



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Cycling Safety in Tommy Thompson Park

Date:	May 29, 2013
To:	Parks and Environment Committee
From:	General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation
Wards:	Ward 30 – Toronto-Danforth
Reference Number:	P:\2013\Cluster A\PFR\PE21-062413-AFS#17763

SUMMARY

This report responds to a request made at the March 4, 2013, Parks and Environment Committee to Parks, Forestry and Recreation and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority on safety concerns raised by residents concerning ten speed bumps installed along 2.5 km of multi-use trail in Tommy Thompson Park in November 2011.

Given the unique ecological character of Tommy Thompson Park and the diversity of users who frequent its trails, it is essential to maintain appropriate controls for the reduction of cycling speed. This report recommends a two-fold approach to address safety and accessibility concerns of the speed bumps. The approach includes an interim modification of the bumps and a public forum to generate longer-term solutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends that the Parks and Environment Committee:

1. Approve interim modifications to the ten speed bumps installed in 2011 to make the incline and decline grade more gradual and ensure greater accessibility of this portion of the trail at an estimated cost of \$8,400 which can be accommodated in the 2013 Parks, Forestry and Recreation Operating Budget;
2. Direct the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and Parks, Forestry and Recreation to work with the City's Cycling and Infrastructure Program to hold a public forum in 2013 to help generate longer-term solutions to reduce cycling

speeds, ensure greater trail enjoyment by diverse users and protect the sensitive local ecology; and

3. Direct the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation to report through future operating or capital budget processes on any net budget impacts resulting from initiatives recommended through the public forum in 2013.

Financial Impact

The cost of modifying the ten speed bumps to make the incline and decline more gradual, and repainting them, is estimated at \$840 per speed bump, for a combined total of \$8,400. This cost can be accommodated in the 2013 Parks, Forestry and Recreation operating budget. The General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation will report through the operating or capital budget process in 2014 and subsequent years on any net operating or capital budget impacts as a result of any additional costs, arising from initiatives recommended through the public forum in 2013.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agree with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on March 4, 2013, the Parks and Environment Committee referred to the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation a communication from the Ward Councillor on safety concerns raised by residents with regard to 10 speed bumps that were installed along 2.5 km of multi-use trail in Tommy Thompson Park in November 2011. The Committee requested that the Division work with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) in recommending alternate solutions that meet the Park's conservation requirements, while not jeopardizing the safety of cyclists, including the removal of the speed bumps this spring.

See the Parks and Environment Committee Decision Document – March 4, 2013, Item PE19.6:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.PE19.6>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Through implementation of the Tommy Thompson Park Master Plan Phase I, a 2.5km section of multi-use trail, not used for regular lake filling activities, was re-surfaced in 2010. The previously existing speed bumps were not reinstalled. Subsequently, TRCA staff observed an increase in the number and speed of cyclists on the multi-use trail. Members of the public voiced concerns to the TRCA about their personal safety due to cyclists travelling through the park at high speeds. TRCA staff and park naturalists had additional concerns about the impact of high speed cycling on wildlife (see Images 1-3). Of particular concern are snakes which are vulnerable to injury and death from collisions

due to their natural basking behaviour. In general, collisions and interactions with park wildlife increase as speed increases, particularly for slow moving reptile species that sun themselves on the roadway.

Image 1: Rabbit Crossing



Image 2: Turtle Crossing



Image 3: Snake Basking



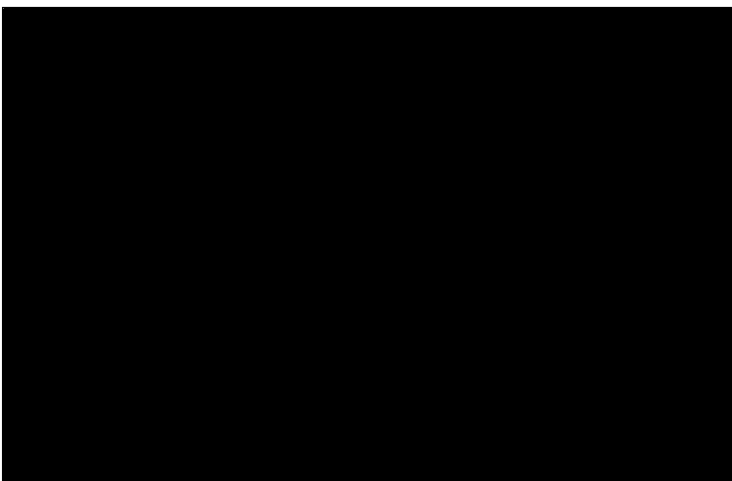
TRCA staff have noted that the more gradual speed humps found throughout the rest of Tommy Thompson Park were ineffective in slowing cyclists. To address this, a request for proposals was issued to supply speed bumps that target cyclists specifically, and prevent cyclists from travelling at excessive speeds. The request was to ensure that cyclists comply with the posted speed limit of 20km/hr, in accordance with Municipal Code Chapter 608 - Parks.

In November of 2011, ten speed bumps were installed along 2.5 kilometres of multi-use trail and were painted bright yellow. “Bump” signs were posted at each speed bump in the spring of 2012, as well as explanatory signage at the park’s entrance (see Images 4-5).

Image 4: New Speed Bumps and Signs



Image 5: Park Entrance Sign



To date, the TRCA and Parks, Forestry and Recreation have received over 40 written complaints from cyclists about the new speed bumps. Concerns raised include: the safety of trail users, recreational cyclists, inline skaters and mobility devices passing over the 10 speed bumps; their effect on park enjoyment; and the impact of the bumps on cyclist training times.

COMMENTS

Tommy Thompson Park is located on the Leslie Street Spit and is owned by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. TRCA is responsible for the protection and management of the park's natural features and wildlife, while Parks, Forestry and Recreation manages the park's infrastructure, including trails. As of January 2012, the park has been jointly managed by the TRCA and Parks, Forestry and Recreation.

The park is officially open to the public on weekends and holidays, when it is staffed by TRCA. During this period, private motorized vehicles are not permitted. On weekdays, the Toronto Port Authority operates a lake filling operation and strictly controls access to authorized visitors. Public access during evenings is not controlled and is at the user's risk. The Aquatic Park Sailing Club leases an area in Tommy Thompson Park and is permitted vehicle access when the park is not officially open to the public. Dogs are not permitted in the park due to its sensitive ecological communities.

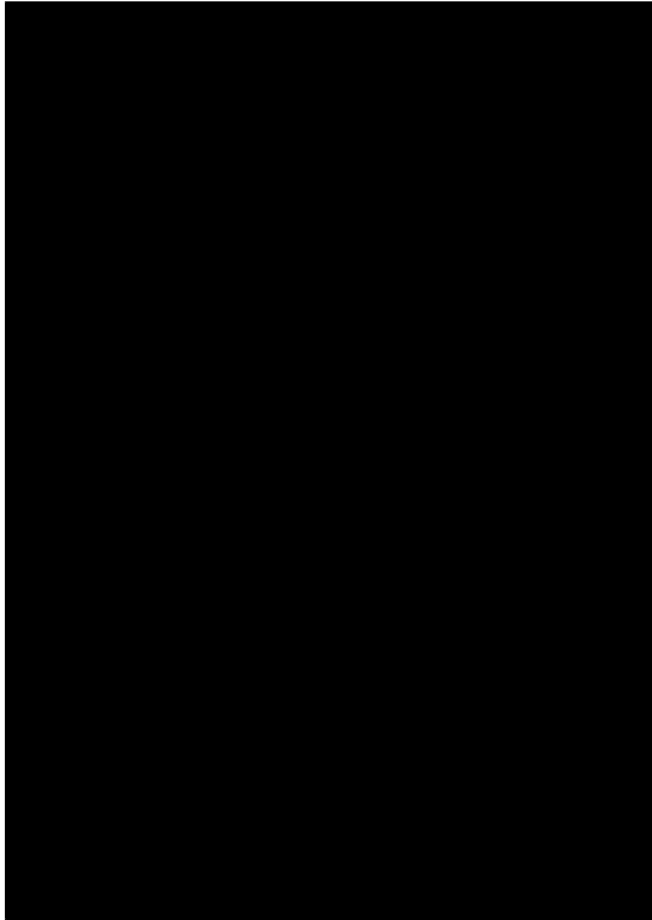
Ecological Overview

Tommy Thompson Park is an urban wilderness park that acts as a wildlife sanctuary providing habitat for plants, birds, fish, mammals, insects, amphibians and snakes. It is designated as a globally significant *Important Bird Area* due to the incredible bird life that inhabits the park year round. The Spit contains two recognized *Environmentally Significant Areas* (ESAs), and the entire site has been recommended as an ESA. The park is also home to species at risk that are protected under the provincial Endangered Species Act. These include the milksnake, Blanding's turtle, barn swallow, bank swallow, eastern wood pewee and monarch butterfly, among others.

Recreational Overview

Tommy Thompson Park is beloved by city residents as a place to "get away" from the city, experience nature, and walk or leisurely ride without concern for vehicle traffic. The park's trail system is three-tiered, with 7.4 km of multi-use trail, 7.3 km of pedestrian trail and 3.3 km of nature trail (see Image 6).

Image 6: Tommy Thompson Multi-Use Trail



Cycling has always been popular at the park and comprises the highest user group. Other major users include pedestrian naturalists, runners/joggers and families. Cycling at fast speeds has only recently become an issue, in part, due to the increasing popularity of road riding and the attraction to Tommy Thompson Park as a car free, pet free urban wilderness.

Tommy Thompson Park Master Plan Overview

The approved Tommy Thompson Park Master Plan provides the foundation for park development and management. The main objectives of the Tommy Thompson Park Master Plan are to:

- Preserve significant species;
- Protect environmentally significant areas;
- Enhance aquatic and terrestrial habitat; and
- Enhance public recreational opportunities.

The Master Plan provides details on the trail or pathway network. The plan states, “The pathway will be of a low speed design and be constructed from asphalt. In order to blend in with the environment no lighting, shoulders, or curbs will line the path. Through the use of safety and identification signage pedestrians will be encouraged to utilize the pedestrian trails and not the bicycle route, while cyclists will be discouraged from using the pedestrian pathway system.”

User Experience Overview

To better understand user experiences and concerns at Tommy Thompson Park, TRCA staff administered a voluntary survey to park users in the summer of 2012. A total of 255 responses were received, with 51.4% of respondents identified as cyclists and 48.6% identified as pedestrians. The largest concern voiced by 12.2% of respondents was speeding cyclists. The second most common complaints were hazardous speed bumps and beach hazards, each at 8.2%. This highlights the persistent confrontation at the park between leisure cyclists and pedestrians and the training speed cyclists. TRCA staff regularly engage in dialogue with these groups.

Next Steps

Given the importance of reducing cycling speeds in Tommy Thompson Park, Parks, Forestry and Recreation can work with the TRCA to create an interim solution to address issues around trail accessibility and safety. Newer speed bumps on the southern portion of the trail can be modified over the 2013 summer/fall season to make them more gradual, while maintaining their capacity to slow cyclists. The total estimated cost of the modification is \$8,400 which can be accommodated within the 2013 Parks, Forestry and Recreation Operating Budget. This would be done in consultation with the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Disability Steering Committee.

It is further recommended that a public forum be held in 2013, with the support of Transportation Services' Cycling Infrastructure and Programs Group, to allow public input on generating a long-term solution for reducing cycling speeds and maintaining trail safety for the diversity of users and wildlife in Tommy Thompson Park.

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SIGNATURE

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