

Oct. 25, 2023



Toronto City Hall
Infrastructure and Environment Committee
100 Queen Street West; Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

RE: Connected Communities: Advancing Year-Round Trails Between Earl Bales Park and York Mills Station

Dear Chair McKelvie and Infrastructure and Environment Committee Members:

Toronto Field Naturalists are glad to add our voice in support of the motion *Connected Communities: Advancing Year-Round Trails Between Earl Bales Park and York Mills Station*.

Toronto's ravines are vital green spaces, offering links to nearby nature for our communities. But many ravines have effectively been inaccessible to exactly those populations most in need, including young families, newcomers and transit users. The pandemic convinced Torontonians that our neighbourhoods need safe year-round pathways to local nature – dedicated pathways allowing pedestrians and cyclists to avoid busy roadways. Earl Bales would be an ideal location to advance a year-round trail connection:

- The many informal trails criss-crossing the area are evidence of the pent-up demand for better linkages through this green space. Erosion, habitat destruction and safety are of course the major down-sides of informal trails. A dedicated formal link would ease pressure on the ravine slopes now being damaged by informal trails.
- Guided walking tours through Earl Bales are already offered by our own TFN outing program and by other nature-focused groups. A direct link for pedestrians to the subway system, coupled with access during the peak seasons of spring, summer and fall would make Earl Bales much more attractive as a destination.
- Highway 401 is currently an almost insurmountable barrier to walkers or cyclists in the area. A dedicated ravine trail giving walkers and cyclists safe passage under Hwy 401 would be a game-changing improvement.

TFN is optimistic that a year-round trail link from Earl Bales to York Mills subway station is very doable. We look forward to collaborating with local Councillors, community members and other stakeholder groups to determine what the best possible trail alignment could be.

Sincerely,
Zunaid Khan, President
Ellen Schwartzel, Past-President
Toronto Field Naturalists