

October 12, 2021

To Infrastructure and Environment Committee Chair and Members:

Re: Creating the East Toronto Railpath

Residents in the Governor's Bridge neighbourhood have raised the potential to complete 'The Missing Link' and build the East Toronto Railpath.

At the core of this connection is an abandoned railway bridge that has the potential to link the Don Valley's public spaces, while providing relief to the existing crowded trails and provide new connections to adjoining neighbourhoods.

The abandoned bridge is most popularly known as the "Half-Mile Bridge" which is a former Canadian Pacific Railway viaduct over the Don River. The bridge is actually just 350 metres long and was built to connect CPR's mainline through Midtown Toronto with Downtown and the waterfront, allowing passenger trains to easily access Union Station. The last regular passenger train used the bridge in 1990, with only the occasional freight using it since. Today, it sits completely disused, and owned by Metrolinx.

At a recent public meeting, Metrolinx confirmed that they have no plans to use this property in the future.

The old route has become an informal walking and cycling trail. The viaduct itself is fenced off on both ends; the lack of railing and gaps between the ties have made the bridge a hazard, though it remains in good condition and easier to pass through should efforts be taken to retrofit the bridge.

The ability to build a trail through this land can become an important part of an active transportation network of trails that connects to the Evergreen Brickworks, Waterfront Trail, and the West Toronto Railpath.

Recommendations:

1. City Council request the City Manager to evaluate the potential to purchase the rail path lands and 'Half-Mile Bridge' from Metrolinx along with an adjacent property above Nesbitt Drive to create the East Toronto Railpath and report back to City Council as needed, or before June 2022.

Councillor
Mike Layton

Ward 11 University–Rosedale



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2. Should Metrolinx be unwilling to sell the property, City Council request the City Manager will instead attempt to enter into a lease agreement for public access and improvements and report back to Council as needed, and before June 2022.
 3. City Council request the City Manager instruct the appropriate staff to strike a working group once negotiations over the use of the property are concluded to help develop the East Toronto Railpath in consultation with the local Councillors for the areas in discussion.

Thank you,

Councillor Mike Layton
Ward 11, University-Rosedale