

East Don Trail Project Environmental Assessment

Community Liaison Committee Meeting #3 Notes

Flemingdon Park Library
2nd Floor, Meeting Room #1
July 15th, 2013
6:30pm – 8:30pm

Meeting Chair: Daniel Egan
Note Taker: Natalie Seniuk

Attendance:

Daniel Egan, City of Toronto
Jennifer Hyland, City of Toronto
Wendy Strickland, City of Toronto
Natalie Seniuk, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
Violetta Tkazcuk, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
Lisa Turnbull, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
Munjeera Jefford, Action for Neighbourhood Change/Hub, Victoria Village
John Taranu, Cycle Toronto
Terry West, Don Mills Residents Inc.
Andy Wickens, Don Watershed Regeneration Council
Louis Fliss, Flemingdon Health Centre - Alternate
John Routh, Friends of the Don East
Paula Davies, Todmorden Mills Wildflower Preserve
Charles Chaffey, Toronto Field Naturalists
George Bizios, Victoria Village Community Association
Mike Jones, Walk Toronto
Jon Riddell, Woodbine Gardens Homeowners Association

Regrets: Ronald Kluger (Bike 25), Mandy Karch (OREG – Ontario Road Ecology Group), Angela Surdi (Parkview Hills Community Association), Chris Winsor (Resident Ward 29), Nancy Smith Lea (Toronto Centre for Active Transportation), Anne Marie Leger (Toronto Ornithological Club), Brendan Flanagan (Wynford Concorde Residents Group)

WELCOME AND OPENING COMMENTS

The Chair, Daniel Egan (DE or The Chair) – Manager of Cycling Infrastructure and Programs at the City of Toronto (City) - welcomed everyone to Community Liaison Committee (CLC) Meeting #3.

The Chair provided an overview of the materials provided as part of CLC Meeting #3, including a PowerPoint Presentation, Agenda, and Questionnaire to be completed by CLC Members.

The Chair asked CLC meeting participants to introduce themselves for the benefit of those who had not had a chance to meet each other.

The Chair handed the meeting over to Natalie Seniuk (NS) – Project Coordinator with Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) – to review the agenda, housekeeping items and project updates.

HOUSEKEEPING AND UPDATES

NS reviewed the agenda for CLC Meeting #3 including the intended purpose of the meeting which was 1) to provide the alternative trail alignments to CLC members and, 2) to receive feedback and input from members regarding the evaluation criteria that would be used to evaluate the alternative trail alignments.

Confirmation of CLC Meeting #1 and CLC Meeting #2 Notes

NS asked CLC members if there were any changes or corrections required to the CLC #1 Meeting Notes. Participants did not have any comments. The CLC #1 Meeting Notes were accepted as presented.

NS asked CLC members if there were any changes or corrections required to the CLC #2 Meeting Notes. NS noted that edits had been provided through email prior to the CLC Meeting and included: some minor grammatical errors, a request to include some links to additional information that had been discussed at the meeting, and a request for comments received after CLC Meeting #1 to be appended to the Notes. Participants did not have any additional comments. The CLC #2 Meeting Notes were accepted as revised.

Project Updates

NS gave a presentation on the CLC meetings held to date, upcoming meetings, and the addition of a fifth CLC Meeting.

NS gave a presentation on updates to the Existing Conditions noting that the Stage 1 Archaeological Assessment and Fluvial Geomorphic Study had been completed, and that a draft of the Baseline Environmental Report had been completed and was being reviewed by the project team and Technical Advisory Committee.

NS presented the major revisions that were made to the Alternatives To following comments received by CLC Members during CLC Meeting #2 and up to the due date for comments of June 19, 2013.

Before turning the meeting over to Violetta Tkaczuk (VT) – Project Manager with TRCA - NS asked if there were any questions about the information presented. No questions or comments were received.

GEOMORPHIC AND GEOTECHNICAL EXISTING CONDITIONS

As members of the consulting team from Aquafor Beech Ltd. were not able to attend CLC Meeting #3 this section would not be presented. VT noted that if CLC members had any specific questions to send them to the project team and they would be addressed by Aquafor Beech.

ALTERNATIVE METHODS

VT provided a recap of the environmental assessment process and where the East Don Trail Project is within the process being followed. VT also explained what the goals and purpose of CLC Meeting #3 were.

VT presented a recap of the Problem/Opportunity Statement as well as the Project Objectives as finalized.

VT explained the Alternatives To and that it was decided based on the completion of the evaluation of the Alternative To (which included input from the project team, CLC Members and the Technical Advisory Committee) the preferred Alternative To was to Provide a Multi Use Trail Connection.

VT explained the Alternative Methods would be the focus of both CLC Meeting #3 and CLC Meeting #4 and that these were the methods for carrying out the undertaking, and for the purpose of this project would be termed "Alternative Trail Alignments".

VT reiterated that CLC Members were being asked to provide feedback on the evaluation criteria and the alignments as presented in order to identify any gaps or additional considerations. It was also noted that the group would be give two (2) weeks to submit their edits, which should be sent to Natalie Seniuk on or before June 29, 2013.

VT presented the Alternative Trail Alignments and explained that the alternatives had been divided into three (3) distinct areas.

AREA 1 – Forest Trail (2 options)

VT provided a summary of each of the Alternative Trail Alignments including a summary of crossings, key points , potential connections and length of proposed trail.

CLC Question

To what level are you considering the access points? And, how do they figure into the decision making process?

Project Team Response

It is one of the evaluation criteria that are being considered as part of the selection of the preferred trail alignment. The ease of creating a future connection to the spine trail will be considered.

CLC Question

Will you be identifying the primary trail first, and then the connections?

Project Team Response

Yes, we will be defining the spine trail as part of the evaluation process for the Environmental Assessment (EA), and it is the main focus of the EA. However, through this process, we want to ensure that we are not precluding any future access points (connections).

CLC Question

Regarding alternative Forest Trail A – This option identifies a connection to Victoria Village. Is this the case? If so, how will the grade be changed to be accommodate this?

Project Team Response

We are not looking at exact location of connections at this point in the process, just the ability to create them through the selection of the spine trail. In regard to the concerns regarding grade, this will be considered when the type of trail connection is decided.

CLC Question

In the northern part of the Study Area are you presenting the Anewen Park and Wigmore Park connection options?

Project Team Response

Yes, those are possibilities. They are two areas that currently have a network of informal trails that could connect to the spine trail.

CLC Question

Regarding option Forest Trail B – Does this option not allow for future access points?

Project Team Response

That is correct; it will be difficult to provide access points with this connection. This option would require an additional bridge to provide a connection. Forest Trail A presents the most feasible alternative for future connections.

CLC Question

Does it cost more to build a bridge than go around? In other words, what is more expensive, extra trail length or a bridge?

Project Team Response

This is not as easy a comparison to make as it will vary greatly depending on the topography and constraints associated with the trail. At this time, we are not able to say for certain which would be the more costly option.

CLC Question

In general, a trail that is located within in the valley will be more likely to be flooded out and more problematic. Is that a consideration?

Project Team Response

Yes, capital as well as maintenance costs are being considered as part of the evaluation of the Alternative Trail Alignments.

CLC Question

Will you be showing the evaluation of the Alternative Trail Alignments?

Project Team Response

Yes, absolutely. This will be presented at the next stage in the process, and at CLC Meeting #4 we will provide details regarding the evaluation of the Alternative Trail Alignments.

CLC Question

I think it is a planning consideration to stay within the inside of the riverbend, is this not true? For example, dealing with erosion over time?

Project Team Response

Yes. Our consultant, Aquafor Beech Ltd., has been looking at this as part of their studies and will be taking it into consideration. In this area, it should be noted that the other side of the river is also very steep.

CLC Question

Why don't you go around the west side of the railway in this area?

Project Team Response

Though not clearly visible on the map provided, the topography makes it very challenging to build a trail here. It was also noted that topography would be shown at the next stage during which the Alternative Trail Alignments would be evaluated.

CLC Comment

It should also be noted, that many types of users will be using the trail, and the shortest available route is not always the most desirable by these recreational users.

CLC Question

In terms of determining which option is best suited, will the CLC be involved in the decision making process?

Project Team Response

Yes, the purpose of today's meeting is to review the evaluation criteria that will be used to evaluate Alternative Trail Alignments. At CLC Meeting #4 we will start the quantitative analysis of the Alternative Trail Alignments.

CLC Question

At the first site visited during the site walk that the CLC went on, we viewed the rail line. Are the owners of this rail line going in to do work to protect their rail line, and what is the plan for this if they are?

Project Team Response

We are in discussions with Metrolinx and have provided them with the information regarding the project. If that work, erosion control work, is required in order to implement the trail, than it will be undertaken as part of this project. Metrolinx will be included in all discussions and erosion control works that may impact their infrastructure. Otherwise, Aquafor Beech had estimated that the erosion would impact the rail line within an approximately 25 year period.

CLC Question

The City of Toronto Natural Heritage map (a link was provided to CLC Members after CLC Meeting #3 for their reference), shows a series of dots detailing flora and fauna. Will we be able to adjust the trail alignment to protect some of these?

Project Team Response

Yes. We will be refining the preferred alternative against the existing conditions (including, but not limited to, topography, drainage, flora and fauna) to ensure that it is built in a sound manner.

CLC Question

In the Alternatives To notes, someone asked whether restoration is carried out and the answer was that it is not part of the project but, where we build the surrounding area will be restored. This does not seem to imply that restoration work will be completed. Please clarify.

Project Team Response

This may be a misinterpretation, as any work that will be undertaken will also be required to go through City of Toronto and TRCA by-law and permitting processes. Though the restoration work is not a part of the Environmental Assessment, it will be a part of the larger project scope.

Area 2 – Road Link, River Walk and Rail Trail (9 options)

VT provided a summary of each of the Alternative Trail Alignments including a summary of crossings, key points, potential connections and length of proposed trail.

CLC Question

Regarding the Road Link alternatives - What type of materials will be used for the trail surface near the hydro access line? Will Hydro One be maintaining the surface in this area, or will it be the City's role to maintain it? We have seen a lot of cracking and degradation of other trails from heavy machinery.

Project Team Response

The material will be asphalt, as it is for the remainder of the spine trail, however the trail in this area will be designed and constructed to withstand traffic from heavy machinery.

CLC Question

Regarding Road Link Option C - There is a large swamp within this area. Would a boardwalk or other trail alternative be constructed to accommodate this, or will you consider going around it?

Project Team Response

If this alternative were chosen, at that time the project team would look at options for addressing this. A possibility would be to construct a switchback trail to avoid the wetland entirely.

CLC Question

Regarding the Road Link alternatives along Linkwood Lane, will this alternative require widening or can you use existing space?

Project Team Response

There are a number of options that could be used including the use of the existing boulevard or grass area, or a combination of both. In addition, the existing road is wide enough to accommodate sharrows, if necessary. These decisions would all be part of the design stage if this alternative is chosen as the preferred.

CLC Question

Regarding the Road Link alternatives - whichever alternative is chosen, the project team should look at the road link alternative for implementation, as it makes sense to provide an additional option. It would provide an alternative for winter and night use. Are you considering this as an option?

Project Team Response

Not at the moment. Due to budgetary constraints the implementation of the road link can be an expensive undertaking.

CLC Question

Regarding the Road Link alternatives - where would costs for constructing the road link come from?

Project Team Response

In order to implement the road link alternative, a number of light standards would be required to be relocated, a retaining wall structure may be required, and a number of utilities may need to be relocated. In addition, the steepness of slope to get back into the valley system would require expensive trail switchbacks or significant grade work and retaining wall structures.

CLC Question

Regarding the Road Link alternatives - St.Dennis Drive has a plan to be more cyclist and pedestrian friendly and in addition, the Eglinton LRT plan calls for bike lanes. If you can improve connectivity, this could be an excellent transportation option. Does the project team have any thoughts regarding this consideration?

Project Team Response

If the trail alignment along the road is not chosen for this project, it could be recommended for a future capital project. Any intelligence we gain through this process could be recommended as part of a future project.

CLC Question

Is the Gatineau connection a good connection option for Victoria Village residents?

Project Team Response

Yes, this could be an option for residents within the Victoria Village community.

CLC Comment

It could be interpreted that the Victoria Village residents have stated their preference through the presence of informal trails within the forested area.

CLC Comment

In response to the comment above, I would like to note that yes, this could be true. However, there are currently no formalized access points for for this community and as a result the existing informal routes may not be a so the true representation of preference.

CLC Question

Regarding the River Walk alternatives – What about safety for trail users in relation to the golf course?

Project Team Response

This option is only possible with acquisition and closure of the golf course.

CLC Question

If the golf course property is purchased, what other uses would it be used for?

Project Team Response

Purchase of the land would meet TRCA and City objectives for acquiring park land within the Don Watershed. And yes, the land could become more than the trail. In regards to a potential purchase of the land, these discussions are in progress with the golf course now and are being undertaken by TRCA and City's respective property groups.

CLC Question

Is there some weighting that would reduce the value of purchasing the golf course land as it meets other requirements, for the purposes of evaluating the Alternative Trail Alignments?

Project Team Response

Right now the evaluation will only consider the cost included in construction of the trail. A discussion is still needed to determine how to address the cost of acquiring the land.

CLC Question

In order for the River Walk A option to be feasible we can assume that golf course will need to be purchased?

Project Team Response

Yes, this is correct.

CLC Question

Regarding the Rail Trail alternatives - The fairway of the golf course comes up to the roadbed of the rail and then there is the track. There appears to be no space to insert a trail?

Project Team Response

Though it may look deceiving, there is in fact space. However, to implement this alternative would require building into the bank or building up.

CLC Question

Regarding the Rail Trail alternatives - Let's say we cannot build through the golf course, what are the options since the rail trail will be on the golf course's property as well?

Project Team Response

Actually, the trail will be on the rail line right-of-way, not golf course property. This alternative would only require an agreement with the golf course at the north end of their property.

CLC Question

Would complete fencing be required for the rail trail alternatives? And for how many metres?

Project Team Response

Yes the area that would run along the rail line and along the golf course would need to be fenced on both sides. As for the metres the project team will get back to the CLC regarding this question. **(ACTION ITEM)**

CLC Question

Considering that the Pan Am path will be going up through the Gatineau trail crossing I think that should be heavily weighted. Is there additional money for that project?

Project Team Response

No, there is no additional funding. Whatever is developed for this project will become the Pan Am path, and the money to implement the East Don Trail has already been allocated within the capital budget. The majority of the money allotted for the Pan Am path will be used to upgrade existing infrastructure.

CLC Comment

Rather than building a route along the west side of the river, an alternative might be to connect the northern portion of the trail at Eglinton, through Sloan Drive and Wigmore Park (eastern alignment rather than western alignment)

Project Team Response

Project team will get clarification from the CLC Member on the exact alignment being proposed. **(ACTION ITEM)**

CLC Question

Regarding the River Walk alternatives – there is a bridge proposed in the middle of the golf course. Are there conditions that required the trail to follow that side of the river?

Project Team Response

The proposed alignment currently follows the existing cart path. However, this would be looked at more closely if this is the preferred alignment chosen.

Area 3 – Access Route (3 options)

VT provided a summary of each of the Alternative Trail Alignments including a summary of crossings, constraints, potential connections and length of proposed trail.

CLC Question

How actively is Toronto Water using their existing access route?

Project Team Response

We can find out for you but it hasn't come up as a concern to date. The access route was built to monitor the trunk sewer, but is not used on a regular basis. **(ACTION ITEM)**

CLC Question

Are you planning an access point for the Parkview Hills community?

Project Team Response

This was discussed however, as part of this process we are not proposing one as this is a very steep connection point.

CLC Question

Would there be marked crossings used as part of these the Access Route alternatives?

Project Team Response

Yes.

CLC Question

Regarding Access Route B option – is there a chance of piggy-backing costs on someone else's bridge?

Project Team Response

Yes, but these would still need to go through approval and design specifications would need to be looked at.

CLC Question

Is there any potential connection from Flemington Park community to the trail?

Project Team Response

Only the spine trail will be assessed as part of the EA process however the connection will be considered to see if we want to include access options.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

VT Presented the evaluation criteria to the group and asked that each member take the information and questionnaire home and provide feedback to Natalie within the two week window (by June 29, 2013).

CLC Comment

Under Functional Value it was suggested that wording be changed to “potential to provide future opportunities” instead of “eliminate future opportunities” **(ACTION ITEM)**

CLC Question

Are we expected to evaluate the trail options now?

Project Team Response

No, just the evaluation criteria to determine if there are any criteria missing, or any that should be modified.

CLC Comment

Under Natural and Physical Environment - There used to be heavy erosion behind the houses (at the south end of the Study Area where the Toronto access route is) and it was a lot of work to complete this work due to the soil layering and composition. There are some potential problems with just looking at "ground water" as it is a tricky area.

CLC Question

With the recent severe rains is there a change in attitude at City hall regarding flooding and planning?

Project Team Response

It is too soon to say, but most of the existing trails did well under the conditions. There were some key areas in the Don that the City is aware could be an issue. There has been a lot of work in the last number of years looking at impacts of extreme weather occurrences and erosion (by both City and TRCA).

CLC Question

How does this project fit within TRCA's stormwater management master plan?

Project Team Response

We are always considering other plans but there is not a direct relationship.

CLC Comment

It seems that there could be additional benefits to acquiring the golf course as it would assist with stormwater management in the Don watershed and should be considered another benefit.

CLC Comment

It should be noted that people do go within certain areas (informal trails) because of constraints like the river; they are not going to wade through a river so they may follow paths like the existing rail tracks and enter steep areas (as an example). This should be considered when looking at informal trail use.

CLC Question

Will there be information provided regarding archaeological and cultural assessment to help with decision making during the evaluation of the Alternative Trail Alignments?

Project Team Response

Yes.

CLC Question

Is there a possibility for another criterion that has to do with partnering in regards to cost, as there are plenty of opportunities?

Project Team Response

It may not be a separate criteria but it could be addressed as an indicator within an existing criteria. Are you saying that one alignment may have more opportunity for cost sharing?

CLC Member Response

Yes, and I think this should be considered.

Project Team Response

Thank you. We will look at this to see if there is an opportunity to reword a criteria to address this. **(ACTION ITEM)**

NEXT STEPS

VT went through the Next Steps for the project.

NS agreed to send a Doodle calendar request to all CLC Members regarding CLC Meeting #4.

VT asked if there were any additional questions before the meeting was closed.

The Chair closed the meeting at 8:30 pm.