.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has been prepared by Cycle Toronto Midtown (Cycle Toronto's ward advocacy group in Ward 22). It is to be submitted to the City of Toronto's Public Consultation Unit as part of the Beltline Trail Study. The report will also be tabled at Toronto City Council, and with the Toronto Parks & Environment Committee.

Although the primary focus of this report is the improvement of cycling conditions on the Beltline, many Cycle Toronto members also walk, run, ski and accompany wheelchairs along the trail. We have therefore decided to broaden our recommendations in the hope that they will benefit all users of the rail, whether they are self-powered or have special needs.

The four overriding principles that guide the recommendations set out in this report are ***Continuity, Safety, Even Balance in Priorities*** and an awareness of the ***Political Dimension.***

1 Foremost among them is the necessity to mould the Beltline into a **unified, CONTINUOUS rail trail.** This entails:
   - a Putting in proper links at gaps between trail segments (as at Allen Rd.) .
   - b More importantly, the establishment of continuity requires direct crossings where the trail intersects major arterials.
   - c Continuity is either degraded or crudely broken by barriers such as uncut curbs, stairs and constrictive gates. These obstacles affect users travelling on/with two, three, or four wheels, as well as some seniors dependent on walkers or canes. Individuals range from those with special needs, to athletes in peak condition.
   - d Increasingly, trail users rely on different modes of transportation when they are up and about. Beltline planning must facilitate multimodal connectivity. Improving trail-to-transit linkages (e.g., at the new Chaplin LRT station) will allow for truly continuous travelling.
   - e Continuity must prevail not just in the dimension of topographical space, but also within time. We would like to see users continuously on the trail at all hours of the day and night. This will only be possible if the current irregular installation of night lighting is made uniform along the entire length of the trail. Also, an extension of Mt. Pleasant Cemetery's hours of opening will result in fewer trail trips being disrupted by locked gates.
   - f Winter maintenance will ensure continuous seasonal usage.
   - g Continuity also has a psychological aspect. Poor orientation on the trail leads to a disjointed user experience. A single, well-placed sign can make the difference between running around in circles or making a beeline to one's destination. Good signage must not be sacrificed in favour of crafting an environment that looks natural.
   - h Adequate travelling conditions must be maintained continuously on the trail. Upgraded drainage will safeguard against washouts, water pooling and ice buildup, enabling trail users to pursue a continuous, direct route on the trail; it shouldn't be necessary to resort to flanking maneuvers around poorly drained areas.

2 The second guiding principle is **SAFETY**.
   - a In order to implement improvement measures properly, safety must be at the forefront. For instance, crossings must be safe as well as direct. That is why we prefer synchronized traffic lights over refuge islands at major crossings.
   - b Biases can lead society to discount certain dangers that we have become familiar with, whereas we may magnify the threat of bogeys that in reality pose little risk. We endeavour to maintain an objective approach, identifying traps that can create a false sense of security. Repeatedly, we

have found that off-road trail hazards are consistently exaggerated in comparison to the carnage that motor vehicles wreak on our streets.

3 Thirdly, trail design should be guided by **EVEN BALANCE IN PRIORITIES** maintained between the needs of trail users, abutting property owners, and the natural environment.

- a Because the Beltline improvement project is being lead by the Forestry section of the City's Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department (PFR), the project leaders are predisposed to favour the restoration of the natural environment, trees in particular. This is only 'natural', but it is a mistake.
  - i The Beltline (even in the ravine section) possesses enormous industrial, railway, historical, architectural and cultural heritages which we are at risk of losing if nature and trees are given controlling priority.
  - ii The campaign to 'green' certain ravines has already lead to catastrophic losses to our heritage. The most notable is at Chorley Park, where we have an opportunity to compensate through an historically-informed restoration of the estate grounds.
  - iii Human activity has totally transformed the Beltline landscape, which incorporates little old growth forest. The natural scenery that many users cherish owes its existence to skillful replanting and nurturing. In other words, "nature" on the Beltline is largely a human fabrication.
  - iv We are recommending man-made additions to the trail (such as lighting, more signage and snow plowing) because many of the other elements of the trail (most trees and drainage, for instance) are also additions that man has injected into the mix. Nor should we overlook the presence of nearby swimming pools, garages, etc. that have been installed by property owners.
- b City of Toronto departments try to fairly weigh the input they receive from different community stakeholder groups.
  - i The needs of homeowners and condo dwellers should be listened to seriously if those individuals reside beside the trail.
  - ii However, in sheer numbers, it is obvious that they are vastly overshadowed by trail users. Care should be exercised lest local interests prevail over the needs of the community as a whole.
  - iii In a small neighbourhood park, priority is usually given to property owners whose residences are located near the boundaries of the park.
  - iv As a 9 km. long rail trail, the Beltline passes through numerous neighbourhoods and wards. Its users are distributed even farther afield.
  - v Indeed, the Beltline is an asset not just of citywide significance but of regional importance. Prior to amalgamation, the "Metro Road" designation gave planners power to override the territorial griping of local residents and councillors, in order to benefit the greater good. Long-range planning of important trails like the Beltline should be similarly prioritized, and local considerations should carry less weight than is normally the case.

4 Beltline considerations cannot be reduced to a series of dry engineering calculations. We also must account for a substantial **POLITICAL DIMENSION** that, for decades, has been central to the trail's history.

- a Some hold the position that the trail should be maintained as recreational green space where locals can walk their dogs in peace, uninterrupted by utilitarian cyclists.
  - i This conforms to the traditional, isolated function of a park. At a superficial level, a narrow emphasis on Mother Nature seems innocuous enough.

ii In reality the position is reactionary, as Ii fails to come to terms with progressive methods of integrating the trail into the metropolis as a whole.

b The Beltline is long, cutting through neighbourhoods that vary dramatically on the socio-economic scale.
    i Rosedale, Forest Hill, Chaplin Estates and Moore Park are at the high end; while the former City of York and the high-rise apartment clusters near Yonge are at the lower end.
    ii These differences have been intensified by former municipality and ward boundaries, which in turn have contributed to the disconnectedness of the Beltline.
    iii What was conceived as a linear trail now subsists as a badly linked collection of separate parks. Unsafe road crossings, substandard wayfinding and poor drainage are disincentives for non-locals to use the trail.
    iv Many wealthy residents prefer it that way, because it keeps 'outsiders' from entering what they feel is their special preserve .

c This sentiment reached an extreme in the 1970's and 1980's, when Forest Hill homeowners attempted to eradicate the Beltline, by buying the land it passed through.
    i Their goal was to extend their back yards and deny the public access.
    ii Homeowners were opposed by a coalition of apartment dwellers, members of the urban reform movement and naturalists who used activist methods (like marches and petitions) to successfully establish the Beltline trail.

d Some homeowners still treat the Beltline as an extension of their backyards.
    i Etiquette rules should govern personal political space, just as laws are in force at the societal level.
    ii Observance of trail etiquette codes is the norm on most trails, but many Beltline locals have not bothered to familiarize themselves with the basics of proper trail behaviour – perhaps out of feelings of entitlement.
    iii As a result, traffic flow on the Beltline is haphazard, woefully inefficient and often congested.
    iv Instead of discouraging usage (a theme we are growing tired of hearing) it would be easier and fairer to ensure that etiquette prevails across the length of the Beltline. A rule as simple as "keep right, pass on the left" will prove most efficacious in achieving an organic streamlining of trail traffic.

e The tradition of exclusion continues. The York Beltline Trail, which passes through a neighbourhood of modest means, was initially omitted from the present project.
    i Forestry experts justified the decision on the basis that ecological degradation was worse in wealthy districts.
    ii Others have criticized the decision on the grounds of social equity: public money ought to be directed to enhancing the trail in an area that lies just south of the Lawrence Heights Priority Investment Neighbourhood.

f Other neighbourhoods have been rocked by political controversies:
    i The Chorley Park section of the Beltline suffered major losses as a consequence of North Rosedale residents' dissatisfaction with the federal government's refugee policy.
    ii Moore Park residents have been fighting for greater public accountability from the management of Mt. Pleasant Cemetery. The results may lead to better access to the cemetery for Beltline users.

g After Rob Ford assumed power as mayor, the "war against the car" became a contentious, politically charged issue in Toronto.
    i New City bicycle policies were premised on the goal of shifting commuter cycling away from on-street bike lanes to off-road trails.

ii Funds have been directed to upgrading certain existing trails, including the Beltline.
iii Unlike other trails that receive more recreational usage, the Beltline is located in the very centre of Toronto, near rapid transit, shops and schools.
iv Because its potential for utilitarian biking is enormous, the Beltline upgrade may be considered a prototypical 'test case" of the new cycling policy.
v The dangers faced by pedestrians at Beltline road crossings also turns this into a test of the seriousness with which the popular 'Complete Streets' approach is being taken by the City.
vi In order to make the Beltline safer for ALL users, Cycle Toronto has mounted a political campaign that is relying on intensive participation in the official consultation process, petitions and the production of this report.
vii If the Beltline fails to realize its potential as an inclusive, active transportation corridor, the ramifications will extend far beyond the confines of Midtown Toronto, sending a broad signal that the City's new, car-centric policies are deeply flawed.

SCOPE OF BELTLINE PROJECT

The City of Toronto's Beltline Trail Study [1] was launched in May, 2012. Its scope has been restricted to only two of the four segments of the Beltline trail. For official purposes, the York Beltline Trail and Mt. Pleasant Cemetery segments have been omitted. Meanwhile, trails located within the Yellow Creek system have been included in the project since it was determined that their ecological deterioration urgently requires remediation. In actuality, these decisions bring the purview of the Beltline Study closer to the route of the *Central Ravines, Belt Line & Gardens* Discovery Walk [2], than to the areas traditionally ascribed to the Beltline trail itself.

We are steadfast in our decision to present our vision of the Beltline as a whole. Many of our concerns relate to continuity and connectivity issues. Cohesion – by its very nature – cannot be fostered by focusing on only one half of the equation. We are therefore covering in this report the entire Beltline, as well as the Park Drive Reservation Trail and the Vale of Avoca. Recommendations will be made in the knowledge that some fall outside the scope of the current project. We believe that these measures nevertheless have merit, and it is our intention that they put on a "wishlist", to be implemented in the future as funding opportunities become available. We don't want to have to keep re-inventing the wheel in a part of Toronto that is undergoing rapid change.

We have identified a good number of areas of improvement for the York Beltline Trail. We regret that many will be left outstanding by the current Beltline project. Nonetheless, we are prepared to work with the local councillor and various City departments in order to deliver to the York trail the same enhancements that the rest of the Beltline is receiving. We must build a unified trail, and we must build it equitably.

We are hopeful that many items on our York Beltline 'to do' list will get tackled by some of the major infrastructure projects coming onstream in the area. These include the Eglinton Crosstown LRT, the Allen Road Study, the Allen Greenway, the York Beltline Trail east extension (towards Marlee) and the West Toronto Railpath north extension. In fact, hundreds of millions of dollars will be spent over the course of the next decade on infrastructure improvements in Ward 15. When the dust finally settles, we want to be certain that the York Beltline Trail has fully benefitted from the investment.

[1] Beltline Trail Study www.toronto.ca/involved/projects/kay-gardner_beltline/index.htm
[2] See the map of the Discovery Walk: http://www.toronto.ca/parks/pdf/trails/DW_Central.pdf

The City of Toronto does not own the land in Mt. Pleasant Cemetery along which the Beltline route is laid. Any changes brought about in the cemetery will have to be achieved with the full cooperation of its management. We are cognizant of the complex circumstances that prevail in this segment of the Beltline, and we are prepared to be patient and flexible.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

WHAT IS THE BELTLINE?

"Beltlines" are to be found in cities across North America.[3] Regardless of the location, the local use of the term "beltline" almost always originates from circular suburban rail or highway routes. In Toronto, much confusion exists as to what properly should properly be considered "The Beltline".

- It refers to not one, but two separate rail routes [4]
- Virtually everywhere, the tracks have been ripped out and none of the stations presently exist at their original locations
- Much of the land is now part of Toronto's parks system, yet if one visits the City's Toronto Parks listings under "B" [5], one will not find the Beltline listed there
- Thanks to the addition of the York Beltline Trail segment – also not listed in the Parks directory [6] – the Beltline has become the longest rail trail in Toronto
- However, the actual length cannot be accurately measured as the southeast trailhead has not been officially established
- Because the Kay Gardner Beltline Park was the first segment to receive official recognition, a popular misconception has arisen that it alone constitutes the Beltline
- Then there is the opposite extreme, which attributes to the Beltline certain trails that properly belong to the Yellow Creek system [7]
- In Oriole Park – which also isn't part of the Beltline – one may spot a bollard marker with the distinctive Beltline identification logo. But on the York Beltline Trail, interestingly, such bollards are totally absent
- Some spell Beltline as a single word; other prefer Belt Line. The City uses both versions

All of these factors create a huge identity problem for the Beltline. Before we proceed to other issues, it is necessary to establish the precise extent and location of the Beltline by examining its beginnings.

EARLY HISTORY

If Torontonians were asked a century ago what the Belt Line was, their answer would more likely have referred to the Niagara Belt Line than any local tracks. Millions of tourists from around the world accessed the chief sights in both the Canadian and American Niagara Falls using the Belt Line electric trolley loop service, operated from 1908 to 1932. [8]

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[3] For example, Calgary, Atlanta, Raleigh, Madison (Wisconsin), Decatur (Alabama), Burlington (Vermont), Columbia (South Carolina), and Alton (Illinois)

[4] The official timetable from July 1894 is titled in the plural, "Toronto Belt Line**s**" (see Railway Heritage section)

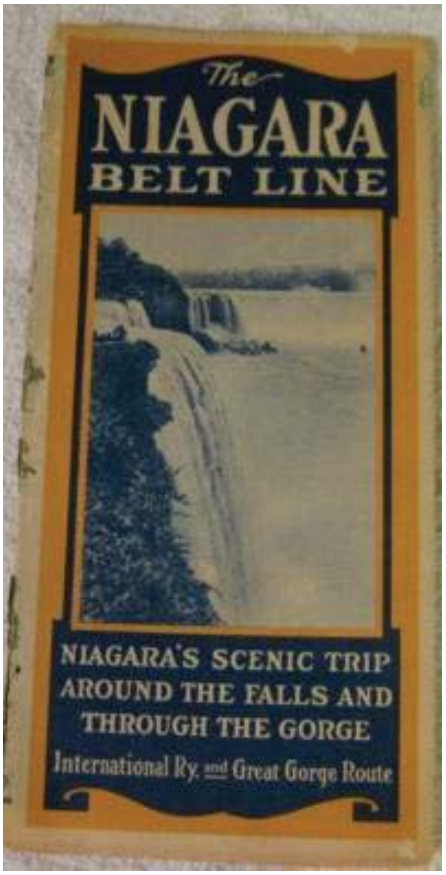
[5] Toronto Parks Forestry & Recreation Department (PFR). "Parks Listing" http://www.toronto.ca/parks/prd/facilities/parks/B.htm (Retrieved Nov. 21, 2012)

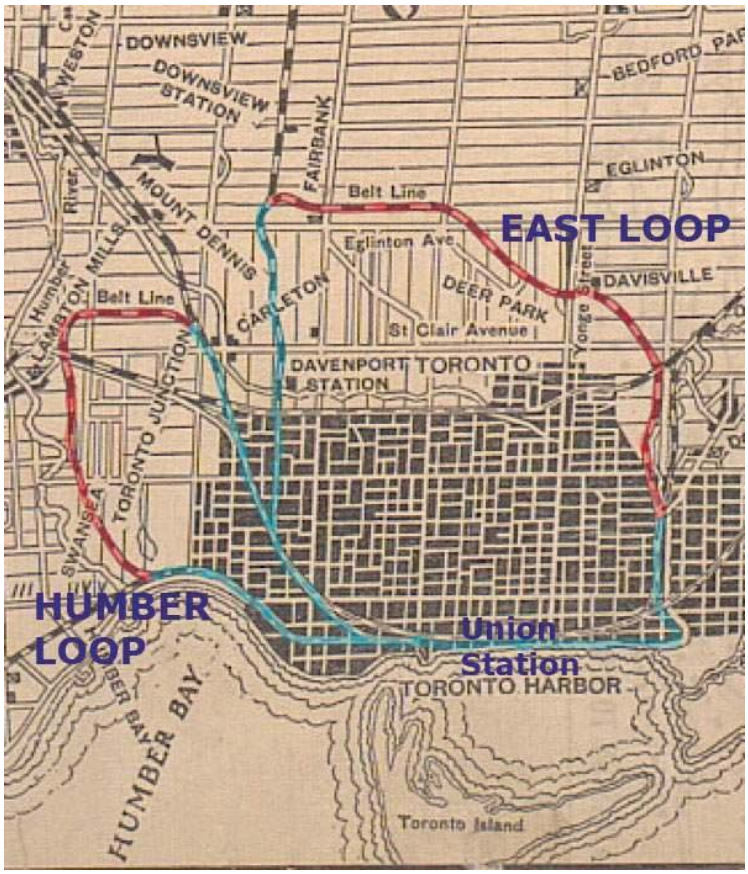
[6] *Ibid.* http://www.toronto.ca/parks/prd/facilities/parks/Y.htm (Retrieved Nov. 21, 2012)

[7] At recent community workshop consultation sessions the phrase "Ravine Beltline Trail" has been used

[8] Niagara Falls Railway Museum: http://www.nfrm.ca/galdisp.php?TitleID=4&ampresultpage=1&pagesize=4

The history of the Toronto Belt Line Railway is far less glorious. It was conceived in 1889 by the Toronto Belt Land Corporation as a 'loss leader' commuter service intended to connect Toronto's downtown with the upscale railroad suburbs the company was planning to the north of the city boundaries. Passenger trains operated from 1892 until 1894, when a collapse in land prices and a continuing financial depression forced the termination of the speculative venture.





Left: Niagara Belt Line Brochure, early 20th century
Right: Cyclists' Road Map for the County of York, 1896 [9]*. Belt Line tracks highlighted in red; trunk line tracks in blue. The Yonge Street Loop is also known as the East Loop*

Humber Loop

During that brief, two-year period, Belt Line trains travelled both to the northwest and the northeast. The shorter of the circular routes was known as the Humber Loop. It was based at Union Station, wrapped under High Park, went north up the east rim of the Humber Valley past St. Clair Ave. and then returned downtown via the Grand Trunk/ CN Weston Sub line. Shortly after the Belt Line Railway's demise, most of the track that had been specifically built for the Humber Loop was pulled up; and the land was sold for property development or street construction.

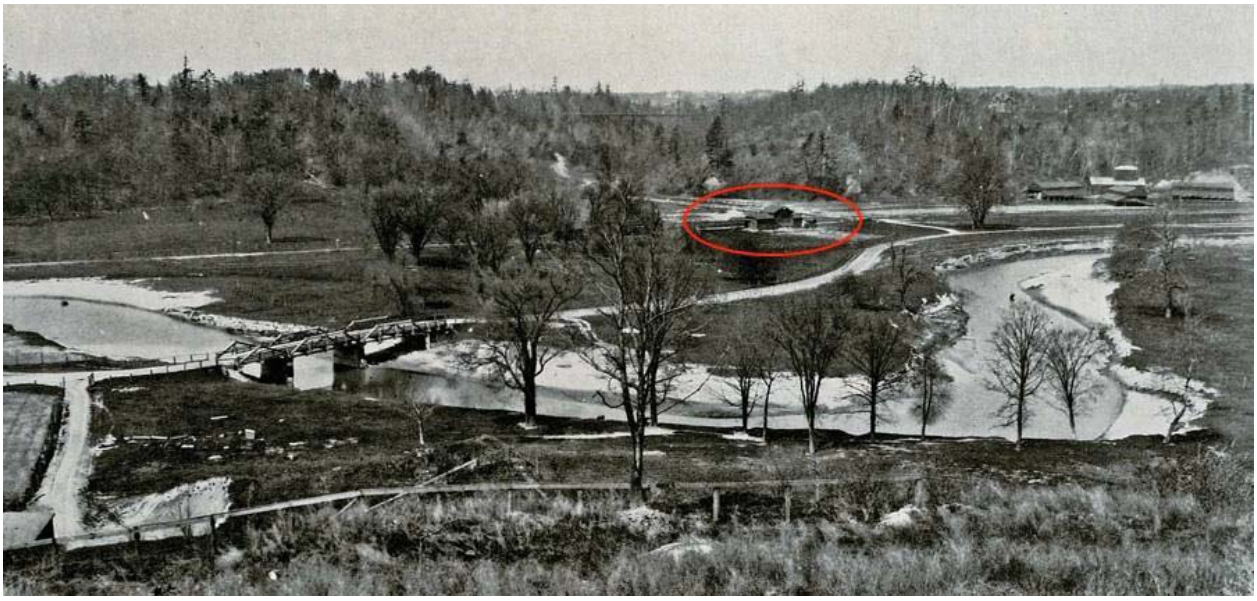
In the 21st century, virtually none of the Humber Loop's original right-of-way survives.[10] The only section suitable as an off-road trail is a 1 km. stretch along the TNP Hydro Corridor (east of Jane, and north of St. Clair).

[9] This was a predecessor of what is now known as the *Toronto Cycling Map*
[10] Toronto Belt Line Railway page. *Facebook* (Retrieved Nov. 21, 2012) www.facebook.com/pages/Toronto-Belt-Line.../325581864148596?s.

The unremarkable scenery is marred by the presence of hydro installations and various nearby roads. All things considered, there is nothing to commend the site other than its historical associations. Further discussion of the Humber Loop shall therefore be relegated to the Connectivity section, where it is treated as an excursion rather than an integral part of the Beltline.

Yonge Street Loop

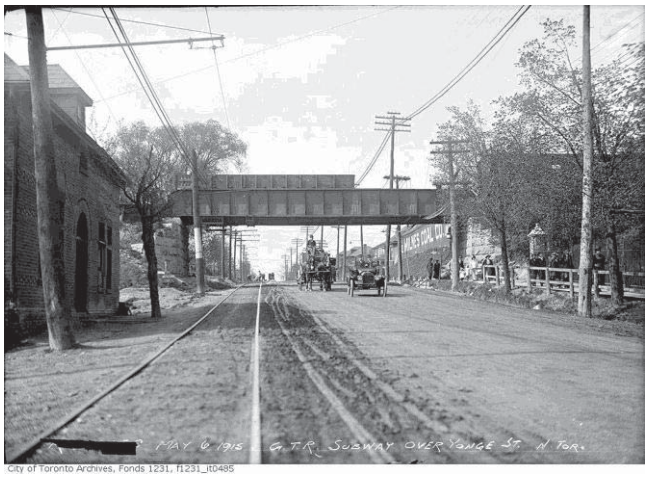
What is now usually referred to as the "East Loop" was in fact called the "Yonge Street Loop" during the Victorian period. This was because the line stopped at Yonge once, after it left Union Station; and then again 31 to 33 minutes later at the 'north' Yonge Street Station, near Merton St. [11] In that half hour Belt Line trains covered more territory than the direct route of the modern Yonge subway. First they went east along the lakeshore using the Grand Trunk main line. Then they turned north up the west side of the Don Valley until Rosedale Station [12] (east of Milkman's Lane). Just beyond, at Rosedale Junction, trains veered to the northwest along the floor of the Moore Park Ravine. At this point, the track was used exclusively by Belt Line and Don Valley Brick Works trains. We therefore propose that what we now call the Beltline should start near Rosedale Station. [13]



Rosedale Station, looking west across the Don River. (Photo courtesy of Derek Boles) The station is circled

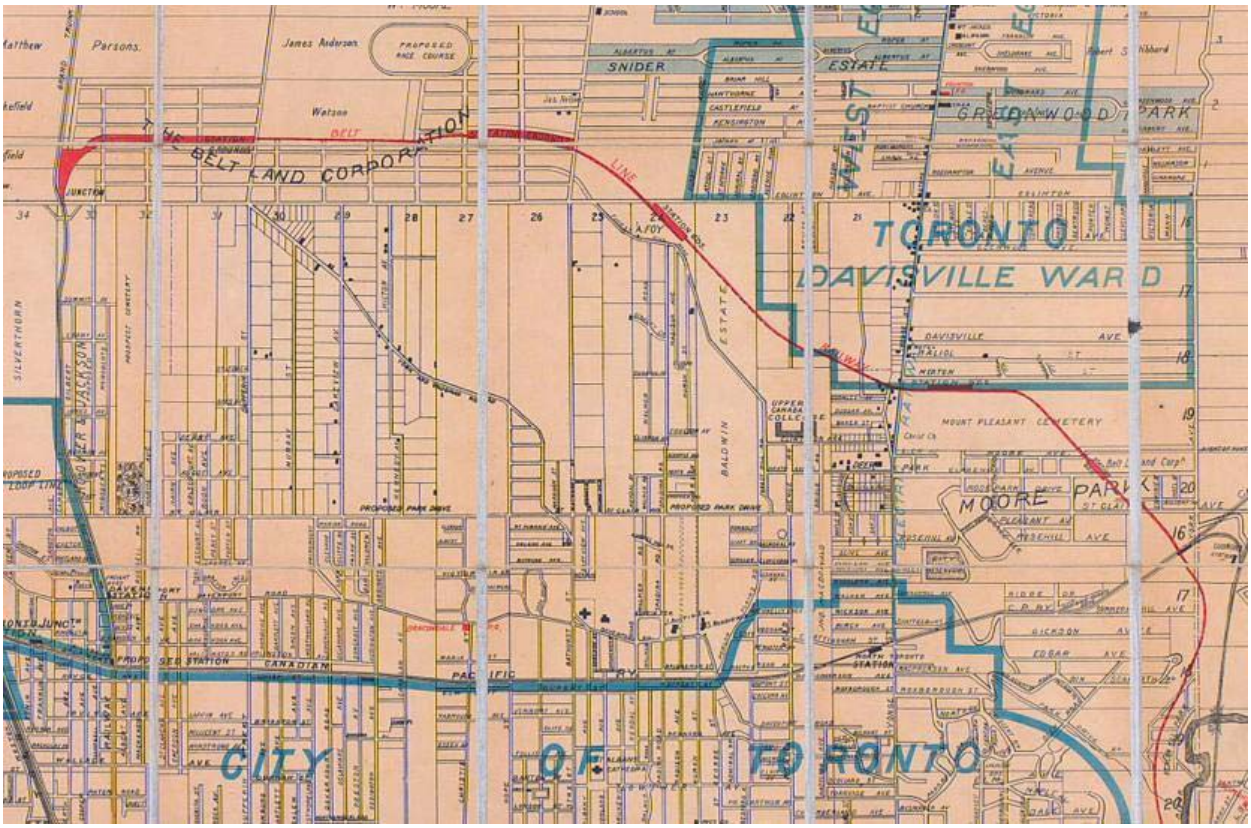
At the north end of the ravine, the train stopped at Moore Park Station, went under the Moore Ave. bridge, and curved to the northwest through the undeveloped eastern part of Mt. Pleasant Cemetery. The next stop was just east of Yonge, reputedly the busiest suburban station on the Belt Line route. The trains served a succession of stations in the Forest Hill and Fairbank districts, which were sparsely populated at the time. Finally, at Fairbank Junction, Belt Line track joined the Grand Trunk (CN Newmarket Sub) line that returned to Union Station. The junction is situated just west of the York Beltline trail's west trailhead. **The part of the Yonge Street Loop which lies between Rosedale Station and Fairbank Junction is unique to the Belt Line Railway. We suggest that this 9.5 km. long crescent define what we today call the Beltline.** The remainder of the loop used Grand Trunk track that was shared with other routes, at various points in time.

[11] The station would have been situated east of the Beltline bridge over Yonge St.
[12] The station no longer exists. (See Railway Heritage section for more information about all of the Belt Line stations)
[13] See Wayfinding – Nomenclature section



Left: Rosedale Junction, 1906. Looking north, from the vicinity of Rosedale Station
Right: Beltline bridge over Yonge St, facing north. Yonge Street Station was just to the east, 1915

The Yonge Street Loop's total trackage amounted to 25.5 km. in circumference. A map printed in 1890 during the Belt Line's planning stage colours in red the track that is specific to the Beltline. It also marks the two principal housing developments that the property speculators were planning. "The Belt Land Corporation" (upper left on the map) identifies the Fairbank neighbourhood; while "Moore Park" (centre right) hugs the south border of the cemetery.



Beltline map, 1890. The railway route (coloured in red) is proposed rather than actual. Bulges indicate stations or junctions.

POLITICAL STRIFE

Abutting homes and highrises

After passenger service on the Belt Line Railway ground to a halt in 1894, the tracks in midtown Toronto fell into disuse for a 16-year period. “In 1910, the Grand Trunk rebuilt the northern portion of the Yonge St. Loop for freight service. Trains ran along this line until the 1970s when the W.R. Allen Rd. was opened and ended rail service east of Marlee Ave.” [14] Throughout this sixty-year period, Belt Line track was used solely for freight purposes. This resulted in the building of coal yards, warehouses, and factories in parts of Toronto which were originally destined to be residential suburbs.

The more recent transformation of many industrial properties into high-rise condos and apartment buildings has lead to a certain tension between trail users. The mansions in Forest Hill and Chaplin Estates are not ‘starter homes’, but nearby apartments and condos are more affordable. They attract younger residents – many of whom go to work or school during the day and appreciate trail lighting when they get home. Also, it is in this demographic that we find a concentration of long-distance runners and cyclists. (They are the ones who calculate their runs and rides in k. rather than blocks.) This mindset, which is common amongst high-rise dwellers, predisposes them to treating the Beltline as a unified, single trail, not a string of disconnected neighbourhood parks.

Owners of single-family homes that abut the Beltline tend to have a very different vision of the Beltline. Historically, they have been inclined either to outright oppose the creation of the trail, or would prefer to limit its use to local park functioning. Many homeowners have installed gates allowing them direct access to the Beltline from their property. The long succession of private gates, bridges, stone walkways and security signs along the Gardner trail between Oriole Pkwy. and Eglinton Ave. may give the impression that this part of the trail is merely an extension of private backyards.

Forest Hill

Needless to say, the Beltline’s Forest Hill section is not a private preserve. It should be emphasized, nonetheless, that Forest Hill has a long tradition of looking after its own interests. The Village of Forest Hill was incorporated in 1923, and it remained independent of the City of Toronto until it was annexed in 1967. Villagers had an aversion to high-rises, so from the very beginning, zoning restrictions limited development to single-family homes.[15] Villagers also had an aversion to the steam whistles that Belt Line trains used to sound in the posh enclave – so whistleblowing was outlawed.[16]

It cannot be said that the Village of Forest Hill has ever been impoverished. But that did not prevent villagers from seeking preferential treatment. The only time a Beltline issue has gone before the Supreme Court of Canada was in 1932, when Forest Hill tried to strongarm the City of Toronto into contributing towards the rebuilding of the Eglinton bridge [17] over the Beltline. The court ruled that a bridge located well within the bounds of Forest Hill (and of benefit to that municipality) should not have to be paid for by outsiders.[18]

The concept of outsiders – or “non-villagers”, in local parlance – came to the fore again in the 1970. This was the year that CN discontinued freight service on what is now the Gardner segment of the Beltline. Negotiations

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[14] “Toronto Belt Line – 1892”, Derek Boles. Toronto Railway Historical Association website: http://www.trha.ca/beltline.html

[15] "In Forest Hill you can't see the forest because of the trees", Gil Zohar. *Today's Senior Magazine,* April 1997

[16] The Corporation of the Village of Forest Hill. “A By-Law to prohibit the sounding of any engine whistles and the ringing of any engine bell, within the Village of Forest Hill” Jan. 25, 1956

[17] Located just west of Chaplin. The bridge was built in 1890

[18] “City of Toronto v. Village of Forest Hill et al.” 1932 *S.C.R.* 602 Date: 1932-06-15

began with the City over acquiring the land for use as a public trail. One would have assumed that the reaction of Forest Hill abutting property owners would have been positive. Far from it. The level of contention went well beyond locals vowing "Not in my backyard". A group of about 200 homeowners (out of a total of 214 in their Forest Hill neighbourhood) actually signed a petition to **absorb the Beltline into their backyards in order to cut off public access**. Contemporary newspaper accounts go into detail about the characterization of trail users. Although noisy train whistles may not have been tolerated in Forest Hill, it was open season to blast against the barbarians at the village gate:

> "Property owners abutting the Belt Line were quite strongly in favour of being allowed to buy that portion adjoining their lot. To support their position, they mentioned the disadvantages which they foresaw in a park belt – children, cats, dogs and burglars would tend to congregate in the park." [19]
>
> "But the homeowners in the area fear conversion of the old rail line into a parkland would intrude on their privacy. The claim it would become a haven for peeping toms, sex deviants, vandals, drug users, motorcycle gangs and lovers. . . . Alderman William Kilbourn thinks residents' fears of vandalism and immorality are exaggerated. . . . 'A small influential group of residents shouldn't be allowed to dictate the future needs of two million people in Metro' [York Controller Douglas] Saunders said." [20]
>
> "Other people, mostly those who live beside the railway tracks and who would now find their backyards facing a public park, were horrified. They had nightmares of burglars and sexual perverts roaming behind their houses. They want to buy the railway line from CNR in individual plots and add it to their back-yards." [21]
>
> [Planning] "Board member Richard Frost, a school trustee, said yesterday opponents of the park proposal have a 'legitimate concern, but have expressed it hysterically. . . . About 200 of the 214 owners of properties backing onto the line oppose the park and want to buy sections of it to add to their back-yards. Many have charged that criminal activity and vandalism will increase on the line if it is made a park." [22]
>
> ""William McKay of the Northwest Forest Hills Homeowners Association is . . . concerned that the young couples who use the belt line as a trysting place will be a bad influence on his son Tod, 11, and his daughter, Robin, 12. 'How can I teach my children morals when there are couples seducing each other a few feet from my house?' he asked." [23]
>
> "Some Forest Hill residents with back yards abutting the Belt Line are concerned about the easy access for motorcyclists, vandals, "non-Villagers" that the walkway would provide. A Planning Board decision June 13, based partly on a public opinion survey in the area, concluded however that the wider benefits from zoning the right-of-way for parks purposes are unequalled in city-wide terms. This advantage would end to override local objections which are based on a projection of its present use, surveillance and maintenance . . . [24]

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[19] "Extracts on the Belt Line from notes taken during the group discussions of the Planning Board's public meetings in Forest Hill, Feb. 3rd, 10th and 17th, 1971", Appendix C, page 5 of Item 5 (d)
[20] "Most aldermen want a belt line park", *Toronto Star,* Aug. 22, 1970
[21] "OK Belt Line park", *Toronto Star,* ca. 1970
[22] "Police report may calm foes of Belt Line Park", *Globe & Mail,* Aug. 19, 1970
[23] "250 homeowners fear crime would increase if belt line made a park", *Toronto Star,* July 22, 1970
[24] "A walk along the beltway. Part of the Metro Centre land swap may become a hiking path for Toronto", Keith Richardson. *Toronto Citizen,* June 29, 1972

Residents' euphemistic references to gay sex orgies were not entirely the result of paranoid fantasy. They may have heard rumours about David Balfour Park, which once had a nocturnal reputation as a gay cruising ground. John Bentley Mays is one of the few journalists willing to broach the topic of

> post-midnight rituals that transmute this popular daytime destination of cyclists and walkers into busy queer space. . . . Nearly complete silence is observed . . . in order to avoid annoying the Rosedale residents asleep in their houses on the crest of the ravine." [25]

Residents of upscale districts sometimes maintain a pretence that any trail activity not related to animals – namely, dog-walking and bird-watching – is disreputable. Bicyclists, motorcycle gang members, peeping toms and gay cruisers all get thrown together – and upright citizens will be sure to keep their distance.

Or perhaps not. Ian Merringer shines a light on the real connection between surreptitious trail activities and the proud residences that surround midtown trails:

> Evening lights from the upper-crust condos of Rosehill and Avoca Avenues don't penetrate very far down the steep stone staircase leading into David A. Balfour Park. Darkness around Yellow Creek is cover for midtown men who might find their walk-in closets at home a little too confining.[26]

Contentious battles over the future of the Beltline continued for two decades. Forest Hill homeowners did not give up easily. In 1984 they were again exerting substantial pressure on the City of Toronto to incorporate the Beltline right-of-way into their backyards. This was premised on a dusty bylaw that had been passed by the defunct Village of Forest Hill, and "because of a serious problem with burglaries." [27]

Activists such as Esther Carin, and politicians including Councillor Kay Gardner and later-to-be Mayor David Crombie relied on door-to-door canvassing in apartment buildings, marches, and two series of petitions to prevail in a campaign to transform the Beltline into public parkland. **In 1988, CN sold the Beltline right-of-way to the City on the understanding that if would be converted into a linear park.**

Making the Beltline a success is a work in process. There is still much to be done, and resistance to change exists as before. The antipathy between property owners and high-rise dwellers that underlay the struggle of the 1970s and 1980s has resurfaced in the present campaign to bring more lighting and winter maintenance to the Beltline.

Davisville

When the Yonge subway line was in the planning stage, the TTC made two attempts to convert nearby Oriole Park into an enormous parking lot just west of the Davisville Station. The first proposal, in 1948, was for a facility that would accommodate 500 cars[28] ; the second try occurred in 1952, aiming for a 600-car capacity.[29] A parking lot of this size would not have been to the advantage of tenants in the nearby apartment buildings that sprang up after the subway was opened.[30] Clearly, the beneficiaries of the parking scheme would have been homeowners

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[25] "Queer Space Green Passages. Examining the different meanings of urban territory", John Bentley Mays. *The Globe and Mail.* Sep. 21, 1994. s.C, p. 1

[26] "Secrets of the ravine", Ian Merringer, *The Globe and Mail* May 29, 2010 s. M.1

[27] "Groups fear loss of green space if Toronto takes CNR land offer", Robert MacLeod, *The Globe and Mail,* June 8, 1984, p. M1

[28] "Year-long fight dropped parking lot is abandoned", *Toronto Star,* Oct. 21, 1948

[29] "Park for Parking TTC idea shocks Oriole residents", *Toronto Star,* May 13, 1952

[30] Brentwood Towers was built between 1958 and 1962

in Forest Hill and the Chaplin Estates, who wanted the luxury of driving to a subway station. There was an enormous public outcry. The park was saved, and to this day Davisville subway lacks public parking for transit patrons.

Since Oriole Park is separated from the Beltline by Frobisher Ave., the outcome of the parking dispute may not seem germane to history of the Gardner trail. However, when CN was negotiating the sale of Beltline lands, the parcel adjacent to Frobisher Ave. came close to being sold for residential development – rather than for use as a trail. Anne Johnston "told northend ratepayers last night that Eggleton has sold them out by not getting proper guarantees a section of the land won't be used for townhouses that would essentially break the park in half." [31]

We may speculate that it would not have made sense to develop townhouses opposite Oriole Park, had it been turned into a parking lot. More realistically, the TTC may have been a willing purchaser of the Frobisher parcel, in order to augment its parking capacity. Thus, as a matter of conjecture, some Forest Hill homeowners nearly succeeded in:

1 buying up Beltline land in order to expand their backyards; and
2 causing the TTC to buy Beltline land to expand its backyard

Moore Park Ravine

Rosedale originally developed as a posh haven for residents of British stock.[32] [33] Several judicial decisions in the middle of the 20th century gradually lead to greater demographic diversification.[34] But the start was rocky. In the 1950s, a certain amount of neighbourhood dissention arose in North Rosedale, centring around Chorley Park (which abutted the Moore Park Ravine section of the Beltline). The estate had been put to use as "a temporary home under University of Toronto supervision for refugee students from Sopron, Hungary, who had fled their homeland in the wake of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956." [35] Not unsurprisingly, the new additions to the neighbourhood did not fit in. "We arrived with nothing but the clothes on our back, but we carried our cultural background." [36] Some of Rosedale's proper residents took exception to having a refugee camp for Hungarian students in their midst.

After the refugees moved on, the fledgling York University became interested in Chorley Park as a temporary site. By this point, the patience of local residents for students had become exhausted. "The North Rosedale Ratepayers Association adamantly opposed locating a university on the property." [37] It may be said that the wheels of government turn slowly – except in Rosedale. Homeowners pressed for a drastic solution. The Toronto Parks Committee decided to raze Chorley Park – the city's grandest estate – in Nov., 1960; the task was completed in 1961.

Chorley Park may be seen as a cautionary tale. When local community members effuse high-mindedly about returning an environment to its natural state, they may sometimes be motivated by base sentiments – such as a distaste for Hungarian student refugees.

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[31] "Eggleton, Johnston square off over deal with railway on park", *Toronto Star*, Oct. 23, 1985, s. A7
[32] The "Residential Map of Rosedale, Toronto's Charming Suburb" (1905) displays owner surnames for all of South Rosedale. Approximately 99% are of British origin. http://static.torontopubliclibrary.ca/da/images/LC/maps-r-85.jpg
[33] Ruth Frager. *Sweatshop Strife: Class, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Jewish Labour Movement of Toronto. 1900 - 1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) p.13
[34] Clayton James Mosher, *Discrimination and Denial: Systemic Racism in Ontario's Legal and Criminal Justice Systems, 1892 - 1961* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998) p. 96- 98
[35] "Historicist: The Saga of Chorley Park" Jamie Bradburn. *Torontoist*, Aug. 9, 2008
[36] Obituary: "Laszlo Peterfy, Engineer: 1933 - 2005". Catherine Cullen, *The Globe and Mail*, Oct. 27, 2005, p. S7
[37] Michiel Horn, *York University: The Way* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008) p. 12

Property Values

Almost a quarter of a century has elapsed since the Gardner Beltline right-of-way has been acquired by the City. Clearly, the predictions by Forest Hill property owners of widespread vandalism, sex orgies and motorcycle gang intrusions have not materialized. In fact, the precise opposite has occurred. The Beltline has become one of the great civic assets of Forest Hill. Realtors nowadays emphasize a property's proximity to the Beltline as one of a home's chief selling points. A formal examination of the Beltline's effect on housing prices has not been conducted. In Ohio, a study looked at 376 single-family properties located within one mile of the Little Miami Scenic Trail.

> This model demonstrated that proximity to the trail positively impacts property values. Specifically, the model results suggested that for every foot closer to the Little Miami Scenic Trail a single-family residential property is located, its sale price increases by $7.05. This finding is notable because rail-trails such as the Little Miami Scenic Trail are often criticized for having a negative impact on property values. This study suggests, to the contrary, that rail-trails can have a positive effect on the economic well-being of the surrounding community.[38]

TRAIL FUNCTION

Unified rail trail

Despite the limited use of branding ,[39] the city has in practice treated the 9 km. long Beltline as a disconnected string of discrete parks rather than as a unified rail trail. Cycle Toronto takes the opposite view. Opportunities for significant rail trails are rare in Toronto's midtown. Enhancing the Beltline's continuity and connectivity in accordance with best practice rail trail design principles will benefit all users of the trail who travel significant distances along its reaches. The Beltline fulfills an invaluable function in the city's bikeway network; it is also a route treasured by long-distance runners, since most of its length is unpaved, providing a surface less punishing to runners' joints than regular sidewalks.

The trail also serves more limited functions. A local resident who visits the Beltline to walk his or her dog for 15 minutes has counterparts across the city who also walk their dogs in the local park for 15 minutes a day. We do like to see pets having a good time on the trail. However, encouraging use of the Beltline just for short jaunts is like building an Olympic-size swimming pool and using it only as a wading pool.

One of the Beltline's unique characteristics is its size. The Beltline is the city's longest rail trail, and it passes through numerous neighbourhoods and wards. Its users are distributed even farther away. In sheer numbers, those living in homes that abut the trail are vastly outnumbered by those who visit the trail from farther afield. The needs of property owners who live adjacent to the trail must be listened to carefully – but it should be remembered that they don't always have the interests of all trail users as their first priority.

As we prepare to make planning decisions that will decide the Beltline's future, we must realize that we are dealing with an asset of city-wide significance. Prior to amalgamation, the "Metro Road" designation gave planners power to override the territorial griping of local residents and councillors, in order to benefit the greater

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[38] Duygu Karadeniz, *The Impact of the Little Miami Scenic Trail on Single Family Residential Property Values.* A thesis submitted to the Division of Research and Advanced Studies of the University of Cincinnati in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Community Planning in School of Planning of College of Design, Art, Architecture, and Planning (2008) p. 71-72

[39] A Beltline logo and custom trail markers

good. Long-range planning of important trails like the Beltline should be similarly prioritized, and local considerations should carry less weight than is normally the case. Only then can the Beltline fulfil its potential as a unified rail trail that will rank with other major rail trails in the province.

The roles of a long trail were well summed up in 1987, just before the City bought the Gardner Beltline land. The Toronto Planning and Development Department envisaged a dual function for the Beltline

> as a recreational facility of City-wide significance as well as one serving the special needs of the abutting neighbourhoods. To accomplish its City-wide function, it is intended to create a sense of continuity along the Belt Line and to provide for linkages with similar linear facilities elsewhere in the City or in abutting municipalities. [40]

Recreational and utilitarian roles

The trail as a whole often goes by the name of the *Belt Line Recreational Trail*. “Recreational” is a term that reflects outdated modes of thinking. The entire distinction between "recreational" and "transportation" infrastructure is a false one. Infrastructure is infrastructure – trying to guess users' intent in using it is presumptuous. Admittedly, a small neighbourhood park is visited mostly for recreational purposes; the longest rail trail in the city has far more potential, and users expect it to serve varied, sometimes utilitarian functions. None of the following diverse activities in the mosaic of 21st century Toronto is consistent with the Victorian notion of a Sunday stroll in the park:

- Commuter use of the Beltline will increase as improved connectivity, continuity, proper wayfinding and extensions of other trails and bike lanes all come on stream
- The City’s emphasis on active transportation will result in more youths travelling along the Beltline to schools lying in close proximity to the trail (such as Forest Hill Collegiate, West Preparatory Jr. Public School and North Preparatory Jr. Public School).
- Students also use the Beltline as part of their education. Science teachers sometimes lead field trips, while physical education teachers send joggers and cross-country runners onto the trail [41]
- Toronto is promoting multi-modal transit which links to trails situated near rapid transit lines. The Beltline will increasingly function as a feeder to the transit system.
- The Beltline crosses through an orthodox Jewish neighbourhood. The trail is sometimes used by those who do not drive their cars on the Sabbath.
- It enables self-powered shoppers to travel safely to stores in an environmentally responsible manner.
- The City should not make blanket assumptions that certain destinations have an exclusively recreational function. Someone who relies on the Beltline in order to attend a funeral at Mt. Pleasant Cemetery can hardly be classified as a “recreational” user.
- The same may be true about people heading to community meetings at the Evergreen Brick Works, or returning research materials to the Forest Hill Library.

The City does not apply the narrow “recreational” designation to roads because traffic planners recognize that a metropolis’ streets are used in many ways. The fact that private motor vehicles may not travel on the Beltline

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[40] Memorandum, “City Acquisition or Lease of the Belt Line”. From the Toronto Planning and Development Department to Land Use Committee. Ap. 24, 1987. p. 1

[41] In addition to the aforementioned three schools, various other educational institutions are located within walking or running distance of the Beltline and Yellow Creek trails. These include: Bennington Heights E.S.; Bishop Strachan School; Branksome Hall, Davisville Jn. P.S.; Deer Park Jn. & Sn. P.S.; Forest Hill Jn. & Sn. P.S.; Gradale Academy; Greenwood College School; Hodgson Sr. P. S.; Oriole Park Jn. P.S.; Our Lady of Perpetual Help E.S., Rosedale Jr. P.S.; Sunnybrook School; Upper Canada College; and Whitney Jn. P.S.

does not mean that the trail serves purposes any the less serious or multifarious. On the trail, as on the roads, people may be going to school, their jobs, shops, places of worship, the grave of a loved one, the library or transit stations. We should refrain from attaching restrictive terms to the Beltline name if we wish to realize its year-round, 24/ 7 potential. “Recreational” carries a ‘lite’, even frivolous connotation. If we are asking that a “recreational trail” be plowed in the winter and illuminated at night, our case is undermined by inappropriate terminology.

As we look ahead, we discern the possibility that policy decisions may be made which go well beyond terminology: the recreational role of the Beltline could be given clear priority over utilitarian uses. This choice would be unwise. It would reflect the traditional bias of the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department, flying in the face of many of the City’s recent transportation initiatives.

Off-road trails given preference over on-street bike lanes

The most relevant of these initiatives is the Bikeway Trails Implementation Plan (BTIP), **approved unanimously** by Toronto City Council on June 6, 2012. [42] It is **specifically intended to shift commuter cycling from bike lanes to off-road trails** such as the Beltline. One of the chief architects of the plan, Denzil Minnan-Wong,

> is confident the improved trail network, first outlined last year in the mayor’s bike plan update, will make bikers safer by getting them off of the streets and into the parks. ‘I agree with minimizing the conflict between cyclists and motorists, and one of the ways you can encourage that is removing the cyclists, and trying to encourage them to use the trails. [43]

The value of the Beltline to the commuter cyclist is well-illustrated by the comment that a petitioner left on Cycle Toronto’s website: “Used it tonnes during the summer. It was an amazing discovery about a year ago. Myself and a colleague use it to get to work. Its a 24 km commute that wouldn't be possible without the Beltline.”

BTIP “includes an annual program to upgrade the existing trails where required to improve safety and connectivity.” [44] Not unsurprisingly, the poorly connected, unsafe Beltline Trail has qualified for inclusion in the program. Part of the Beltline upgrade budget is coming from the BTIP, which is being funded with money that would have been spent in previous years on on-road bike infrastructure improvements. In the year 2012, Toronto did not add a single kilometre of bike lanes to the city’s bikeway network. [45] We would therefore remind the City that the needs of cyclists should be examined carefully, as this opportunity may be a once-in-a-generation chance to fix problems that have long afflicted cyclists on the Beltline.

Toronto Bike Plan

The Toronto Bike Plan was adopted by City Council in 2001. The current Beltline upgrade may be seen as contributing to the fulfillment of the long-range goals of the Bike Plan, which envisaged 249 km. of bikeway trails. Such goals as safe cycling and environmental sustainability transcend artificial distinctions between recreational and utilitarian cycling.

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[42] Toronto Council Item 2012.PW15.2 - Bikeway Trails Implementation Plan
[42] http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.PW15.2
[43] “Bike plan blazes trails instead of lanes”. Ben Spurr. *NOW Magazine*, May 16, 2012
[44] “Bikeway Trails Implementation Program”. Report from the Acting General Manager, Transportation Services, to PWIC, Apr. 27, 2012, p. 1. http://www.toronto.ca/cycling/network/pdf/trails_project_table.pdf
[45] Jared Kolb, “Toronto Adds Zero Kilometres of Bike Lanes in 2012”. The 2001 Toronto Bike Plan called for 495 kilometres of bike lanes to be added by 2012. However, only 112.9 kilometres, or 23%, have been completed. http://cycleto.ca/news/2012/10/22/toronto-adds-zero-kilometres-bike-lanes-2012?

The Toronto Bike Plan implements the following policy of the Toronto Official Plan: 'Policies, programs and infrastructure will be introduced to create a safe, comfortable and bicycle friendly environment that **encourages people of all ages to cycle for everyday transportation and enjoyment** [46] including… an expanded bikeway network.' Implementation of the Toronto Bike Plan also supports the Clean Air, Climate Change and Energy Efficiency Action plan adopted by Council in June 2000.[47]

Function of ravine trails

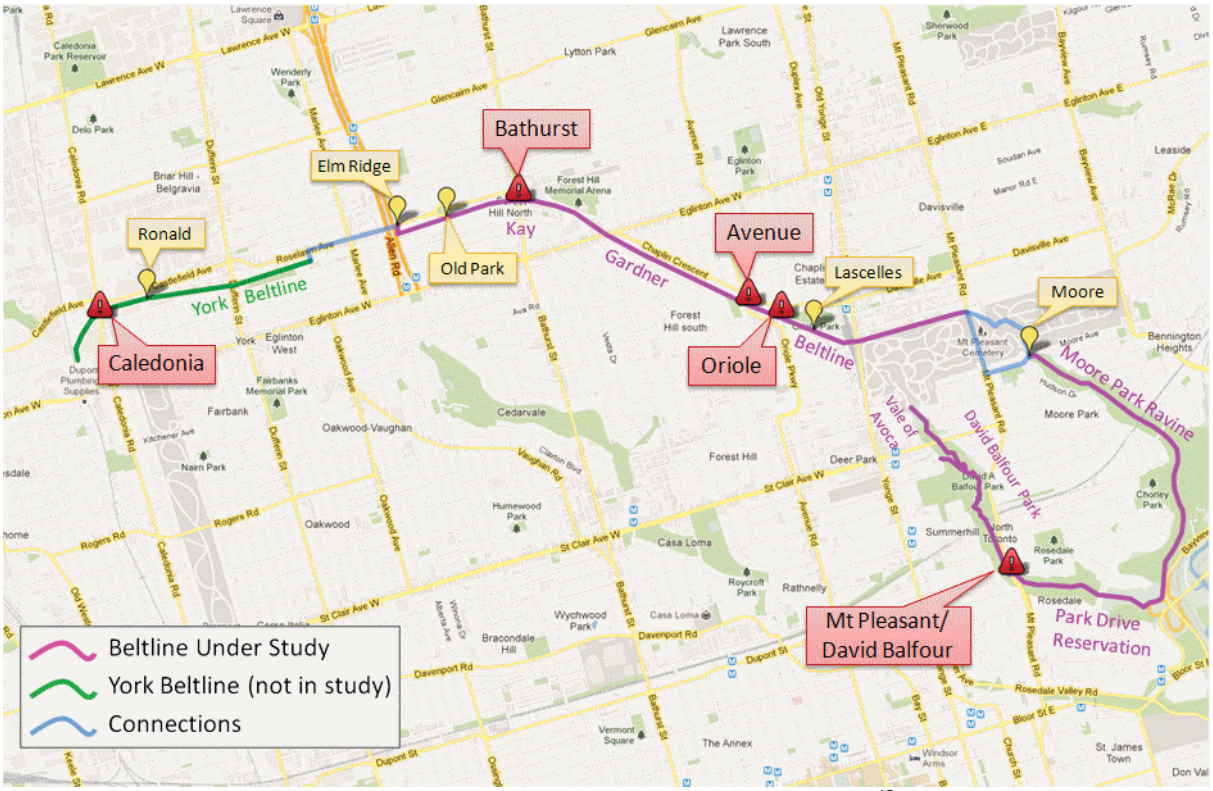
At regular intervals, the Gardner and York segments are provided with trail access points that are useful in taking utilitarian to their destinations, many of them on nearby Eglinton Ave. The Moore Park Ravine and Yellow Creek trails, in contrast, have few access points – most of which are routed along slopes that involve negotiating either stairs or steep ramps. As a result, present usage of ravine trails is more recreational than utilitarian. We expect cycling in the ravines to increase for the following reasons:

- The Beltline and Lower Don trail systems are poorly connected. If a well-designed link (such as the Chester Hill rail bridge proposal) is realized, commuter cyclists will at last have an effective, off-road route that will take them from North Toronto to downtown jobs and classes. Many commuter cyclists would prefer a crescent-shaped, off-road route over more direct and central on-road bike lanes. On the continuous trails they would encounter magnificent scenery, fresh air, and almost no cars and stoplights.
- The population in the downtown, particularly Ward 27, is undergoing a huge increase thanks to new condo construction. Many condo dwellers own bikes but not cars. If they want to reach green space, a logical option is to cycle to the ward's ravines.
- As the Evergreen Brick Works matures into a major cultural destination, its user base in central Toronto will more and more become aware that the ravines provide one of the best access routes.

[46] bolding emphasis added

[47] "Traffic Control Signals and Road Alterations – Bikeway Network Trail Projects" Report from General Manager, Transportation Services to PWIC (May 27, 2010) p. 3

CROSSINGS



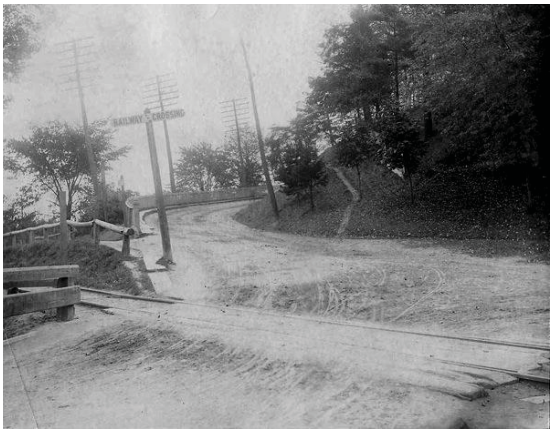
Locations of major crossings (marked in red) and minor crossings (yellow)[48]

HISTORY

19th Century

Because the route of the original Belt Line Railway passed through much undeveloped land, bridges were built only at the Yonge, Eglinton, Dufferin and Moore intersections.[49] The remainder of the road crossings seem to have been at grade. Our inheritance has proven to be problematic in a time when horse-drawn carriages have been replaced by high-speed motor vehicle traffic. In the 120-year period since the railway was built, **not a single direct Beltline crossing has been signalized**. In regards to signage, the warnings that Victorians posted at Beltline crossings were more conspicuous than what exists at most crossings today!

[48] See this map online at http://goo.gl/maps/0qFHc
[49] A bridge no longer exists at the Moore Ave. crossing



Left: Avenue Rd. looking north from St. Clair. 1912.
Right: Beltline crossing at Winchester St. (Cabbagetown, near the Necropolis) ca. 1890's. The original rail route ran downtown along the west side of the Don River. Note rail crossing sign in foreground

20th Century

Over the course of the 20th century, Toronto's has witnessed a tremendous expansion of its northern suburbs. Many residents in these communities use the private automobile to travel to Toronto's downtown using arterials such as Avenue Rd., Oriole Parkway, Bathurst St., and Caledonia Rd. These all cross the Beltline. At the beginning of the century, at-grade crossings made sense on roads that had light traffic (by modern standards). It was a different matter by the end of the century. Perhaps the busiest thoroughfare today is Mt. Pleasant Rd. – which did not even exist in 1900.

Beltline road crossing infrastructure has not been upgraded to any meaningful extent in decades, and is certainly not adequate to safely handle huge increases in arterial traffic volumes. An essential contradiction lies at the heart of the problem:

1. Transportation Services has determined that safety standards can only be met if direct crossings on major roads are signalized (excepting prohibitively expensive under-/overpass options)
2. As is the case with many urban rail lines, the Beltline right-of-way runs parallel to most city streets.This results in existing stoplights on nearby major roads (namely, Chaplin Cres. and Roselawn Ave.) being in close proximity to the trail.
3. At most intersections, the separation is less than 100m., the preferred standard that Traffic Operations engineers use to justify the installation of a second set of stoplights.
4. Because t**he City deems these distances too short**, it has failed to signalize Beltline crossings.
5. However – as we will soon elaborate on – **trail users consider the same distances to stoplights too far**, and will cross mid-block through dangerous, fast-moving auto traffic.

Lack of resolution has lead to a certain paralysis. The Beltline trail was conceived as a 9 km. linear park, but it currently functions as a disconnected succession of separate sections, with very few safe crossings between the segments. This dangerous situation cannot be allowed to continue. Safety is the paramount issue.

Support in the past for safe crossings

As it turns out, crossing safety has been on people's minds for over half a century:

- **1966** – *Natural Parklands Report:* "Safe, separated crossings shall be provided wherever roads bearing heavy traffic need to be crossed, to maintain the continuity of the park system." [50]
- **1985 –** *A Segment of the Belt Line Railway*: "The crossing of Bathurst Street presents a more severe problem because of the volume of vehicular traffic and the proximity to the controlled intersection to the north. Rerouting to the intersection provides an inconvenient detour. There appear to be two other alternatives:
    1. A crosswalk, or
    2. An overhead walkway [51]
- **1991** – *Final Report of the Belt Line Working Committee:* "The City's road system represents a major barrier to the continuity of the Belt Line and detracts from the public's enjoyment of the Belt Line as a recreational trail. Unmarked and uncontrolled road crossings also compromise the safety of Belt Line users." [52] "In each case, the Belt Line ends abruptly at the street. As a result, Belt Line users are faced with a decision to cross the road directly, if traffic permits, or leave the trail and cross the road at the nearest controlled intersection or crosswalk. In order to promote the safe and continuous use of the Belt Line, the Working Committee has recommended that . . . signalled crosswalks should be installed at the Bathurst Street, Avenue Road and Oriole Parkway road crossings to provide direct links between Belt Line segments." [53]
- **1995** – *Councillor Howard Joy:* "At a recent public meeting, held by Councillor Gardner, the issue of the problem of pedestrian crossings at [the Beltline intersections with Avenue Road and Oriole Parkway] was raised. . . . Preliminary discussions are underway with respect to possible roadway reconfiguration close to both locations. Accordingly, I . . . would encourage you to participate, so as to ensure that potential pedestrian crossing improvements might be incorporated into any plans." [54]
- **2002** – *Toronto Pedestrian Charter*: "To create an urban environment in all parts of the city that encourages and supports walking, the City of Toronto:
    - upholds the right of pedestrians of all ages and abilities to safe, convenient, direct and comfortable walking conditions;
    - provides a walking environment within the public right-of-way and in public parks that encourages people to walk for travel, exercise and recreation;
    - supports and encourages the planning, design and development of a walking environment in public and private spaces (both exterior and interior) that meets the travel needs of pedestrians;
    - provides and maintains infrastructure that gives pedestrians safe and convenient passage [55]

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[50] *Natural Parklands in the City of Toronto.* City of Toronto Planning Board. (June, 1960) p. 13

[51] *A Segment of the Belt Line Railway: an inventory and analysis of its development potential for bikeways.* City of Toronto Planning and Development Department (March, 1985) p. 28

[52] *Final Report of the Belt Line Working Committee.* City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Department (1991) p. 8. Kay Gardner was the committee's chair and members included Councillors Michael Walker, and Howard Levine, representatives from the Ontario Trails Council, the Toronto Field Naturalists and most of the nearby residents associations, as well as a few unaffiliated homeowners and tenants.

[53] *Ibid.* p. 13.

[54] Letter from Councillor Howard Joy to Herb Pirk, Commissioner of Parks & Recreation, Dec. 20, 1995

[55] *Toronto Pedestrian Charter.* Adopted by Toronto City Council, May 21, 2002
http://www.toronto.ca/transportation/walking/pdf/charter.pdf

STATUS QUO

Bias of traffic engineers

Active transportation choices are becoming increasingly popular in Toronto. They are associated with health benefits in individuals, mitigation of congestion on the city's roads, and a reduction of our collective carbon footprint. In recognition of these benefits, the City has adopted the Pedestrian Charter – the above extracts are clearly relevant to Beltline crossing design. Toronto has also committed itself to the *Climate Change, Clean Air and Sustainable Energy Action Plan*, which includes a substantial expansion of Toronto's trail and bike lane network.[56]

Unfortunately, the Traffic Operations section of the Transportation Services department does not seem to be adequately heeding these developments. They still approach the Beltline giving unquestioned priority to the smooth flow of motor vehicle traffic. Little seems to have changed since the 1950s, when the overwhelming priority of traffic engineers was moving cars with the least impedance along arterial roads where few cyclists ventured. This mentality has lead to a minimalist, do-nothing treatment of Beltline crossings that has compromised users' safety and enjoyment of the trail. It is only a matter of time before there is a serious injury or death. While we understand concerns about impacts on auto traffic movement, **the overriding principle on the Beltline trail should be safety first – especially for vulnerable pedestrians and cyclists.**

We urge traffic engineers to commit themselves to a 'complete streets' [57] philosophy, whereby equal importance is assigned to the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles. This means being pragmatic, and being flexible. A good start is to carefully examine the consequences of decisions that have marginalized legitimate trail users.

The distance factor

City officials often recommend that cyclists make a "quick jog" at major arteries, in order to cross safely at existing stoplights north of the Beltline trail. However, advocates of safety detours tend to downplay the distances involved. Admittedly, a single detour would not be unduly onerous for most trail users. Their journey would be interrupted only by a few minutes. It is a totally different matter when the multiple crossings are encountered in succession (which will increasingly be the case as the Beltline's connectivity improves). The cumulative effect is substantial.

Eastbound cyclists **must dismount before proceeding on a stoplight detour**, since riding on the sidewalk [58] or wrong-way on the street are both illegal practices. If cyclists undertake a simple, half-hour traversal of the Beltline along the York and Gardner trails, they must cope with 6 problematic, at-grade intersections at Caledonia, Ronald, Old Park, Bathurst, Avenue, and Oriole Pkwy. Walking to and from the existing stoplights, rather than crossing directly along the trail axis, will entail footslogs totalling 768 m. for bicycle 'riders'. This figure is simply unacceptable for one of the city's most important off-road, multi-use facilities.

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[56] *Change is in the Air. Climate Change, Clean Air and Sustainable Energy Action Plan: Moving from Framework to Action.* Toronto Energy Efficiency Office (June, 2007) p. 5 *http://www.toronto.ca/changeisintheair/pdf/clean_air_action_plan.pdf*

[57] See: Complete Streets for Canada http://completestreetsforcanada.ca/

[58] Riding or walking a recumbent bicycle on a sidewalk is both impractical and inadvisable

INTERSECTION	EAST SIDEWALK	WEST SIDEWALK	STOPLIGHT CROSSINGS	Extra distance walked:	
				CYCLISTS	**PEDESTRIANS**
Oriole Pkwy.	77	63	17	157	140
Avenue Rd.	67	59	24	150	126
Bathurst St.	43.5	45	17	105.5	88.5
Old Park Rd.	16	8.5	23.5	48	24.5
Ronald Ave.	51	33	12	96	84
Caledonia Rd.	90.5	101.5	19.5	211.5	192
DETOUR TOTAL: extra distance walked (metres)				**768**	**655**

Cyclist and pedestrian crossing detour measurements for the Gardner and York segments, representing the extra distances trail users must actually walk [59]

Cyclists like to ride along Beltline in order to glide without interruption through a tranquil, natural, car-free environment. Eastbound detouring at six intersections would compel riders to get off their bikes and trudge for over ¾ of a km. along noisy, polluted, congested thoroughfares in a disjointed, gap-toothed pattern. This makes for a wretched user experience.

Cyclists who head to the Beltline are expecting to go for a ride, not a ¾ km. walk. Their road crossing decisions are made accordingly. Empirical observation at key crossings confirm that almost no eastbound bicycle riders walk up to the existing stoplights. The majority of cyclists on the Beltline wait for a gap in traffic and cross mid-block. This practice is not against the law, and in fact it is followed by police bike unit members. Lest anyone take on delusions of invulnerability, it is worth sounding a cautionary note: what is legal is not at all synonymous with what is safe.

Detours at Avenue Rd. and Oriole Pkwy. total 307 m., exceeding the 270 m. length of the trail between those two arteries

[59] These measurements were taken by members of Cycle Toronto with a tape measure *in situ*

The vast majority of pedestrians and joggers also cross mid-block. Parents pushing strollers are frequently to be seen dodging traffic in order to make their Beltline crossing as swift as possible. The total extra walking distance that stoplight detours impose on pedestrians is slightly less than for cyclists – 655 m. (This is because pedestrians must walk across the road regardless of which point they cross at.) Nevertheless, those on a strenuous, long walk don't welcome adding an extra ⅔ km.series of circuitous detours along what is touted as a "linear park".

Trail user comments

It is one thing to use a tape measure and abstract lines of reasoning to explain why a tour of the Beltline can be an exercise in frustration. It is just as effective to let people who regularly frequent the trail describe their experiences in their own words. Cycle Toronto invited petition signers to include comments on the electronic version of the petition to support Beltline improvements, circulated in the autumn of 2012. We may assume that many opinions are coming from trail users who make the subjective decision to take the less safe of crossing choices – dodging traffic. It is no surprise that the overwhelming priority of commenters was crossing safety. We have extracted some of the more revealing observations:

- *Safety for crossing is my biggest concern.*
- *The street crossings are a real danger and need to be made safer. Please install on-demand pedestrian crossings. (Tunnels and bridges would be too expensive and disruptive). The world will not end if a few cars are slowed down for a few seconds to let people cross the road.*
- *I would use the trail more if improvements such as curb cuts and safe crossings are in place, and I would bring my children.*
- *As both a user of the trail and a frequent car commuter on Bathurst and Avenue, I believe that the crossings at major streets really need to be improved for everyone's safety. I can't count the number of times I've seen joggers or cyclists dash across Bathurst or Avenue, narrowly avoiding cars. This really needs to be taken care of!*
- *I'm a hike leader with the Toronto Outdoor Club and lead at least 2 walks a month on the Belt Line and three walks a month in the Central Ravines (Moore/David Balfour). I have to say the top priority for me is to get some sort of signaled crossing at Mount Pleasant Road and David Balfour Park.*
- *I've used it twice in the past month and just can't believe how difficult and dangerous it is to cross the roads, no crosswalks or curb cuts, especially at Avenue and Bathurst!*
- *Safe crossings at major streets would make this great resource even better.*
- *I would like to see safe crossings at each major intersection across the trail and bike arrows painted across the streets. I would also like to see at each crossing a yellow caution sign placed on both sides of the crossing indicating to drivers that this is a bike/pedestrian crossing and they have to slow down and come to a stop. It would be great to have street lights added to these crossing so all ped travellers (cyclists included) can stop traffic to cross otherwise underpasses should be dug so traffic is not stopped.*
- *I would use it more if it weren't so dangerous trying to get across Bathurst and Avenue Road*
- *This trail is a really awesome way for me to get to my work on Castlefield and Dufferin. It's calm, secure, beautiful. The only problem it's crossing the streets with my bike on my back in the middle of traffic in rush hour. Because of the lack of a red light for the trail.*

METHODS TO MAKE CROSSINGS SAFER

In response to the rising tide of active transportation users, traffic engineers around the globe have been developing cutting edge solutions to various intractable safety problems. The main challenge here in Toronto lies in summoning the political will to implement them. It is time that transportation planners recognize the limitations

of the status quo, and seek proper, real-world solutions. We shall list some of our preferred options for Beltline crossings.

Synchronized signals

We strongly recommend that safe, user-activated, signalized crossings be installed at the Bathurst St., Avenue Rd., Oriole Parkway and Mt. Pleasant Rd / David Balfour Park crossings. The crossings should be direct: a second set of stoplights should be installed where the Beltline trail meets major arteries, with no detour being necessary to already installed stoplights in the vicinity.

All new signalized trail crossings (except for Mt. Pleasant) can be be synchronized with the nearby existing traffic signals to the north. In order not to disrupt auto traffic flow, the phases of new signals should coincide with those of existing ones. Consequently, a green phase can be maintained at both sets of stoplights on the north-south street. Stoplight pairs can function effectively as a single integrated system by virtue of their close proximity. At the three Gardner intersections, distances that are onerous to walk are much easier to cover by car. (The Oriole and Avenue trail crossings range from 59 to 77 m. from the Chaplin Cres. traffic signals; and the Bathurst trail crossing is 45 m. from the Roselawn Ave/Elm Ridge Dr. signal.)

The trail signals should turn green for the **relatively short amount of time** when the cross street signals are green (Chaplin or Roselawn/Elm Ridge). As a result , synchronized stoplights preserve smooth traffic flow and do not not unduly inconvenience motorists – while at the same time meeting the highest safety standards for major arterial roads.

Various types of signal activation could be employed, using either a push button or a loop in the asphalt (should asphalt be installed), or both. There is a crossing of the Don Roadway at Lakeshore that successfully uses both.

Precedents

The Finch and Gatineau hydro corridor trails span major thoroughfares such as Markham Rd. and Bathurst St. Traffic engineering at these locations consistently relies on best practices, with fully signalized red-light crossings. It should be emphasized that these are for brand new trails that receive very low levels of pedestrian/cycling traffic – and they cross busy suburban arterials! The Beltline trail, which is far busier, deserves to be upgraded to the same high standards as the hydro corridor trails.

We have been told that the Traffic Operations section of Transportation Services uses a preferred standard of 100 m. minimum separation between proposed stoplights and already installed stoplights. They generally will waive this rule only when warranted by high levels of pedestrian/ cyclist traffic. The Beltline is the most intensively used trail in midtown Toronto, and it will only get busier after improvements to the trail are completed. Public safety on such an important facility is paramount, so we should look at precedents in Toronto where stoplights are in close proximity.

Exceptions to the 100-metre rule include the pedestrian crossing at the east side of Eaton Centre, located 70 m. north of Shuter St. (synchronized with the Shuter lights) An even tighter configuration exists at the mall's south end, where pedestrian stoplights have been installed just 40 m. west of the principal intersection at Yonge and Queen.[60] [61] We can also cite a similar arrangement on St. George Street [62] where a signalized pedestrian crossing is situated 100 metres north of College St. Our final example is the recently constructed Leaside rail

[60] Crossing on Yonge St at the Eaton Centre, 70 m. north of Shuter Ave: http://goo.gl/maps/8W9eb
[61] Crossing on Queen St at the Eaton Centre, 45m west of Yonge St: http://goo.gl/maps/cYKiu
[62] Crossing on St. George Street, 100 m. north of College Ave: http://goo.gl/maps/RqS39

trail, which crosses Lawrence, just east of Leslie St. (synchronized with the Leslie lights). Its operation may be observed in this video: http://youtu.be/lSVHY7O7UWQ

Queen St., looking east. Eaton Centre signals in foreground separated by 40 m. from Yonge St.stoplights

Proximity concerns are not relevant to the stoplight we are proposing for Mt. Pleasant Rd. Motorists would become accustomed to it much as they have adapted to the recently installed stoplight near Carstowe Rd., 500 m. to the north.

Hybrid signals

On streets that receive moderate traffic, such as **Moore Ave**., **Ronald Ave.** and **Caledonia Rd.** we should consider alternatives to stoplight signalization. The High-Intensity Activated Crosswalk (HAWK) is a hybrid signal that has been developed in the United States specifically to improve safety at crossings for self-powered traffic. They are well-suited for mid-block installation at trail crossings. HAWK signals incorporate:

- the high-visibility of stoplights
- activation choices of pedestrian crosswalks
- wider user range than crosswalks (including cyclists, who cannot legally ride on standard crosswalks)
- more flexibility than stoplights
- reliability, testing at 95% compliance rates[63]
- effectiveness, reducing crashes by an average of 29% [64]

In its normal state, a hybrid beacon is dark. When the signal is activated, its beacon lights up and proceeds through an amber/ red/ amber cycle that stops vehicular traffic, enabling trail users to cross safely. Its operation may seem to resemble a stoplight, but with one important difference. If pedestrians and cyclists see a gap in traffic, they may legally cross without activating the signal. They benefit because they don't have to wait needlessly for the signal to change. Motor vehicle traffic also is less inconvenienced, since HAWKs tend to be activated during off-peak hours less frequently than stoplights. This imaginative addition to the traffic engineers' toolbox could serve Toronto well as the city transitions towards a 'complete streets' approach to urban planning.

[63] NACTO. *Urban Bikeway Design Guide* (April 2011 ed.) p. 229
[64] *Ibid.*, p. 229

HAWK hybrid signals. Left: Phoenix *Right: Portland*

Underpasses and overpasses

Tunnels may be appropriate for Moore Ave., Avenue Rd. and Bathurst St., the latter two also being possible candidates for bridges.

A drawback of both underpasses and overpasses is their greater construction costs. This is compensated by the complete lack of disruption caused to the motor vehicle traffic that is passing above a tunnel or below a bridge. An additional benefit for trail users is the elimination of the necessity to wait for a stoplight signal to change.

A specific advantage of underpasses is that their grade separation from the road is less than that of overpasses; consequently, cyclists will encounter less strenuous ascents and descents. Moreover, tunnel paths are usually straight (and thus quickly traversed), whereas bridges may incorporate stages with 180-degree, hairpin turns. Factors militating against tunnels are potential drainage complications, poor internal visibility conditions and vulnerability to crime.

Safety Refuge Islands

Synchronized signalization remains our preference for major arterial road crossings. We are leery about safety refuge islands because using them properly is dependent on experienced judgement. We do not believe that all children are adept mid-block crossers, and predict that conflicts will arise if they must share the limited space of an island with one or several dogs.

Nonetheless, in the circumstance that a safety refuge island is installed, a number of design criteria should be recognized:

- It should be capacious enough to accommodate a group of mounted cyclists. Our target would be a family of two adult riders, and three children.[65]
- If site limitations do not permit the safety refuge island to be built at proper size, then barriers and railings should be excluded from its design
- Curbs must be cut at all points where users are meant to travel
- The egress must conform to OADA standards

Curb cuts

Curb cuts are essential at all trail crossings because they:

[65] A good model would be the safety refuge island at Pottery Road

- enable cyclists (especially those riding recumbents and cargo bikes) to ride continuously without damaging their wheel rims
- simplify the pushing of bundle buggies and strollers (especially 2-child models)
- make crossings wheelchair-accessible

The lack of curb cuts at the majority of the Beltline's intersections is an indicator of the low regard in which traffic engineers hold trails. Drivers who exit countless, humble, residential driveways are allowed curb cuts – but cyclists on one of Toronto's most prestigious pieces of bike infrastructure generally have had to make do without. Presumably, the justification is to prevent inattentive trail users from unwittingly venturing into arterial traffic. However, common sense suggests that a pedestrian who inadvertently continues over an uncut curb may trip, and fall into oncoming traffic. Likewise, an unwary cyclist hurtling across a sidewalk is likely going at such a speed that he or she will probably not have enough time to safely stop, regardless of curb height.

In other ways, too, uncut curbs may actually increase the danger of crossing a road. A professionally designed trail intersection will channel pedestrians and cyclists predictably to a convenient crossing point. However, an uncut curb disperses cyclists, some bumping down the curb, others heading south to the nearest curb cut, others heading north. A minority will travel to the regular intersection crossing, and even fewer will dismount. At the other side of the street, most cyclists must stop to lift their bicycles onto the sidewalk, placing them in a vulnerable position in the middle of the roadway. **Haphazard, random crossing patterns are difficult for motorists to interpret, and increase the possibility of a collision.**

At unsignalized crossings, there are superior alternative measures that can be use to notify trail users that they are approaching an intersection, including yield signs, bollards, good lighting, audible beaconing, sidewalk brickwork and coloured crossing pavement.

The Beltline crossing at Moore Ave. not long ago received curb cuts which ought to set an example for other crossings on the trail. Moreover, trail users have enjoyed cut curbs at Lascelles Blvd. for years. Worryingly, the reconstruction in Sept. 2012 of the sidewalk at Old Park Road preserves uncut curbs, demonstrating that the Moore and Lascelles precedents are not being heeded.

Raised crossings

On Moore Ave. and Old Park Road, unsignalized intersections near the Beltline cause a deceleration of traffic. In order to ensure a continuation of slower speeds near the Beltline crossing, it may be appropriate to raise the height of the pavement at the crossing. Studies have shown that this method is an especially successful in controlling speeds organically on streets that do not receive frequent use by emergency vehicles or heavy trucks – such as Moore Ave. and Old Park Rd.[66]

This simple method of calming traffic should make it possible to safely paint the crossings with zebra stripes – a measure that the Transportation Services is reluctant to implement at lower-volume, unsignalized crossings.

[66] U.S. Federal Highway Administration http://www.international.fhwa.dot.gov/pubs/pl10010/ch03.cfm

Left: Raised crossing, Darebin, Australia
Middle: Community Safety Zone signs warn drivers of the consequences of speeding
Right: Rail-patterned, coloured brickwork, near Caledonia Rd.

Surfacing markings

Colour impressed on-road pavement should be laid down at all signalized crossings. If there is a concern that the same treatment at uncontrolled crossings may create a false sense of security, then these should be painted with regular zebra stripes.

Crossing design should use all available means to enhance general safety levels. This includes upgrading sidewalks in order to provide another visual clue to both on-road and on-trail users that they should proceed with caution. At trail/ road intersections, the characterless concrete of sidewalks should be replaced with interlocking coloured stone or brick. We would do well to copy the attractive rail pattern of the brickwork installed at the trailheads of the York Beltline Trail.

When both crossing pavement and sidewalks bear distinctive markings, they work synergistically to enhance safety. In addition, the trail's continuity becomes more apparent to the eye: no longer will arterial roads take a slice out of the Beltline's real estate. This highlighting is valuable for wayfinding purposes and to the visually impaired.

As a general principle, crossings should be as close to perpendicular to the road as possible. This minimizes crossing distance, which is vital for seniors; it also makes the direction predictable for people with visual impairments. When there is no choice but to skew a crossing, care should be taken to paint the wide stop line for motorists at a 90 degree angle to the road, not parallel with the trail.

Signage

We recommend that the following should be installed:

- **ON-ROAD**
    - a short distance before trail intersections:
        - Trail Crossing signs [67] , in tandem with:
        - Regular yellow diamond crossing signs (on the same post)
    - at unsignalized crossings, at the south edge of the Beltline right-of-way (not to the north)
        - Yield or Stop signs, in tandem with:
        - Sign identifying the Beltline or ravine trail

[67] See Trail Crossing Sign section

- **ON-TRAIL**
    - at all road and lane intersections:
        - Yield signs, in tandem with:
        - Signs indicating the road name
        - Adequate lighting to ensure that the signs are visible at night

Signage identifying the names of streets and the trail itself are vital in affirming the Beltline's importance as part of the city's transportation infrastructure.

Community Safety Zone designation

Avenue Rd. and Oriole Pkwy. are used by many commuters without sufficient regard for pedestrians and cyclists using the trail and local streets. In particular, many northbound motorists are in the habit of exceeding the 40km/h speed limit on Oxton Ave., and run the risk of not having enough time to stop at the Beltline crossing on Avenue Rd. The same problem also occurs on Frobisher Ave., where the sight lines of westbound drivers are obscured by foliage as they round the corner onto Lascelles Blvd. – and find the Beltline crossing a mere 10 m. away. Inattentive motorists may also pose a danger to children accessing Neshama Playground, one of Toronto's premier special needs facilities located in nearby Oriole Park.

We therefore recommend that the entire area be designated as a Community Safety Zone. At a minimum, it should encompass these four roads in a diamond configuration: Oriole Pkwy., Avenue Rd., Oxton Ave. and Chaplin Cres.; it should also extend southeast along Frobisher Ave. and Lascelles Blvd. (at least as far as Kilbarry Rd.). Within the zone, speed limits will be reduced by 10 km/h and speeding fines will be doubled. Many municipalities in Ontario have been successfully increasing the number of Community Safety Zones within their boundaries; it is time that Toronto catch up with its neighbours.

Another prime candidate for designation as a Community Safety Zone is the crossing at Old Park Rd., located immediately to the north of the West Hill Preparatory Jr. Public School. The speed limit on this section of road is still 40 km/h. Alternately, speed calming measures and a reduction in speed limit to 30 km/ h along Old Park Rd would achieve the same effect.

SPECIFIC CROSSINGS

Mt. Pleasant Rd.

lllegal speeding is endemic on Mt. Pleasant Rd., especially in the vicinity the Yellow Creek valley where traffic in both directions is descending. The thoroughfare is a city street, not a highway. Motorists must be reminded of this fact through regular and consistent enforcement of existing speed limits of 60 km/h. Drivers who obey the law will have adequate time to recognize and observe traffic signals at Roxborough Drive. It is vitally important that auto traffic respect speed limits because there are a dozen educational institutions that are located within a block of the Mt. Pleasant Rd./ Jarvis corridor (starting at the north with Branksome Hall).

Moore Avenue

Various options are available for the Beltline crossing over Moore Ave. In order of preference, they are:

1. A HAWK hybrid signal
2. An unsignalized crossing with pavement that is:
    a. raised and colour-impressed
    b. at grade and painted with basic zebra stripes
3. A tunnel that slopes down towards the south, going under utilities infrastructure. It would exit towards the bottom of the hill, mitigating steep ravine gradients. A well-designed tunnel, with an accessible

connection to the sidewalk on the north side of Moore Ave., would provide the best option for wheelchair users. Ironically, a tunnel would return the Beltline to the lower grade that it occupied a century ago, when Moore Ave. was routed across a substantial bridge.

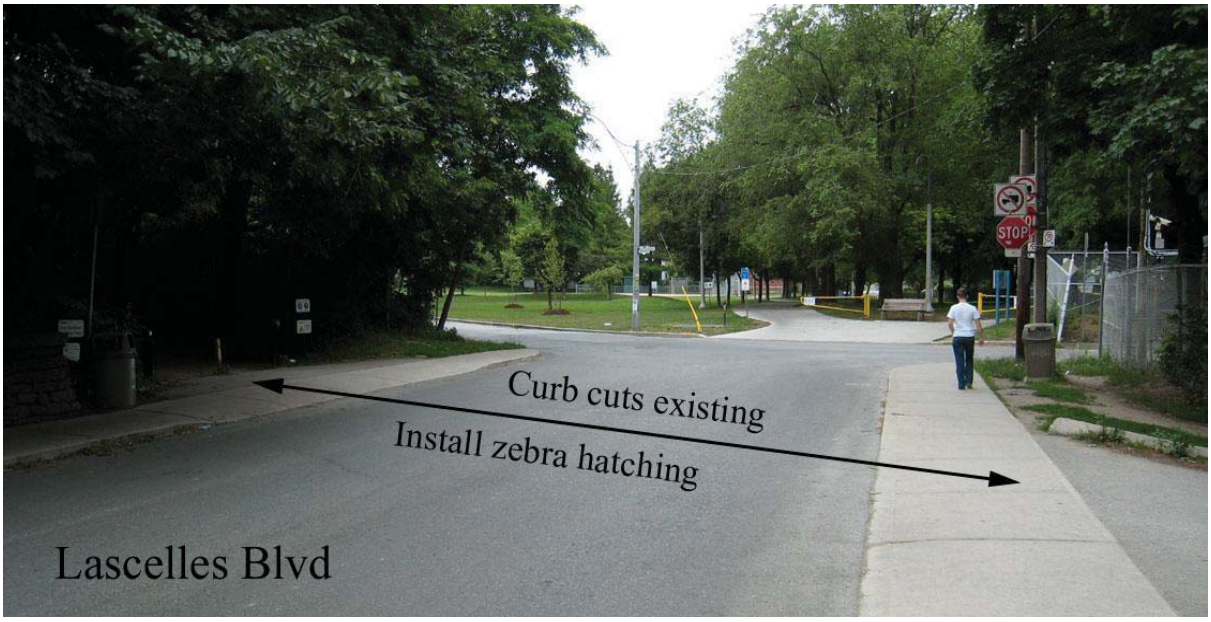
We do not view maintaining the present minimalist conditions on Moore Ave. as an option that respects either the aims of the Toronto Pedestrian Charter or the status of the Beltline as a major piece of civic off-road infrastructure. Assessment methods that are oriented to school crossings are not suitable for this location. [68]

Left: Moore Ave. bridge, looking southwest, 1913. The Beltline used to run below Moore Ave.
Right: Moore Ave. crossing, looking south. The crossing was actually safer a century ago.

Lascelles Blvd.

Motorists heading east along Frobisher Ave. encounter dense foliage as they turn the corner southbound onto Lascelles Blvd. Speeders may have difficulty stopping safely for Beltline crossers after they turn south onto Lascelles Blvd. In order to address this problem, we suggest that trees at the corner by pruned regularly, and that this area be included in a Community Safety Zone.

[68] For instance, traffic counts must be performed on weekends, when the trail is used most intensively.
[68]



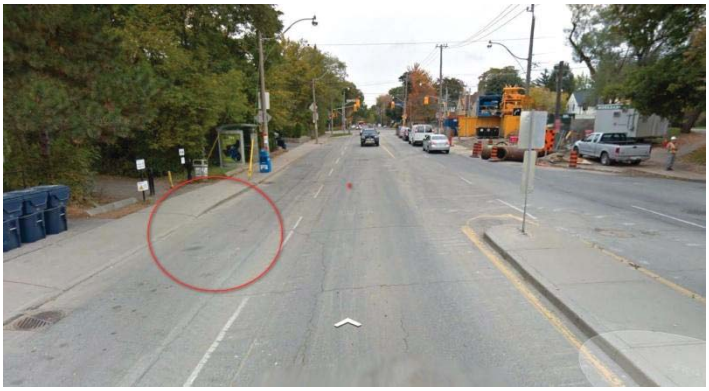
Lascelles Blvd. crossing. Note foliage at corner. Special needs playground located upper right.

Oriole Parkway

We take the position that synchronized signalization of the Oriole Parkway crossing should be a priority. Of the Gardner trail's three major, at-grade crossings, the one at Oriole Parkway involves the longest walk to the existing stoplights at Chaplin Cres.(77 m. on the east side, and 63 m. on the west). Although an existing median refuge island can be incorporated into the crossing design, its limited dimensions fail to achieve the level of safety that full signalization would bring.

A bus layby monopolizes a full southbound lane on the west side of Oriole Parkway (adjacent to the Beltline). Bulb-out curb extensions at the north and south ends of the layby for all practical purposes reduce the southbound capacity of Oriole Parkway at this point to a single lane. The bus stop is served by only one route (the #5 Avenue Rd. bus) and is not intensively used. Because three southbound lanes exist on Oriole Parkway just north of the Chaplin Cres., the bus stop could be moved to the northern location without inconveniencing either motorists or transit riders.

The space occupied by the layby will be put to far more valuable use if it is converted to a bulb-out curb extension at the point where the Beltline crossing is located. Filling in the middle area of the layby will reduce the distance of the Beltline direct crossing, and improve sight lines for Beltline crossers and drivers.



Left: Oriole Parkway, looking north. Red oval marks the location of proposed bulb-out curb extension
Right: Example of bulbout, San Francisco

Avenue Rd.

A particular problem at the Avenue Rd. crossing is northbound traffic exceeding the speed limit on Oxton Ave. When rapidly moving motorists turn around the bend onto Avenue Rd., they may have difficulty stopping at the Beltline crossing. This problem will be eliminated through three measures:

1 A flashing amber signal should be installed on Oxton Ave.between Highbourne Rd. and Avenue Rd., warning northbound motorists that a stoplight is located around the corner.
2 A stop sign should be erected at the corner of Oxton and Avenue Rd.
3 Community Safety Zone designation

Avenue Road is a strong candidate for synchronized signalization. Not only is it one of the busiest arterials that the Beltline crosses, but the separation between trail and existing lights is among the greatest. For the same reasons, an underpass could also be contemplated for this location.

Left: Avenue Rd., looking south, with traffic heading northbound after rounding the bend from Oxton Ave.
Right: Avenue Rd., looking northwest, showing the direct crossing route

Forest Hill Memorial Arena

The trail is intersected by the parking access lane to 650 Eglinton Ave. West and pedestrian routes to Forest Hill Collegiate, and well as Shallmar Blvd. and Mayfair Ave. These three minor crossings require streamlining. Signage, surfacing and barrier removal should be harmonized to the greatest extent possible.

Bathurst

Bathurst St. is subject to complicated pedestrian movements. Students frequently cross on their way to and from Forest Hill Collegiate and the nearby recreation facilities at Memorial Arena. Transit users congregate around the northbound #7 Bathurst bus stop. The waiting area is so constricted that it often fills with TTC patrons; regular sidewalk users sometimes have to gingerly slip through the crowd. Asking Beltline users to do the same would aggravate an already uncomfortable situation.

An alternative to synchronized signals would be an underpass.The expense is probably more justified at Bathurst than any other crossing because traffic volumes will probably be rising as a result of intensification of areas to the north, and the future changes to the Allen Rd.

Direct crossing routes at Bathurst St.

Old Park Road

This is probably the easiest crossing to make safe, if there is a will to get to the root of the problem. Sadly, we are off to a bad start. In Sept. 2012, the sidewalks on each side of the Old Park Road crossing were reconstructed WITHOUT curb cuts.

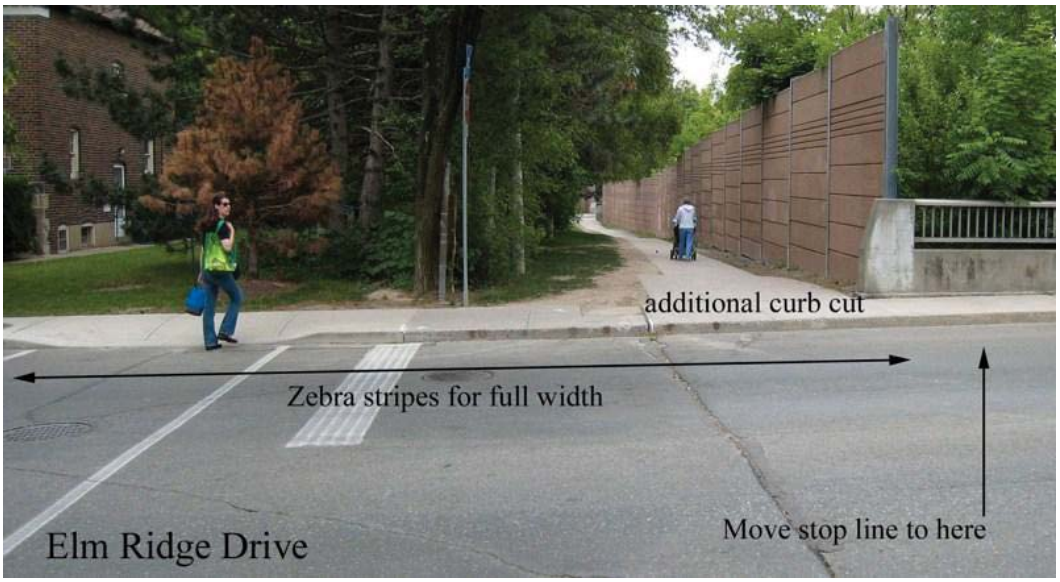
We recommend the following measures in order to unite into a single crossing what now are separate trail and traffic circle crossings:

1. Cut the curbs
2. The stop sign on the southwest side of Elm Ridge Circle should be moved slightly south
3. Move the existing stop sign on the triangular island at the south end of Elm Ridge Circle to the east side of Old Park Road (on the south side of the trail right-of-way)
4. On both east and west sides, skew trail slightly northward in order to align trail with stop signs
5. Raise the crossing
6. Colour the crossing pavement and abutting sidewalk

Allen- Newgate Rd.

The pathway that runs from the Gardner's western trailhead to Elm Ridge Drive requires several improvements:

1. Widen the entire path, and fan out the north end where it meets the Elm Ridge sidewalk (so that eastbound users do not face a sharp corner)
2. On the south side of Elm Ridge Dr., move the stop sign to a point about 1 m. west of the sound barrier wall
3. Install transparent sound barrier panels near Elm Ridge Dr to allow trail users to see (and be seen by) oncoming traffic
4. Paint zebra stripes that span the full width of the crossing (defined by the wall to the west, and the north side stop sign, to the east)
5. Cut the curbs
6. Post directional signage
7. Extend the existing Roselawn bike lanes at least as far east as this crossing



Allen Rd.pathway looking south from Elm Ridge Dr.

Ronald Avenue

Traffic volumes on Ronald do not justify full stoplight signalization, but hybrid HAWK signals may be appropriate. At the very least, curb cuts and pavement colouring should be implemented

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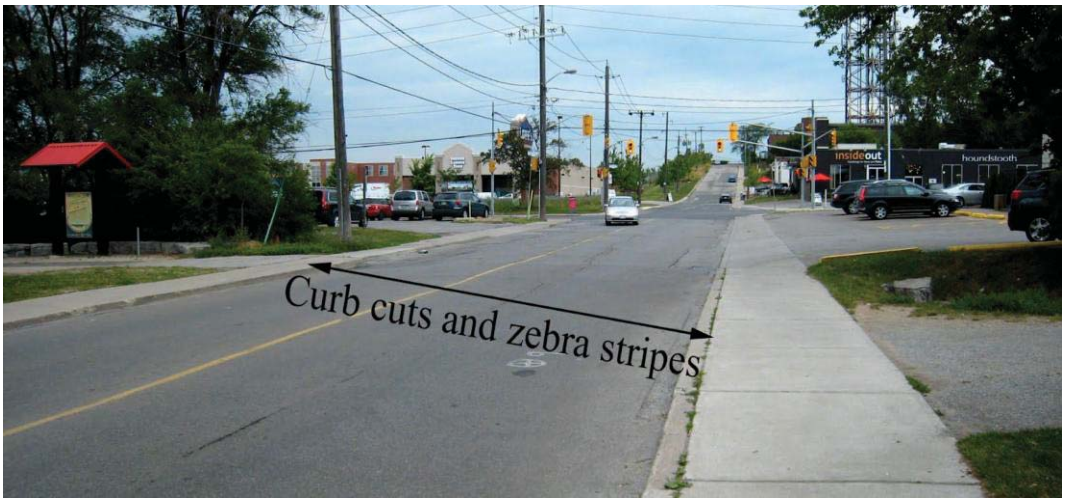
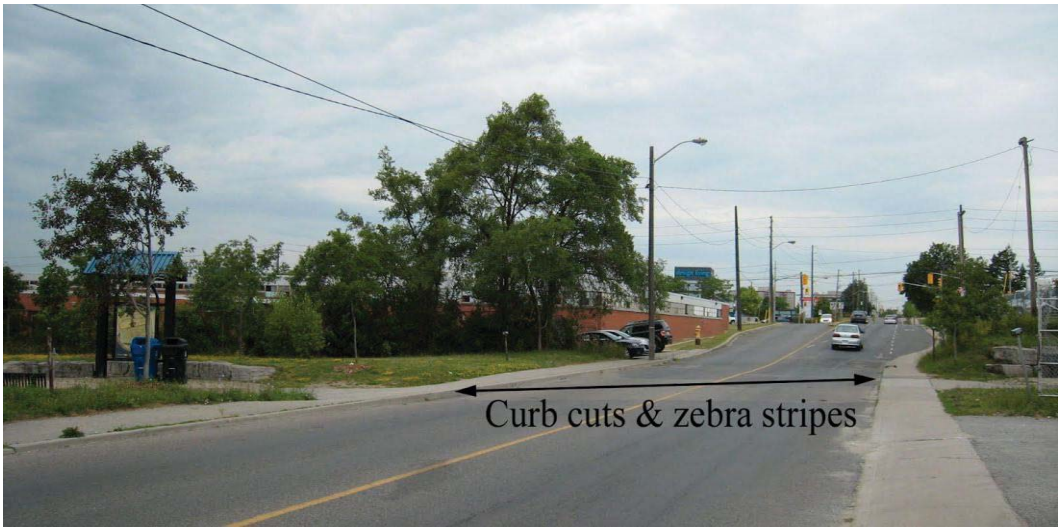


Ronald Ave. looking north

Caledonia Road

Detouring northwards along Caledonia Rd.in order to cross at the Castefield Ave. stoplights is totally impractical, the 'jog' totalling a distance of 192 m. As Caledonia carries a high amount of heavy truck traffic, it would be a good candidate for hybrid HAWK signals, or synchronized signals (as well as curb cuts and surfacing colouring). Also, a sidewalk should replace the dirt ditch that lines the west side of the road.



Caledonia Rd., looking to the north

LIGHTING

LET THERE BE LIGHT

We recommend that all trails along the Beltline and Yellow Creek should be lit in their entirety [69], to permit them to be used at dusk and beyond. This is especially important during the fall and winter months, when Torontonians with jobs that involve regular business hours do not have the opportunity to use the Beltline while the sun is still up.

The illumination of the trail from Mt. Pleasant Rd. to Lascelles allows it to be used safely on a 24/ 7 basis. Even during the dead of night or on the coldest evenings of the year, there are still people walking their dogs or using the trail to get home. Indeed, the trail feels safe and almost romantic when the lights are on.
By comparison, the unlit section, extending from Lascelles Blvd. to Allen Rd, inspires trepidation. Thickly forested, the trail becomes shrouded in shadows well before dusk. At night, the trail is pitch black, with virtually no users. This is especially a problem in the autumn and winter when darkness settles in between 4 and 5 p.m.

The York Beltline Trail is not as densely wooded as the Gardner, but it can receive much traffic at dusk and in the early part of night. The installation of lighting on this segment should be a priority.

[69] This includes the York Beltline Trail


Left: Beltline trail lighting east of Lascelles Blvd. Right: unlit section of trail to west, at same exposure levels

SAFETY

Benefits of lighting

Lighting is an important element of public safety, and many apartment buildings and private residences have exterior lighting for this very reason. **Trail lighting should not be so intense that it contributes unduly to light pollution or fosters a false sense of security, yet at moderate brightness levels it can provide the following benefits**:

1. It leads to an increase in the number of people on the Beltline at night. Bystanders function as "eyes on the street", deterring crimes against other trail users
2. The presence of dogs is an additional deterrent factor
3. More legitimate users on the trail help prevent break and enters into adjacent houses
4. Lights enable property owners to observe suspicious behaviour on the trail
5. Lighting can also discourage illegal night-time dumping. Passers-by can help identify and report offenders, helping protect the physical integrity of the Beltline
6. It illuminates wayfinding signs and minor 'landmarks' that enable trail users to orient themselves
7. It allows trail users to spot path hazards such as fallen branches or eroded ruts that might cause trip and fall accidents in dark conditions
8. Trail lighting reduces the potential for collisions at night, especially when pedestrians are wearing dark clothing and cyclists are not using extra-strength bike lights
9. Increasing trail usage at night relieves crowding pressures during the day; this reduces the potential for conflicts and collisions during peak periods

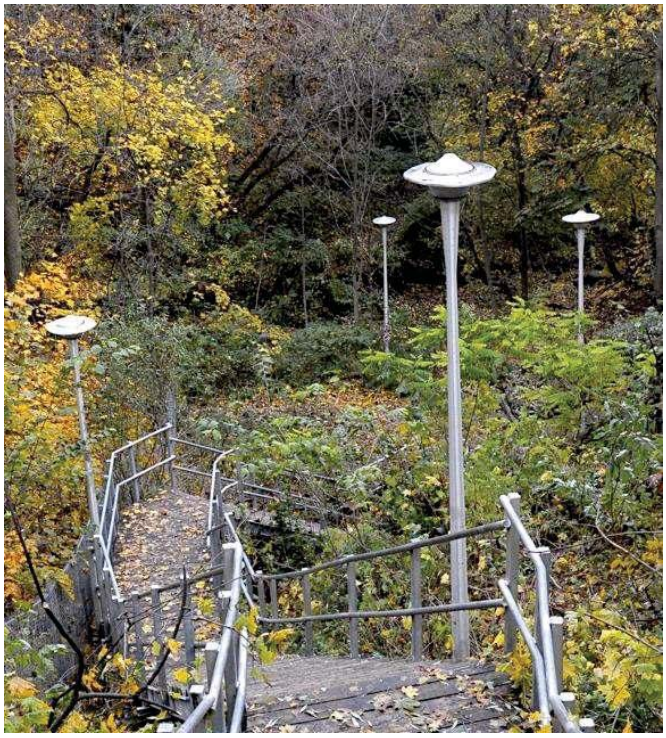

Left: Eglinton underpass. Even during daylight hours, the interior is dark, putting many people ill at ease
Right: Sunlight filters through dense foliage of the Gardner trail at midday. At dusk, the same foliage causes the path to become quickly enveloped in darkness

Police

As long ago as 1970, the Toronto Police have taken the position that the Beltline should be lit at night. Before the Gardner had even become a park, the Deputy Chief of Police wrote: "the police have no objection to the property becoming a park, but strongly recommend sufficient lighting and thoughts be given to the landscaping of the park to ensure it does not include dense shrubbery, which would invite offences." [70]
To discourage break-ins, local police promote a Light the Night campaign. "Participate in the 'LIGHT THE NIGHT' crime prevention initiative in 53 Division, by joining with your neighbours in leaving all of your exterior lights on all night. Increased night-time illumination will act as a natural deterrent to these offenders who utilize the cover of darkness to their full criminal advantage." [71] "We're drawing people out into the open space and we're filling those spaces with good people. Bad people don't want to be around when there are good people there who see them," said Sgt. Jeff Pearson" of the Toronto Anti-Violence Intervention Strategy unit. [72] It would seem that the response to the police campaign has been robust, as many homeowners and landlords on the Beltline have installed exterior lighting on their properties.

A representative from 53 Division declined to comment on current Beltline lighting proposals; but he did confirm that the broad-based Light the Night campaign is currently ongoing throughout the city.

[70] Letter from John Ackroyd to William Sutton, City of Toronto Planning Board, Aug. 27, 1970
[71] 53 Division Community Bulletin, June 2010 http://www.spadinasecurity.com/Resources/TPS/20100604-d53_community_bulletin.pdf
[72] "Toronto Police Illuminate the City's Darkest Corners". Henry Stancu. *Toronto Star,* Nov. 17, 2010



*Left: Police **Light the Night** campaign graphic*
Right: Lights in Vale of Avoca, near Heath St., a ravine area that has a reputation for being 'natural'

Comparative risk

In certain quarters, there is resistance to the idea of lighting off-road trails at night because they tend to be more isolated than city streets. If a trail user is involved in a mishap or becomes the victim of a crime, there may not be any onlookers present; and access by emergency services personnel may be problematic.

Although we acknowledge these risks, we believe that the City should be analysing the logical implications of NOT lighting trails:

- Most cyclists will ride instead on well-lit streets, where they run increased risks of motor vehicle collisions.
- Joggers may choose to run on concrete sidewalks or on road asphalt, where they too are vulnerable to collisions with automobiles.
- Some pedestrians may simply choose to drive to their destination in a car.

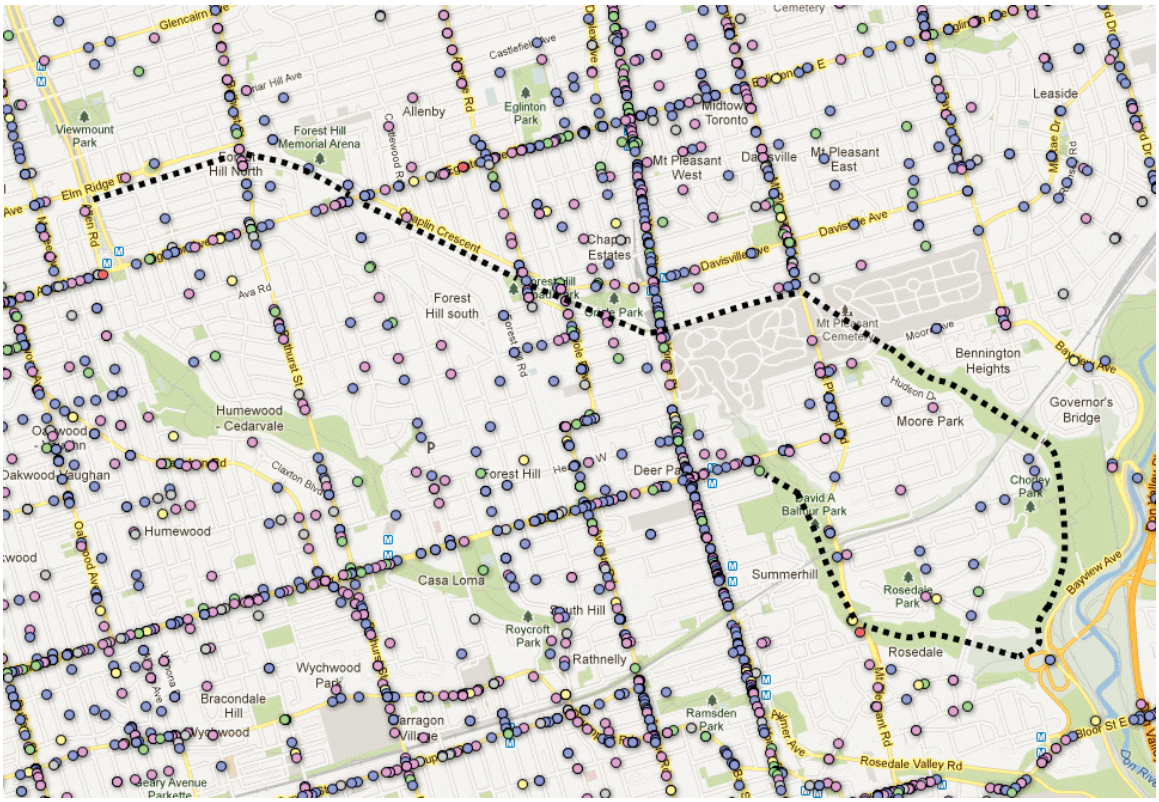
The common denominator in all three scenarios is the automobile. Cars are comfortable, and they are often regarded affectionately by their owners as cocoons – an attitude that belies their lethality. Popular assessment of comparative risk almost always shows a bias towards underestimating the risks posed by motor vehicles, leading to **a false sense of security**.

> In Canada, automobile accidents killed 2,778 people in 2003, and caused 222,260 serious injuries. (Transport Canada, 2004) For Canadian males aged 10 to 24, and females aged 10 to 29, motor vehicle accidents pose the greatest risk of death from any cause. (Statistics Canada, 1999) Government is thus faced with the challenge of mitigating a risk which does not trigger acute public concern. While the absolute level of road deaths and injuries might seem worthy of ambitious policy interventions, Covello suggests that a steep discount is applied to risks associated with mundane activities and familiar technologies. Automobile travel thus appears safe in comparison to the dangers arising from more exotic

technologies whose failure could produce spectacular disasters, such as airplane crashes or nuclear reactor meltdowns. [73]

We would place dark woods in the same category as airplane crashes and nuclear meltdowns. Canadians appear to have an unreasonable, primal fear of forests at night, perhaps ingrained in childhood by fairy tales. However, the popular perception of risk imputed to night usage of trails seems to be much more chronic than the evidence-based reality. We are confident that a rigorous comparative risk analysis – fully adjusted for usage levels – will reveal that Canadians suffer far, far fewer serious injuries on trails than the 222,260 hurt on the country's roads. This is where the real carnage is occurring.

It would be instructive to compare the injury rates on nearby roads to those of the Beltline Trail itself. The Globe and Mail acquired and mapped 25 years of cycling collision data in the City of Toronto [74]. The pattern is unmistakeable. Cyclists are far more likely to be injured by automobiles on major roads than on the trail itself.



Map of Cyclist Collisions, 1997-2012. The Beltline Trail is shown in black. Fatal collisions are red, major injuries are are yellow, and minor or minimal injuries are purple-mauve.

The City has refused to release similar data on pedestrian injuries, but the Transportation Services data centre publishes annually a map of the year's pedestrian injuries [75]. The pattern is similar. Pedestrians are in far more danger near cars than in the safety of the Beltline Trail.

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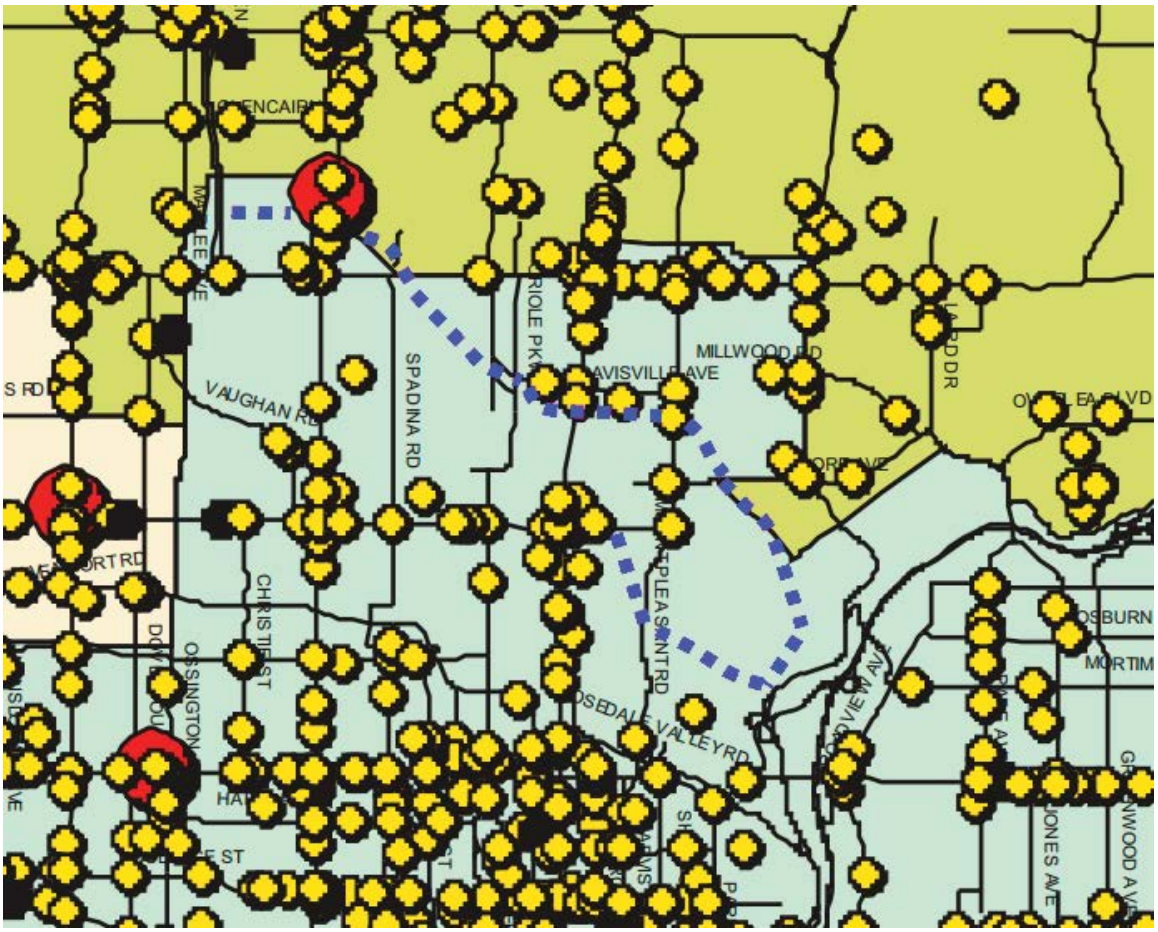
[73] Anthony Perl, "Setting One's Sights: Exploring the Dynamics of Goal Selection in Road Safety Policy". *Canadian Journal of Transportation.* Vol. 1, No. 1, 2007 http://journals.hil.unb.ca/index.php/CJT/article/view/738/3300
[73]

[74] Stuart A. Thompson and Kaleigh Rogers, "Explore the data: Toronto bicycle collisions mapped over 25 years". *Globe and Mail*, Thursday, Feb. 02, 2012. http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/toronto/explore-the-data-toronto-bicycle-collisions-mapped-over-25-years/article543684/



Map of Pedestrian Injuries, 2011. The Beltline Trail is shown in purple. Fatalities are shown in red.

Two fatalities have occurred near the Beltline Trail in recent years. A pedestrian was struck and killed in 2011 at the Bathurst-Roselawn intersection, and a 22-year-old cyclist was struck and killed crossing Mt Pleasant Rd at David Balfour Park.

A comparison made from the actuarial (rather than judicial) standpoint deems criminal intent to be of no relevance. Injuries and fatalities that are caused as a result of crimes in public parks therefore should not be weighted more heavily than those that happen by accident, negligence, drunkenness or criminal recklessness on the roads. The comparison should exclude subjective factors; its goal is not to identify subtle gradations of horror. For our present purposes, it is not productive to make a distinction between a murder victim and a DUI victim. A death is a death. With this principle in mind, we suggest that Parks staff compare statistics with Transportation staff.

If residents whose homes abut the trail continue to have reservations about lighting on the Gardner between Lascelles and the Allen Road, we recommend that the Crime Prevention Association of Toronto (CPAT) perform a safety audit with police participation. A particular focus would be the efficacy of lighting as a crime prevention measure.

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[75] City of Toronto, Transportation Services Traffic Safety Unit. Pedestrian Collision Summary Leaflet - December 2012. http://www.toronto.ca/transportation/publications/brochures/2011_ped.pdf

Trail user comments

Many trail users are reluctant to use unlit parts of the trail at night. We received the following comments from signers of the Cycle Toronto Beltline improvements petition:

- "I have also written a letter, but would like to add that I think maintaining this trail as a viable greenspace for this area is very important. Most parts of the city have larger green spaces for recreation, dog walking, etc. – this is pretty much all we have in this part of town and we should be doing everything we can to maintain it and to encourage people to use it. In order to do so, lighting the darker parts of the trail is vital -- especially for fall, spring and winter."
- "Also, there is no lighting and is not safe for women biking alone."

CURRENT SITUATION

Beltline and Yellow Creek Trails

The distribution of lighting along the Beltline and Yellow Creek trails is rather haphazard:

- The Kay Gardner Beltline Trail is presently lit along a 1.1 km. stretch from its endpoint at Mt. Pleasant Rd to Lascelles Blvd. Forest Hill Rd. Park and several parkettes in Forest Hill are also lit. The remainder of the Gardner, from Lascelles Blvd to Allen Rd, has no lighting
- The only part of the York Beltline Trail that is bright at night is the Dufferin St. bridge, due to extremely bright security lighting installed at a nearby auto dealership.
- The Moore Ave. ravine is unlit.
- The Evergreen Brick Works is lit, including the parking lots and buildings.
- The extremely bright high-mast lights at the Bayview Ave/Bloor Ave ramp illuminate the southernmost end of the Park Drive Reservation trail, and a good deal of the hillside above.
- The Park Drive Reservation Trail used to be illuminated. Although the lamp-posts mostly survive, the lights were disconnected years ago and are not currently operational.
- A limited number of functioning lights exist in the ravine section of David Balfour Park. The upper section of David Balfour Park, at the Rosehill Reservoir, is fully lit around its perimeter.
- A group of extremely bright lights shine in the north end of the Vale of Avoca, which is wilder and more 'natural' than almost any other point in the Yellow Creek or Beltline trail system

Merton St. condos

In proposing lighting for the entire Beltline and Yellow Creek trails, we are not entering terra incognita. The lighting that has been operational for about five years along the Merton Street stretch has served as an unofficial pilot project. Lights were installed primarily for safety reasons. There is not a great deal of separation between many lower level condos and the lamps on the trail. If residents were being bothered by light pollution, they would be voicing their concerns.

At our request, Councillor Matlow's office has checked their records for light pollution and other complaints. It has been confirmed that the councillor received zero complaints in the half year prior to Sept. 10, 2012 from residents whose homes overlook the presently illuminated stretch of the Beltline. Furthermore, a stakeholders meeting was held on Oct. 2, 2012 specifically to elicit the feedback of Merton Street residents, about 35 of whom attended. In the minutes of the meeting, the sole mention of lighting was favourable:

> A few participants felt that accommodating winter activities was an important design principle. In particular, participants were interested in the accommodation of skiing along the trail (and seeking

permission for skiing through the cemetery), and adding additional lighting to make the path more visible in the winter months. [76]

From the informal reports we have heard, the majority of attendees were quite enthusiastic about the lighting on Merton, and some made a point of requesting that it be extended into Forest Hill. The positive experience of residents who have lived with trail lighting suggests that homeowners who live west of Lascelles Blvd. are needlessly concerned about light pollution and loss of privacy.

Indeed, there is considerable activity on the lit section of the trail, even at night. In today's economy, an increasing number of workers do not follow traditional 9-5 business hours. They may work in shifts or in industries that are busy at late times of day; also, the self-employed often keep flexible hours Although trail counts have not been conducted on the Beltline Trail, other lit urban trails see a significant proportion of the trail traffic during the night.[77]

West Toronto Railpath

The most important rail trail precedent is provided by the Beltline's counterpart in the west end. The West Toronto Railpath is lit in its entirety, from Cariboo to Dundas West. Friends of the West Toronto Railpath comment that the trail is well-used during dark hours, despite the Junction neighbourhood having a reputation for higher crime rates than Forest Hill, Moore Park or Rosedale. The trail is popular at all times of the day and night because it is perceived as being relatively safe. In contrast, two highly-publicized cyclist traffic fatalities have occurred on public streets near the railpath.[78]

Eglinton Park

A path in the northeast corner extends from Roselawn Ave. 200 m. south. It is lit at night by a row of lights which are situated just a few metres from the backyards of residences on Edith Drive. The disposition of the path, lights, backyards and the rear windows of houses is remarkably similar to the Forest Hill section of the Beltline. We have contacted staff at Councillor Stintz's office. Their office has not received any complaints from local residents in regards to the current lighting configuration at Eglinton Park.

Cedarvale Park

Cedarvale Park is the largest park near the Gardner trail. Lighting levels vary in intensity. The lights through the thickly vegetated Cedarvale wetland are not shrouded, but barely extend to the next nearby light. If a single light is out, that section of the trail is quite dark. In a recent survey of residents who live near Cedarvale Park, "participants were clear that improved pathway lighting from Ava to the off-leash area and from Markdale to Durham was important for safety reasons, noting that any lighting should be designed to minimize light pollution and protect wildlife." [79]

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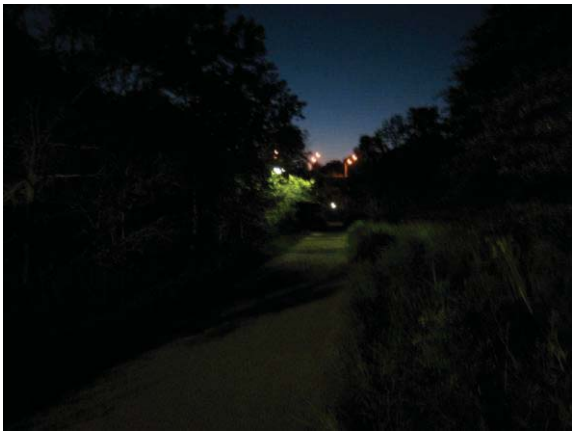
[76] http://www.toronto.ca/involved/projects/kay-gardner_beltline/pdf/2012-10-02_summary_report_beltline_trail_merton_street_public_meeting.pdf

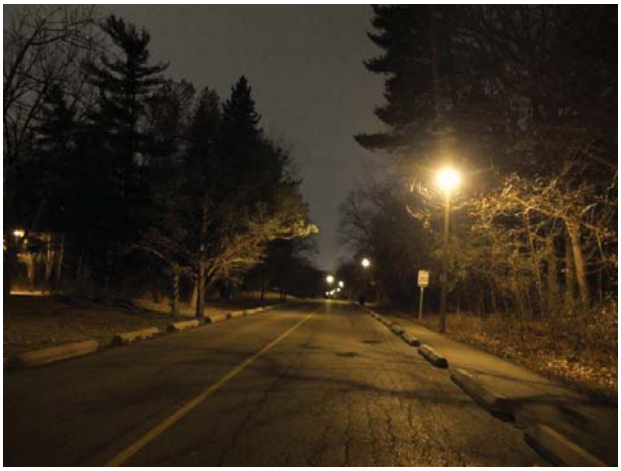
[77] http://www.orilliapacket.com/2008/11/04/city-trails-crawling-with-recreational-users

[78] Jenna Morrison and Tom Samson

[79] Ward 21 E-News Community Update. Dec., 2012 newsletter. s. 2 "Cedarvale Park and Ravine survey results"

Left: Trail lights in Cedarvale Park, seen from Bathurst Ave bridge. Right: Cedarvale lights from trail level.

Left: Lit driveway by West Don River in Sunnybrook Park. Right: Lit driveway in Sunnybrook Park


Left: Lit parking lot in ET Seton Park (South of Eglinton). Right: Lit bridge over West Don by dog run area in Sunnybrook Park

Sunnybrook Park

Sunnybrook Park is another major green space in midtown Toronto that boasts extensive natural areas, wildlife and mature trees. All the paved driveways that run through Sunnybrook Park are lit, including several parking

lots, the forested sections by the West Don River, and even the driveways near Wilket Creek. Ironically, few cars use the park after dark – whereas the popular pedestrian pathway beside the road is not lit.

We believe that a glaring double standard is in place, revealing inconsistencies in PFR policy. Motorists expect lighting near roads, and parks officials cater this preference. Pedestrians are less insistent about lighting and are not indulged. From the standpoint of a deer or a bird, however, it does not matter whether light pollution is originating from a road or a pathway.

Don Valley

The Don Valley is lit in its entirety by the extremely bright, high-mast lights along the Don Valley Parkway. These lights are totally different from the small, low-intensity trail lights used in the City's parks. Highway high-mast fixtures are typically 35-40 m. in height, featuring eight high-power sodium bulbs. Although shrouded, the lights still cast light far beyond the highway. Standard street lights are also found on Bayview Ave. and Pottery Rd., along their length. Even the unused Beechwood Dr. roadway, decommissioned for decades, still has its fully-operational lighting intact to its terminus in the Don Valley. This short road only serves one address in the valley: the Toronto Police Canine Training Yard just to the north of the DVP, a full 350 m. before the end of the lights.

Other park and trail precedents

PFR is quite zealous in keeping its properties bright at night. Lighting has been installed in dozens of Toronto parks and trails. Significant green spaces near the Beltline and Yellow Creek trails that are partially lit at night include the Rosehill Reservoir, Oriole Park and Forest Hill Memorial Park.

To widen the perspective, PFR has begun work on creating an inventory of lighting in trails across Metro Toronto. Some trails are lit in their entirety, others only when they cut through parks. It should be emphasized that **some lighting has been installed in isolated, densely forested, natural areas such as the interior of High Park**. A very preliminary, unconfirmed summary includes sections of the following:

Berner Trail Park
Black Creek Trail (Chalkfarm, Downsview Dells, Driftwood, Edgeley, Northwood & Smythe Parks)
Brookbanks Park Trail
Centennial Park (Elmcrest Creek Trail & Eglinton Ave. West Trail)
Duncairn Park Trail
Duncan Creek Trail
Earl Bales Park Trail
East Don Trail (East Don Parkland & Villaways Park)
East Highland Creek Trail (Audrelane & Goldhawk Parks)
Eglinton Flats Trail
Elizabeth Simcoe Park Trail
Etobicoke Creek Trail (Marie Curtis Park)
Finch Corridor Trail (Driftwood & & Hendon Parks)
G. Ross Lord Park Trail
Gaffney Park Trail
Gatineau Hydro Corridor (Thomson Park)
Glendora Park Trail
High Park (Spring Rd., Deer Pen Rd., trail near Howard Park entrance)
Highland Creek Trail (Cedar Ridge, Colonel Danforth, Morningside & Highland Creek Community Parks)
Humber Bay Park Trail

Humber River Recreational Trail (Kingsmill, Rowntree & Gzowski Parks)
Lavender Creek Trail (Gaffney Park)
Martin Goodman Trail (various points)
Milliken Park Trail
Mimico Creek Trail (West Deane Park)
Moccasin Trail Park
Morningside Park Trail
East Don Parkland
Rosedale Valley Road (trail running south from Rosedale Subway Station)
Sanwood Park Trail
Taylor Creek Trail (St. Clair Ravine)
Viewmount Park Trail
Waterfront Trail (Marie Curtis Park)
West Don River Trail (Sunnybrook Park)
West Highland Creek Trail (Birkdale Ravine; Cedar Brook, L'Amoreaux and Thomson Parks)
Wickson Trail Park
Wilket Creek Trail

Ontario municipalities

The Ontario Trails Council recently surveyed 20 municipalities throughout Ontario, collecting information about their trail lighting policies. It was found that the higher the level of trail use, the greater was the likelihood that lighting would be present on the trail. As for "proximity of residences – in the event houses are close by, trail directed light is preferred. Although homeowners are convinced that lighting will improve property safety there is no definitive study linking lit trails to increased public risk of crime." [80]

LIGHTING DESIGN

Grid lighting

Grid-connected lighting is more dependable than solar powered designs, and is our clear choice for the Gardner and York trails. Lighting should be installed that enhances safety on the trail, without causing significant disruption to wildlife or adjacent homeowners. Important features include:

- Low-emission, pedestrian-scaled design, customized for trails
- Special narrow-dispersion bulbs, that can be angled toward the trail so that the path is illuminated, and little else
- Metal full-cutoff fixtures installed over lamps will provide a shield that prevents light from shining upwards, where it would contribute to light pollution
- Wattage and light emissions should be more lower in intensity as compared to the many street lights that line every road in Forest Hill
- Timers could be used to shut off, or dim, lighting at predetermined times (e.g., half an hour after the closing time of the Chaplin LRT station)
- The height of the lampposts should be high enough to deter vandalism but low enough to avoid dispersing light widely

[80] Letter from Patrick Connor, Executive Director of the Ontario Trails Council, to Cycle Toronto, Dec. 4, 2012

Solar lighting

Most of the lighting currently used in Toronto's parks would not be out of place in an old black-and-white movie. Perhaps it is time to be forward-thinking, and test some cutting-edge, sustainable lighting technologies. If grid-connected lighting is considered too expensive or otherwise inappropriate for ravine trails, then we recommend that solar lighting be considered as an alternative – perhaps as a 'green' pilot project. The best candidate for solar lighting would be Moore Park Ravine.

Solar lights activated by motion-detectors are the most efficient, and two models stand out: the Carmanah EverGEN 1720 and the LuxOsol Dimming.

Advantages:

- They are far less expensive to install than regular lights powered off of the grid
- Their operational costs on a continuing basis are minimal, (aside from the expense of replacing batteries)
- They are environmentally friendly and have a low carbon footprint
- Light pollution is reduced by motion detector systems which can turn the lights down in intensity (or off) when trail users are not in the vicinity.
- By setting motion detection lighting to a dim default setting, users are made aware that lighting exists on the trail, but electricity use and light pollution are minimized
- Their streamlined designs (combining photovoltaic panels and batteries) are pleasing to the eye, unlike other solar lighting models which often utilize solar panels in crude arrays
- Batteries enable the lights to function for up to four days without sunlight
- Motion-activation results in less battery drainage, a key factor where the tree canopy reduces the amount of sunshine received by photovoltaic panels
- Motion-activation turns on lights in waves as users proceed down a trail. This advertises the approach of other trail users and improves safety at night
- They are both manufactured in Canada, and are designed to withstand Canadian winters

Disadvantages:

- Motion-activated lights must be maintained properly. If the sensors get dirty, the lights can become stuck in the "on" phase.
- Even at the highest setting, these systems are dimmer than grid-powered street lamps (– not necessarily a disadvantage in forested, natural areas)
- If a light is operated continuously throughout the night, its battery may become exhausted well before sunrise
- Batteries must be replaced every 5 to 10 years
- Because most Torontonians are unfamiliar with motion-activated lighting, they may be concerned when they look at the trail in the distance and notice that the trail is feebly illuminated. Posted signage and experience will correct this perception over time.
- Wildlife may trigger the motion-activators. This will happen mostly with large animals which – like humans – are capable of learned behaviour.

LIGHT POLLUTION CONCERNS

Existing light sources

Some local residents consider trail lighting a form of light pollution, and are concerned about the alteration of light levels in the outdoor environment. On the Gardner Beltline, however, a proliferation of lights already exists

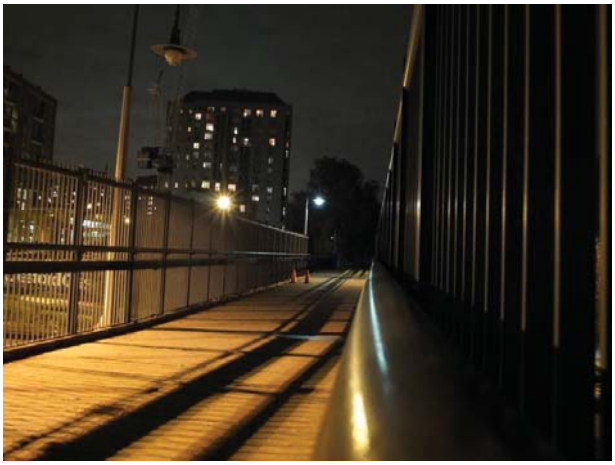
on adjacent private property. Some homeowners have installed exterior lighting for safety reasons, but much exists for purely decorative purposes.

An assessment of sky glow light pollution must be undertaken (at the very least) at a neighbourhood level. In Forest Hill, the most significant contribution to nighttime illumination occurs on public streets. Dozens of linear kilometres of road space are made bright by a vast street light network that creates far more sky glow than the lights already installed on the Beltline. Even most back alleys in the city are fully lit with street lights – although few would consider back alleys to be as safe as city streets.

The purpose of street lighting is to maintain safety and illuminate the route people are travelling on. These are precisely the same goals that path lighting on the Beltline serves. We consider irrelevant whether the beneficiaries of lighting are motor vehicles (on roads) or self-powered transportation users (on the trail). What is of the essence it that the Beltline is the linchpin trail in central Toronto. As such, it deserves proper lighting, just as normal streets deserve proper lighting.

To illustrate the relative levels of light intensity along the Beltline Trail, the following photographs were taken at the same exposure levels at various locations.

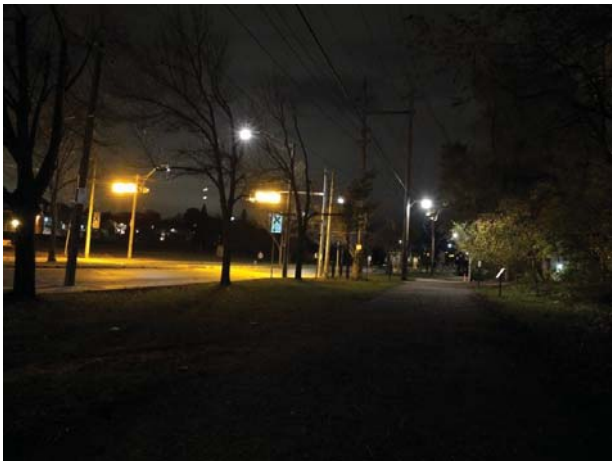

Left: Bayview Avenue near Evergreen Brick Works. Right: Bayview-Bloor onramp with High Mast Lighting

Left: Beltline Trail south of Merton St. Right: Bridge over Yonge St and TTC Davisville Yard


Left: Gas station at Chaplin and Avenue.
Right: Decorative tree lighting in Forest Hill, aimed upwards at tree canopy


Left: Lighting at Duncannon St trail crossing. Right: Apartment garage and garbage bins north of Eglinton.




Left: Lighting at Chaplin and Forest Hill Arena, with trail-facing streetlight on right.
Right: Trail-facing streetlights along Allen Rd sound barrier

Left: Auto dealership at Dufferin bridge. Right: Upwardly-illuminated billboard at Dufferin

Some critics point out that inappropriate nocturnal lighting levels may compromise the sleep of residents by interfering with their circadian rhythms and pineal gland functioning. Other critics are concerned over the negative carbon impact and financial costs of excessive energy consumption. Cost savings and illuminance reductions could be achieved by either turning off trail lighting at a certain hour or by toning down the intensity. Perhaps the best answer to light pollution criticisms is that if they are taken to their logical conclusion, then lighting would be removed from all side streets. This would have unacceptable safety implications. On the same grounds, we hold that allowing the Beltline to be enveloped in darkness has worrisome impact on public safety.

People who live in the heart of a major metropolis have come to expect a certain amount of ambient light at night. We must regain our sense of proportion. Lighting the Beltline even in the Moore Park Ravine will have minimal effects on general illuminance levels compared to the high mast, 30-metre tall, high pressure sodium lighting on the nearby Don Valley Expressway.

Wildlife protection: migratory birds

Birdwatching has always been a significant part of the Beltline's traditions, starting with Esther Carin (without whose efforts the trail might not exist today). We have discussed this issue with Michael Mesure, Executive Director of the internationally respected Fatal Light Awareness Program (FLAP) [81]. In general it has been his experience that the threat posed by night lighting of trails to the well-being of birds and other forms of wildlife can be significantly reduced by using low-intensity lighting directed downward and shielded, so that only the necessary trail area is illuminated. Although Mr. Mesure has not investigated the particular conditions which exist on the Beltline, he suggests that migratory birds are probably harmed in far greater numbers by collisions into the windows of high-rise condos and apartment buildings that are clustered along the northern half of the trail system, rather than by ambient lighting produced by the downward-directed lights we are proposing.[82]

We shall advance three additional reasons for ravine trail lighting having a minimal effect on the well-being of migratory birds:

1 Ravines are sunken in elevation. Lighting at the bottom of a ravine is less prominent than the many other sources of urban light pollution emanating from the rest of city

[81] Telephone conversation with Michael Mesure, Oct. 12, 2012

[82] More information is available at FLAP's website: http://www.flap.org/faqs.php

2 In particular, the narrow Mud Creek and Yellow Creek ravines are flanked by housing and street lights which produce higher light levels than carefully designed path lighting, particularly if the latter is motion-activated and set at a dim default level.
3 The path areas are obscured by tree foliage canopy, particularly in the autumn migration season.

There is a trade-off between protecting the safety of humans and protecting the safety of wildlife. We believe that the most effective harm-reduction strategy would involve the application of treatments to the windows of high-rises adjacent to the Beltline, in order to reduce bird strikes.

Local wildlife habitats

It is important to distinguish the repercussions of light pollution on migratory birds from its effects on local bird populations nesting in park habitats near trails. Naturalists have expressed fears that artificial lighting may be harmful to local birds, sometimes causing them to flock and nest elsewhere. Serious research on the effects of lighting on bird nesting is not well developed. Rich and Longcore [83] have surveyed the scientific literature and cite studies examining biorhythm changes that affect bird nesting, singing, hormonal secretion, egg-laying and breeding patterns. They caution that results may sometimes be influenced by urban environments, where the food supply is differently constituted, and average temperatures are higher [84] than rural areas.

As with birds, biorhythm research on mammal, reptile and insect populations is not at mature phase. It is far easier to take stock of animal-strike deaths and injuries on Toronto's roads. The Beltline cannot be compartmentalized. To take an "as the bird flies" perspective is to view the trail as part of the city's complete environment. We cannot allow ourselves to become fixated by the effects of dim trail lighting while totally ignoring the street environment, where harm to wildlife is caused by bright car headlights, steel fenders and exhaust pipes. Motor vehicle emissions do not benefit the lungs of mammals. Collisions on roads throughout the city frequently kill animals and birds – both wild and domesticated. "Today dead animals alongside roads are a common sight and are probably seen by many more people than their living conspecifics in zoos or native habitats." [85] **Keeping trail networks unlit shifts people's travel patterns at night away from environmentally friendly means (especially bicycles) to noxious, deadly motor vehicles.**

Just as we recommend that an unbiased risk management approach be used to analyse human safety on trails, so it should be used to protect wildlife against ecological light pollution.The end effect of darkened trails is to achieve a marginal increase in nocturnal wildlife protection in the vicinity of trails – and a more serious and disturbing increase in animal fatalities on our streets. Cyclists, more than other road users, are well aware that our roads are killing zones. The same area near the curb that bikes travel on is where crushed animal carcasses are frequently to be encountered. Parks staff must not discount the destruction of animals that is occurring outside park walls. In conclusion, we would ask that PFR collaborate with Transportation staff in pursuing integrated wildlife harm policies that focus on the real problem area: public streets.

HOMEOWNER PRIVACY

The Beltline passes through the geographic centre of Toronto. Forest Hill is very much an **urban** location. A fact of big-city life is that homes with windows and yards facing a public street may be subject to the gaze of passers-by. It is second nature for most city dwellers to draw a curtain when their privacy is a priority. Homeowners whose residences face the Beltline also have to manage a 'second front', since some of their rear windows and

[83] Catherine Rich and Travis Longcore, *Ecological Effects of Artificial Night Lighting* (Island Press, 2005) p. 115 - 117
[84] This is the so-called 'heat island' effect
[85] John Davenport and Julia L. Davenport, (eds.), *The Ecology of Transportation: Managing Mobility for the Environment* (Springer, 2006) p. 165

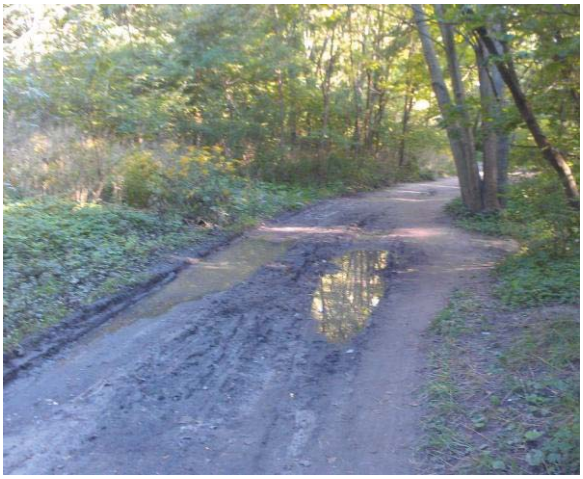
back yards are visible from the trail. This has always been the case. **The Beltline right-of-way has existed from the early 1890s, predating the construction of virtually every residence that now abuts the trail. When they purchased their houses, homeowners would have been well aware of the special privacy considerations associated with a rail/ trail location.**

The lighting of the Beltline will undoubtedly increase traffic volumes on the trail after the sun sets. However, privacy isn't an incremental matter. A curtain is either drawn, or it isn't. Once a curtain separates homeowners from the gaze of trail users, it is fundamentally irrelevant whether the numbers of the latter increase. On the other hand, Beltline lighting will usher in one change that is sure to happen: suspicious trail user activity will be more conspicuous to homeowners and trail users.

DRAINAGE

Because most of the Beltline and Yellow Creek trails are routed along riverbeds, drainage problems are common. Following summer rainfall, trail users must navigate standing puddles, washouts and significant mud. In the winter, entire sections of poorly drained trail are subject to ice accumulations. Users habitually overstep path boundaries when they attempt to outflank mud, puddles and eroded areas in the middle of the trail. **The need for improvements in drainage will be critical once trail widths are reduced.**

We recommend that the City retain engineers and geotechnical specialists to resolve the trail drainage problems. An audit should be performed after the spring melt, when drainage problems are most acute. In most locations all that is needed may be improved ditches, swales, stone dust top-dressing or regular regrading of the trail's granular surfacing. More severe drainage problems can often be addressed by raising the trail's grade or rerouting problematic stretches to higher elevations.



Left: Poorly drained trail at David Balfour park

Right: Flooding on trail east of Lascelles Blvd.

PROBLEM AREAS

Shallmar Blvd.

During storms, runoff rushes down the steeply sloping Shallmar Boulevard and Mayfair Ave. (near Forest Hill Memorial Arena). Although four catch basins exist where the two streets converge, their placement isn't optimal.. If the catch basins are clogged – or the downpour is torrential – the water just runs past them. Instead of a proper storm drain at the bottom of the hill, a slapdash notch has been cut in the curb near the Beltline

boundary. This allows the runoff to flow directly onto the trail, which takes on the function of a drainage ditch. Major storms can result in severe pathway erosion. The city sends employees on an irregular basis to clear the curb notch and to fill runoff channels with gravel. These are makeshift responses to a recurring problem that needs permanent remediation.

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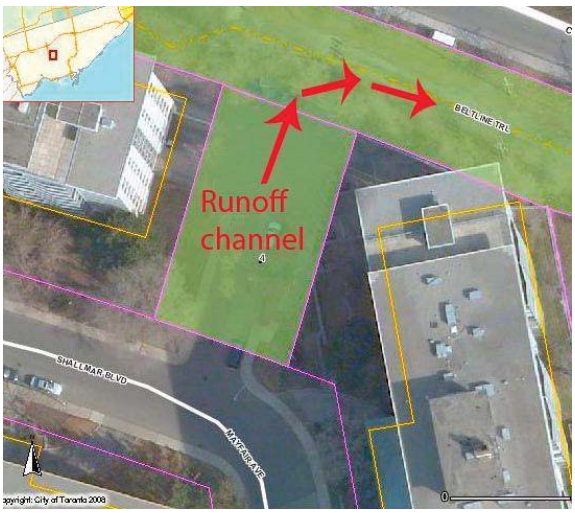


Left: Overview map of Shallmar Blvd. runoff water flows
Right: Runoff channel on Gardner trail flooded with water from Shallmar Blvd. and Mayfair Ave.

An effective solution seems to have been hobbled by various boundaries. The runoff water originates from Ward 21, while the Beltline trail itself at this location is in Ward 16. Compounding matters, it is unclear whether the installation of a storm drain is the responsibility of the City, or the landlord(s) owning two apartment buildings[86] that flank the location where a drain should go. Superintendents regularly wheel out dumpsters on garbage collection days and place them near the Beltline fence, where a future storm drain would be most effective.

The same pattern is repeated just 150 m. east of Shallmar, where runoff from the Forest Hill Collegiate property washes out another part of the trail. The same solution is in order: a proper storm drain.

Lascelles Blvd.

The heavily travelled section of the Gardner trail just east of Lascelles Blvd. can become completely flooded during the spring thaw, and after major storms. Due to poor drainage, this section has lost much of its granular surface in a thick layer of mud. This is a strong candidate for pathway grade raising.

Moore Park Ravine

This is the segment of the Beltline that suffers the most extensive drainage problems. In fact, the trail surface is totally dry only during droughts at the height of summer. At other times of the year, mud is predictable. Throughout the ravine, the trail's ability to shed water must be improved on a large scale. The worst section lies on the east side of the path, just north of Heath St.

Attention should be focused on the Heath Street bridge environs. The challenge is here is to deal with the large volumes of runoff without relying on coarse gravel surfacing, which wreaks havoc with bicycle and wheelchair wheels.

[86] 21 Mayfair Ave. and 10 Shallmar Blvd.

Park Drive Reservation Trail

The steep slope on the section of the Park Drive Reservation Trail just southeast of Mt. Pleasant Rd. washes out 3 or 4 times a year. Major improvements in drainage will eliminate the need for frequent road maintenance.

David Balfour Park

Even though the trail is paved, regular flooding of Yellow Creek has deposited a layer of partially dried mud on much of the path. In the worst sections, we recommend rerouting the path to a location higher up (or even outside) the floodplain. Ideally, the trail would be at a fairly consistent grade, in order to avoid the pooling of water in depressions.

SURFACING

Granular

On the Kay Gardner Beltline trail, we recommend that the granular surfacing presently in place be preserved. It should be maintained properly, with top-dressing and grading done on at least on an annual basis. The pathway through the Eglinton underpass should be resurfaced with proper granular, as the current hard surface is prone to rutting.

In both the Moore Park ravine and the Vale of Avoca, the sections of the trail that now subsist as compacted soil should be upgraded to granular.

Gravel

The Beltline path has been surfaced with rough gravel at two points that are particularly prone to flooding:

- Gardner trail, opposite Forest Hill Memorial Arena
- Moore Park Ravine, underneath the Heath St. bridge

Coarse gravel fails to provide a stable riding surface for bicycles. When the gravel is not spread evenly a bike wheel can start sliding unexpectedly. This may lead cyclists – particularly youthful or inexpert riders – to lose their balance and overturn. We recommend that that the City remedy the root cause of the problem in these areas, which is poor drainage. It would then be possible to replace rough gravel infill with a safer, granular tread surface, in keeping with the rest of the Beltline.

Asphalt

The Moore Park ravine path's gradient on the descent south from Moore Ave. is too steep. At the present time, some seniors and others with mobility problems have difficulties negotiating the slope. During winter, ice can render the path treacherous for all users. We recommend that the northern end of the trail be reconfigured using one or more switchbacks. If the trail's grade is moderated to a sufficient extent, it will be possible to replace the current disintegrating asphalt surfacing with granular. As a result, the descent will be easier to negotiate for all trail users.

WINTER MAINTENANCE

Paradigm shift

Park usage patterns are undergoing a paradigm shift. The proportion of strictly recreational visits to trails is declining, while the number of visits with a utilitarian purpose is rising. We expect this trend to intensify in the future, as programs like safe walking/ cycling to school become more widespread. It is clear that a repurposing of trails requires better support from PFR – notably the provision of winter maintenance.

Climate change and the Beltline

Toronto's winters in the 21st century have been growing milder. In the past, welcoming, powdery snow would collect on the trail; and as a rule, temperatures would be consistently cold enough to allow the snow to become compacted and walkable. We are now experiencing regular freeze/ thaw cycles that can transform mounds of snow into thick sheets of treacherous ice. Depending on precipitation patterns, portions of the Beltline can freeze for long periods in the winter – a danger to anyone who ventures onto the trail, especially seniors, joggers and cyclists. Key links in the pedestrian network can be seriously affected: when the bridge over Yonge St. is covered in ice a 500 m. detour is needed.

In effect, portions of the Beltline become essentially unusable for extended periods in the colder months. Compared to a generation ago, trail winter usage options are more limited , meaning that Torontonians are not getting full value out of a major city asset. Allocating money to winter maintenance will realize this value. **We therefore recommend that regular snow removal be undertaken along the trail.**

Costs

As for capital costs, it is doubtful that these would be onerous, probably involving only the purchase of an extra snowplow.

Usage of unmaintained parks drops enormously during the three months when snow and ice typically encumber Toronto's parkland. Stinting on winter trail maintenance is a false economy. Snow-plowing will bring people back out onto our trails. The cost surely compares favourably to other expenses that PFR bears in the winter, such as heating community centres.

Significant amounts of money are being directed to the Bikeway Trails Implementation Plan in order to create a network of trails that will allow cyclists to ride through the city safely, with minimal inconvenience to motorists. Off-road rails are all very well in fair weather, but their usability plummets in the winter if they aren't cleared of snow. It is folly to make investments that shift cycling patterns from roads to trails, and then leave the cycling community in the lurch by not making a parallel commitment to winter maintenance on the most intensively used trails.

Torontonians generally do not complain about PFR's do-nothing winter maintenance policies. Many of us fly to southern destinations, a practice that is supported by vast sums of money lavished on keeping airports functional through inclement weather. At a time when our winters are becoming milder, making our parks more user-friendly in the colder months might reduce the need some of us feel to travel south. The environmental damage produced by emissions from a snow plow is far overshadowed by the harm jet exhaust causes.

Inclusion

Many seniors are legitimately fearful of suffering serious injury caused by slip and fall accidents in icy conditions. Currently, ice accumulations deter many trail users with mobility or balance problems from venturing onto the

Beltline for long periods. The use of the trail by wheelchair users in the winter likewise needs to be clarified. Ideally, snow clearing would be routine, enabling wheelchair use year round. Warnings should also be made available to wheelchair users about the condition of the trail. Winter trail maintenance will allow vulnerable trail users greater access to the Beltline at a time of year when their outdoor walking opportunities are limited.

The following two photographs form a study in opposites. The Beltline route in Mt. Pleasant Cemetery is well maintained in the winter, and the wheelchair user would have faced few problems negotiating the main paved roads inside the cemetery. Unfortunately, as she makes her way north from the exit she encounters the unplowed path of the Gardner Beltline. Realistically, she cannot safely travel along the Gardner. Slowly and with difficulty she crosses about 8 m.over the snow until she reaches the plowed lane in the distance (upper right of photo). Even just crossing the unmaintained Beltline is an uncertain undertaking for someone in a wheelchair. Meanwhile, on the same day and just a few hundred metres in away, a cyclist breezes along the path through Oriole Park. The city clears snow at this location, and it makes a huge difference for active transportation users.

Left: Wheelchair travelling north from Merton exit of Mt. Pleasant Cemetery
Right: Cyclist riding north through Oriole Park

Avid hikers will head out onto the trail in all conditions. They have icers, crampons, balaclavas and Wellington boots at the ready. Hardy cyclists don body armour and ride out on mountain bikes with double suspension and studded tires. They aren't flustered by jagged ice pocked with small craters. Nothing will hold them back. The rest of us, however, see no reason why a quick jaunt on the Beltline should involve preparations more apt for an expedition. A youth who is using the trail to go to school – or an office-worker who is wants to combine a pleasant walk with catching the TTC – aren't in the Mt. Everest frame of mind. PFR shouldn't be letting them down.

Ecological benefits

An added benefit of snow clearing is that the effects of the spring thaw will be less serious. Providing that snow is regularly removed during the winter season, users will tend to stick to the plowed central section.

When a trail is not maintained during the colder months, the trampled middle part may turn to mush, or freeze over into a sheet of ice. Users then attempt to outflank problem sections by walking around them. As the areas to the side of the trail in their turn become less walkable with use, pedestrians will veer even farther from the centre, to the point where they are off the actual trail. In the spring, this is an environmentally sensitive area – mud providing little protection to vulnerable upper tree roots.

Maintenance techniques

Granular surfacing is more difficult to plough than asphalt pavement. However, specific techniques have been developed for gravel roads in rural areas, and many of these can be adapted to the Beltline's unpaved trails. Clearing snow off of granular surfacing demands more attention from the plow operator. A fine line exists between snow and and the trail surface. The object is to remove as much snow as possible, without disturbing the granular.

1. PLOWING:
    a. The plow blade should be tipped with a urethane edge, instead of steel
    b. In order to minimize damage to the trail, a 'back blade' mounted on the rear of the plow is back-dragged (instead of the more usual forward-pushing position)
    c. If the blade is too low and starts to scrape the trail surface, it may be adjusted
    d. If granular accumulates where it shouldn't, the blade may be used to drag it back to its proper place
    e. Windrow runoff channels should be created on parts of the trail susceptible to ponding
    f. At the end of the winter season, it will be necessary to redistribute old granular, and top-dress the trail with a new layer. Annual grading also helps to address rutting and other erosion problems that have developed over the preceding summer season.
2. TRACTION:
    a. Environmentally friendly materials such as sand or straw can be spread on the trail to improve traction
    b. Salt should be used sparingly, and only in extreme circumstances
3. HEATING:
    a. Radiant heating could be installed under the tread of bridges subject to ice accumulation
    b. The Yonge Street bridge deck needs replacement, in any case
    c. Installation on the Dufferin Street bridge could be delayed until the deck starts to degrade

Precedents

We have been told that PFR has a general policy of not plowing granular trails. Winter maintenance could be pursued as a pilot project, with the Beltline trail becoming a showpiece example of what is possible. We are confident that PFR staff are up to the challenge, and could apply newly developed expertise to other popular unpaved trails.

We shall cite three precedents for winter maintenance on paved bicycle facilities.

1. An agreement is in place to plow the new downtown network of separated bike lanes, starting with those on Sherbourne.[87]
2. Transportation Services has begun snow removal on the Martin Goodman Trail. The feedback from winter trail users has been favourable; and as a result more people enjoy the lakefront during the winter.
3. The West Toronto Railpath is now being cleared of snow in its entirety. Since this trail is also lit at night, it is useable 24/ 7 in all four seasons. This is a model to be emulated by all heavily used trails in the city.

[87] PW.19.3 http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.PW19.3


West Toronto Railpath after snowfall, Jan. 2013
Left: (Photo: Geoffrey Bercarich) *Right: (Photo: Joey Schwartz)*

The Railpath and the MGT have been targeted for snow clearance because they are key bicycle transportation corridors. The Beltline is their midtown equivalent, and it serves an equally broad user base – almost all of whom would benefit immensely from winter maintenance.

If the City is adamant that it shall not plow granular trails, then at a minimum it should be clearing snow from the paved York Beltline Trail (which from the logistical standpoint resembles the West Toronto Railpath).

Legal liability

If the City is concerned about potential lawsuits, it could maintain the same policy as before, namely, that the City will not be held responsible for maintaining the trail during winter. In other words, snow removal on the Beltline will occur as a service at the discretion of the City but not as a legal obligation of the City. A similar policy was recommended for the MGT in 2008:

> In order to mitigate the risk of liability, appropriate signage would have to be installed indicating to both cyclists and pedestrians that they should use caution and would be at their own risk when using the trail during the winter season.[88]

WAYFINDING

CITY OF TORONTO WAYFINDING SYSTEM STRATEGY

Wayfinding on the Beltline should conform as closely as possible to the design guidelines being developed by the City of Toronto's Wayfinding System Strategy initiative. Since the project's recommendations have been by no means finalized, we hope that a certain amount of cross-fertilization will occur. The Strategy is currently

[88] Winter Snow Removal on the Martin Goodman Trail" . Report from Brenda Patterson, General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, to Parks and Environment Committee. October 30, 2008. p. 4
http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2008/pe/bgrd/backgroundfile-17294.pdf

focused on urban street wayfinding, and requires greater sensitivity to the special requirements of off-road areas. Some of the wayfinding solutions developed for the Beltline may influence general wayfinding best practices for Toronto trails.

SIGNAGE

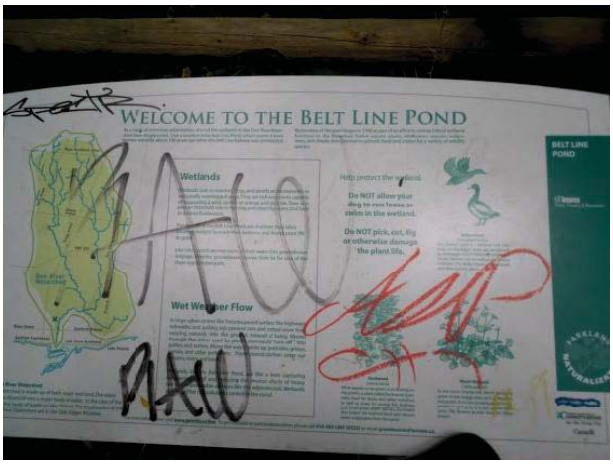
Uniformity

A uniform style should be developed for all signage on the Beltline trail, so that no matter which segment users are on (**including Mt. Pleasant Cemetery)**, they will meet signs that conform to a common design format.

Uniformity isn't just a matter of aesthetics. Trail users who familiarize themselves with a standard sign style for road intersection warning signs, for example, will be on the alert for them, especially when the traffic noise suggests that a road is nearby. Should sign styles change when users pass from one trail segment to another, they are less likely to heed important warnings.

We suggest certain general guidelines:

- Surfaces on all signage should be finished with a 'non-stick' protective coating that facilitates the removal of graffiti [89]
- Posting should be at average eye level (approximately 155 cm.) . . .
- on the right side of the path. On-street signage is never installed on the left side of normal, two-way roads. Trails should be no different. Trail users tend to travel where they are looking; they are drawn towards signs, approaching them more closely in proportion to the amount of text to be read. Proper sign placement reinforces travelling on the right side, a key tenet of trail etiquette
- The reverse should be left blank (or perhaps marked with the beltline logo)



Left: Graffiti on Information board, Moore Park Ravine Right: Sign posted on left may lead to conflicts

In addition, specialized signage should be posted for the benefit of wheelchair users at key trail access points [90], providing information about:

- trail conditions
- inclines

[89] Urban Hygiene Ltd. produces the "Easy-on" permanent anti-graffiti coating

[90] such as St. Clair West and Davisville subway stations, the Moore Park Ravine exit at Bayview, and the Evergreen Brick Works

- the next access point
- wheelchair vehicle parking opportunities
- cautionary notes about pitfalls such bidirectionality (i.e. a user can get down a hill, but going up it is not accessible).

The purpose of such signage is prevent a situation where a user gets onto the trail, comes across a barrier and is either stuck or must backtrack to the last access point.

Visual clutter

The trail should not be cluttered with too many signs. When confronted with a surfeit of signage, the reaction of many users will simply be to ignore them all. Also, excessive numbers of poorly positioned signs can obscure sight lines, needlessly exacerbating the danger of collisions. The Beltline's sign landscape must be simplified. For instance, virtually all dog-owners are aware of their obligation to clean up after their pet, thanks to intensive poop-and-scoop campaigns over the years. Therefore, it should suffice to include this rule in the posted etiquette code. If it is felt that dedicated signs are still needed, they should be affixed to sides of waste receptacles.

It has been suggested that all wayfinding signage be eliminated in the ravines, in order to preserve their natural character. As a result, those requiring assistance might approach other trail users for directions. Some people will not be comfortable with being accosted in this manner. Without a doubt, their privacy rights transcend in importance any preference for a natural, signless trail milieu.

A more practical method of reducing visual clutter is to consolidate non-priority messages and display them together on a large sign. It has been proposed that information be posted on vertical, 'context totems', which take up less space on the trail than information boards. Totems are admittedly compact, and solve visual clutter problems admirably. However, there can sometimes be "too much of a good thing". In this case, we actually **WANT content such as etiquette rules to be prominent**. Passers-by may readily overlook a context totem; they are less likely to ignore an information board. Totems can also be problematic if they are too high. Information posted at the top may be difficult for a wheelchair user to read.

Information boards

Boards should be situated near trailheads, other entrances and rest areas. Locations should be away from bottlenecks, so that people reading them will not obstruct trail traffic. (An example of poor placement is the sign board placed on the ramp just inside the north-west entrance to Mt. Pleasant Cemetery.)

We suggest that the following features be included on standard Beltline information boards:

1 Trail map
2 Connections to other trails and bikeways
3 Points of interest
4 Discovery Walk details
5 Pride of place on information boards should be devoted to trail etiquette rules. [91]

The existing information boards at Mt. Pleasant Cemetery do not contain adequate information for Beltline users. We suggest that separate signs be posted along the Beltline route that include:

1 A map
2 Clarification of the differences between the pedestrian and cyclist routes

[91] The actual content of the rules is discussed in the Stewardship section

3 An explanation of the blue wayfinding line
4 Historical information about the original Beltline rail route
5 20 km./ hour speed limit for cyclists
6 A reminder to respect those attending graveside ceremonies.

Wayfinding stations

7 wayfinding stations have been constructed on the York Beltline Trail. They serve the same role as the information boards that are found on other segments of the Beltline. An additional benefit of the York wayfinding station design is the pitched roof, which extends just far enough to shelter trail users from downpouring rain. In a pinch, the station can do double-duty as a temporary haven for those who wish to wait out the worst of a storm.

We recommend that similar wayfinding stations be constructed at strategic location such as near the Moore Ave. crossing and just outside the northwest entrance to Mt. Pleasant Cemetery. This is the sort of amenity that private donors might be willing to fund.

Smaller interpretive signs

Smaller signs should be posted on the trail in order to convey important educational information relating to nearby natural, cultural or industrial features. In order to avoid sign clutter, their use should be minimized. It would suffice to post interpretive information of secondary importance on information boards.

Crossing signs

The yellow, diamond-shaped crossing signs presently posted at many Beltline crossing points have the advantage of familiarity and recognition amongst Toronto's drivers. Unfortunately, the signs are somewhat ambiguous, failing to convey several all-important details:

- It is a trail that is crossing the street. (Trails tend to be less conspicuous than regular roads)
- Wheelchairs may be encountered, as well as . . .
- various modes of active transportation (which proceed at varying speeds)

Other trails in Ontario rely on a well-designed Trail Crossing sign which warn drivers about these vital details. We suggest that a sign similar to the design used for the Welland Canal Trail be posted on streets a short distance ahead of Beltline crossings, in tandem with the current yellow diamond signs. One above the other, they will make an effective combination.

Left: Crossing sign on Oriole Parkway *Right: Trail Crossing sign on Welland Canal Trail*

Trail segment signs

The Beltline is composed of four fragmented segments: the York Beltline Trail, The Kay Gardner Beltline Park, Mt. Pleasant Cemetery, and the Moore Park Ravine. Most trail users are unaware of the full extent of the trail, because printed maps, signage, road painting and online documentation are completely inadequate on every segment of the trail. Especially at trailheads, it is essential that signage indicate directions and distance for all Beltline segments, with specific instructions on how to travel to the entrance of the next segment.

Signs should be erected on both sides of terminus points. A single sign is NOT sufficient. To use an example on the Beltline, a sign should be set up at the crossroads where the Gardner's path along Merton intersects with the path running north from the Mt. Pleasant Cemetery gate . Another sign should be posted **inside** the cemetery, so that users are alerted to exit here and not, say, at the main Yonge St. gate. A good analogy would be highways, where wayfinding signs are considered necessary both on on-ramps and on off ramps. Although it is recognized that the present Beltline upgrade is only dealing with two of the trail's four segments, we nevertheless urge the City to pair signs regardless of project scope considerations.

Directional signposts

Directional signposts should be erected at trailheads and key junctions indicating the direction and distance to:

1. Transit stations and routes within 500 m., such as:
    a. subway stations (Davisville, St. Clair, Summerhill, Rosedale, Sherbourne and Castle Frank, Eglinton West and Glencairn)
    b. LRT Stations (Mt. Pleasant, Yonge, Avenue Rd., Chaplin, Bathurst., Oakwood, Dufferin, and Caledonia)
    c. bus routes
2. Cycling and pedestrian infrastructure:
    a. major nearby streets
    b. on-street bike lanes
    c. on-street signed bike routes
    d. off-road trails
    e. BIXI stations
3. Nearby points of interest, landmarks and institutions:

a Parks (e.g. David Balfour, Rosehill Reservoir, Rosedale Park, Chorley, Craigleigh Gardens, Moorevale, Crothers Woods, Oriole, Forest Hill Road Park, Cedarvale, Viewmount, Walter Saunders Memorial, Fairbank Memorial, Woodborough)
b Institutions (schools, libraries, hospitals, community centres, arenas)
c Historical landmarks (Evergreen Brick Works, Todmorden Mills)
d Shopping districts and malls (Castlefield Design District, Mt. Pleasant Village, West Side Mall, etc.)
e Cemeteries (Mt. Pleasant, Prospect)

4 The actual trail being entered onto

The last suggestion would seem to be glaringly obvious. Yet very few entrances to the Beltline or Yellow Creek trails are presently signed as such.

Community input should be sought in determining precisely which local destinations are listed on signage.

Left: Bollard in Mt. Pleasant Cemetery, to which Discover Walk signage is crudely strapped
Right: Example of visual clutter at Avoca Avenue trail entrance. Signs convey minor messages but fail to identify the name of the trail or where it leads to

Discovery Walk signs

The "Central Ravines, Belt Line & Gardens" Discovery Walk[92] was devised by PFR as a way to encourage walkers to explore the Beltline and the trails along Yellow Creek. Its route is largely identical with the area covered by the present project. Ironically, the signage erected to aid hikers following the Central Ravines walk is generally more prominent than regular Beltline signage. We believe that the Discovery Walk wayfinding aids should be considered secondary to those of the Beltline. Furthermore, round Discovery Walk directional signs have been criticized as prone to being "misinterpreted as road signs" [93] They are betraying their age; most are bent, worn and unsightly. Their presence is now superfluous: they should be removed from the trails.

Effective, basic wayfinding signage is sufficient to guide Discovery Walk participants, and details may be provided through mobile device apps, information boards or brochures. By avoiding dedicated route signage, we open up possibilities for creating niche routes designed not just for walkers, but for cyclists, transit and wheelchair users, etc. They would all rely on standardized, 'one-size-fits-all' wayfinding; and none would clutter the Beltline with signs that are targeted to a narrow segment of trail users.

Blue line

A unique and most effective wayfinding method is employed in Mt. Pleasant Cemetery, where the Beltline Trail follows a convoluted route. A solid blue line has been painted along the side of the road, and traces the trail route all the way from the Merton west gate to the Moore Ave. gate.[94] A secondary dotted line line marks the cycling detour around the Forest of Remembrance. Many cemetery visitors are unaware of the line's significance. We therefore recommend two measures be implemented, to make the line more prominent:

- Explanatory signage should be posted at all cemetery entrances
- The line, which is fading, should be regularly repainted [95]

Bollards

Bollards are frequently encountered where the Beltline is intersected by roads. Although bollards have a remarkably modest 'footprint', they ought to serve many purposes:

1. For wayfinding purposes, they should identify the trail.
2. They should prevent ingress onto the path by unauthorized vehicles.
3. Bollards may warn trail users that they are approaching a road that carries dangerous motor vehicle traffic.
4. Bollards should be highly visible at night in order to help trail users orient themselves.
5. The design and colouring of all bollards should be uniform in order to maximize their recognizability.
6. Proper bollard placement should reduce conflicts by streaming trail traffic to the appropriate part of the path. When configured in rows, an odd number should be installed. "Installing an even number of bollards can encourage collisions between trail users because users coming from both directions will naturally head toward the central open space." [96]

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[92] http://www.toronto.ca/parks/pdf/trails/DW_Central.pdf

[93] Wayfinding System Strategy (Phase One) for the City of Toronto, p. 7 http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2012/pw/bgrd/backgroundfile-49817.pdf

[94] The blue line had been likened to the Yellow Brick Road in *The Wizard of Oz*

[95] It is to be expected that the cemetery will undertake the repainting and pay the costs. In 1966 it was agreed that the Cemetery management would "maintain the said Cemetery lands along the line of such a route in suitable condition.". Transfer of Right-of-Way Lands to Toronto General Burying Grounds– Moore Park Ravine. *Board of Control Report No. 9*, Appendix A, Jan. 18, 1966, p. 346

[96] Trails for All Ontarians Collaborative. *Ontario's Best Trails. Guidelines and Best Practices for the Design, Construction and Maintenance of Sustainable Trails for All Ontarians.* (2006) p. 171

A folding bollard that is kept flat on the ground fails to fulfill any of the above six functions. To the contrary, a flat bollard may not be noticed and is capable of sending a bicycle, cane user, or wheelchair careening, and possibly crashing. We therefore urge that parks maintenance staff be diligent in returning folding bollards to their erect position.

Customized black bollards bear an elegant logo that strengthens the Beltline's brand. Users are familiar with the logo, and it should be retained. However, the current black colouring is too dark to be properly noticed by the visually impaired, motorists travelling at rapid speeds, and everybody at night. We recommend that all bollards be finished in a single brighter colour such as yellow, orange or red. Promoters of trail aesthetics may deem such colours garish, but safety concerns ought to be paramount. Presently, the black Beltline bollards are supplemented with yellow hinged bollards and, in a few places, by rusted lengths of pipe set in concrete bases. The different styles detract from recognizability. Moreover, bollards will be more conspicuous in the dark if they are treated with effective reflective coatings.

We are aware that in rare instances, cyclists have collided into bollards, which can be obscured when one trail user's sight lines are blocked by another user. This danger is far outweighed by the many benefits of bollards.

The one function that bollards ought not to carry out, is serving double-duty as signposts for other signs.

MAPS

Trail overview maps

Presently, large map signs are posted at the trailheads of the Gardner, the York and the Mt. Pleasant Cemetery segments. Unfortunately, the maps have many shortcomings:

- Coverage is restricted to their respective segment
- They are outdated, and do not include developments such as the Merton extension of the Gardner
- They do not reference other segments of the Beltline trail
- They omit nearby features such as transit routes, landmarks and cycling infrastructure
- they lack positioning aids, such as "Your are here" markers

A comprehensive, standardized map of the Beltline trail should be prepared, encompassing the four constituent segments. It should rectify the above-noted problems and contain complete wheelchair accessibility information for all parts of the trail. . The map should be posted on information boards, online and as part of a downloadable mobile device app. A hard copy in brochure form should also be printed.

We have not been able to locate any satisfactory maps of the trails in the Yellow Creek system. If a map is produced along the same lines as the Beltline, users will be more eager to explore Yellow Creek and it will take on a stronger identity.

Toronto Cycling Map

Because many cyclists – and not a few pedestrians – rely on the Toronto Cycling Map for navigation, it is essential that this map be kept accurate and up to date. The 2012 edition fails to properly convey to users information about certain aspects of the Beltline. The following revisions are suggested for the 2013 edition.

- One of the map's general shortcomings is that it identifies bike facilities only if they have a number. Well-known trails like the MGT and the West Toronto Railpath are not specifically named. The Beltline is no exception, and its segments (namely, the York Beltline Trail, the Kay Gardner Beltline Park and the Moore Park Ravine Beltline Trail) should be identified on the map.
- The Merton St. extension of the Gardner trail should be marked by a thick purple line
- The Moore Park Beltline Trail is presently classed as a "minor Multi-use Pathway". After the upgrades to this segment have been completed, it will no doubt become one of the most popular self-powered means of accessing the Brick Works, and should therefore merit the thick purple line indicating a "major" pathway designation.
- The grey park road route through the eastern half of Mt. Pleasant Cemetery should be revised in order to reflect the cyclist route changes necessitated by the building of the Visitation Centre.
- A yellow, suggested on-street route should extend from the Beltline's Ronald Ave. exit to Eglinton Ave. (This would serve as a connection to Prospect Cemetery.)
- Beograd Gardens should be marked on the map, and a yellow square path/ road intersection symbol should be placed at its east end.
- Other yellow symbols should mark the Brick Works, both of Mt. Pleasant Cemetery's Merton St. gates, and entrances opposite Forest Hill Memorial Arena.
- Red stairway symbols (with step numbers) should be placed at the exits at Mt. Pleasant Rd. and Merton St. (30 steps), Yonge St. (34 steps), Eglinton Ave. (36 steps), Dufferin St., Montcalm Ave. and Shaftesbury Ave.

Other maps

The "Exploring Toronto's Parks & Trails" map is far more effective than the cycling map in conveying the importance and unity of the Beltline. It requires two corrections. The western leg of the York Beltline Trail (from Caledonia to Croham/ Bowie) should be coloured brown, as should a short connector trail linking the Moore Park Ravine trail with the Brick Works.

The "Central Ravines, Belt Line and Gardens" Discovery Walk map [97] requires updating. It is this Discovery Walk which the Ontario Trails Council lists in its comprehensive coverage [98] of trails throughout the province. The fact that that the Beltline – Toronto's longest rail trail – is not mentioned as an independent entity by the OTC is a sign that the Beltline's continuity shortcomings are stymying the trail's true potential.

WEBSITE

It's vitally important that a website provide 'one-stop' access to all information relevant to the Beltline Trail. It should be designed for ease-of-use on mobile devices as well as computers with larger displays. Mobile apps should be developed for the Discovery Walk, and for connections to other trails and parks.

[97] http://www.toronto.ca/parks/pdf/trails/DW_Central.pdf
[98] http://www.ontariotrails.on.ca/trail-activities/cycling---roads-paths/

NOMENCLATURE

Beltline spelling

The spelling of “beltline” is inconsistent. The trail as a whole is variously referred to as the *Belt Line Recreational Trail,* the *Belt Line Linear Park* or simply *The Belt LIne*. The word separation reflects anachronistic, 19th century usage, when circular suburban rail routes were called Belt Lines. In the 21st century, however, single-word spelling is more common, as evidenced by the Calgary’s *Beltline,* Atlanta’s *Beltline*, and the Washington *Beltway* (the highway equivalent).[99] In Toronto, the *Kay Gardner Beltline Park* and *York Beltline Trail* names also adhere to accepted modern usage. We contend that the name of the entire trail should follow suit. It is important to establish uniform spelling consistent with contemporary principles. (As this report is being written, even Google’s spell checker is flagging “Belt Line” as incorrect.)

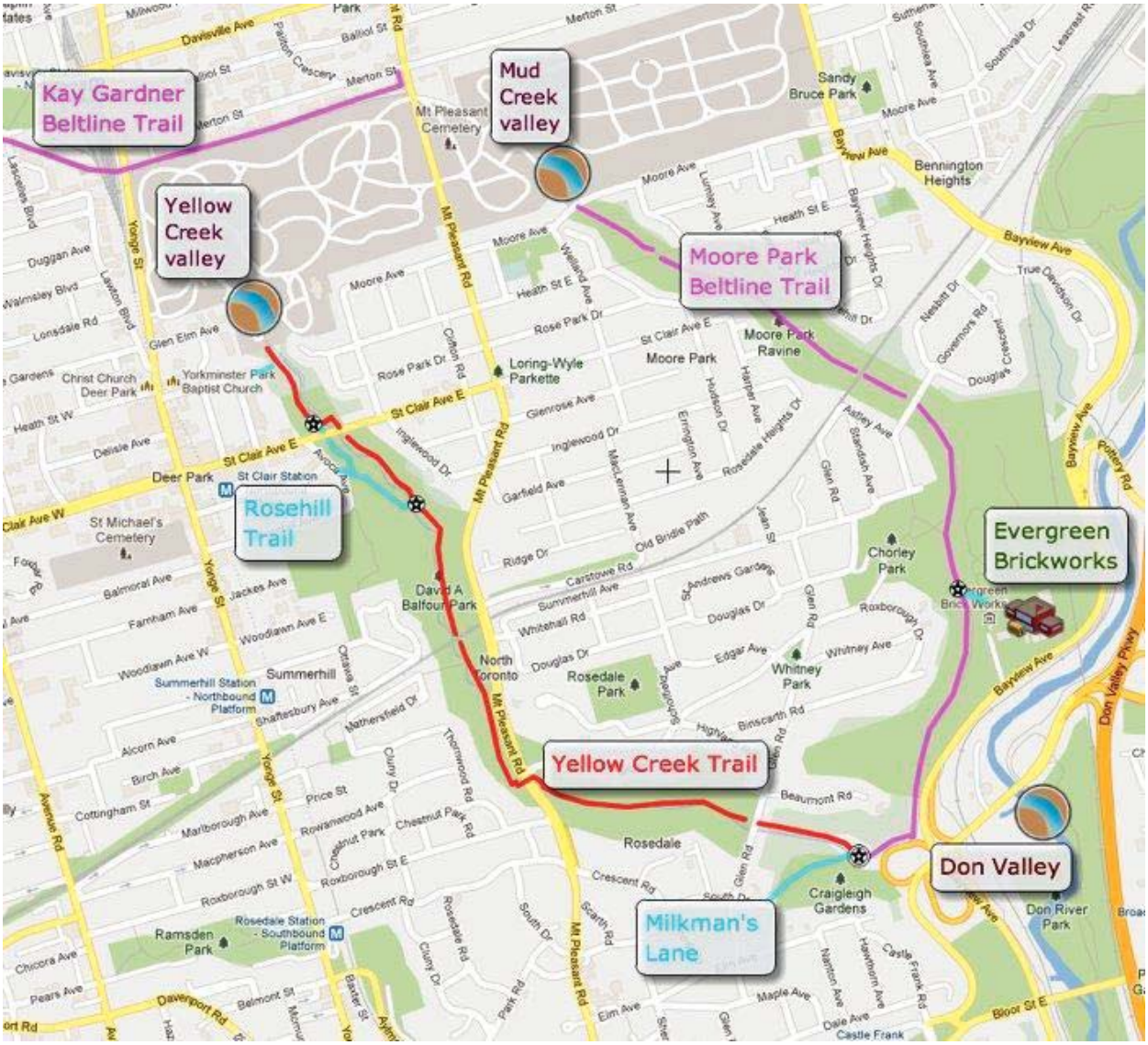
Name of entire trail

We have previously made the case that the term “recreational” is unduly restrictive and does not adequately describe the multifarious functions that 21st century users put the trail to. We also feel that inclusion of the city name would signify that the trail is in the same league as other major North American rail trails.
We therefore propose that “Recreational” be replaced by “Toronto” in the official title, whose new name would be *Toronto Beltline Trail*.

Secondary trail names

The *Kay Gardner Beltline Park* and the *York Beltline Trail* names should not be changed in any way. Both should be considered local components of the *Toronto Beltline Trail*.

[99] The terms *Beltline* and *Beltway* are derived from transportation infrastructure and their use should not be expanded to include related geomorphic features (such as the Yellow Creek ravines)



Map of trails in the Lower Don tributary system

Yellow Creek and Mud Creek ravine systems

The now dry upper course of Mud Creek passes through the east half of Mount Pleasant Cemetery, while the Yellow Creek valley runs through the west half. Both creeks are tributaries of the Don River. They descend – via sewers and open stream – into the Don Valley, converging just north of the Belt Line Railway's now demolished Rosedale Station (near Bayview Ave.).

- The trail running through the Moore Park Ravine past the Brick Works should be formally named the *Moore Park Beltline Trail*. In the alternative, it could be called – less glamorously – the *Mud Creek Beltline Trail.*

- Much confusion exists around the names of trails running within the Yellow Creek valley, which have not all been standardized. These trails are **NOT** part of the Beltline system. We propose:
    - *Yellow Creek Trail* as the new moniker for the main trail, incorporating the *Park Drive Reservation Trail* (running from *Milkman's Lane* to Mt. Pleasant Rd.), and what is sometimes

referred to as the *Avoca Trail* or *David Balfour Park Trail,* traversing the floor of the David Balfour Park, and then leading along the floor of the Vale of Avoca to Mt. Pleasant Cemetery. The *Park Drive Reservation Trail* name should be retired. It isn't memorable and it involves a contradiction in terms (drive – trail).

- *Rosehill Trail*, as the name of the trail running from the bridge across Yellow Creek in David Balfour Park up the west slope of the Vale of Avoca to the Rosehill Reservoir; it will also include the path that runs at a high elevation northwards to the St. Clair bridge.
- The *Milkman's Lane* trail should preserve its traditional name.

Beltline Terminus Points

In order to strengthen the identity of the Beltline trail, it is important to establish official trailheads.

- Track laid down by the Belt Line Railway up through the Moore Park Ravine shunted off from the Don Valley line [100] at Rosedale Station. Ideally, the site of the demolished station would be a fine choice for the Beltline's southeast terminus. The present day reality is that the station site is situated precisely where the Don Valley Parkway's Bloor exit road passes over Bayview Ave.[101] Since a tangle of highway ramps and cloverleaf roads is not a suitable point for a trailhead, we should be looking for a compromise location.
- A more memorable and convenient end point for the trail can be found about 300 m. west of the Rosedale Station location at the three-way trail junction where the Beltline, Milkman's Lane, and the Park Drive Reservation Trail (a.k.a., the Yellow Creek Trail) all converge.
- The York Beltline Trail's west trailhead at Bowie Ave. (near Croham Rd.) should be recognized as the Beltline's western terminus point.

Left: Proposed south trailhead location at junction of Moore Park Ravine trail (foreground), Milkman's Lane (veering to the left) and the Park Drive Reservation Trail (slightly to the right)

Right: Existing west trailhead of the York Beltline Trail,at Bowie Ave. Note red sheltered wayfinding station

[100] Now known as the CN Bala Subdivision

[101] Email from Derek Boles, historian of the Toronto Railway Historical Assoc., to Michael Black, Dec. 12, 2012

CONNECTIVITY

There is enormous potential for the Beltline and Yellow Creek trails to connect with other pieces of off-road and on-street bike and pedestrian infrastructure. This was realized as long ago as 1970. “Toronto Planning Board unanimously supports creating a park which, if linked to proposed nature trails from Etobicoke to Scarborough, would form a continuous walkway ‘without rival in North America’.” [102]

CONNECTION BETWEEN KAY GARDNER AND YORK BELTLINE TRAILS

Let us begin with a key missing link. The western terminus of the Kay Gardner Beltline Park and the eastern terminus of the York Beltline Trail are separated by a gap of 650 metres. Many trail users travel between the two segments of the Beltline by making an on-street connection across the Allen Rd. along Elm Ridge Drive and Roselawn Avenue. Beltline regulars who consider it worthwhile to ‘hop’ between the two trails appreciate that the York Beltline Trail is a full 2.0 km long. Its distinctive scenery and imaginative layout make it a significant addition to the Beltline experience. Unfortunately, the gap between the trails is not particularly user-friendly or well-signed. As a result, many people who are familiar with the Gardner trail are not aware that the other trail exists – and the same is also true with frequent users of the York trail.

The left red arrow marks the York trail exit; the right arrow marks the Gardner exit. The left lime arrow indicates the route of the proposed exit at 901 Roselawn; immediately to its right the shorter lime arrow marks the position of a full extension to Marlee Ave.

Our first recommendation is to provide wayfinding signage at trailheads informing users that the Beltline trail continues on the other side of the Allen Rd. as a different segment. Instructions should be given as to how to make the connection. It is important to specify that cyclists should proceed along Signed Route 26, and then follow the Roselawn bike lanes. Of course, these details should also be marked on Beltline system maps.

At the western end of the Gardner trail there are two choices for crossing the Allen. One can proceed south to Aldburn, but the route becomes convoluted after crossing the Allen bridge. We recommend the north option. After travelling up the footpath beside the Allen Rd., it is necessary to take Signed Route 26 west along Elm Ridge across the Allen Bridge to Marlee. Next, cyclists can use bike lanes on Roselawn until they reach the east end of Beograd Gardens. Both wayfinding and safety would be improved if cyclists could use continuous bike

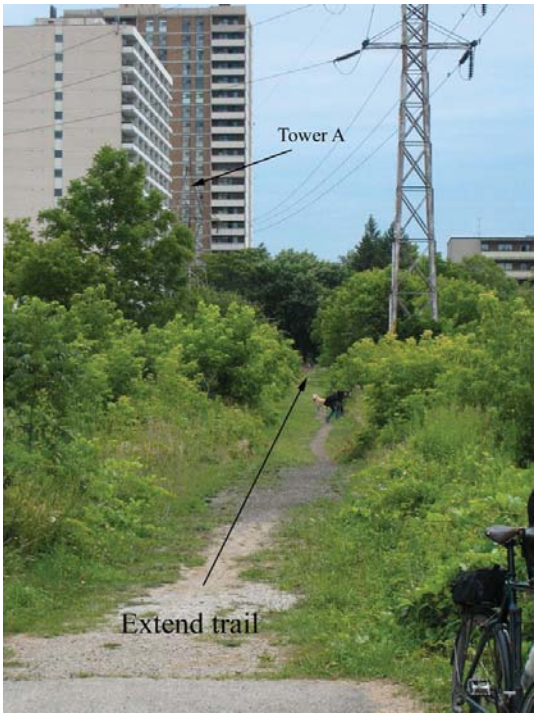
[102] Most aldermen want a belt line park”, *Toronto Star,* Aug. 22, 1970

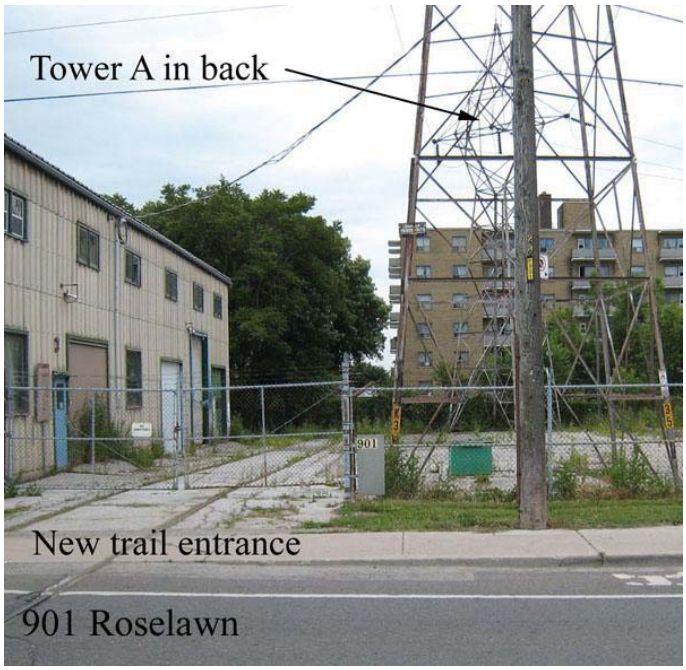
lanes. Accordingly, we recommend that bike lanes on Roselawn be extended east to Elm Ridge, at least as far as Newgate Rd.

Left: Elm Ridge Dr. bridge over Allen Road
Centre: Roselawn Ave., east of Marlee Ave.
Right: Entrance to east end of York trail looking south towards Beograd Gdns. from Roselawn
(N.B. – Photo of entrance to the Gardner trail at Elm Ridge in Zebra Crossings section)

Another improvement should be made at Beograd Gardens. As this is one-way, the City should designate the sidewalk as a multi-use pathway in order to allow cyclists to ride on it legally. It is not obvious that this humble, narrow sidewalk is the main entry point to the York Beltline Trail. No directional signage exists on Roselawn and Beograd Gardens. The same deficiency exists at the trailhead. Furthermore, a dirt path that is not yet part of the Beltline runs from the paved trail eastward through a neglected, scrubby area.. A Dead End sign should be erected in order to prevent trail users from wasting time venturing down this cul-de-sac.

Frequent users of the York Beltline Trail have long hoped that it would be extended eastward along the alignment of the old Beltline right-of-way to Marlee Ave. This would provide it with a proper trailhead, and would also sidestep all of the problems associated with Beograd Gardens and a dead end. In the summer of 2012, Cycle Toronto recommended to Councillor Josh Colle various improvements to the York trail, the chief of which was remedying shortcomings of the trail's eastern terminus. As a result of our discussions with Councillor Colle's office and City staff, we are pleased to report that **progress is now being made in extending the trail.**





Left: Original Beltline right-of-way would be used for east extension of York trail
Right: Alternate entrance option using lane at 901 Roselawn Ave.

In the event that the City is only partially successful in negotiating a right-of-way to the east of the York trail's present terminus, we would be content to see the path extended as far as the Hydro One property at 901 Roselawn. The entrance to the trail could be routed along the lane to the east side of the hydro tower marked A in the above photo. It would provide far more space than is now available at Beograd Gardens and the trail length would be extended by 200 m.

Property ownership issues may be thornier on the east side of Marlee. Ideally, the York trail could also be extended from Marlee to the east wall of the Allen Rd. If this were accomplished, then if would make sense to invest in a footbridge across the Allen, providing an ideal link between the two Beltline segments. An opportunity to construct the bridge may exist in conjunction with the Allen Road upgrade project. This would mark a great step forward in unifying the Beltline and establishing real continuity.

BRICK WORKS CONNECTIONS

Access problems

The Evergreen Brick Works is still at an early stage in its growth. The complex lies in the heart of the Don Valley, and remedying deficiencies in its connections to the rest of Toronto is of regional importance. As one approaches the Brick Works from Bayview Ave., one immediately notices sprawling parking lots that are reminiscent of car-centric shopping malls. [103] As with shopping centres, these parking lots quickly reach full capacity at busy times on weekends. The priority given to the private automobile betrays an egregious contradiction that compromises the Evergreen Brick Works' essential mission as a showpiece for environmentally positive design. Motorists enjoy easy access from the DVP and the Bayview Extension, while

[103] We would prefer that parking facilities at the Brick Works be less visible. They could be moved underground or at the very least shielded by tall evergreen hedges.

many visitors relying on active transportation are compelled to 'run the gauntlet' on Bayview. Access for users of mobility devices is even more problematic. The proposed Chorley access trail will benefit them, but this must be done in tandem with improvements at Moore Ave. and Heath St.

TTC access

As for public transit, the Brick Works is virtually off the radar. It isn't integrated into a major transit route. A shuttle bus runs at a frequency of every 30 to 45 minutes, turning a TTC trip to the Brick Works into a lengthy, planned excursion into the Don Valley. Abysmal transit access is cutting off the rather isolated complex from its large downtown customer base, many of whom do not own automobiles. The TTC's foot-dragging highlights the urgency of improving the ravine trails for cycling –which is now the best sustainable method of travelling to the Brick Works.

The Don system

The Brick Works is situated between two of central Toronto's major trails: the Beltline and the Lower Don. The proposed Chorley trail will provide a good connection from the Beltline to the Brick Works. The weak link in the chain is getting safely from the Brick Works to the Lower Don. At the present time, most cyclists travel about 1 km. along Bayview Ave. and Pottery Rd., both of which carry large volumes of traffic at high speeds. Cyclists who are drawn to off-road trails because of their safety and pristineness are instead being exposed to highway-strength levels of traffic and pollution.It would be far safer and more convenient if a direct, non-vehicular link across the Don River were to be established using a rail viaduct.

> "The Chester Hill Rail Bridge is an unused rail line which could become a landmark connector between the Don Trail, the Brick Works site and the east side of the valley at Chester Hill lookout. While it is likely that the line will be designated for future rail use there may be opportunities to use the support structure to 'hang' a pedestrian/bike bridge over the Don River and adjacent active rail line. . . . It can be done in stages. It could be called "The Don Valley Rail Path". . . . The C.P.R. / Chester Hill / rail bridge line is technically not abandoned; there are apparently longer term plans to use it for a Go Train. However, the structure could be used to support a connection." [104]

Roxborough

Cycling to the Brick Works from points west can be done via the Rosedale Valley Road. This involves a huge detour south, and the connecting trails along Bayview are still awaiting completion. A superior route from the west could be developed at minimal expense. Riders would take the Beltline south from the Brick Works, connecting to the Park Drive Reservation Trail. They would cross at the stoplights we are proposing for Mt. Pleasant Rd., proceeding along its west side in a southeast direction to Roxborough. There is no sidewalk along this 130 m. stretch. We therefore recommend that the primitive dirt path be upgraded to a concrete, multi-use sidewalk, which would benefit most users:

- all cyclists going northbound, who would be going the wrong way if they use regular northbound traffic lanes on Mt. Pleasant Rd.
- southbound riders who are not comfortable riding close to cars on a quasi-highway
- wheelchair users who have difficulty negotiating a narrow dirt path. [see Handicapped Accessibility section]
- able pedestrians who prefer not to be inconvenienced by mud

Travellers would turn west at Roxborough St. E., a safe side street that will take them through Rosedale to a newly-installed stoplight at Yonge. TTC users would have a one-block walk south to the Rosedale Station.

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[104] *Connecting Trails, Communities and the Brick Works in the Lower Don. Summary Report of June 28, 2011 Workshop.* ed. Paul Young (July, 2011) p. 11, 15, 16

Cyclists may wish to push west, with the option to connect to the Davenport and Annette bike lanes as far as Jane St.

We feel that this provides an ideal western route to the Brick Works that will connect it to a huge potential user base in the following neighbourhoods: Rosedale, Yorkville, Rathnelly, the Annex, Davenport, the Junction, and High Park.

CONNECTIONS TO OTHER OFF-ROAD TRAILS & ON-STREET BICYCLE FACILITIES

The string of trails along the Beltline and Yellow Creek occupy an absolutely central position in the city. As other nearby trails and bike lanes are built, extended or upgraded, the Beltline will increasingly function as a hub, connecting to various bicycle facilities that fan out in all directions. It is vital to alert Beltline users to the location of these routes through signage, maps, and website information. In this way, people will expand their list of favourite outdoor rides and walks. Since the new trails will mostly connect to the Beltline's extremities, pressure should be taken off of the Forest Hill section of the Gardner, which many people use because they are not aware of alternatives.

Eglinton/ Burnhamthorpe

The proposed addition to the Eglinton Ave. West Trail will see bike lanes installed from Jane St. to Weston Rd. It is to be hoped that bike lanes on Eglinton will be eventually extended further east from Weston Rd.– at least to Caledonia. The goal would be the creation of a continuous, on-street bike facility on Eglinton that Beltline users can use from the western terminus of the Beltline to the Mississauga border. Moreover, one should not overlook the bike infrastructure that is available in Peel County. [105] A route may be taken through Centennial Park that connects to the Burnhamthorpe Trail, a bikeway that runs west through almost the entire length of Mississauga. It ends about 1 km. east of the Highway 403 and the Oakville border.

We also support the construction of bike lanes on Eglinton Ave. as an integral part of the Eglinton LRT project. Conceivably, cyclists could exit the Beltline at the Chaplin LRT Station and ride on bike lanes along Eglinton to Kennedy Station. If this were achieved, an almost continuous bikeway from Scarborough to Oakville would be possible.

Humber Loop (north end)

Compared to the Beltline's Yonge Street/ East Loop, little of the Humber Loop's original right of way survives. The only viable, off-road stretch suitable for cycling or walking is located on the TNP Hydro Corridor. It starts at Woolner Park, on the east side of Jane St., 400 m. north of St. Clair Ave. W. Those exploring the corridor should head west, wrap around a hydro installation, then proceed to Rockcliffe Blvd. Descend along Terry Drive and use a paved walkway (circled in photo below) to push along the south side of the hydro corridor until Symes Road is reached. At this point the old Beltline route veered south, though what is left of the meatpacking district.

This route measures a mere 1 km. Although the scenery is scarcely memorable, the same cannot be said about the odours blowing from the nearby abattoirs. The Humber Loop excursion can only be recommended to those who wish to boast that they have ventured onto the "other" Beltline.

[105] http://www.mississaugacycling.ca/wp-content/uploads/mastermap.jpg

Left: Walkway near Humber Loop right-of-way, Terry Drive (St. Clair and Jane)
Right: View of the Humber Valley, with the Humber Loop Beltline tracks in the foreground, and Old Mill and the Bloor Street Bridge in the distance. ca. 1895-1900

West Side Mall

The York Beltline Trail ends abruptly at Bowie Ave. and Croham Ave. If a bridge were constructed across the CN Newmarket Sub tracks to the West Side Mall, cyclists could safely connect to the Trethewey 'suggested' bike route that leads west to the Humber valley trail system.

CN Newmarket Sub Rail Corridor Trail

The Bike Plan lists an off-road rail trail to be built along the CN Barrie rail corridor from just south of Eglinton to north of Finch. The Barrie corridor would directly link to the York Beltlne's trailhead, providing a superb 9 km.connection almost to the city's northern boundary.

Prospect Cemetery

Prospect Cemetery is located 3 blocks south of the York Beltline Trail, and may be reached directly via Montcalm Ave., or via Ronald Ave. for signaled access. A recent study notes that the cemetery "provides local residents and cyclists a safe and accessible connection north to Eglinton Avenue. Given the adjacency of the Cemetery to Earl's Court Park, an opportunity arises to connect these green spaces to the City's large green space network. The Mount Pleasant Cemetery and its integration to the Belt Line trail was cited as a precedent."[106]

West Toronto Railpath

From a larger perspective, the 2-km. long Prospect Cemetery can also function as a link to the West Toronto Railpath which will reach Strachan Ave. (south of King St.) after its expansion south. Phase 2 of the West Toronto Railpath also proposes a northward extension along the Georgetown rail corridor, terminating at Keelesdale Park. This may be continued north as the proposed Black Creek Drive trail, terminating at Queen's Drive (just north of Lawrence Ave.)

[106] Avenue Study St. Clair Avenue West (Keele St to Glenholme Ave) City of Toronto Planning Department (2006) Appendices, p. 3 http://www.toronto.ca/planning/pdf/stclairkeele_finalrep_5_appendices.pdf

Marlee/ Lawrence Heights

Bike lanes lead along Roselawn Ave. to others that go up Marlee Ave. (almost to Lawrence). As part of the Lawrence Heights redevelopment project, cycling infrastructure is being planned that should extend from Lawrence to Yorkdale Mall.

Allen Greenway

The proposed Allen Greenway will start at the western terminus of the Gardner trail (next to the Allen wall) and run parallel to the Allen Rd. to Ranee Ave., where it will veer northeast through Baycrest Park, ending at Neptune Drive. The 3.4 km.-long Allen Greenway could be integrated into a long-distance corridor. At the north end it would connect with Downsview Park and York University. At the south end a walkway next to the Allen Rd. reach 2 blocks short of Cedarvale Park and Sir Winston Churchill Park (thence to the St. George/ Beverly bike lanes). Ironically, this cycling corridor would approximate the route of the cancelled Spadina Expressway.

Cedarvale Ravine

Good wayfinding is critical to connect users between Cedarvale, the Eglinton West Station, and the Beltline. The north end of Cedarvale Ravine is separated from the Eglinton West station by the relatively safe, 2-block long Everden Rd. It is probably not necessary to make any changes on Everden other that posting directional signage. (For more details, see “Loop Routes”, below.)

Glen Cedar Rd.

From the Old Park Road Beltline exit, a good corridor extends southwards along Glen Cedar Rd., Signed Bike Route 31, and then, after a southwest jog, down the Christie bike lanes past Bloor. Along certain blocks, Glen Cedar Rd. is one-way. Council has approved the installation of contra-flow lanes that would allow cyclists to proceed in both directions. This measure has been put on hold pending a clarification of legal issues at the provincial level.

Route 35

The on-street signed route 35 may crosses the Beltline at Oriole Park. The route proceeds through side streets northwards, terminating south of Wilson Ave. Route 35 also continues southwest from Oriole Park, connecting to the well-used Poplar Plains/ Russell Hill bike lanes leading south to the downtown. Russell Hill may also be accessed directly at Robert Parkette, just south of Eglinton Ave.

Moore Avenue, Bayview, Sunnybrook and Don Mills

A bike lane on Moore Avenue can be taken east to Bayview Ave., where a variety of quiet side street routes go through Leaside. North of Eglinton, Route 26 may be followed eastwards along Broadway to the entrance to Serena Gundy Park, which connects to the Sunnybrook Park, Edwards Gardens and thence to the Don Mills Rail Trail.

Bayview Ave.

A bike facility has been proposed that would border the Bayview Extension, starting at Moore Ave. continuing as far as Rosedale Valley Road. It would be routed on existing off-road trails and on the road shoulder, separated from motor vehicle traffic by jersey barriers. To a certain extent, a Bayview bikeway may function as an alternative to the Moore Park Ravine trail in accessing the Don Valley. However, many cyclists will undoubtedly prefer the trail, which is not blighted by the noise and pollution generated by highway-like conditions on the Bayview Extension.

Rosedale Valley Road

When the patchwork of pathways lying parallel to Bayview Ave. have been upgraded to a continuous bikeway on Bayview, cyclists will have available a pleasant route looping to the downtown via Rosedale Valley Road.

Milkman's Lane/ Sherbourne/ Danforth

The recently restored Milkman's Lane winds its way up to South Dr. in Rosedale. If cyclists ride 100 m. west, they can use Signed Route 41 to connect to the separated bike lane network on Sherbourne St. Route 41 also connects to the Bloor bike lanes that go over the Prince Edward Viaduct to the Danforth.

Rosehill Reservoir/ Yonge

A path leads up the west slope of David Balfour Park to the Rosehill Reservoir. The Reservoir park functions as a valuable link a route that Cycle Toronto Midtown is endeavouring to develop as an alternative to Yonge St. [107] It would enable riders to proceed along side streets as far south as the Summerhill subway station; and north as far as the Beltline at Mt. Pleasant Cemetery.

LOOP ROUTES

Cedarvale/ Nordheimer Loop

Additionally, cyclists at Rosehill Reservoir may ride along Signed Route 20 from the north end of the reservoir along Rosehill Ave. and Balmoral Ave. to the Poplar Plains/ Russell Hill bike lanes. The Nordheimer Ravine is close by, and it may be taken northwest as far as the St. Clair West subway station. After proceeding to Heath St. W., cyclists should descend into the Cedarvale Ravine, which ends just 2 blocks shy of Eglinton. Everden Rd. covers the 2 blocks the Eglinton West subway station, from which a multi-use pathway leads north along Allen Road to the Gardner Beltline. This completes a circular route along the Beltline, Yellow Creek, the Nordheimer Ravine and Cedarvale Park.

Heath St./ Route 20.

Another loop route is possible that includes the York Beltline Trail. At the north end of the Vale of Avoca, stairs lead west to Heath St., which extends westwards until it reaches Tichester Rd. and Signed Route 20. This connects to the Vaughan and Rogers Rd. bike lanes. Prospect Cemetery may then be taken northwards to connect to the York Beltline Trail, thus completing the loop.

Alternatively, trail users may travel along Heath St. only as far as the St. Clair West subway station's north entrance, where a short descent leads to the Cedarvale Ravine and thence to the York Beltline Trail via the Eglinton West subway station.

Moore Park Ravine/ Vale of Avoca Loop

For details, see Mt. Pleasant Cemetery section above.

Tour de Beltline

The Tour de Beltline is the most ambitious circular route. The original 1890s Belt Line east loop plans involved laying new track at the north and east ends. Elsewhere, railway engineers relied on existing trunk line track in order to route their trains to Union Station. Cyclists interested in recreating the original route as a 'Tour de Beltline' may emulate 19th century strategy by relying on some of Toronto's best known trails. Their location

[107] Yonge Street Hill Winter Alternatives Report. Ken Brown (2011)

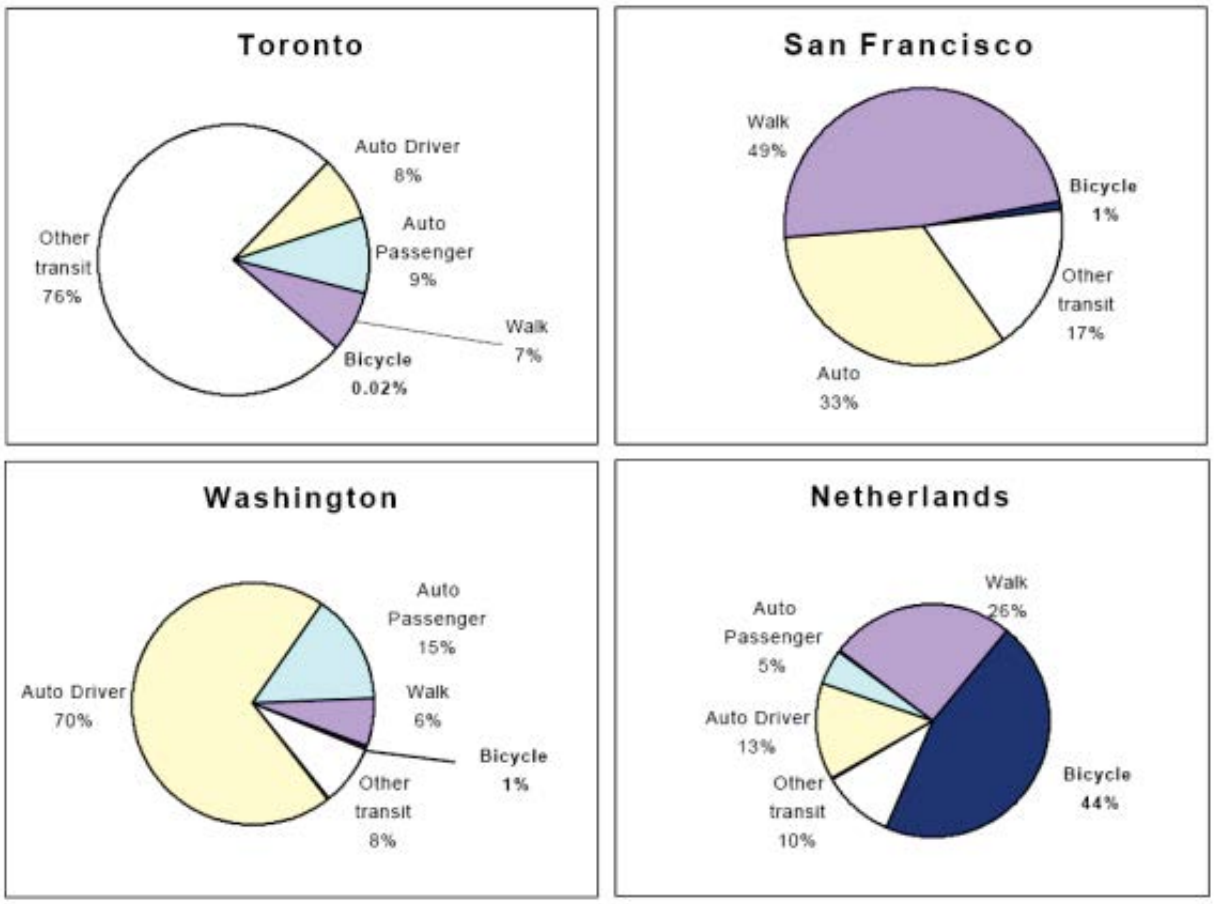
approximates but is for the most part is not identical to the exact position of the original tracks – some which are still in active use.

1. Start at Union Station.
2. As it is no longer by the lake, proceed down the Bay bike lane to the waterfront.
3. Take the Martin Goodman Trail east
4. Then turn north up the Lower Don Trail
5. Ride to Pottery Road, which connects to Bayview and thence to the Brick Works
6. A short trail links to the Moore Park Ravine trail
7. Proceed north up to Moore Ave.
8. Cross over and enter Mt. Pleasant Cemetery through the Visitation Centre gate
9. Head northwest through the cemetery to the underpass and exit at the east Merton gate
10. Travel the length of the Kay Gardner Beltline Park to Allen Road
11. Ride on-street west along Elm Ridge and Roselawn to Beograd Gardens, and enter the York Beltline Trail
12. Proceed to the stairs at Montcalm Ave., which should be taken to the north gate at Prospect Cemetery
13. Traverse both the cemetery and Earlscourt Park
14. Ride along the Davenport bike lane west to Osler St., heading south until Cariboo Ave.
15. Enter the West Toronto Railpath and ride to Dundas St. W.
16. Connect back to the Martin Goodman Trail by Lansdowne and Jameson (or, after the extension of the WTRP, the Strachan bike lanes)
17. Return to Union Station via the MGT and Bay

TRANSIT CONNECTIONS

General recommendations

More than a decade ago, the Toronto Bike Plan called attention to this city's lack of success in developing cyclist access to transit stations. Whereas 44% of the Dutch population ride their bike to local public transportation stations, only 0.02% of Torontonians cycle to public transit.



Rapid Transit Station Access Modal Splits in 4 locations [108]

> [In Toronto] almost half (48%) of recreational cyclists cite "distance" as the major reason they didn't use their bicycles to travel to work or school, or for other utilitarian purposes. The combination of cycling and public transit – bike-and-ride – offers an excellent way to extend the practical trip distance for cyclists. Travellers can ride their bike to the nearest TTC subway or GO Transit station and continue their journey on transit, either with or without their bicycle. This travel option is very popular in some major European cities, but has not yet become popular in Toronto.[109]

It is imperative that Toronto's poor record for multi-modal connectivity be improved, not just for cyclists but also for pedestrians. Planners should make it easy for travellers on the Beltline to hop on the TTC; and likewise, the Beltline should be made accessible for TTC riders. In order to meet these goals, all subway and LRT stations in close proximity to the Beltline should be equipped with:

1. Directional signage to the Beltline (as well as other trails, major parks, etc.)
2. Generous bike parking facilities, preferably sheltered from precipitation
3. Easy access to, and passage through, transit stations for cyclists with bikes
4. BIXI stands

[108] City of Toronto. *The Toronto Bike Plan* (2001) s.8.1 http://www.toronto.ca/cycling/bikeplan/pdf/chapter08.pdf
[109] I*bid.*, s.8.2

Left: BIXI station at Montreal's Saint-Laurent metro station
Right Sheltered bike parking area, Alewife MBTA station, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Castle Frank subway station

A proposal has been made to link the Moore Park ravine trail with the Castle Frank subway station by utilizing the cloverleafs and westbound off-ramp leading from Bayview Avenue to Bloor St. This would provide cyclists and pedestrians with an important subway connection to the Beltline's southern trailhead.[110]

Davisville and St. Clair subway stations

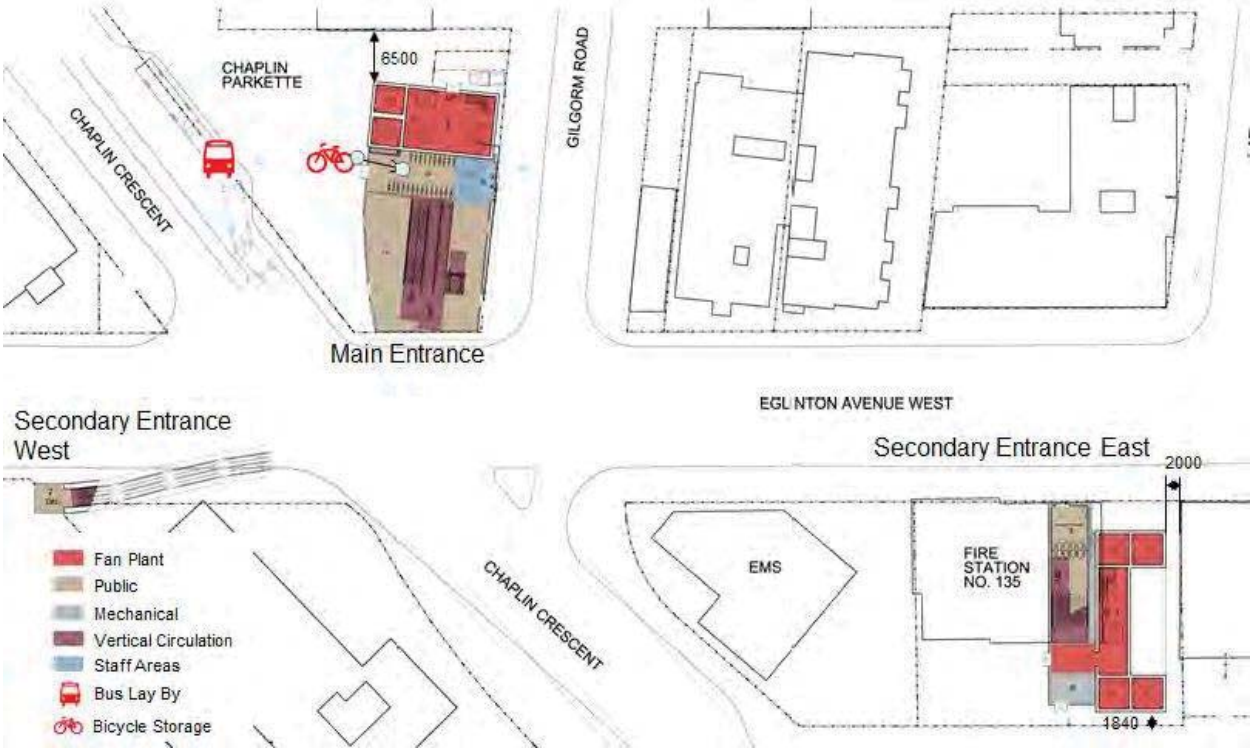
Stairs on the east side of Yonge St. provide the most direct means of reaching the Davisville subway station. However, most mobility device users and cyclists will prefer to use at grade connections through Oriole Park or via Merton St. From Mt.Pleasant Cemetery, alternate subway access may be gained by exiting the Yonge St. gate and heading south to the St. Clair Subway.

Chaplin LRT Station

The future Chaplin LRT station is unique in that it is the only station on the Crosstown Eglinton line that has the possibility of **direct access** to the Beltline trail. The Gardner passes just west of the location of the planned Chaplin Station. The trail carries far more cyclists and pedestrians than Chaplin Crescent itself.

The preliminary design for Chaplin Station [111] presented by Metrolinx on April 25th, 2012 fails to exploit the multi-modal potential of the site's proximity to the Beltline. The primary (accessible) entrance is on the north-east corner of Chaplin and Eglinton. A secondary entrance is placed on the south-west corner of Chaplin and Eglinton. Surprisingly, Metrolinx has not included in its official plans for Chaplin Station a direct, at-grade connection to the Beltline trail.

[110] *Connecting Trails, Communities and the Brick Works in the Lower Don. Summary Report of June 28, 2011 Workshop.* ed. Paul Young (July, 2011) p. 15, 16
[111] http://thecrosstown.ca/news-media/whats-new/online-consultation-chaplin-station



Preliminary design of Chaplin Crosstown LRT Station

As a result, LRT users will be required to ascend a lengthy set of stairs from the path to Eglinton Ave., which towers above the Beltline. After passing through the southwest entrance, they will then have to descend another series of stairs in order to reach the LRT train platform. The flawed design has many repercussions:

- Fit travellers will have to endure a "Stairmaster' type of workout
- Handicapped individuals will be forced to make a detour along Chaplin Crescent several hundred metres long, and then ascend a hill to reach the street-level station entrance on Eglinton
- Cyclists and persons pushing strollers and bundle buggies will also be intimidated by excessive stair-climbing.

Creating safe and connected cycling infrastructure is a key component of the Metrolinx Mobility Hub Guidelines. Metrolinx details a number of specific approaches to implement these guidelines.[112]

- *Ensure all road users are accommodated on major corridors in mobility hub areas. Where possible, provide segregation and protection for bicycles, pedestrians, and transit.*
- *Provide priority measures and segregation for cyclists.*
- *Develop a bicycle network that increases safety of cyclists and positions cycling as a competitive mode choice.*
- *Identify cycling priority corridors on routes to transit stations and between major destinations.*
- *Close gaps between local and regional cycling networks and provide connections to transit stops and stations.*
- *Identify routes that are more attractive to cyclists on which to place cycling facilities such as trails, bike lanes, and cycle tracks. These include routes that:*

[112] Metrolinx Mobility Hub Guidelines (2011), http://www.metrolinx.com/en/projectsandprograms/mobilityhubs/02SeamlessMobility.pdf#page=2

- *Have lower travel speeds and/or vehicular volumes;*
- *Provide a lower grade where elevation changes occur;*
- *Follow travel demand patterns and serve multiple destinations, including shopping, schools, libraries, and parks; or*
- *Serve as a shortcut to major destinations.*

Multi-modal trips are a key component of the Metrolinx Mobility Hubs, and guideline 1.3 explicitly specifies cycling connections to transit stations:

> *1.3 Create safe and direct pedestrian and cycling routes to rapid transit stations from major destinations and regional cycling and pedestrian networks.*

One of the approaches used to implement Guideline 1.3 is to:

- *Extend municipal and regional multi-use trails, walkways and cycling facilities into station areas where possible.*[113]

In addition to interconnectedness and multi-modal integration, Metrolinx promotes [114] other conceptual goals such as lower greenhouse gas emissions and the enhanced comfort of patrons. We are dismayed that the current southwest entrance design fulfills none of these aims.

Certain technical considerations make it difficult to reconfigure the southwest entrance in order to provide it with doors at two levels. One set of doors at a lower elevation would give direct access to the trail – while the other doors, higher up on Eglinton Ave., would allow LRT patrons approaching along Eglinton from points west to conveniently enter the station at street level.

The station architect has admitted that, although space is tight near the Eglinton bridge, a two-level solution could probably be worked out. In the last analysis, the real objection to a direct connection revolves around safety issues, not design. Metrolinx representatives are concerned that a Beltline-level entrance to Chaplin Station would not be properly lit at night.

We recommend the following solutions:

1. The southwest entrance shall include doors at trail level, with minimal grade separation
2. Their hours of opening shall be identical to schedule that prevails at the main north entrance
3. Lighting shall be installed on the entire Gardner trail, from the Allen Rd. to Mt. Pleasant Rd.
4. In both the Eglinton underpass and the vicinity of the Chaplin Station Beltline entrance, bright lighting shall be kept turned on even during daytime hours
5. Clearly visible security cameras should be placed at the trail entrance
6. Bike parking shall be installed within the underpass, which will provide shelter against the elements
7. A BIXI station shall also be set up at street level
8. The set of wood stairs that presently allows trail users to access Eglinton from the east side of the trail should be reinstalled on the west side.

Few rapid transit stations in Toronto are located next to an off-road trail. The Chaplin LRT station presents us with a rare opportunity to achieve a seamless interface between cutting edge transit and a major accessible,

[113] Metrolinx Mobility Hub Guidelines (2011), http://www.metrolinx.com/en/projectsandprograms/mobilityhubs/02SeamlessMobility.pdf#page=12
[114] http://www.metrolinx.com/thebigmove/en/goals/

safe, off-road trail. Adoption of our recommendations will turn Chaplin station into a showpiece of multi-modality that fulfills Metrolinx's goal of comfortable, sustainable transportation. In addition, tangible benefits for the local community include:

- The well-liked Beltline carries far more non-vehicular traffic than nearby Chaplin Cres.
- Local residents could incorporate a pleasant walk along the trail into their TTC journey
- As they pass through the lower entrance, individuals moving on/ with two, three or four wheeled devices would enjoy easy, **direct**, stair-free station access
- Students and library patrons could walk directly to Forest Hill Collegiate and the Forest Hill Public Library without encountering any dangerous road crossings
- The trail also functions as an alternative to Eglinton, an inhospitable and dangerous thoroughfare – particularly near the Chaplin intersection
- Chaplin Station lies in the middle of a section of the Gardner trail that runs 1 km. without being intersected by a major road; users are therefore not vulnerable to automobile-caused accidents
- 24/ 7 lighting of the Eglinton underpass will address a long-standing safety problem
- A well-lit direct entrance will have a synergistic effect: long distance, Beltline through-traffic, in conjunction with LRT patrons flowing through Beltline entrance, will achieve a critical mass that make both uses safe
- Nothing reduces crime and safety problems like human eyes, especially if those eyes are accompanied by dogs

Eglinton West subway/ LRT and Glencairn stations

A pedestrian walkway runs parallel to the Allen Rd. between the walled terminus of the Gardner trail and the Eglinton West subway station. At its south end, the walkway is too narrow to permit cyclists to pass others safely. We recommend that the walkway be upgraded to full multi-use functionality. This would entail widening and improving the lighting. The Allen Rd. upgrade project offers the most appropriate opportunity for implementing these measures.

When the Allen Greenway project has been completed, it will provide alternative subway access to the Gardner trailhead via the Glencairn station.

Caledonia LRT Station

Metrolinx has indicated that the Caledonia Crosstown LRT station will be located in close proximity to the York Beltline Trail, and Crosstown planners are considering a formal connection.

Other Crosstown LRT Stations and buses

The future Bathurst, Oakwood and Dufferin LRT stations will all be located within 500 m. of the Beltline, and the Avenue station will be 700 m. Bus routes also have stops near the Beltline on Bathurst, Dufferin and Caledonia. Trail signage should include nearby bus stop locations.

TRAIL SEGMENTS

VALE OF AVOCA

Cemetery connection

Paths exist on both sides of Yellow Creek in the Vale of Avoca. North of St. Clair, private property encroachments render the trail almost impassable on the east side. On the other hand the well-designed trail on the west bank generally makes for pleasant walking up to the St. Clair Bridge, south of which the trail ascends the Vale of Avoca and becomes much rougher. Walking is laborious on these steep slopes, which have been embedded with wood corduroy logs. Almost at the top of the valley, the west bank path meets the trail leading to the Rosehill Reservoir. Trail users intending to go from the cemetery through to David Balfour Park currently must climb the Vale of Avoca and then descend again to creek level. The route involves too much arduous hill-climbing to make it satisfactory for casual walkers, cyclists and many seniors.

We therefore propose that a pedestrian bridge be built where the gorge narrows, underneath the north side of the tall, existing St. Clair Bridge. (See Lower Don tributary map, above.) Most people have little difficulty traversing the existing trail that extends from the cemetery southwards along the west bank of Yellow Creek. Our proposed bridge would take them to the east bank, which leads south along level, unchallenging terrain, to the main path in David Balfour Park. The trail should be upgraded, boardwalks and small bridges being installed where necessary.

Critics may complain that these additions will interfere with the ‘natural beauty’ of the Vale of Avoca. In response, we must draw attention to the St. Clair Bridge, the boardwalks already in place, and the existing multitudinous, wire Gabion cages lining the creek embankments – none of which are in any way natural. The great advantage of re-routing the main Yellow Creek trail at St. Clair from the west to the east bank is that trail users could make their way through the Vale of Avoca on a level, civilized and very scenic path that does not require precarious climbing. Furthermore, such a route could be more easily traversed in the winter.

Because Yellow Creek is highly susceptible to flooding in the Vale of Avoca, we support proposals to reroute sections of the trail to higher ground.

A bridge connecting the Yellow Creek’s left and right banks would also be helpful near the large CP rail bridge.

Rosehill Reservoir

A secondary path leads from the bridge across Yellow Creek up the west slope of David Balfour Park to the Rosehill Reservoir, which is the chief park of the Summerhill neighbourhood. We would like to call this the *Rosehill Trail*. While cycling may be difficult on the main Yellow Creek trail to the cemetery, the Rosehill Trail provides bicycle riders with an even, paved northern route leading out of the ravine. Cyclists also benefit from the reservoir option insofar as it connects to side streets which may be followed parallel to Yonge as far north as Highway 401.

Left: Ramp leading up the west slope of David Balfour Park to Rosehill Reservoir. 1970s (Photo: Citatus)
Right: Same scene, 2012. Note dead trees lying on slopes in background

MOORE PARK RAVINE

Uniqueness

Ontario boasts the existence of thousands of unspoilt ravines. The Moore Park Ravine is unique, not for its natural qualities, but for its history. We hardly need reminding that the ravine was traversed by the city's first commuter railway. It is less well known that trains later served the Don Valley Brick Works, which supplied a product out of which many of Toronto's early buildings were constructed. Finally, the ravine was fronted by Canada's most lavish residential estate. We will treat aspects of these various heritages in greater detail in later sections. In dealing with trail design issues, **it is important to prioritize the preservation of the ravine's unique history, as well as trail user access to heritage sites.** Of course, it is also important to sustain the ravine ecosystem, which has been under pressure because of City road-building, subway construction, periodic flooding of Mud Creek, inadequate conservation of private property and invasive insects.

Slope south of Moore Ave.

One of the steepest gradients to be encountered on the Beltline is located immediately south of Moore Ave. The aging asphalt surfacing is buckling in many places. In winter the combination of ice, unevenness and a precipitous incline makes this slope absolutely treacherous. Some elderly users are deterred from entering the Moore Park Ravine precisely because this access point is so dangerous.

It has been proposed that the pathway be replaced by a set of stairs. While this measure may an improvement for some users, it constitutes an absolute barrier for those with mobility handicaps, many seniors, users of recumbent and cargo bikes [115] , and young cyclists who risk catastrophic falls hauling their bicycle up or down a set of stairs. The installation of stairs is an entirely inadequate solution.

It makes a great deal of sense to add an alternative to stairs. A switchback would allow easy passage to those using wheeled devices, dogs and walkers who prefer a relatively untaxing, gradual incline. At the same time, athletic trail users (e.g., runners) could take a faster, more direct route via stairs. The pairing is truly inclusive, permitting people of all abilities to choose their preferred option.

A splendid precedent for a switchback/ stairs combination was implemented at nearby Sherwood Park, where a path makes a steep descent from Blythwood Road. It is sensitively executed using natural stone blocks rather

[115] carrying goods from the Evergreen Brick Works farmers' market

than concrete. As is evident from the photo below, the switchback incorporates plentiful trees in its design. Unlike straightforward stairs, the switchback follows a circular route that affords varied views. Many visitors to Sherwood Park use the switchback because it is scenic, and positively enhances the surrounding landscape – **indeed, it is a highlight of the park.**

Another precedent for a switchback will lie at the heart of a recently approved trail connecting the Moore Park Ravine trail with the Brick Works. If the City is investing money in a switchback to connect the lower part of the trail, it is logical to also make a commitment to installing a complementary installation at the all important trailhead near Moore Ave.

Sherwood Park switchback. Direct stairs are in the background, behind the dog-walkers

The serpentine shape of a switchback offers natural traffic-calming that deters rash cyclists from speeding down the ramp at unsafe speeds. It also enhances safety in another way. Trail users would approach Moore Ave. gradually, allowing them and motorists ample time to become cognizant of each other. At the present, powerful mountain-bikers may shoot up the hill, suddenly finding themselves on the Moore Ave. sidewalk with little room to spare. Good path design provides a transitional zone, where cyclists may adjust to the presence of road traffic.

Left: Publicly-owned land available south of Moore Ave. for a switchback with east and south options
Right: Moore Park Ravine, view of east option land from trail level

Switchbacks occupy more real estate than stairs. Thankfully, the city owns a half-hectare parcel of unused land immediately south of Moore Ave., extending about 70 m. east of the Beltline trail. There is more than enough room to accommodate a proper switchback. This is a prime location, boasting a pond just to the south. A switchback would allow the public safe access to wonderful scenery that isn't properly appreciated.

We understand that, within the land parcel to the east of the trail, PFR has identified a federally-protected butternut tree, or possibly an (unprotected) hybrid. We hope that is possible to design the switchback such that the tree is left undisturbed. It may be necessary to obtain special approval for a buffer zone of less than 25 m. In the alternative, a smaller city-owned land parcel could be used to the southwest of the trail.

A totally different option is also possible. A tunnel could be constructed under Moore Ave. that emerges at a point lower in elevation than the street. Going underground has many combined benefits:

- Gradients would be moderated
- Trail users could cross Moore Ave. safely
- Those in wheelchairs and seniors could enter the ravine without difficulty
- Motor vehicle traffic would not be disrupted
- Damage to trees in the Moore Park Ravine would be minimal
- The downward angling of the tunnel would eliminate the need for water pumps, lessening construction costs

Access to the Brick Works

We fully support plans to install another switchback near Chorley Park that will allow all users to go from the Beltline trail to the Brick Works without having to use stairs or make a detour to the south. This path should be wheelchair accessible.

Bayview Ave.

Between the Brick Works and Milkman's Lane, the trail becomes severely constricted by Bayview Ave. and an on-ramp leading to it. Conflicts problems are aggravated by sharp changes in grade, impinging tree foliage and eroded surfacing. In order to facilitate the widening of these two bottlenecks, the City is considering the purchase of two privately-owned parcels of land. We support this initiative, and also recommend that gradients be moderated to the greatest degree possible. The effects of trail widening on the natural habitat are insignificant compared what has happened as a result of nearby highway building in the Don Valley.

MT. PLEASANT CEMETERY

LEGAL STATUS

The cemetery is managed by the Mt. Pleasant Group of Cemeteries (MPGC). Lately, a dispute has been raging over its legal status. The MPGC contends that it is an independent, non-profit corporation that reinvests income above expenses in the many cemeteries it runs. Critics claim that the group was created by the Legislature as a

public trust almost two centuries ago, and the cemetery property thus ought to managed with more accountability to the public. [116] Josh Matlow, the local councillor, has weighed in:

> As your City Councillor I will . . . support the creation of a local oversight committee of interested local residents, ratepayers and tenants associations, and willing councillors from neighbouring wards for our parks, ravines and cemeteries. This includes the Mount Pleasant Cemetery, which is currently run like a private corporation rather than a public trust (as it was meant to be).[117]

Regardless of the outcome of this controversy, we must emphasize the MPGC has a legal responsibility to be responsive to the needs of Beltline users, as formalized in various agreements reached between the MPFC and the City. We should never forget that Mt. Pleasant Cemetery is part of the Beltline. Cycle Toronto considers Beltline continuity and connectivity to be high priorities. To ignore the cemetery – one of the trail's four segments – is simply not realistic. For this reason, we will not allow ownership uncertainties to exclude the Mt. Pleasant Cemetery section of the trail from our discussions or upgrade considerations.

Ownership problems are endemic amongst trails across the continent. Many sections of the Bruce Trail, for example, are routed along privately owned land. Trail users may not be aware whether a part of the trail is publicly owned or not, because the blaze markings are uniform. However, if property owners withdraw permission for the trail to be located on their land – then the trail must be rerouted and hikers may be severely inconvenienced. In the case of the Beltline, this scenario cannot materialize. Although the MPGC has sometimes been less than enthusiastic adhering to its legal obligations, it does have a basic duty to preserve a well-maintained route (close to the right-of-way established by the original rail line) which Beltline users can traverse during daylight hours.

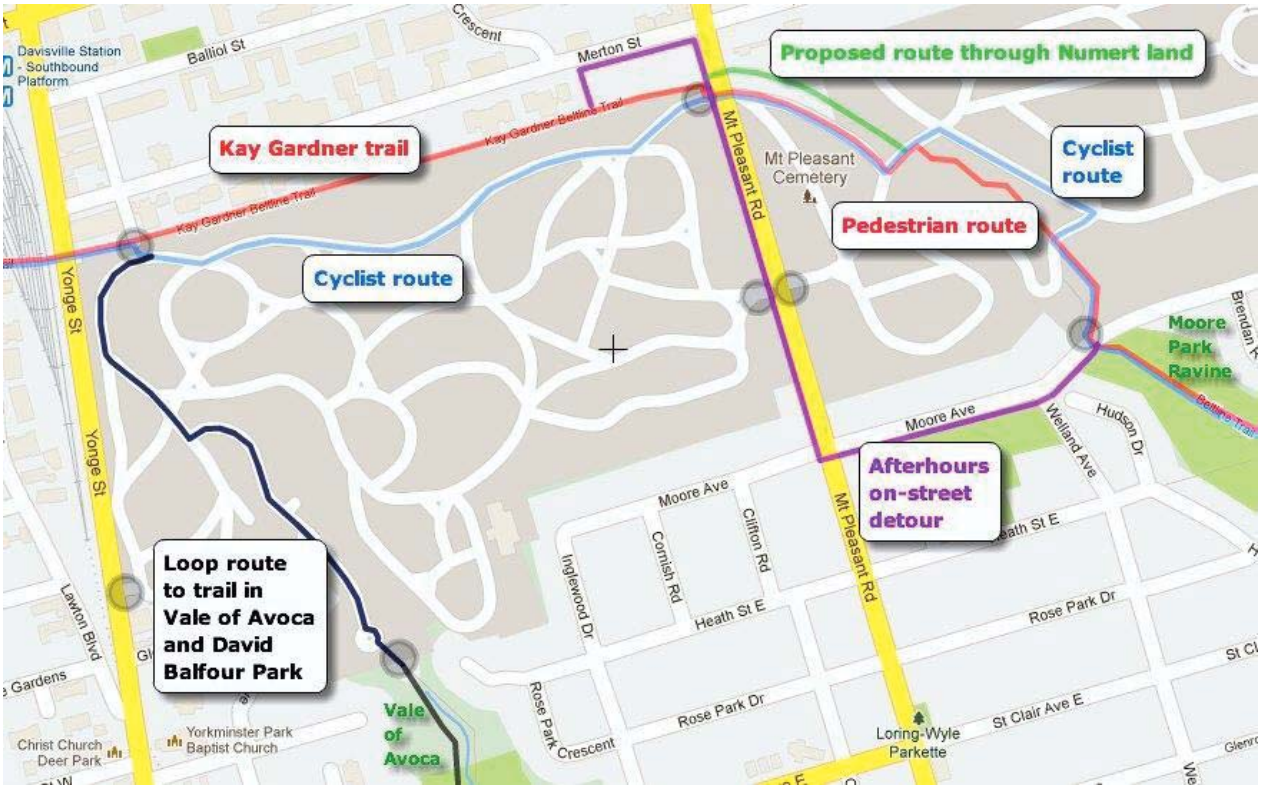
ROUTES

Mt. Pleasant Cemetery's serpentine road network is quite complex, even bewildering. Several route options through and around the cemetery are available for Beltline users. The official map [118] provides minimal information, and we therefore recommend that a more detailed map be posted at the three entrances that let out onto the Beltline, as well as at other key points in the cemetery. No less than five routes are of interest to Beltline users, as follows:

[116] "Grave concerns: Is Mount Pleasant cemetery Group Ontario's 'lost' crown corporation?" Tom Blackwell, *National Post*. May 5, 2012

[117] "A New Approach for Toronto City Hall". Josh Matlow e-newsletter (Retrieved Dec. 12, 2012) http://joshmatlow.ca/ward-22/newsletters/78-a-new-approach-for-toronto-city-hall.html

[118] http://www.mountpleasantgroup.com/deathoccurred/cemeteries/locations/mp



Route map of Mt. Pleasant Cemetery (entrance gates are indicated by grey circles)

1 *Main pedestrian route*

The official route of the Kay Gardner Beltline Park was recently reconfigured along the original railway right-of-way between the Merton St. row of condos and the north wall of Mt. Pleasant Cemetery (terminating at Mt. Pleasant Road). This pathway is popular with pedestrians, who can enter the cemetery via a gate just west of the Mt. Pleasant Road underpass. The route proceeds through the Forest of Remembrance, past the Visitation Centre, exiting through the Moore Ave. gate.

2 *Cyclist route*

Prior to the extension of the Gardner trail, Beltline users would enter the cemetery through the west Merton gate, proceeding to the Mt. Pleasant Rd. underpass along a road that runs roughly parallel to the north wall. Especially in the winter, the majority of cyclists (and wheelchair users) prefer to follow the older route because it is paved and plowed. We recommend that this be retained as an alternate route, including the blue wayfinding line painted along the road edge. In the east half of the cemetery, cyclists diverge from pedestrians at the Forest of Remembrance, riding along a paved road to the east before doubling back. The pavement of this bike-specific detour is marked with a blue dashed line. Additional signage is required at turning points in the route.

3 *Afterhours on-street detour*

Outside of the cemetery's official hours of opening, cemetery gates are all locked. Afterhours Beltline users must resort to an alternate route that involves on on-street, 1-km. detour if they wish to connect from the Gardner trail to the Moore Park Ravine trail. Unfortunately, side street options are limited. The most direct route is along Mt. Pleasant Road and Moore Ave. Proper signage should be posted on these streets, as well as the access lane that passes between 253 and 267 Merton St.

4 *Loop connecting Moore Park Ravine and Vale of Avoca*

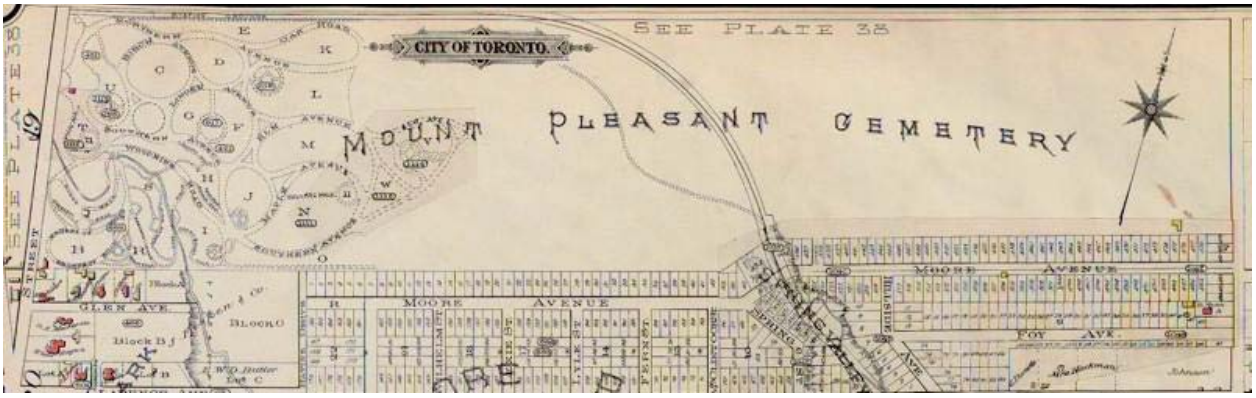
We hope that the planned upgrade to the trail that runs through the Vale of Avoca and David Balfour Park will be completed expeditiously. It will then be possible to travel comfortably in a loop up the Yellow Creek valley and down the Mud Creek valley. The critical junction would be along internal cemetery roads that connect the Mt. Pleasant's Vale of Avoca and Moore Ave. gates. (For details, see above map.) Not many hikers and even fewer cyclists are aware of the possibilities of this loop, which ought to be better publicized. Its potential was recognized by City planners as long ago as 1960: "It might even be possible to make a connection through the cemetery between the ends of the two ravines, in which case a circular system would be created running some 4.5 miles in circumference. [119]

5 *Extension of Gardner trail through Numert land*

When the Belt Line Railway was built in the early 1890s, its route skirted the eastern edge of the cemetery's active burial areas. In fact, no other rail or road route intersected the 200-acre Mt. Pleasant lot until 1915, when the City expropriated cemetery land in order to construct Mt. Pleasant Rd.

Even in 1890, while the Belt Line rail route was still under consideration, there was debate about the cemetery's public interest responsibilities.

> The ravine[120] in the cemetery property, which offers the best if not the only practicable route for the Belt line, is practically not a burial ground. The interments up to this date have only reached a point fourteen hundred feet distant. Two wire fences intervene between this point and the centre of the ravine. . . . What effect the use of this ravine for a railway line would have upon the value of the Mount Pleasant property as a cemetery, in the event of the trustees at some future time desiring to extend the cemetery proper, relates to the question of compensation. As far as I understand the wishes of the people living in the neighbourhood, there is a universal desire that the cemetery proper should not be extended. . . . The trustees of Mount Pleasant represent a public interest. The easterly half of their property should never be used for cemetery purposes, but, if it is to held by the trustees, it should at least be held subject to the condition that it shall interfere as little as possible with the requirements of the general public." [121]



Mount Pleasant Cemetery, 1893. The Beltline tracks curve through the middle. Bayview Ave. is on the right, and Yonge St. to the left.

In 1966, the City transferred the Belt Line right-of-way lands to the cemetery Trustees on condition that the "specific route to be used by the public . . . be a maximum of ten feet in width over the said old Belt Line Railway Right-of-Way lands . . . and the Grantee shall maintain the said Cemetery lands along the line of such a route in

[119] *Natural Parklands in the City of Toronto.* City of Toronto Planning Board (June 1960) p. 5
[120] By "ravine" the author is referring to the Mud Creek valley
[121] *Toronto Daily Mail*. April 30, 1890. Letter to the editor, from Geo. A. Mackenzie dated April 29, 1890

a suitable condition." [122] It was also specified that "there should be walkways through Mount Pleasant Cemetery in accordance with the proposal of the 'Natural Parklands' report" [123]. To wit: "Natural vegetation – including trees, shrubs, wild flowers and tangles of undergrowth – shall be retained to the greatest degree possible." [124] The message is obvious: the public is entitled to pass through Mt. Pleasant Cemetery as privileged users of a scenic trail – rather than as interlopers merely to be tolerated.

Some of the most picturesque areas of the cemetery are in the eastern half within the Mud Creek valley (along which the rail line used to run). The clear intent of the 1966 conveyance was to establish a pedestrian path through this prime land, preserving its natural conditions and keeping it well separated from gravesites, hallowed ground and funerary buildings. Such a route was partially realized in 1983, when a wood-chip path was laid out from the Moore Ave. gate, extending north towards towards what was then called Mepham Garden. [125] In 1991, the Belt Line Working Committee proposed that the pedestrian path be completed all the way north to the Mt. Pleasant Rd. underpass. [126]

Instead of their recommendation being implemented, the opposite occurred. In 1995 another agreement was reached between the MPGC and the City that permitted "the cemetery owners to sell plots on the cemetery property that have been withheld under the conditions of the previous right-of-way agreement." [127] Further encroachments occurred in 2009. A Visitation Centre was built over the old Beltline easement at the previously unspoiled south end. In order to accommodate a new parking lot, the Beltline route was shifted east, but not far enough to escape the presence of parked cars.

Assurances had been made that City "staff has set high standards for the provision of adequate landscaping, buffer zones,screening of the proposed parking area, appropriate grading and safety measures to ensure that users of the trail enjoy an appropriate condition over the easement area." [128] The present reality differs from City promises. The once beautifully situated Beltline route has degenerated into a disjointed patchwork that forces pedestrians and cyclists onto separate, sometimes very narrow, routes – both a shadow of what was intended to be built in 1966. Many local residents feel that the public interest has been shortchanged. Conditions on the Beltline route can be improved if more trees are planted along its border. Conifers would be most suitable, since they will screen parking facilities and roads throughout the winter.

[122] Transfer of Right-of-Way Lands to Toronto General Burying Grounds– Moore Park Ravine". *Board of Control Report* No. 9, Appendix A, Jan. 18, 1966, p. 347
[123] *Ibid.,* p. 346
[124] *Natural Parklands,* p. 13
[125] *A Segment of the Beltline Railway: and inventory and analysis of its development potential for bikeways.* City of Toronto Planning & Development Department (March, 1985) p. 41
[126] *Final Report of the Belt Line Working Committee.* City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Department (1991) p.30-31
[127] Memorandum from Herb Pirks, Commissioner of Parks and Recreation, to the Executive Committee. July 27, 1995
[128] "Toronto Staff Report" from Director, Community Planning to Toronto and East York Community Council. Aug. 2005, 2006

Left: The curved Numert strip extends east from the pedestrian underpass. An oval marks the location where the proposed trail extension ends, and a connecting path could be built through the cemetery, heading southeast

Right: Proposed route for Beltline footpath. Red oval connects wooded Numert property in the background with existing brick walkway leading in the direction of Moore Ave.

If the recent history of the cemetery's south side is one of lost opportunities, at the north end there is more hope for positive change. The original Beltline right-of-way included a 120 metre strip of undeveloped, wooded land curving southeast from Mt. Pleasant Rd. (south of the apartment buildings at 345 and 375 Merton St.). In 1986 the property was referred to as the Numert Construction Limited Lands.[129] The land is now owned by the City. If this parcel was annexed to the Gardner, then the Beltline pathway could be extended east of Mt. Pleasant Road towards the centre of the cemetery. It would be relatively simple to build a footpath connection from the end of the Numert strip to a brick walkway that exists about 25 m. to the southwest.

[129] *A Segment of the Beltline Railway: and inventory and analysis of its development potential for bikeways.* City of Toronto Planning & Development Department (March, 1985) p. 16

*Left: A solid row of conifers screens the Mt. Pleasant Cemetery Visitation Centre parking lot, in order that the eyesore not be seen by visitors to MPGC's cherished Garden of Remembrance. Equal consideration is **not** shown to Beltline users on the brick and asphalt path to the right*

Right: Mt. Pleasant Rd. locked pedestrian underpass parallels larger tunnel just to the south

Mt. Pleasant Rd. Underpass

An added benefit of extending the trail southeast is that the underpass beneath Mt. Pleasant Rd. would be made much safer. Currently, pedestrians must travel through the tunnel designed for motor vehicles. It is flawed by serious blind spots and visibility problems. However, the underpass was constructed with a matching tunnel intended for self-powered traffic. At present, the disused tunnel is permanently gated and locked. Extending the trail through the Numert lands would allow the opening of the gates. Traffic would be separated into two streams, greatly reducing the chances of collisions. Beltline users could walk without interruption on the Gardner path under Mt. Pleasant Rd., continuing along the Numert strip into the heart of the cemetery. The underpass gate would have to be locked at night, but this task would not inconvenience cemetery staff as they already are in the routine of locking an adjacent gate.

Hours of opening

The Beltline right-of-way in Mt. Pleasant Cemetery was transferred from the City to the cemetery trust in 1966 on condition that cemetery management "at all times during daylight hours permit pedestrian access through the Mount Pleasant Cemetery" [130] Accordingly, we recommend that public access to the Beltline route through the cemetery be extended. In proposing a new set of hours of opening, we have selected four criteria:

1. Cemetery gates should be open from dawn to dusk [131]
2. Times should be easy to remember
3. Avoid too many different time periods (e.g., separate times for each of the 12 months is too complicated)
4. Avoid frequent changes (e.g., in 2012, times changed on March 1 and then again on March 11)

[130] "Transfer of Right-of-Way Lands to Toronto General Burying Grounds– Moore Park Ravine". *Board of Control Report* No. 9, Appendix A, Jan. 18, 1966, p. 346

[131] http://www.sunrisesunset.com

STARTING	ENDING	FROM: a.m.	TO: p.m.
Current hours			
March 1	Daylight Savings	8:00	6:00
Daylight Saving	September 30	8:00	8:00
October 1	Eastern Standard Time	8:00	6:00
Eastern Standard Time	February 28	8:00	5:30
Proposed new hours			
Daylight Saving	April 30	7:00	8:00
May 1	August 30	6:00	9:00
September 1	September 30	7:00	8:00
October 1	Eastern Standard Time	7:00	7:00
Eastern Standard Time	February 28	7:30	5:30

Speed limits

Speed restrictions within Mt. Pleasant Cemetery should be revised. The current policy states, “To ensure the safety and respect of those visiting the cemetery maximum speed limit 10 km./h”. Nonetheless, motor vehicles are allowed to travel as fast as 30 km./ hr. We are not aware of a rash of cyclist-caused injuries in cemeteries. As for concerns about noise, we believe the real culprit to be cars, which also pose far more of a threat to the safety of cemetery users than bicycles. We therefore see no justification for imposing unreasonable constraints on cyclists’ speed.

We recommend that a cycling speed limit be set at 20 km./ hr., which is standard in Toronto’s public parks. In a cemetery environment, however, there must be one exception. Special consideration should be shown by cyclists who are travelling in the proximity of groups in mourning, and burial ceremonies. In these circumstances, speeds should be reduced to 10 km/ h, or less. We feel that this rule should also apply to cars, and be posted on the cemetery’s informational sign boards.

Identity strengthening

Amongst the Beltlne’s four segments, the cemetery has the weakest identity. This need not be the case. Throughout much of the 20th century, the Beltline right-of-way was well established at Mt. Pleasant. For this reason the Beltline Trail should be considered not as an intrusion into the cemetery but as an integral part of its heritage. Continuity is of the essence. Most of our recommendations for the cemetery are intended to act in synergy to produce a single effect. We want trail users to feel that **when they are inside the cemetery they are still on the Beltline**. Planting a few Beltline bollards along the route is not enough! We are confident that cooperation between the MPGC, community groups and local councillors will produce dramatic changes in the future.

KAY GARDNER BELTLINE PARK

Multiple routes

Although the Gardner park was the first section of the Beltline to open as a trail, it has recently undergone expansion eastwards, paralleling Merton St. In the Mt. Pleasant Cemetery section (below) we outline the possibility of yet another extension into the heart of the cemetery. The trail's growth requires certain routing issues to be straightened out. At the present time, various routes officially exist both within the cemetery and to the north of its walls.

Brentwood Towers

The Brentwood Towers complex is one of the oldest high rise apartment developments in midtown Toronto. It was built in 1958, when freight trains still chugged along the Beltline right-of-way which abuts the apartment property. Initially, it was not safe to provide a passage from Brentwood Towers parking lot to the Beltline trail. In the 21st century, lack of any direct connection compels the hundreds of tenants to make a circuitous detour. Taking into account the dozens of bridges and gates which allow residents in single-family homes in Forest Hill to access the Beltline from their backyards, it is only reasonable to allow the same privilege to a multi-residential complex that dwarfs in size the dwellings to the west. Accordingly, the City should collaborate with Brentwood's owner, O'Shanter Development Company, in seeing that a connection comes to fruition.

The Friends of Oriole Park group is seeking to annex as parkland a section of land situated at the western extremity of the TTC's Davisville Yard. If they are successful, then it will be possible to connect the Beltline with the extended southeast end of Oriole Park.

YORK BELTLINE TRAIL

HISTORY

The Belt LIne Land Corporation had intended to develop the Fairbank neighbourhood as the largest of its new suburban surveys. Its proposed layout was based on the grid street patterns that were typical at the time. The promoters envisaged an orderly, lower middle class neighbourhood dominated by houses smaller in scale and extravagance than what the developers were planning for upmarket Moore Park. As is the wont of real estate promoters, they used diplomatic language to tip off potential customers that Fairbank homes would not break the bank:

> To meet the requirements of that large class which cannot afford expensive dwellings and yet desire tasteful homes, the survey in the vicinity of Dufferin Street at Fairbank will prove a boon. . . . Speedy growth and steady advance in value must follow the establishment of railway accommodation; and very soon a considerable community will cluster around the present nucleus. … It will lift toiling men and women, for a little while at least each day, out of the grime and scent of the city. [132]

[132] *The Highlands of Toronto*. Toronto Belt Land Corporation promotional pamphlet (1891) p. 13, 21

Fairbank real estate development plan, ca. 1890-92

After the Belt Line Land Corporation went bankrupt, the development of the Fairbank neighbourhood was far less systematic than the paternalistic property speculators from downtown Toronto had been planning. Solid members of the working class did indeed set up residence here, but they did so on their own terms. The former Township of York used to have a less stringent building code than either the City of Toronto, or the Village of Forest Hill. The area has always attracted tradesmen, many of whom used to build their homes with their own two hands. They might do so in stages, adding to their houses as their family size or funds increased. Just as building was haphazard, so were street patterns. The positioning of lots in the Eglinton Ave. photograph from 1924 does not correspond with the original orderly Fairbank plan from the early 1890s.


Eglinton Ave., looking east from Dufferin St. and Vaughan Rd., 1924

The area, which was to become part of the City of York, has always been regarded as a sort of poor cousin of Forest Hill, just down the road.

> Those who chose to live on the city's periphery did so to acquire cheaper housing, not a superior lifestyle. . . . Suburbs were popularly referred to in to in uncomplimentary fashion, through generic terms such as 'the burbs' and 'the sticks,' and specific ones such as 'Scarberia' in the case of Scarborough. Suburban dwellers likewise lacked status, in some cases strikingly so.[133]

14 years have now elapsed since the amalgamation of Toronto's boroughs. Scarborough still gets singled out. On the other hand, urban elites do not denigrate the former City of York – they simply ignore it.

PRESENT PROBLEMS

This is exactly what happened with the York Beltline Trail. It has been open since 2004, but most people living east of the Allen Rd. are unaware of its existence. True to form, when the scope of the Beltline study was being determined, the York Beltline Trail got left out. In 2012, the City has held a series of community consultation meetings in order to obtain public input that will shape improvements on the Beltline. The organizers were solicitous to get a good turnout from Forest Hill homeowners. In contrast, those living near the Beltline west of the Allen Rd. were not invited. The executives, investment bankers and lawyers in Forest Hill are accustomed to getting their way. The "toiling men and women" that the Belt Line promoters tried to lure to Fairbank are used to taking their lumps.

Is it equitable to use public funds to revitalize those parts of a trail passing through three of the wealthiest neighbourhoods in the city, while excluding a section that is situated just south of one of the most underprivileged: the Lawrence Heights Priority Investment Neighbourhood?

[133] Lawrence Solomon. *Toronto Sprawls. A History. University of Toronto Centre for Public Management Monograph Series* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007)

Lawrence Heights Priority Investment Neighbourhood is marked in orange. The York Beltline Trail is coloured green, and identified within red oval

The rationale for ignoring the York trail is that it was built just a few years ago, in 2004. Its pathway surfacing and vegetation are both in better condition than is the case on other segments of the Beltline. Admittedly, the York trail isn't blighted by hundreds of dying trees and wholesale erosion on a grand scale.. However, this should not make planners complacent. In determining whether a trail needs upgrading t**he date of its construction is not nearly as important as whether its design and condition conform to contemporary standards.** The York trail, to be sure, does not embody best practices:

- The York trail suffers from various deficiencies in handicapped accessibility. The trail was completed just as major disability legislation was being passed. [134] Wheelchair users must cope with 3 sets of stairs, 2 unsafe road crossings, 4 sets of tight gates, and a ditch where a sidewalk ought to be. [135] These design shortcomings are all the more unfortunate because in other respects the York's asphalt paving and moderate grades are very wheelchair friendly.
- The pattern is repeated with signage. 7 expensive wayfinding stations incorporate various up-to-date features that users expect in a modern, 21st century trail fixture. We are provided with much neighbourhood information and a large map. But there is no detailed information about the rest of the Beltline! This flaw is more excusable in the Gardner's signage, which was erected well before other trail segments opened. The York is a new addition to the Beltline family and it should show respect for its elders.
- Aside from the wayfinding stations, there are no Beltline directional signs to be found either on or off the trail.
- A proper entrance should be built onto the Beltline from the lower section of Miranda St. If the land is privately owned, an easement should be obtained. Also, both trailheads are served by one-way streets.
- The crossings at Caledonia Rd. and Ronald Ave. receive less commuter motor vehicle traffic at rush hour than the Gardner's major crossings. However, during the day, numerous trucks are on both roads. (See Crossings section above, for details.)

SOLUTIONS

Integration into the Beltline system

For 8 years, the York Beltline Trail has existed as an isolated entity, unconnected in any serious way with other Beltline segments. We have systematically examined all aspects of the problem. As mentioned in the connectivity section, our discussions with Councillor Colle's office and City staff have been fruitful. Progress is now being made in implementing four improvements:

1 The York trail will be extended eastwards towards Marlee, reducing the separation from the Gardner and allowing for a proper east trailhead
2 The Roselawn bike lane will be extended along Elm Ridge to reach the connecting walkway to the Gardner trail
3 Modern signage will be erected on the York trail
4 The Friends of the York Beltline community group will be founded in early 2013

Staff at a recent Allen Rd. stakeholder consultation session confirmed the possibility of a Beltline bridge being built over the Allen Rd., contingent on a specific redevelopment option being chosen.

[134] *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, 2005 and the *City of Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines*, 2004
[135] See Handicapped Accessibility section, below

Entrances

Currently, the easternmost entrance to the York trail is via Beograd Gardens, a one-way street. In order to allow cyclists to ride through the entrance legally, the sidewalk should be designated as a multi-use pathway.

Cyclists who want to travel south from the York trail's western trailhead at Bowie Ave. to Eglinton and beyond are faced with a one-way northbound street as their closest option, namely, Croham Rd. We recommend that the city install a contra-flow bike lane on Croham, as far as Eglinton. Although the curb is cut on the sidewalk to the south of the two black entrance gates, it should also be cut at a point between them in order to permit direct access in a straight line.

Western trailhead at Bowie Ave. and Croham Rd.

Urban character

Compared to other sections of the Beltline, the York trail has a decidedly urban character.

- It is paved in its entirety, and as a result snow-ploughing would be easier to achieve
- Winter maintenance is especially desirable in the vicinity of Walter Saunders Memorial Park, which functions as a central gathering place of the Fairbank neighbourhood
- Objections to lighting ought to be minimal, as few people and little wildlife make their homes adjacent to the trail
- This is one of the few parts of the Beltline that is lined with extensive lawns. Currently, the space is not properly exploited. Possible amenities include picnic tables, community gardens, exercise stations, fire pits or pizza ovens
- Thanks to its retention of many industrial structures, the corridor would be suitable for the display of large-scale, railway-related memorabilia, which would blend into the landscape of locations like Fairbank Junction (at Croham Rd.)
- York trail user demographics reflect Metropolitan Toronto's diversity far better than those of Forest Hill homeowners.

ACCESS

EQUITABLE USE

The trail should be designed such that all authorized users – no matter what active or mobility-impaired transportation mode they choose – are treated with an even hand. The Beltline has been characterized as a linear park. It can only be enjoyed as such if access to its complete length is allowed **on an equal basis** to pedestrians, joggers, cyclists, cross-country skiers and mobility device users. These groups should all be granted 'preferred user' status.

The multi-use mandate lies at the core of our country's premier trail, The Trans-Canada Trail. "The Trail is designed to accommodate six preferred activities: walking/hiking, cycling, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling and canoeing." [136] The Government of Ontario stresses the principle of equitability and inclusion in its *Ontario Trails Strategy* plan, which recommends the enhancement of the trail experience through these strategies:

- Accommodating multiple uses
- Managing user impacts
- Improving accessibility and safety
- Support the development of a framework, tools and strategies for addressing the needs of multiple users, resolving the conflicts that arise among competing uses and promoting a comprehensive system of trails that meets the needs of varied users.
- Nurture the development of an overall approach to trail design that accommodates the widest range of user abilities.
- Encourage outreach initiatives to target non-traditional users.[137]

We would add another strategy that is appropriate to one of the world's most distinctly multicultural cities: racial diversity. The Beltline ought to be developed in an even-handed manner, such that investments are made in neighbourhoods where new Canadians are concentrated, as well as those whose members trace their lineage to the Family Compact.

We must be on guard lest access restrictions result as an unintended consequence of well-meant measures. For instance, the construction of stairs can pose a cruel barrier to wheelchair users and seniors whose legs are no longer capable of heroic tasks. Access can also be curtailed as a result of deliberate decisions. In some quarters, it is felt that certain groups should be denied use of the trail during peak periods. Cycle Toronto takes a different position. Inclusiveness should be the overriding guiding principle of a public, taxpayer-supported resource like the Beltline. We should not be entering a game where some users are given preferential treatment, and others are singled out because they occasionally bark, or because they occasionally throw lollipop stems on the path, or because they occasionally pass others in a brusque manner.

HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility Guidelines

[136] Trans Canada Trail. *Greenways: Vision and Core Principles.* p.1 http://tctrail.ca/assets/pdf/A-GREENWAYS-VISION.pdf
[137] *Ontario Trails Strategy.* Ministry of Health Promotion (Toronto, 2005) p. 16-17 http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/sport/recreation/A2010_TrailStrategy.pdf
[137]
[137]

Currently, the disabled are confronted with various barriers on the Beltline that either prevent or impede their access to parts of the trail. We suggest that the entire area within the scope of the Beltline study be examined with a view to inventorying deficiencies under the City's Accessibility Design Guidelines, as well as the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Because the obstacles that pose problems for wheelchairs also affect bicycles, strollers and bundle-buggies, we are confident that improvements in the Beltline's accessibility for the handicapped will benefit all users of wheeled contrivances through application of Universal Design principles.

We admit that some ravine sections of the study will never be upgraded to full levels of accessibility. Fortunately, higher standards can be attained in the Gardner and York Beltline segments. This would entail upgrading minor entry points and access paths. Because the York Beltline Trail is paved and the grades are not extreme, it shows the greatest promise for being completely accessible to those with mobility issues. Ironically, various design shortcomings have prevented the York segment from fulfilling its potential.

Gradients

In redesigning the Beltline and Yellow Creek trails with the aim to maximize inclusiveness, certain constraining factors must be recognized:

- budgetary limitations
- severe gradients
- respect for the natural environment

These factors militate against solutions such as a funiculars at the Heath St. Bridge or in the Vale of Avoca– which would admittedly be beneficial for those with mobility handicaps. We have also resigned ourselves to accepting the limitations of various minor access routes to ravine trails. Nevertheless, we believe it worthwhile to hold fast to the goal that a **through route from Moore Ave. all the way to the Rosehill Reservoir be negotiable in a power wheelchair.**

Specific ravine areas that need improving are:

- The descent south of Moore Ave. [see Moore Park Ravine for solutions]
- The rolling section near Bayview Ave. and its ramps, which presents problems associated with steep gradients, sharp turns, narrow paths, poor visibility and eroded surfacing.
- After its surfacing has been improved, the ramp leading from David Balfour Park to the Rosehill Reservoir can be made accessible providing that sections are reworked to reduce the gradient, plateau or resting areas are planned following AODA standards, and trail warning signs at nearby access points are posted

The grades of the paths on the Gardner and York segments are remarkably close to level, a tribute to 19th century railway-building. The Mt. Pleasant Cemetery route dips under Mt. Pleasant Road, and again in the Mud Creek riverbed east of the cemetery office. While these gradients exceed the recommendations established by the City of Toronto's Accessibility Design Guidelines, the surfacing is paved and smooth. The assumption is that the user of a powered wheelchair could traverse the Mt. Pleasant Beltline route without any significant problems (once inside the poorly designed gates).

Stairs

Steps present an absolute barrier to wheelchairs and many seniors. A high set of stairs can be taxing even for able-bodied cyclists when hauling up a bike with loaded panniers. However, steps may be preferred by some seniors in certain circumstances:

Steps are used in areas where the trail gains elevation quickly. A series of steps allows the remainder of the trail to have a less steep grade and reduces the risk of trail erosion or washouts. Steps may be preferred to steeply graded trail sections by individuals who use crutches or canes. However, steps create a significant barrier to individuals who use wheelchairs and should be used minimally, if at all. Steps must not be included in new construction. If steps are already incorporated into the design of existing trails, the following best practices should be implemented:

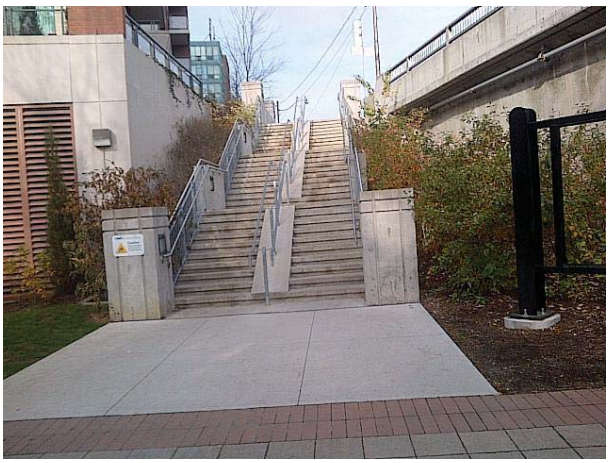
- *Install a switchback or alternate side trail to allow users to avoid the steps;*
- *Provide signage indicating the size, number, and location of the steps along the trail at the trail entrance or trailhead.*[138]

Gently inclined ramps or switchbacks are the first choice of almost all users. We therefore recommend that stairs be supplemented or replaced by ramps at these locations:

- The proposed replacement of the paved path south of Moore by a set of stairs definitely needs a safe, accessible alternative since this is the trailhead relied on by most users to a enter the ravine system from the north.
- We urge that priority be given to the installation of the proposed switchback connection between the Moore Park Ravine trail (at Chorley Park) and the Brick Works. The recently completed metal stairs are inaccessible and problematic for anyone relying on wheeled transportation.
- Dufferin St. is the most important thoroughfare that intersects the York Beltline Trail, and the two should be connected by a ramp from the southwest. Making Dufferin St. accessible is a crucial step in fulfilling the multi-modal potential of the Crosstown LRT's Dufferin Station.
- When the Chaplin Crosstown LRT Station is constructed, the southwest secondary entrance to the Beltline should be made accessible.
- On the Gardner trail, stairs exist at Yonge St. and Mt. Pleasant Rd.[139] Since the installation of ramps at these locations would be difficult, it would suffice to develop accessible detour routes via Merton St. A detour route (to Forest Hill Road from the Forest Hill Road Park) should also be posted near the stairs leading to Russell Hill Rd. and Larratt St.
- While the short stairs at Montcalm Ave. and on the boardwalks in the Vale of Avoca are less heavily used, upgrading them would be relatively inexpensive.
- If the connection between the cemetery and David Balfour Park is ever to be made accessible, the chief barrier that needs remedying is the stairs under the St. Clair bridge. At both the ascents leading to both Heath St. and Shaftesbury Ave., any measure that would adequately benefit the handicapped would be prohibitively expensive.

[138] U.S. Department of Transportation. *Designing Sidewalks and Trails for Access* (2001) 15.5.1.7

[139] Both stairs are substantial. There are 34 steps at Yonge and 30 at Mt. Pleasant Rd.



Left: Stairs at Merton and Mt. Pleasant Rd.

Right: Stairs leading down to Yonge St.

Bridges

The surfacing under and over various bridges is problematic.

- Small rough stones have been spread underneath the Heath St. pedestrian bridge, in order to prevent erosion damage from runoff. A collateral effect is the impeding of wheelchairs
- The hardened earth path inside the Eglinton underpass has been gauged, creating uneven surfaces. In dark conditions, those with vision, mobility or balance impairments might trip.
- Another tripping hazard is encountered on the Yonge St. overpass bridge. The wood deck is rotting, and certain timbers need to be replaced
- Boardwalks in the Vale of Avoca should be better maintained. For instance, a missing wood plank has created a cavity large enough to catch a foot. This poses a danger to the vision-impaired, and also to distracted trail users with 20/ 20 sight.
- The repairing of the bridge across the Yellow Creek in David Balfour Park has eliminated the former stepped rise. If the bridge is rebuilt using more permanent materials, the tread should be at grade.

Gates

Riders suffering from certain physical problems are increasingly taking to the streets and trails on trikes and recumbent bicycles. These machines are less maneuverable through sharply angled switchbacks and tight gates – which can also be difficult to negotiate for anyone who is in a wheelchair, on a cargo bike, or towing children in a bike trailer. The following bottlenecks require improvement:

- The ramp at the west Merton entrance to Mt. Pleasant Cemetery
- The black gate at the east Merton cemetery entrance serves no useful purpose, and it is virtually impassable for wheelchairs and long bicycles. Furthermore, the gate's latch is troublesome for anyone with manual dexterity problems.
- Tightly spaced, immovable gates block the path through the cemetery's Forest of Remembrance
- Consider the elimination of P-gates at various points on the York Beltline Trail; at minimum, repaint them in a more conspicuous colour
- The Shallmar Blvd. entrance is not gated, but the bollard/ post combination that is in place acts as a barrier blocking passage to wheelchairs


Left: Wheelchair user negotiating P-gates, looking west towards Ronald Ave.
Right: Inaccessible gates at east Merton cemetery entrance

Furniture and amenities

Park benches should be available at least every 400 m.,so that those with mobility handicaps or the elderly may periodically rest and recoup their energy before proceeding on the next leg or their excursion. New benches should conform to accessibility design guidelines. Along the Gardner's Merton St. segment, much of the York trail, and the Moore Park ravine near Chorley Park, open spaces are plentiful. These provide opportunities to install picnic tables. In comparison to park benches, accessible picnic tables can accommodate a greater range of activities, and give people of all abilities the chance to rest, eat, chat, work at a laptop, lay out a newspaper, change a baby, etc.

Garbage and recycling receptacles [140] should be located in the vicinity of [141] benches, water fountains, sign boards and anywhere trail users are likely to congregate. 'One-stop shopping' makes it easier for people with mobility problems to attend to various tasks without having to walk far. The same opportunity will be taken advantage of by cyclists, who can dismount and relax in an area where amenities are concentrated. Dog-walkers appreciate not having to carry waste bags great distances before they can dispose of them.

We support the proposal to construct a series of rest areas in the Moore Park ravine. We would also note that between Moore Avenue's north sidewalk and the south cemetery fence adequate City-owned space exists for a proper rest area. This section is now poorly organized, with signs scattered about in locations on the lawn that are difficult to access in a wheelchair.

Signage should make known the availability of public, handicapped accessible washrooms at nearby locations such as the Mt. Pleasant Visitation Centre. Oriole Park, Forest Hill Public Library, and Forest Hill Memorial Arena.

Bike racks or Ring-and-post bike parking fixtures should be installed at trailheads and access points used by cyclists.

[140] Green bins dedicated to dog waste should be located where there are high volumes of dog traffic
[141] However, proximity should not be so close that garbage odours are noticed

Colour

- The black marker posts (or bollards) topped with the stylized “Belt Line” logo are too dark to be readily recognized by visually impaired trail users. In fact, during the night, they are not even conspicuous to those with 20/ 20 vision. It is therefore recommended that the posts – or at the very least, the logo plates – be repainted in a brighter colour with light-reflective strips. It may be simpler to replace them or to eliminate their use completely.
- Painting crossings with zebra-stripes is effective, but colouring the pavement at crossings would be even more helpful for those with impaired vision

Crossing skewing

Trail crossings that run perpendicular to streets are predictable for visually impaired trail users. Furthermore, a 90-degree crossing is shorter than a skewed one and can therefore be traversed more quickly by all users. Shortened crossings are especially beneficial to those with mobility handicaps and to seniors, whose crossing speeds are tested by the duration of green stoplight signals.

Because the Beltline intersects both Avenue Rd. and Oriole Parkway at a sharp angle, it may not be possible to fully straighten out the crossings at these two points. Various measures should be considered to help the visually handicapped navigate skewed intersections:

1. An accessible pedestrian signal that produces a locator tone to achieve audible beaconing .
2. The installation on intersection pavement of wayfinding guide strips
3. Tactile diagrams of street crossings placed near signal activation buttons.

Sidewalks and access paths

Our previous recommendations to signalize crossings and cut curbs are especially important to people in wheelchairs. They have fewer choices than able trail users. A poorly designed sidewalk leaves them no option other than to detour to the nearest stoplight.

It is important that the trails be integrated into surrounding neighbourhoods. At virtually all of the roads that the Beltline and ravine trails intersect, sidewalks exist on both sides. These enable wheelchair users to leave the trail and safely roll to locations in the immediate vicinity. There are four exceptions:

1 On Caledonia Rd., there is no provision of a sidewalk on the west side. Erosion and foot traffic pulverization have produced a gully that is impassable for wheelchairs. When the area was strongly industrial, a sidewalk may not have been essential; now that it is part of the Castlefield Design District, it is time to start pouring concrete.

2 A narrow dirt path runs along the west side of Mt. Pleasant Rd. from the David Balfour Park entrance to Roxborough St. E., for a distance of 130 m. Midway, a metal traffic barrier creates a bottleneck. Because this path forms a vital link between the Yellow Creek trail system and Rosedale subway station, it should be replaced by a proper sidewalk.

3 A new path should be built in Forest Hill Road Park from the southern point on Forest Hill Road Park to the northwest corner where an unofficial trail already exists. Grade it up to trail level.

4 The pathway leading from the Gardner west trailhead along the Allen Rd. wall to Elm Ridge Dr. is too narrow to allow mobility device users to safely pass bicycles, strollers, etc.

Left: West side of Caledonia Rd. (facing north towards Castlefield)
Right: Mt. Pleasant Road (east side facing north towards Roxborough). Bottleneck circled in red

Park access paths should also be accessible. For instance, the 300 m. long Walter Saunders Memorial Park has just a single curb cut onto Hopewell Ave.

Left: Narrow pathway at Allen Rd. wall. Cyclists are often forced on to dirt shoulder
Right: Mt. Pleasant Cemetery. The brusque message these fixed barriers send to wheelchair users who wish to proceed along the narrow [142] Beltline path through the Forest of Remembrance is "forget about it"

Vegetation

Goldenrod should be culled from the areas bordering the trail in order to benefit those who have chronic allergies to it.

[142] The original Beltline right-of-way was 10 feet (= 3.05 m.) In places, the present path is as little as 1.5 m. wide

GENDER ISSUES

Sexual assault risk

The expansion of Toronto's urban trail network is sometimes criticized on the grounds that the risks of using trails are higher for females than males. As as consequence, many women prefer to use on-street bike infrastructure rather than off-road trails. Emphasizing the development of the former may seem to be the best way to maintain fair access and allocate resources equitably. This policy would seem to be supported by the Toronto Police 2011 statistics, indicating that women account for 87% of victims of sexual assaults reported to Toronto Police Services.[143] The Department of Justice lists a national average for the year 2002 that is slightly lower: 85%.[144]

In the following table, Statistics Canada breaks down sexual assault occurrences by location, for the year 2003. Trails fall into the Open Area category, where 4.1% of sexual assaults take place nationally. This ranks about halfway between Public Transport (1.6%) and Roads (8.3%). Since the number of people using the road system is much higher than those frequenting open spaces, female cyclists on trails might indeed be considered a high risk group on a per km. travelled basis.

Location of selected criminal violations, 2003

	Total	Resi-dence	Hotel, Motel	Com-mercial[1]	Parking Lot	School	Publlic Insti-tution[2]	Public Trans-port[3]	Street, Road, Highway	Open Area[4]	Unknown
	number	percentage									
Violation Against the Person											
Homicide[5]	**331**	56.2	2.7	9.7	3.6	0.6	2.1	0.6	14.8	6.0	3.6
Sexual Assault (1,2,3)	**12,582**	60.4	2.2	7.4	1.8	3.8	4.2	1.6	8.3	4.1	6.4
Assault (1,2,3)	**118,201**	48.7	1.2	13.2	4.1	5.5	4.6	1.6	15.6	2.7	2.7
Kidnapping/Hostage Taking	**2,349**	64.9	1.8	10.0	2.9	1.5	1.4	0.9	13.0	1.5	2.0
Abduction	**244**	52.0	0.4	3.3	1.6	7.8	3.3	2.5	22.1	2.5	4.5
Robbery	**22,906**	7.6	0.8	41.3	5.7	1.9	1.1	3.6	32.2	4.3	1.4
Criminal Harassment	**10,079**	63.7	0.6	11.0	1.8	3.8	3.5	0.6	8.3	0.9	5.9

Location of selected criminal violations (2003). Open Areas *category includes areas of public access, e.g., parks, playgrounds, lakes, rivers, etc.* [145]

Other risk factors

It is important to avoid becoming so fixated on the risk of sexual assault and crimes against the person that they obscure other hazards that cyclists may be exposed to – many quite deadly. In the Lighting section, we explored night-time comparative risk issues. During the day, most people exhibit the same tendency to discount risks that we are familiar with – for example **staying at home,** where 60.4% of sexual offences take place – and to exaggerate the perils of off-road rape. Let us focus on the hypothetical scenario of a U. of T. student who is considering cycling along ravine trails to the Brick Works. Would she be better off staying within the confines of her college dorm?

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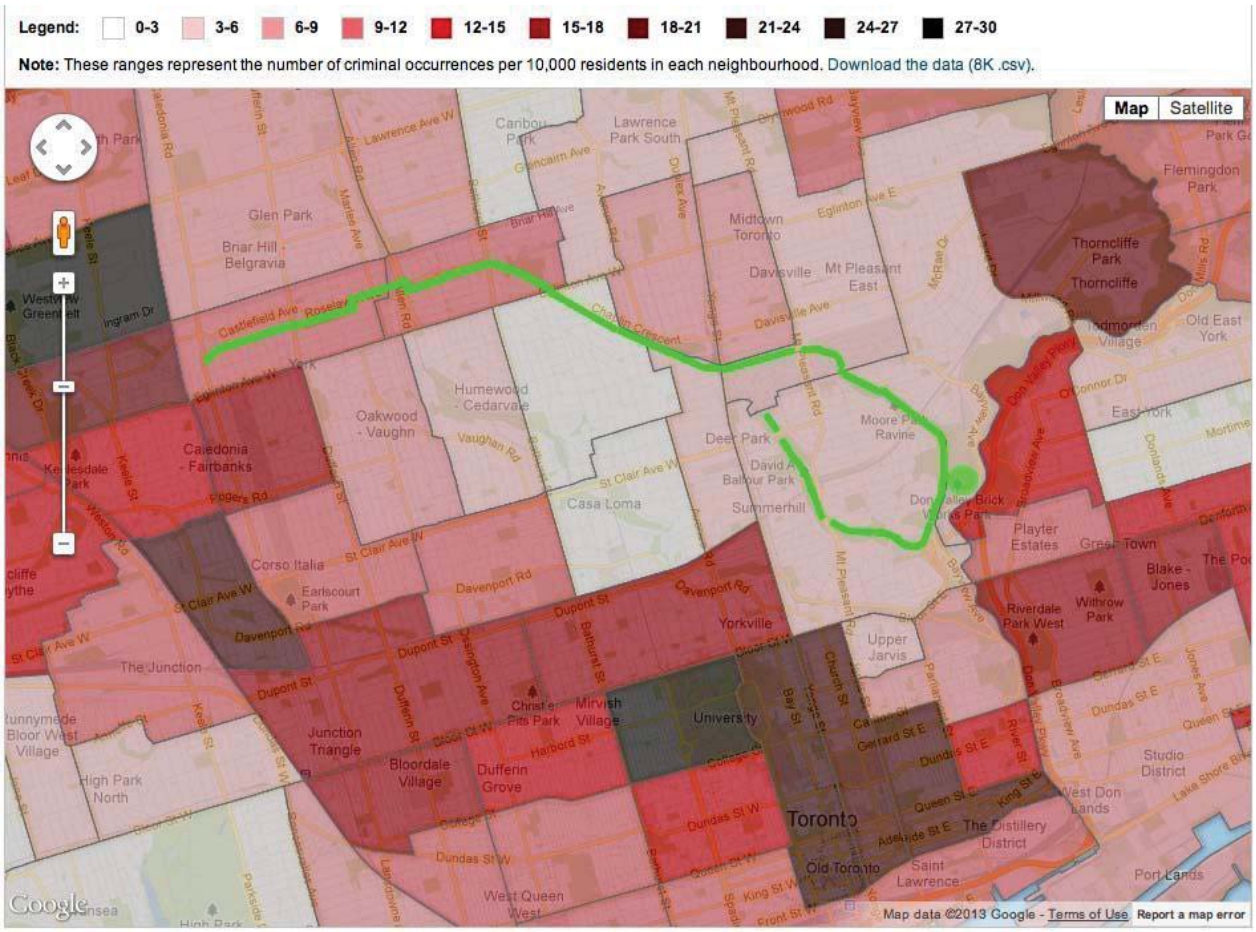
[143] Specifically, there were 2,568 female victims and 383 male victims. "Annual Statistics Report. 2011" Toronto Police Services, p. 18 http://www.torontopolice.on.ca/publications/files/reports/2011statsreport.pdf

[144] Statistics on Sexual Assault: High risk groups, s. 3.4.3 http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/pi/rs/rep-rap/2006/rr06_vic2/p3_4.html#f83

[145] "Canadian Crime Statistics.2003", Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. Statistics Canada, Table 3.7, p. 55



Toronto crime map displaying occurrences of sexual assault by neighbourhood. Based on police data drawn from the years 2004 to 2011. Gradient system uses intense, dark colours to indicate higher assault rates, and paler tones indicating lower rates. The Beltline is represented by a green line, and the Brick Works by a green circle

The above map makes it immediately apparent that the Beltline and Yellow Creek trail systems are located in that part of central Toronto where sexual assault rates are relatively low. We would recommend that a female student cycle on trails during daylight hours, accompanied by a least one other person. Under these conditions, her excursion to the Brick Works would probably not expose her to risks of sexual assault higher than if she stayed at her dorm (and it was located in a dark brown square on the map).[146]

Alternatively, she could ride along city streets to the Brick Works.

- A cyclist runs the greatest risk of collisions at intersections. Therefore, even if our student used bike lanes, her chances of being injured would be higher than on properly signalized trails.
- Nor would bike lanes provide any protection whatsoever against toxic pollution emitted by motor vehicles. Ground level ozone prematurely ages the lungs and the particulate matter that spews out from auto exhaust pipes contributes to coronary disease. [147]

[146] We advance this hypothesis only as a matter of conjecture and do not suggest that cyclists base their actual riding decisions on it.

[147] "How much pollution am I sucking in by running outdoors?", Adria Vasil, *NOW Magazine*, June 28, 2013

- "A study by the World Health Organization published in 2008 estimated that outdoor air pollution caused 1.3 million premature deaths worldwide per year." [148]
- Studies have shown that physical activity which takes place in parks and green space reduces stress.[149] In contrast, time spent on the road may contribute to road rage.
- Most city streets provide less shade than trails. Once again, on-street bike lanes will not protect against the carcinogenic effects of ultraviolet radiation.

One particular virtue of the Beltline is the cathedral-like tree canopy that envelops many of its segments. This not only blocks harmful sun rays, it also cleans the air. Of course, Beltline air is cleaner to begin with since private motor vehicles do not have access to the trail.

Options

It is misguided and simplistic to use sexual assault risk factors in order to dismiss trails as a serious component of urban bicycle infrastructure – especially one like the Beltline which passes through some of the safest parts of Toronto. Cyclists have different vulnerabilities. On a day when an air quality alert has been issued, an asthma sufferer may be well advised to use the Beltline rather than roads like Eglinton Ave. When a UV warning comes out on a sunny day, a skin cancer survivor may wish to take advantage of the the Moore Park Ravine's screening tree canopy. A novice cyclist or a group of teens may feel less challenged on a trail than a street. **We should allow every cyclist to assess risks particular to their own circumstances.** Funding the improvement of trails like the Beltline expands the number of choices available to cyclists. We are not interested in dictating where they should ride. Those who would channel bike resources exclusively to the on-street bike network are reducing the options available to the cycling community as a whole.

BIXI

The BIXI bicycle rental catchment area is presently limited to the downtown. However, an expansion of the BIXI system is envisaged, and bike rental stations will eventually be established north of Bloor. Cycle Toronto is recommending that BIXI rentals be available at certain Eglinton Crosstown LRT stations, including Avenue Rd., Chaplin, Bathurst, Eglinton West, Oakwood, Dufferin and Caledonia. Except for Avenue Rd., these stations will be located within 400 m. of the Beltline, making access to the trail convenient for TTC patrons.

In the Beltline's central section, BIXI stations could be set up near the Davisville and St. Clair subway stations. Stations could be set up at major crossings like Oriole Pkwy. and Moore Ave. It is also recommended that a BIXI maintain a strong presence at the Evergreen Brick Works. Interestingly, the possibility of bicycle rentals near the Brick Works was entertained half a century ago. "The cleared area near Chorley Park provides space for a bicycle station, where bicycles could be rented and serviced should a need for that kind of service arise." [150]

The total length of the Beltline deters many hikers from traversing the trail from beginning to end. Access to BIXI would allow Beltline users to explore by bike parts of the trail they are unfamiliar with. Since the Brick Works complex lies near the terminus of the Beltline trail, it would be possible to use BIXI to cycle the Beltline either in its entirety – starting at Caledonia Rd. – or in whatever stages renters so desire. A convenient add-on to a Beltline ride is the loop formed by the Park Reservation Drive Trail, David Balfour Park and Rosehill Reservoir. The latter is situated close to the proposed BIXI station at the St. Clair subway. Another possible BIXI option is the Castle Frank subway station, providing that a trail is constructed from there to the Brick Works.

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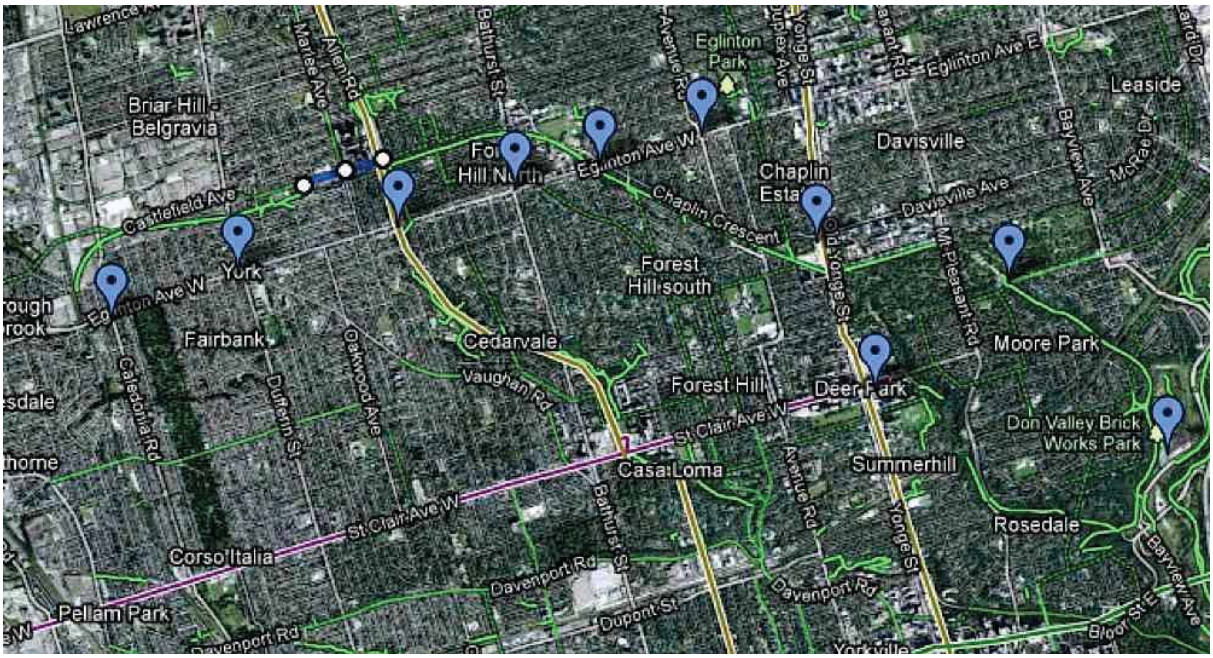
[148] "Asian Cities' Air Quality Getting Worse, Experts Warn", Bettina Wassener, *The New York Times*, Dec. 5, 2012
[149] "The Health and Social Benefits of Recreation", California State Park (Sacramento: California, March 2005) p. 20
[150] City of Toronto Planning Board. *Natural Parklands in the City of Toronto* (Toronto: June 1960) p. 21
[150]

Many Torontonians feel unsafe riding a bicycle on busy streets, yet they are very receptive to the idea of cycling through green space. The BIXI/ rapid transit multi-modal combination would enable them to use the TTC to travel under the streets they are nervous about cycling along, rent a bike at a wide choice of stations, and then enjoy a ride through quasi-pastoral scenery in midtown Toronto on a route that extends up to a dozen kilometres. Few Canadian cities afford this kind of opportunity.



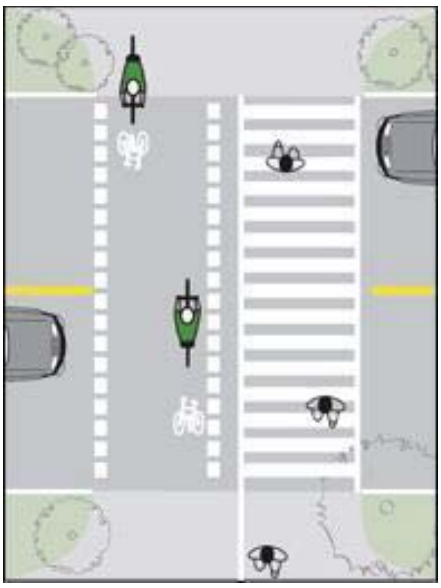
Locations of proposed Bixi stations

CONFLICT REDUCTION

On any multi-use trail, conflicts can occur between people (and pets) using various modes of transportation. The Beltline is a facility that lies within the public realm. Accordingly, we must reiterate that all users should be treated equitably, whether they be pedestrians, joggers, cyclists, cross-country skiers, mobility-device users or dogs. Various changes will help to minimize conflicts on the Beltline, without exerting an exclusionary influence on any particular mobility category.

Parallel crossings

At all major road crossings, separate zones should be dedicated to pedestrian and cyclist use. Users can cross at speeds appropriate for their travel mode without encountering any conflicts. This configuration has been implemented on the Finch and Gatineau hydro corridor trails. The case for a separation of users at Beltline crossings is compelling, as they receive more traffic than suburban trails. There is a collateral benefit. A widening accompanied by the trimming back of foliage will make the intersection more visible to both motorists and trail users.



Left: Separated zones design is a best practice solution for crossings
Right: Cyclist making an unexpected entry onto Beltline using a trail cut at Elm Ridge Circle/ Old Park Rd.

Trail cuts

Unauthorized cuts into the trail allow convenient, mid-segment entry onto the Beltline. However they can create potentially dangerous conflicts in densely wooded areas where trees may conceal the sudden ingress of someone cutting onto the main path. This produces an impression of 'coming out of nowhere' and cyclists in particular may have very little time in which to react. Since unauthorized trail cuts may also be ecologically harmful, they should be eliminated on a case-by-case basis.

At intersections without curb cuts, pedestrians may be surprised by cyclists who are making a beeline from the trail to an easy crossing point. The implementation of proper, safe crossings would eliminate these unsanctioned shortcuts.

Width of trail

Trail user conflict minimization is facilitated by a wider trail. The University of Guelph has set a guideline that the minimum width of a busy, multi-use trail should be 3.5 – 4 m.[151] This allows trail users enough leeway to pass each other safely, and to avoid puddles, mud, and fallen branches. On the other hand forestry considerations dictate that the trail be kept as narrow as possible in wooded areas to prevent damage to tree roots and vegetation. A balance must be sought between the safety of humans and the health of the forest. Because trees are dying in great numbers on the Beltline and Yellow Creek trails, it is the forest which generally should have priority.

Exceptions should be made in certain locations, notably the area near Bayview Ave. (See Moore Park Ravine section, above.)

On a narrow trail at a busy time of day, users who stop to take a break will be tempted to step off of the pathway in order to allow others to pass safely. At regular points along the trail, the path should be widened to create a

[151] *Rails to Trails*. Report Prepared by the Advanced Planning Practice Trail Group from the University of Guelph in conjunction with the Huron and Perth Planning Departments (University of Guelph, 2012) p. 7

rest area – preferably with a bench – allowing people to take a break without impinging on other trail users or the natural habitat. The Moore Park Ravine, in particular, would benefit from a chain of rest areas.

Service vehicles

Service vehicles are often driven along the trail and park squarely in the middle of the pathway, if there is no convenient space elsewhere. This has several deleterious effects:

- Visibility plummets
- Trail users are funnelled into narrow areas, creating conflicts
- Users may be compelled to detour off the path, damaging vegetation and tree roots
- Truck tires may damage the path's surfacing, leaving skid marks and ruts
- Many Beltline 'regulars' treasure the trail as a rare urban oasis free from motor vehicular traffic and big city commotion. Tranquillity on the trail can be destroyed by a single encroaching vehicle.

We recommend that PFR maintenance crews restrict their reliance on trucks and heavy vans to the greatest extent possible. Smaller maintenance vehicles with the proportions of golf-carts are adequate for many tasks. They present a much narrower profile on the trail, and their lighter weight results in less damage from tires. Should it be necessary to transport materials or waste, it is often sufficient to tow these in a trailer that also presents a slim profile and preserves adequate visibility conditions. If PFR is intent on narrowing the path width in forested sections of the Beltline, then it should also make a parallel commitment to use appropriately-scaled vehicles.

Service vehicles are sent by utility companies, construction and landscaping contractors along the trail in order to perform work for residents whose homes abut the Beltline. In most cases, this is not necessary as the crews usually have the option of parking their vehicles in houses' private driveways. This may impose certain inconveniences on workers. Nonetheless, the benefits to the public of keeping trucks off of the Beltline are such that PFR should take great care to keep bollards at trail entry points in the erect position. It should be remembered that most homeowners in Toronto manage to undertake heavy-duty work on their properties without having the luxury of a separate trail access route to their backyards.Therefore, vehicular access to the Beltline should be granted to utilities and contractors only when they absolutely cannot gain an alternative means of access. To facilitate the process, temporary permits should be issued that must be clearly displayed in vehicles.

Lighting

Unlit portions of the trail can become crowded as users cluster their visits during daylight hours. This trend is even more pronounced during the colder months of the year, when many people who who work normal business hours are able to visit the Beltline in bright conditions only on Saturday and Sunday. Congestion on the Beltline may be alleviated by extending the time period during which the trail may be safely used. Illumination of the trail will encourage some users who flocked to the Beltline during its busiest hours to instead travel along the trail during the early morning or at night. Lighting allows more flexibility, moderating spikes in usage by spreading out trail visits more evenly around the clock.

Dogs

Dogs should at all times be kept on a short leash on the Beltline trail. A particular danger is created when a dog-walker is on one side of the path, their pet is on the other, and the leash acts as a barrier that an approaching cyclist will not see until it is too late. Just as human trail users should not dart unpredictably from one side of the path to the other, so dogs should be controlled and prevented from running haphazardly. Also, trees and vegetation are damaged when dogs wander off of the trail, and their owners follow.

Nearby approved, off-leash areas are located at the Brick Works, the Park Drive Reservation and Cedarvale Park. Of course, regular parks are suitable venues for allowing dogs to run about at will on a fully extended leash.

Signs

It is worth repeating that signage tends to draw trail users towards the signs they are reading. Therefore, signs must always be posted on the right side of the trail, and positioned to face oncoming users.

Rest areas

Whether in offices or on trails, folks (and their pets) are known to congregate around the proverbial water fountain. We should not only provide more of them on the Beltline, we should surround drinking fountains with benches, recycling receptacles, lighting and information boards. The goal is to tempt sociable trail users to relax at these one-stop rest areas –rather than mill about in the middle of the path, creating obstructions which result in traffic conflicts.

Traffic capacity

As midtown Toronto's premier multi-use trail, the Beltline receives intensive usage. In some quarters, there are concerns that the limits of the trail's capacity to bear self-powered traffic are presently being tested during peak-use periods. **We believe that if our recommendations for conflict reduction are implemented, the multi-use trail will be able to accommodate far more users than is currently the case.** We must emphasize that a significant mitigation of conflicts will only occur if:

1. the City makes a serious commitment to improvements in the Beltline's infrastructure;
2. the trail is maintained to high standards on an ongoing basis; and
3. users learn and consistently observe the fundamental rules of trail etiquette.

It has been suggested that when the trail is being heavily used by pedestrians, cyclists should consider walking instead of riding. We feel that such a proposal for a multi-use trail to be both misguided and counter-productive. A person riding a bicycle presents a relatively narrow lateral profile that typically does not exceed 70 cm. (the width of handlebars). In congested conditions, a rider may, if necessary, cycle at walking speed – or even come to a temporary full stop in order to allow others to pass. When cyclists dismount, they themselves occupy a certain amount of trail space, averaging around 40 cm. To this must be added the 70 cm. that their machine occupies. The combined lateral profile of a bike being walked by a cyclist will measure approximately 110 cm. Bicycles are engineered to maintain proper balance when pedalled. If they are walked, bikes with loaded panniers or basket(s) are more difficult to control and may potentially capsize. In short, cyclists who choose to walk their bikes take up more room on the trail and have less control over their machines. The resulting impact on trail congestion would not be positive.

At the present time, Beltline traffic behaves in an anarchic manner, with people frequently stopping in the middle of the trail, travelling on the wrong side or proceeding in wide groups that 'bottle-stop' the pathway. If cars occupied a public road in a similar, free-for-all manner, traffic would grind to a halt. Prohibiting all private motor vehicles from using Toronto's roads during rush hour would be one way of solving the city's congestion problems. Our considered view is that this response would be excessive and, indeed, completely off-target. A far more elegant traffic solution for the Beltline exists: impose similar rules of the road.

For the same reason, we are leery of suggestions that Beltline usage needs to be stabilized or even reduced. We shouldn't be trying to keep people off the trail when it is **so much easier** to ensure that people on the trail respect a simple set of rules.

Trail Etiquette Rules

The PFR Trails Code of Conduct webpage should be revised. It is not sufficient to make the general statement that "trails are multi-use and bi-directional unless otherwise indicated".

The Beltline attracts many users whose experience on other trails is minimal. In fact, some people may not aware that **trail etiquette is distinct from the code of conduct that prevails in regular parks** (where park patrons can usually stroll about freely on lawns). Trail activities involve less freedom of movement. The key difference is that trail users should stay on the right side of a multi-use trail, and pass others on the left. We have reviewed codes of etiquette for about 150 trails across North America [152], and can confirm that the keep right/ pass left rule is standard.[153] The concept should be easily grasped, as it is a cardinal rule on public roads.

> Over the last decade numerous jurisdictions across North America have proven that conflicts on multiple use trails can be minimized by establishing codes of trail etiquette and advertising them on signs, trail guides and at special events.[154]

It is necessary that all users of the Beltline trail conform to conventional, common-sense multi-use trail practices. We suggest that the following etiquette guidelines be observed at all times:

1. Share the trail. Users should be respectful, courteous and yield to those using mobility devices.
2. Trail users must keep to the right side of the path, and allow other users to pass on the left
3. When appropriate, cyclists should make their approach known with a bell or a greeting
4. Those being passed should respond cooperatively
5. When travelling in groups, and taking more than half of the trail, yield to user traffic travelling in the opposite direction by moving right
6. Those going downhill should give right-of-way to trail users going uphill
7. Maximum rate of speed for bicycles is 20 km/ hour [155]
8. When on the trail at night bicycles and wheelchairs must be equipped with lights and reflectors.
9. Motorized vehicles (including scooters and ebikes) are prohibited at all times
10. Leave flowers, vegetation and wildlife for others to enjoy
11. Do not litter
12. Clean up after your pet [156]
13. Dogs are to be kept on leashes [157] not to exceed not to exceed 2.4 m. in length [158]
14. Do not travel off path in wooded areas. Refrain from using unsanctioned trail cuts and not create new ones
15. Respect the privacy of property owners whose homes are adjacent to the trail

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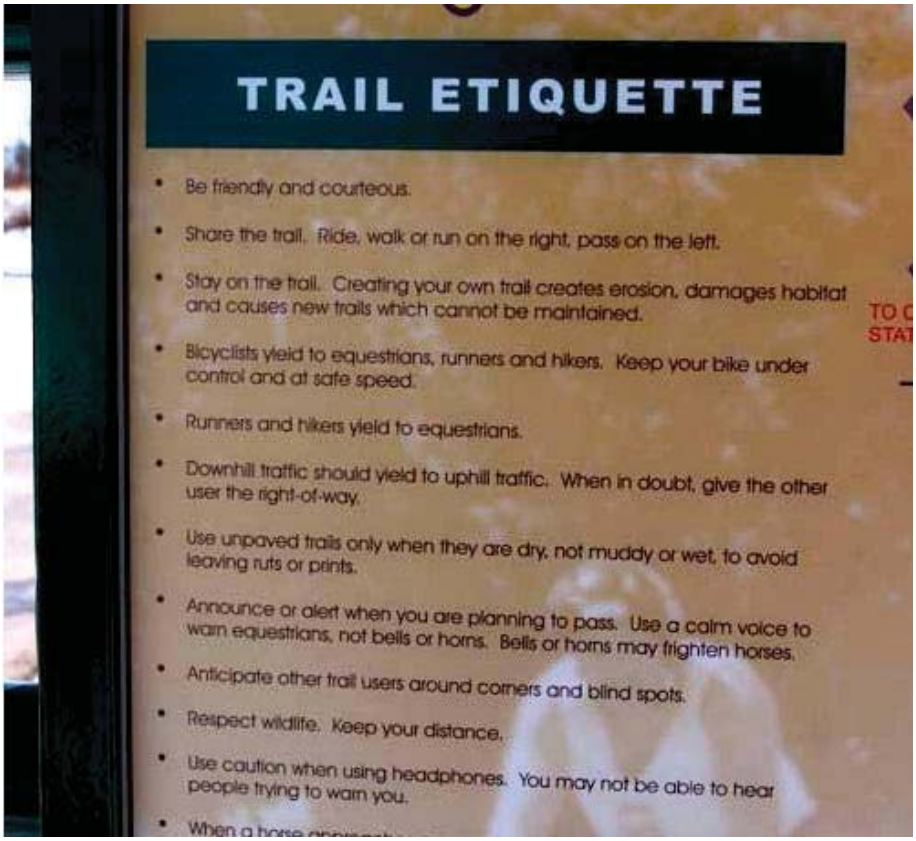
[152] Trent University Trail Studies Unit: http://www.trentu.ca/academic/trailstudies/ethics.html
[153] Trails for All Ontarians Collaborative. *Ontario's Best Trails. Guidelines and Best Practices for the Design, Construction and Maintenance of Sustainable Trails for All Ontarians.* (2006) p. 283
[154] Kimberley Advisory Trail Planning Committee. *Recreation Trails Master Plan* (2003) p. 12
[155] *Toronto Municipal Code*: 608 – 32
[156] *Toronto Municipal Code:* 608 – 34 C 2
[157] *Toronto Municipal Code:* 608 – 34 A (1)
[158] *Toronto Municipal Code:* 608 – 34 C (1)

All multi-use trail users should be educated as to expected behavior when on-trail. Over the last decade, numerous jurisdictions across North America have proven that conflicts on multi-user trails can be minimized by intensively publicizing codes of trail conduct. To this end, a more complete explanation of etiquette rules should be posted on the internet. It is also important to feature them prominently on information boards at trailheads, other entry points and rest areas. American Trails.org, which boasts that it is "the world's largest online trails resource", uses this photograph as the leading example of an etiquette posting on a multi-use, urban trail information board:



Left section of information board, Cherry Creek Trail, Parker, Colorado (Photo: Stuart MacDonald)

STEWARDSHIP

Homeowner Stewardship Responsibilities

Just as we are proposing etiquette rules for trail users, so we are suggesting a 'good neighbour policy' for abutting property owners.

1 Do not allow the dumping of leaves and other residential yard waste onto the trail's right-of-way. [159]
2 Inform any contractors you have working on your property that that privately generated garbage is not to be discarded on publicly owned land, and that private vehicular access to the trail is prohibited, unless special authorization has been granted by the City.

[159] *Toronto Municipal Code*: 608- 7

3 The Beltline may run behind your residence, but it is not an extension of your back yard. This is a public park, and you should respect it as such. [160] Private gates, bridges to the trail, patio stones and the like detract from the Beltline's natural beauty.
4 Avoid creating or using unsanctioned trail cuts, as they may cause damage to tree roots and plants
5 Privately owned fences abutting the Beltline should not exceed a height of 2.5 m.[161] and should be maintained a state of good repair
6 Security signs should be posted inside fences, rather than on the outside, where they become an unwelcome [162] part of the park's visual landscape.[163]
7 Multi-residential building managers should not blow foul air from exhaust fans onto the trail [164]
8 Respect trail users' rights to privacy, and refrain from videotaping trail users

LEFT: Encroaching private entrances cheapen the concept of the public realm
RIGHT: Illegal video surveillance sign does not specify where the camera is aimed [165]

Erosion Remediation

In the ravines, the Beltline and Yellow Creek trails generally exist along a publicly-owned strip of land that extends along the ravine floor. In most areas, the actual slopes are owned (wholly or in part) by private landowners. Erosion problems threaten the trail, the health of trees in the ravine, the stability of the slopes, and

[160] *Toronto Municipal Code*: 608- 7
[161] *Toronto Municipal Code:* 447-2
[162] Between Avenue Rd. and Eglinton Ave., a succession of warning signs is posted on fences warning to beware of dog, security company patrols, etc. The effect is to transform what ought to be idyllic scenery into conditions resembling an American crime scene investigation television programme.
[163] *Toronto Municipal Code*: 608- 48 A (1)
[164] This is a problem south of the Eglinton underpass
[165] 221 Forest Hill Rd.

even the physical integrity of the private residences built on the hilltop. It is imperative that in addressing erosion problems, a comprehensive approach be adopted. Ecologists must examine the ravine ecosystem as a whole, and draw up a set of remediation recommendations suitable for implementation by private landowners. Efforts must then be taken to engage ALL residents whose property abuts the ravines – as no integrated solution is possible without their cooperation. We therefore suggest that the City fast-track a public-private erosion remediation pilot project.

Although erosion is often gradual, the process can reach a tipping point when violent weather touches off sudden events such as flooding and landslides. Hurricane Sandy reminds us that catastrophic storms may affect inland areas, not just seaboards. If a storm of the same intensity as Hurricane Hazel were to bear down on the tributaries of the Don, we could witness major devastation of the Mud and Yellow Creek ravines. Let us take preventative steps now, in order to ensure to ensure that we minimize future losses of trees, houses and even human life.

Flood damage at Eglinton Flats, aftermath of Hurricane Hazel. 1954. Located 1 km. north of Humber Beltline loop

Community gardens

Parts of the Merton section of the Gardner, as well as the extensive lawns on the York trail, are visually monotonous and would benefit from the addition of gardens. We recognize that the PFR's flower budget is constrained. Already, so-called 'guerilla gardeners' have adorned the trail with flowers. Their efforts should be formally encouraged, with community gardens being designated at the most appropriate locations.

Transportation stewardship

The Parks Department has been emphasizing the forestry aspects of stewardship. However, a rail trail embodies important transportation functions, and it is therefore appropriate that stewardship principles be expanded in the case of the Beltline. **Rather than simply attending to the needs of the vegetable kingdom, the needs of trail users should also be looked after.**

Cycle Toronto has organized various outreach events. A recent session at Oriole Park (steps from the Beltline) involved the installation of free bike bells for cyclists whose machines lacked them. How is installing a bell similar to planting a tree? Needless to say, community members who plant seedlings are helping to restore the Beltline's tree canopy. Bells are essential for cyclists in warning pedestrians that a bike is approaching. The ringing of a bell helps maintain civility on the trail, reduces user conflicts and ultimately increases the capacity of the Beltline to carry traffic in an acceptable manner.

Rio Tinto Alcan has recently donated a shed to the West Toronto Railpath, which is to be used for bike maintenance. Likewise, the Cyclepath store on Yonge St. has offered to install and maintain a bike repair stand. The compact facility would offer cyclists free use of basic tools for repairs, as well as an air pump. A suitable location might be on the Gardner trail, to the east of the Yonge St. bridge.

Trail Wardens

Volunteer trail wardens could travel the Beltline on bike or on foot. Their objectives would be to see that trail etiquette rules are being respected, help with directions, pass along information regarding points of interest, ecology, Beltline history, connecting trails, etc. Wardens can also report suspicious behaviour to the police, and instances of trail damage to PFR. They could wear a safety vest bearing the Beltline logo. They would have no real enforcement authority, and would function in the same advisory manner as Neighbourhood 'Watch volunteers.

The Toronto District School Board should be approached with a view to asking students at nearby schools (such as Forest Hill Collegiate) to volunteer as Beltline trail wardens. Time spent on warden duties would count towards completing their requirement of 40 hours of community involvement.

Police patrols

The 53 Division bike unit patrols Beltline and Yellow Creek trails on a regular basis. We have advised them that their presence is much appreciated by trail users. If the police can increase the frequency of patrols, conditions on the Beltline will be made safer, both for trail users and owners of adjacent property. Although the police give priority to serious crime, they are cognizant of Cycle Toronto's concern for trail etiquette, and we hope that cooperation on this initiative will take place over the next few years.

HERITAGE CONSIDERATIONS

We would welcome the erection of historical plaques, or interpretive text on information boards, that commemorates aspects of the architectural, cultural, political, industrial and railway histories of the Beltline. Since these fields do not fall within PFR's sphere of expertise, we urge that recognized authorities be consulted in the early stages of the project. To this end, collaboration with organizations such as Heritage Toronto, the Ontario Heritage Trust, and the Toronto Railway Historical Association would be productive. The former has contributed ideas towards interpretative signage on off-road trails such as the Huron-Wendat Trail (on the Finch Hydro Corridor) and The Shared Path (on the Humber River).

NATURE VS. ARTIFICE

The Beltline is seen by many users as at green oasis. Their inclination, which is shared by PFR, is to emphasize natural elements in the Beltline's future development, particularly in the ravine sections. We are concerned that 'naturalization' efforts may be pursued too far. In order to create more greenery in the Beltline area, for example, Canada's most imposing viceregal estate was razed. In its place, PFR planted a few trees and some grass.

The trail's heritage includes more than trees and houses. Passenger service on the Beltline lasted only two years whereas freight service continued for sixty years. In consequence, the Beltline became one of Toronto's industrial corridors. As the city de-industrializes, it is important to preserve (or at least, to commemorate) the sites of the factories, mills, silos, supply yards, sewers and immense excavations which were used by our forefathers to create the Toronto of today. They are part of our history.

The dominant feature of the Beltline and Yellow Creek trail system is not an uninterrupted expanse of unspoiled, natural space. This is hardly Temagami, nor even the Rouge. Although old growth forest remains in certain isolated pockets, the results of human activity are observable on most parts of the trail. Much of the verdant canopy that Beltline enthusiasts are so fond of was actually planted relatively recently. Half a century ago, before arborists' interventions occurred, the Beltline had a different appearance. **Fidelity to our past is not necessarily synonymous with reverting landscapes back to a more natural state.** We urge caution lest reforestation threaten the human heritage of the Beltline.

It is important to find a balance between preserving nature and appreciating the industrial and architectural heritages of the Beltline. It is an urban trail, par excellence. Many of the Beltline's delights derive from the contrast between human artifice – for example, Forest Hill mansions – and greenery. Further south, the geological uniqueness of the Brick Works was revealed only through decades of digging by heavy machinery.

Looking ahead to the future, we see no contradiction in bringing new technologies to the Beltline. Computer-synchronized stoplights, solar lighting, trail-size plows and wayfinding mobile apps – these all continue the tradition of human ingenuity that has thrived on the Beltline for over a century. Their presence will help maintain the Beltline's distinctive equilibrium between nature and human invention.

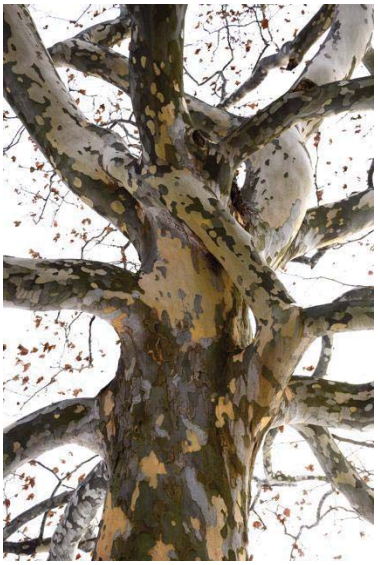
Sometimes, "low-tech" measures are useful too. We recommend that traditional historical plaques or interpretive notices be posted at those historical sites which the community deems to be worthy of commemoration.

NATURAL HISTORY

Many Torontonians value the Beltline principally because of its arboreal greenery and lush vegetation. These exist at Mt. Pleasant Cemetery in abundant quantities. In fact, the cemetery is recognized as one of the continent's finest arboretums. Many examples of non-native trees flourish here. We do not recommend that they be culled, as their variety gives a great deal of pleasure to trail users.

What is less appreciated by some people passing through Mt. Pleasant, is being in close proximity to the less than pleasant activities which are particular to a graveyard. These have been allowed to steadily impinge on the landscape that surrounds the Beltline route. The intent of the 1966 agreement was to keep the trail bordered by pleasant scenery, not corpses. It should be possible to take children on a walk along the Beltline without having to explain to them the facts of death.

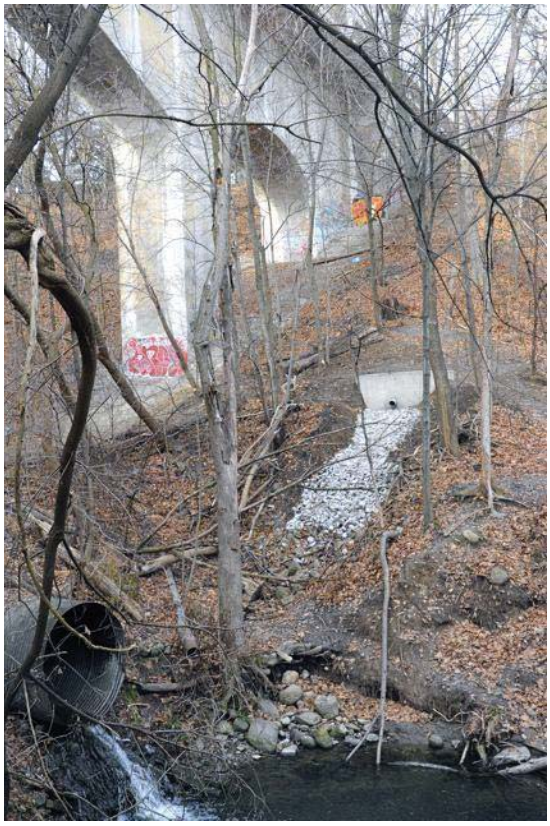
Mt. Pleasant Cemetery, Forest of Remembrance. Left: Beltline bollard Right: Recent burial, with Beltline trail in background




Left: Mt. Pleasant Cemetery, plane tree
Right: Vale of Avoca. Wire mesh Gabion cages reinforce the banks of Yellow Creek

Superficially, the Vale of Avoca seems pristine; a deeper look reveals extensive flood-control measures, Gabion cages, looming bridges and a profusion of graffiti. In fact, the Yellow Creek is the very antithesis of a natural watercourse: the greater part is channelled, tunnelled, grated, bridged and polluted. Again and again, this pattern repeats itself. Most elements of the Beltline and ravine areas have fewer consistently 'natural' elements than we might reasonably assume.

Left: Bridge foundations at David Balfour Park – a brutal combination of graffiti and concrete
Right: Park Drive Reservation, 1948. Note the scarcity of trees in middle of the valley

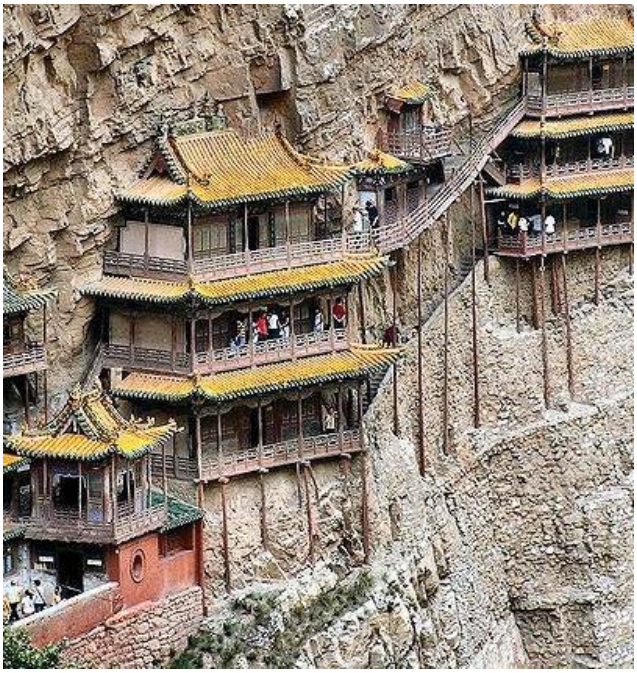


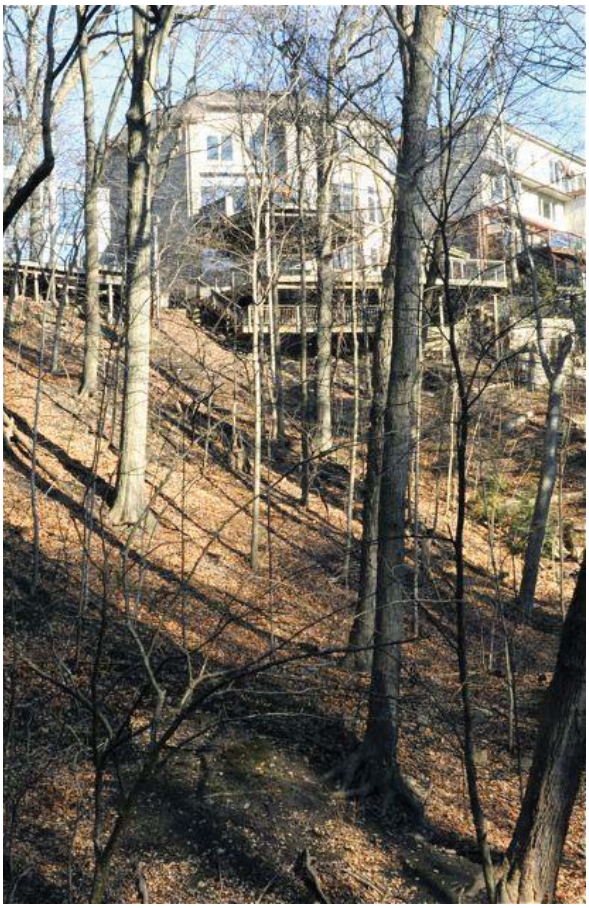
Left: Northern end of Moore Park Ravine Beltline, 1908. A natural landscape, gashed in the middle by the Beltline rails
Right: Northern end of Moore Park Ravine, 2012. Engineers have clearly had a field day

South of St. Clair, the landscape is wilder. The Moore Park Ravine at first seems unspoiled, but this is illusory. Many of the trees are in fact relatively young. In 1946, the City planned to push a major road up the ravine, and

to this end began cutting down numerous trees along the Beltline right-of-way.[166] What the chainsaw didn't destroy the steamshovel attacked. Close scrutiny reveals waterworks infrastructure in many places. Embankments and tunnels channel Mud Creek. Where bucolic streams once flowed naturally into the creek we now see galvanized discharge pipes poking bluntly out of the ravine's reinforced slopes.

Higher up, the natural qualities of the ravine crest are long gone. The 1908 photo of the ravine shows a real forest that hasn't been invaded by development. Now let's fast forward a century. There are far fewer trees visible on the ravine brow, which has become lined with decks sitting on stilts and houses perched precariously at the edge. Why would homeowners choose to live so dangerously? For the view of the ravine, of course. It is pointless to lament the domestication of the Mud Creek landscape. **As long as houses frame the horizon, the ravine will not be natural.** Instead, we suggest that trail users appreciate this surreal panorama of distended houses as one of Toronto's more freakish and outlandish spectacles – a wonderfully crazy, jacked-up suburb. It recalls some of the world's most heroic building feats, like China's Hanging Monastery of Mount Heng.





Left: Hanging Monastery of Mount Heng, Hunyuan County, Shanxi province, China
Right: Overhanging houses, Moore Park Ravine

If the pursuit of ravine naturalization is taken to an extreme, the logical course of action would be to remove all residences and decks from the lip of the ravine. This would be an extremely disruptive, expensive and imprudent undertaking. We take a firm position against interfering with private property located along the crest of ravines. In

[166] Charles Sauriol, *Remembering the Don. A Rare Record of Earlier Times. Within the Don River Valley* (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 1981) p. 95

regards to the unfortunate dispute that Vera Dickinson went through over her Beaumont Road property, we **strongly disapprove** when

> An official with the conservation authority says expropriation is necessary for environmental reasons. "We think valley systems are significant open-space features that make Toronto unique," said Craig Mather, the authority's chief administrator." [167]

The southern half of the ravine has been transformed in different ways by the Brick Works quarry, which once would have been one of the few man-made features in Toronto visible by satellite. This gigantic scar in the earth extended east of the Beltline; on the west side, stretched 14 manicured acres that belonged to Canada's most lavish estate, Chorley Park. A more unnatural juxtaposition could not be imagined! Charles Sauriol brings attention to yet another indignity. "The face of the ravine below Chorley Park – the Government House – has been marred with 'fill' from the Toronto subway diggings." [168]

The south end of Moore Park ravine is in even worse shape, having been despoiled by the imposing traffic engineering infrastructure of Bayview Ave. Its ramps lead us to the Park Drive Reservation trail. Over the last generation, it has been allowed to grow wilder and greener. As long as it is being used by heavy maintenance trucks, though, it will never return to a truly natural state.

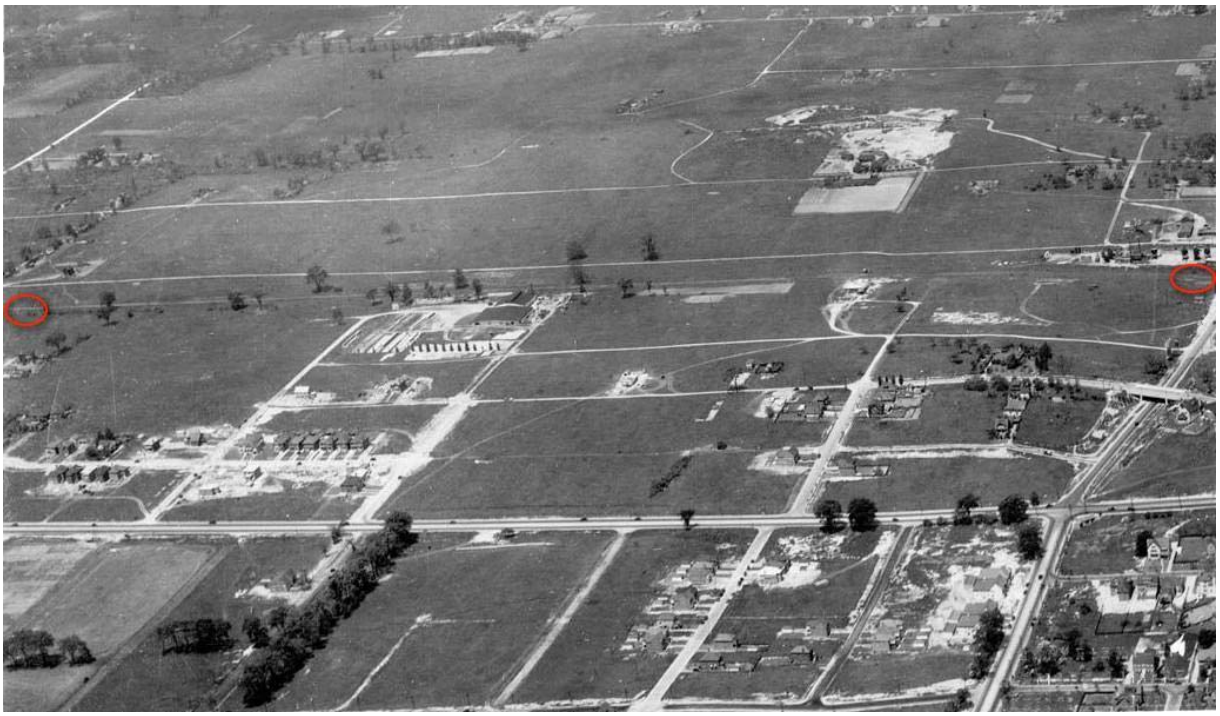
Left: Beltline tracks west of Avenue Rd. (1968) Right: The Beltline looking east across Bathurst St. 1955

Most of the areas that the Beltline passes through north of St. Clair used to be farmland. Mt. Pleasant Cemetery's east end was farmed as recently as the World War II. [169] The low-slung landscape of the former Village of Forest Hill and the City of York recalls their agricultural origins. Trees were less plentiful than we might expect in a place like Forest Hill, despite its name. Three 1935 aerial photographs of Upper Forest Hill make clear that old growth forest had been cut down by pioneers in another era. As a photo of Bathurst St. attests, the Upper Forest Hill section of the Beltline was hardly verdant in 1955. Matters hadn't improved dramatically by 1991, when Bob Duguid commented that "the barren character of [the] Belt Line between Bathurst Street and Eglinton Avenue should be improved by extensive planting"[170] . Even on the imposing stretch between Eglinton and Avenue Rd., trees were less mature and the canopy not as dense a generation ago. **We speculate that one reason that many of the Beltline's trees are now struggling is that they were planted relatively**

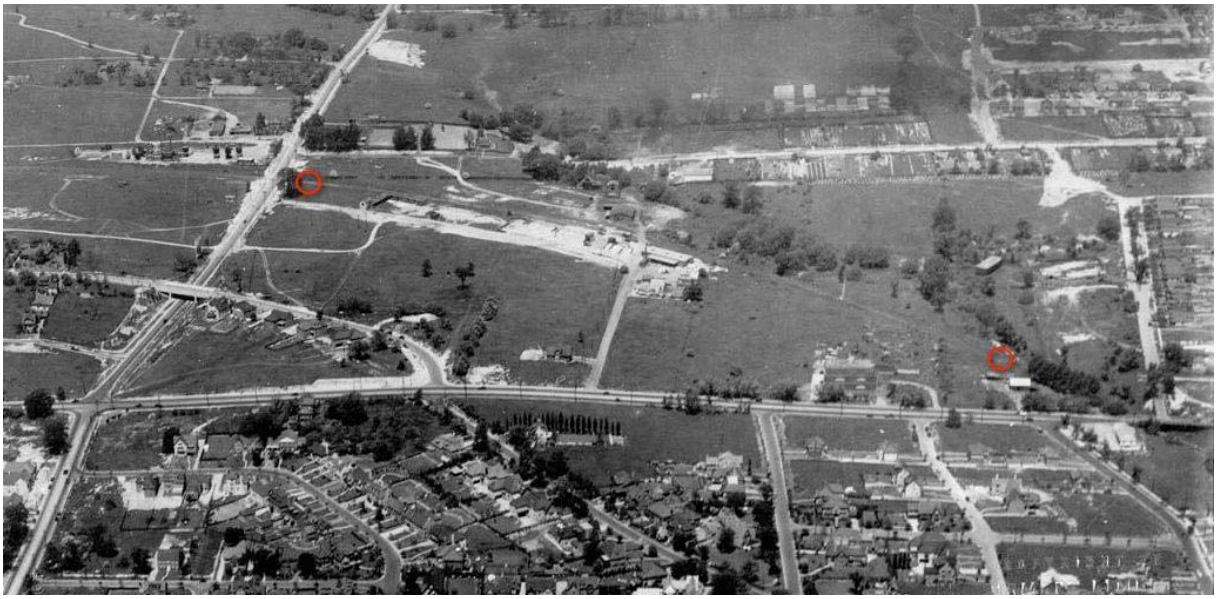
[167] "Ravine lot touches off fresh battle", Gay Abbate, *The Globe and Mail,* May 25, 1999, p. A13
[168] *Ibid.,* p. 99
[169] Mike Filey, *Mount Pleasant Cemetery*. (Toronto/ Oxford: Dundurn Books, 1999) p. 31
[170] Belt Line Working Committee. Meeting minutes, Feb. 6, 1991. p. 2

recently. Trees of greater maturity generally have root systems of substantial reach and depth that are less prone to damage by soil compression, compaction and consolidation.

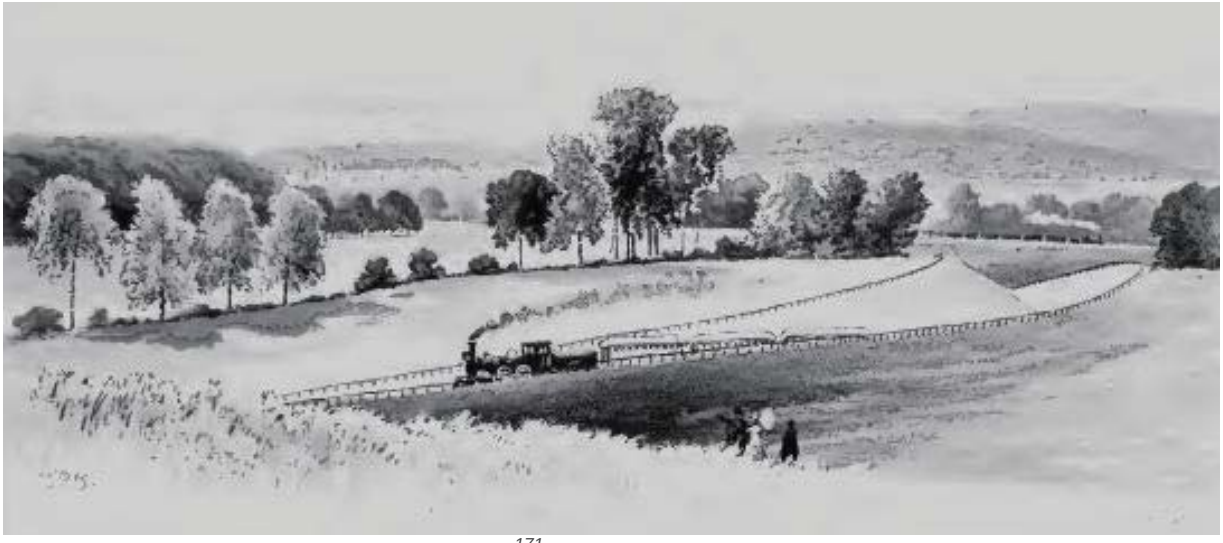
Aerial view of Forest Hill, 1935. Old Park Rd. is to the right, while Eglinton Ave. runs across the foreground. The Beltline lies between the circles



Aerial view of Forest Hill, 1935. Eglinton Ave. is in the foreground and Bathurst St. runs at an angle towards the right red circle. The Beltline lies between the circles.



Aerial view of Forest Hill, 1935. Bathurst St. runs at an angle past the LEFT red circle. The Beltline lies between the circles and Eglinton is in the foreground.



Fairbank Junction looking southwest. 1891.[171] *A slightly idealized view of farmland that Victorian property speculators had their eye on. The vantage point is presently near the site of the west trailhead of the York Beltline Trail. The West Side Mall is now located just beyond the train in the distance, to the right.*

ARCHITECTURAL & GOVERNMENTAL HISTORY

Chorley Park

The most important work of architecture on the Beltline was Government House, at Chorley Park, overlooking the south end of Moore Park Ravine. Modelled after Renaissance chateaux in the Loire valley, it served as the official residence of the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario from 1915 until 1937. Government House eclipsed Ottawa's Rideau Hall in size and expense. "Worth more than $18 million (in 2007 dollars) when built in 1915,

[171] *The Highlands of Toronto*. Toronto Belt Land Corporation promotional pamphlet (1891) p. 31

Rosedale's **Chorley Park was once the most opulent and palatial home in the country**." [172] The estate encompassed 14 acres, northwest of the Brick Works. "The gardens surrounding the house . . . combined a formal approach, across a rusticated concrete bridge to a square forecourt, with a more informal series of terraces that raised the house on fortification-like walls above the slope of the site." [173]

In 1937, after the Ontario Government became unwilling to pay the operating expenses of Government House, the property served as a military hospital, regional RCMP headquarters and temporary housing for Hungarian refugees. It was eventually sold to the City of Toronto. In 1960, the Toronto Parks Committee voted 6-4 in favour of demolishing the main building. The wreckers were hired the following year after which the property was converted to public parkland. [174] What we presently experience at Chorley Park is a pale, nondescript reflection of the palatial estate that was mostly obliterated from the hill overlooking the Beltline. Rosedale dogs nowadays relieve themselves in a field where there once stood the home of five Lieutenant Governors.

Allan Gotlieb, former chairman of the Ontario Heritage Foundation[175], singled out Chorley Park as an example of Toronto's lack of appreciation of its historic architecture:

> A great city is, of course, built on a blend of the best of the old and new. . . . There is an urban archaeology that is evident to any interested observer -- artifacts from different eras, juxtaposed, each with its own historical logic, all working together to form, collectively, a unique urban environment. Toronto has not been adept at cultivating such an ambience. . . . over the years Toronto has lost many precious parts of its architectural legacy -- grand mansions like Chorley Park, historic skyscrapers like the Temple Building, and great public buildings like the original asylum of the Queen Street Mental Health Centre. We are poorer for these losses.
>
> Yet we cannot simply blame greedy developers and demolition crews. They do not materialize out of nowhere. This is a character issue. The root of the problem is that we don't value our historic architecture. We continually allow our public, commercial and grand residential buildings to decline in a graceless downward spiral that inevitably ends with general agreement that a place is not worth saving. Or else we just tear them down. [176]

Our large province is blessed with a great deal of natural parkland. However, in Ontario we possess very few formally landscaped estates with a history as important as Chorley Park's. The grounds were designed by the prominent American landscape engineer, Charles Wellford Leavitt, as well as by a couple who pioneered landscape architecture in Ontario – Lorrie and Howard Duninington-Grub. The latter was once questioned by the Ontario Minister of Public Works as to whether the lavishness of the Government House gardens was justified. This was in 1915, when fountains, balustraded fences and terraces were being laid out. Duninington-Grub commented that "Garden design in a country devoid of gardens must necessarily be a gradual evolution." [177] Plans were slightly scaled back.

Unfortunately the appreciation of ornamental gardens amongst Ontario's bureaucrats does not seem to have greatly evolved over the last century. Chorley Park is a unique heritage site which deserves far more official

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[172] "The Curious Case of Chorley Park". Mark Maloney, *The Toronto Star.* Saturday July 28, 2007 (Emphasis added) http://www.thestar.com/article/240723

[173] William Dendy, *Lost Toronto: Images of the City's Past*. Revised ed. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993) p. 221

[174] "Historicist: The Saga of Chorley Park" Jamie Bradburn. *Torontoist*, Aug. 9, 2008

[175] Now named the Ontario Heritage Trust

[176] "A Tolerance for Mediocrity", speech by Allan Gotlieb to the Canadian Urban Institute. *National Post*, Mar. 18, 2000, p. F2

[177] Edward Butts; Karl Stensson, *Sheridan Nurseries: One Hundred Years of People, Plans, and Plants* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2012) p. 14

respect than it presently receives. Returning landscape to a more natural state isn't always the right thing to do. The lamentable chronicle of Government House should make us re-examine the almost reflex instinct of staff in the Forestry section of PFR to prioritize trees, without due consideration of cultural and architectural heritage factors.

Chorley Park lies within the bounds of the North Rosedale Heritage Conservation District, designated in 2004-05.[178] E.R.A. Architects Inc. and the North Rosedale Ratepayers Association drew up a detailed plan for the district, which highlighted Chorley Park's history.[179] Because the survey emphasized built form rather than landscape architecture, Chorley Park's gardens were not listed in the North Rosedale heritage evaluations survey. However, it is clear the grounds of the former Government House are an essential component of the heritage of North Rosedale. The City of Toronto has established five guidelines for determining cultural heritage value within a Heritage Conservation District.[180] Chorley Park contributes to the importance of the district's heritage on all counts, and we shall quote the criteria selectively:

1 has design value, has a rare, unique landscape
2 has historical value because it has direct associations with an institution that is significant to a community[181]
3 has contextual value because it supports the area's history, is defined by a landmark
4 has social value because it yields information that contributes to the understanding of a culture within the community[182]
5 has natural value

While the demolished principal edifice of Government House is beyond rescue, much of the basic surrounding landscape architecture and terracing survives. Significant heritage value is attached to the grounds, which should be formally protected from 'naturalization'. Accordingly, we recommend that the land currently falling within the bounds of the estate's original 14 acres should be classified as a "park" rather than a "natural area". Staff at Heritage Toronto, the Ontario Heritage Trust and the Garden Club of Toronto [183] should be consulted in order that an historically accurate restoration of Chorley Park's grounds be ensured. **Landscaping, terraces and hillside walls should be returned to their former state**, as they were during the viceregal period**.** The English-style gardens that used to dominate the slopes to the east should be recreated in their entirety, all the way down to the Beltline path. Proper consideration should be given to renewing the ragged, gone-to-seed conditions that prevail on the estate's lower reaches near Mud Creek.

Trail users should be informed by signage (at trail grade) about Chorley Park's historical importance – without having to make the long ascent to the commemorative plaque located at 245 Douglas Drive[184]. Also, after the path network of the estate has reconstructed, maps should be posted at strategic locations.

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[178] Adopted by Toronto City Council, July 20, 21 and 22, 2004; Ontario Municipal Board Decision No. 2387, Sept. 25, 2005
[179] *North Rosedale Heritage Conservation District Plan*, 2004, p. 49 http://www.toronto.ca/heritage-preservation/pdf/hcd_northrosedale_5march08_small.pdf
[180] Scott Barrett, *Heritage Conservation Districts in Toronto - Procedures, Policies and Terms of Reference* (City of Toronto, City Planning Division,January 2012) p. 28
[181] i.e., the Office of the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario
[182] While Chorley Park served as the viceregal seat, it was one of the centres of Anglo-Canadian, aristocratic social life
[183] The club had been involved in the restoration of gardens at other important estates such as Casa Loma and Spadina House.
[184] Erected by the Toronto Historical Board in 1975 http://openplaques.org/plaques/6686

Government House grounds, Chorley Park, looking north. ca. 1915 - 37.

Left: Government House, Chorley Park, north garden (Photo: Art Drysdale)
Right: Government House, Chorley Park, aerial view of grounds, 1930.

Chorley Park, Government House. Left: hall, ground floor, 1916 Right: drawing room, 1916

Chorley Park, Government House Left: entrance, ca.1930 Right: demolition, ca. 1961

BEFORE: Chorley Park. Government House, looking to northeast. 1916

AFTER: Chorley Park, looking to northeast, 2012