

**East Don Trail Project  
Environmental Assessment**

**Community Liaison Committee Meeting #2  
Notes**

Flemingdon Park Library  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Meeting Room #1  
June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013  
6:30pm – 8:30pm

Meeting Chair: Adele Freeman

Note Taker: Natalie Seniuk

<b>ATTENDANCE</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Lisa Turnbull	Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
Natalie Seniuk	Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
Violetta Tkazcuk	Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
Garth Armour	City of Toronto
Jennifer Hyland	City of Toronto
Dave Maunder	Aquafor Beech Ltd.
Rob Amos	Aquafor Beech Ltd.
Ronald Kluger	Bike 25
John Taranu	Cycle Toronto
Terry West	Don Mills Residents Inc.
Abid Hussain	Flemingdon Health Centre - Alternate
Paula Davies	Todmorden Mills Wildflower Preserve
Charles Chaffey	Toronto Field Naturalists
Anne Marie Leger	Toronto Ornithological Club
George Bizios	Victoria Village Community Association
Mike Jones	Walk Toronto
Jon Riddell	Woodbine Gardens Homeowners Association
Brendan Flanagan	Wynford Concorde Residents Group
Regrets: Munjeera Jefford (Action for Neighbourhood Change/Hub, Victoria Village), Andy Wickens (Don Watershed Regeneration Council), Louis Fliss (Flemingdon Health Centre), John Routh (Friends of the Don East), 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)	

## **WELCOME AND OPENING COMMENTS**

The Chair, Adele Freeman (AF or The Chair) - Director of Watershed Management at Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) - welcomed everyone to Community Liaison Committee (CLC) Meeting #2

The Chair asked that CLC meeting participants to introduce themselves.

Violetta Tkaczuk (VT) – Project Manager with TRCA - welcomed the group to the meeting and went over the agenda for the evening.

VT provided an overview of the relevant planning initiatives that were used to develop the project objectives, identify the problems and opportunities, and the opportunity statement.

VT showed the map and key points that were visited as part of the sitewalk that was undertaken on May 30 with available CLC Members and members of the project team. A brief description of the three locations and key features that were discussed during this visit were presented.

## **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

VT presented the existing conditions within the Regional and Local Study Areas.

### Groundwater and Baseflows

Baseflow accounts for 49% of the mean annual discharge in the Don River (river flow is generally made up of groundwater discharge (baseflow) and land surface runoff)

### Stormwater Management and Water Quality

Stormwater management was often not implemented within the area historically, but as development boomed stormwater management practices became more prevalent in the 1980's

### Natural Cover: Flora

The regional and local study areas follow the same trend regarding the natural cover types present within them with forest cover being the most highly represented natural cover type.

L Ranks are a means of ranking flora and fauna, and are assigned relative scores according to their ecological needs and sensitivities, the range being L1 (intolerant) to L5 (tolerant). L1 to L3 are of regional concern in TRCA jurisdiction, L4 are considered to be of concern in the urban areas.

### Natural Cover: Wetlands

No provincially significant wetlands are present within the regional study area. Wetlands are found throughout the regional and local study area, and total 5.1ha in size for the entire local study area.

### Fauna: Wildlife and Habitat

Natural Cover in the Regional Study Area is lower than other areas within TRCA's jurisdiction. Across other areas within TRCA's jurisdiction natural cover represents 25% of the area, whereas, in the Don this natural cover only represents 12%. Species at Risk within the Regional Study Area include the Eastern Meadowlark; Species of Concern include the Eastern Wood Pewee; and, invasive species include the European Starling.

### Fauna: Fish and Fish Habitat

Fish and fish habitat within the East Don River is monitored through the Ontario Stream Assessment Protocol (OSAP). This program is run by TRCA and includes an annual bugs and benthics survey (as they are an excellent indicator of water quality), annual bank profile survey, and a fish survey that is undertaken every three years.

A number of existing instream barriers exist within the system including weirs, and natural debris. These prevent fish from moving up stream.

### Potential Environmentally Significant Areas (ESA)

Wigmore Park Ravine is the only potential Environmentally Significant Area within the Regional Study Area. It has been designated as an ESA because it meets 3 of 4 criteria set out for designation.

### Land Use

The majority of the land use within the Region Study Area is residential, followed by green/open space and recreation, and then industrial

### Questions related to Existing Conditions

#### **CLC Question:**

What do the numbers on the map on slide "Groundwater and Baseflow" stand for (see slides for reference)?

#### **Project Team Response**

They show the percentage of the total baseflow that is contributed to the system by each of the subwatersheds. Based on the numbers shown on the map, most of the groundwater discharge is occurring in the lower reach of watershed.

The Chair requested that the information regarding what the percentages on the map stand for be posted for the benefit of CLC members unable to attend.

#### **CLC Question**

When referring to the L Ranks, what does tolerant/intolerant mean?

#### **Project Team Response**

The L Ranks represents a species tolerance to their ecological need and sensitivity to their environment. L1 Ranked species are most sensitive to disturbance within their environment.

**CLC Question**

Is part of this project remediation to remove invasive species from the study area? (Examples of invasive flora species inquired about included dog strangling vine, Manitoba Maple)?

**Project Team Response**

It is not part of the project; however as part of the project species will be removed for trail construction, and these may be invasive species where possible. The species removed, will always be replaced with native species.

**CLC Question**

Are the species of concern presented in the slides the only ones found in the regional and local study areas? And, does this only apply to flora species?

**Project Team Response**

No, there are other species within the area including fauna. Only some were shown to provide an example and illustrate what can be found. It should also be noted that there is a difference between species at risk (regulated by MNR) and species of concern (as listed by COSEWIC – Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada). Species of concern are listed but they do not have legislation protecting them.

**CLC Question**

What does natural cover refer to?

**Project Team Response**

Natural cover refers to the natural and un-groomed areas. They are often made up of forests and successional areas. They do not necessarily relate directly to what wildlife in the area need, but could potentially be used as habitat by a variety of species.

**CLC Question**

When it is stated that there are Species at Risk identified in the area, is it based on a specific population size?

**Project Team Response**

No, it is based on surveys that have been completed, and may represent only a single sighting.

**CLC Question**

Are there known to be any Species at Risk nesting within the Regional Study Area?

**Project Team Response**

Not to our knowledge, but it is possible. To date, a study to assess this has not been completed.

**CLC Question**

Can the notes of additional species be provided? And, was this only a sample of a larger list?

**Project Team Response**

This is only a sampling however, there are other species that were identified in our records, this will be included in the East Don Trail EA existing conditions report that will form part of the EA.

**CLC Question**

There are Chinook Salmon that run up the Don River. Are they harming the other fish?

**Project Team Response**

Chinook are introduced species however, they are not harming the other fish. Chinook run up the system to Markham, likely because the barriers that used to be in place in the Don River have been removed. It should also be noted that they are not a reproducing population. The native salmon species to the area is the Atlantic Salmon, and fingerlings were found recently in the area.

**CLC Question**

Are all the fish found in the Don River system native?

**Project Team Response**

The majority of fish found in the Don River system are common native fish. The only invasive species is the common carp.

**CLC Question**

Are there any Koy?

**Project Team Response**

Koy are mostly found in ponds and contained areas near residential areas. They have been surveyed however, when it does happen it is just an occurrence and not prevalent.

**CLC Comment**

Chinook salmon are invasive. The Chair clarified that they are not categorized this way by TRCA.

**CLC Question**

Are Brown Trout invasive, or are they native to Ontario?

**Project Team Response**

AF noted that we are not sure that they are native to this area, but possibly stocked. The project team will check. Historically, Brown Trout have been competitive with Atlantic Salmon for habitat.

**CLC Question**

What is the process for designating an ESA?

### **Project Team Response**

In approximately 2008 City of Toronto identified additional areas within the City that could be potential ESA. To qualify as an ESA the site/area must meet one of the four set criteria. Wigmore Park Ravine is a candidate site and meets three of the four criteria, which means that it is a significant area and needs to be paid close attention to it during design. Currently, there is not any set legislation for the protection of this area. Candidate areas will be presented to City Council for approval as part of the next Municipal Plan process.

### **CLC Question**

What does having an ESA in the area mean? Will the presence of the ESA affect routing and construction or, just implementation?

### **Project Team Response**

The presence of the potential ESA will not preclude activities but is a consideration in how the trail is built and the care taken to protect significant resources. This will be addressed later in the process.

### **CLC Comment**

Ward 25 should be added to the mapping and presentation as it is affected by the project.

## **GEOMORPHIC AND GEOTECHNICAL ANALYSIS**

Rob Amos (RA) – with Aquafor Beech Ltd. – presented the geomorphic and geotechnical analysis that was undertaken for the project. Fluvial geomorphology is the science of how water interacts with land.

### Historic comparison of the geomorphic investigation

From 1949-67 some big changes occurred outside of the valley system in terms of development. This included significant changes to the Don River itself, such as, some realignment of the river and hardening of the channel banks. From 1949 to 2011 we see a lot of urbanization occurring including the addition of significant roadway crossings. Urbanization places stresses on the water course and impacts the river system.

### Physiography of the study area

RA showed an image of what the Don River would have looked like with the lake Iroquois shoreline (which receded 9000 years ago to the current Lake Ontario). The receding of the lake left a lot of sand and silt deposits which run through the Study Areas. As a result, we now have sandy planes (old shoreline) and do not see a lot of bedrock in the area.

### Assessment of the Reaches

In order to assist with the assessment, the river channel within the Local Study Area was divided into three reaches which are each based on similar characteristics. The area upstream of the Local Study Area was also reviewed in order to take some lessons learned.

## Upstream Trail

- Site 1 (S1) and Site 2 (S2) the banks of the Don River have been hardened to protect infrastructure. There are some interesting aspects to the existing trail including an offline wetland area in Sauriol Conservation Area with a viewpoint.
- S3 a different type of hardening of the river is present, and is made up of gabion baskets to protect existing trail.
- S4 the existing multi-use trail runs along the toe of valley and the banks of the river have been hardened to protect it.
- S5 shows a concrete weir (or fish barrier) that was implemented with a channel realignment to help with grade changes within the river.
- S6 is location at the first bridge crossing in the area and the banks have been armoured. It was noted that for this project, the team will be trying to increase the span of the bridges to reduce the hardening of the banks.
- At S7 the trail is acting as a physical divider between the wetland and the river channel.
- S8 shows the location of the trail at the railway crossing. This was not an ideal location. The natural channel upstream is significantly impinged due to trail which causes flooding and overtopping of the banks. As part of the design for this project, the team will want to ensure that the hydraulics of the system are as minimally impacted as possible.
- S9 is an example of a crossing that is working a bit better (than S8) and there is only minor impingement and hardening present here.

## Reach 1 (R1) – North end of Local Study Area

- S1 is the location of the upstream tie-in to the existing trail. A crossing would be required near this area otherwise; the trail may need to go outside of valley.
- S2 is the site of the northern most large erosion scar (which is similar to the one seen on the CLC site walk). At this site one can see the sands and silts that make up the valley slope.
- S3 is an example of some of the existing infrastructure that is present within the valley system (this site shows a manhole for the existing storm sewer system).
- S5 & S6 show an example of an informal trail that is running close to the river bank. As part of this project, design of the multi-use trail will maintain a minimum buffer from the edge of bank to reduce risks due to erosion.
- At S7 & S8 present examples of where active erosion and fallen trees are present within the Study Area.
- S9 is the location of first railway crossing that they may need to be addressed as part of trail design.
- S10 shows the opposing side of the river bank to S9. This bank would be much harder to access than that at S9.
- S11 & S12 are sites where stormwater infrastructure (outfalls) is present. The images show the aging infrastructure and its impact on the area.
- S14 shows a different river channel setting. In this area you begin to see examples of a more natural channel than that present north of S14.
- S15 is the site of the erosion scar at base of railway line and provides a good illustration of some of the considerations for design.

- At S17 & S18 the railway line is shown that will need to be crossed as part of a trail.
- S21 & S22 are sites where valleywall contact of the river has been made and some valley toe protection has been constructed. At this site there is also an open meadow that could be potential habitat for the meadowlarks that have been surveyed in the area.
- S23 & S24 are located at the potential crossing point near Eglinton Avenue, and will need to be closely assessed during detailed design as it may prove to be a tricky crossing, which will likely require a bridge crossing of the channel upstream of Eglinton, and then alteration of the existing embankments to fit the trail under the bridge. The Metrolinx rail line also crosses under this bridge structure.

In the interest of time, the geomorphic and geotechnical conditions presentation was not completed. It was agreed, by the CLC Members present, that the remaining Reaches (R2 & R3) would be presented at CLC Meeting #3.

RA provided a brief summary of R2 & R3 before the group continued on to the evaluation of Alternatives To.

### Questions related to the Geomorphic and Geotechnical Analysis

#### **CLC Question**

Will Toronto Water have to come in to do maintenance in the area and be a cause of continuous disturbance, even if the trail is not built?

#### **Project Team Response**

Yes, Toronto water will be accessing the area for regular maintenance, and they are involved in this project. Their hope is that the trail system will act as a permanent access route to their infrastructure when it requires maintenance.

#### **CLC Comment**

If you are going to design and construct a new trail, it might as well be located where their (Toronto Water) disturbance will already occur.

#### **Project Team Response**

Sewer infrastructure will be considered as part of the evaluation of the trail alignments. There are other factors that will be considered as well; however, Toronto Water will be part of the discussions because they are interested in using the trail for access.

#### **CLC Question**

If Toronto Water is going to be using the trail for maintenance, there is a high probability that this will result in damage to the trail and it could go without being repaired. Will the design consider the weight of these vehicles?

#### **Project Team Response**

This point has been noted, and will be discussed further at the detailed design stage for the project

## **REVISED OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT**

VT presented the final opportunity statement as refined based on feedback received through public consultation including Community Liaison Committee, Technical Advisory Committee, the Public Information Centre, and other individual points of contact.

## **DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES TO**

VT explained what Alternatives To are, the two that are being considered for this project, and what initiatives drove the development of the Alternatives To.

Alternatives To are high level options to solve the problems and opportunities presented. The Alternatives To have been scoped down based on the previous planning initiatives that were developed for the area. TRCA and City spoke with the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) to confirm that they had support to present two (2) Alternatives To, and that those presented provide good solutions to the problem.

VT explained the evaluation of the Alternatives To. Six (6) broad evaluation criteria were developed to evaluate the Alternatives To. These broad evaluation criteria are the overarching themes under which high level impacts will be categorized. VT provided an overview of the various components that make up the evaluation table.

Two notes were made about criteria:

1. The criteria are based on the perspective of a multi-use trail user.
2. Population growth was not considered in each criterion but was looked at as more of an overarching theme throughout all of the criteria.

### **CLC Question**

Do we have any control over the rail lines and their removal from the valley system?

### **Project Team Response**

The rail lines are considered an essential service and we therefore have no control over their removal. In addition, we have not heard of any plans to remove them.

### **CLC Question**

We could be heroic and say that the railroads could be removed and moved to areas that are more populated. Is that possible?

### **Project Team Response**

Unfortunately, this is outside of the scope of this study. In the context of this study, a more appropriate conversation topic would be the routing of the trail. Also to be noted, Metrolinx is one of the key stakeholder groups for this project and the project team has met with them separately.

### **CLC Question**

How many bridges are proposed?

### **Project Team Response**

Based on the feasibility study that was completed, there are approximately 17 bridges proposed.

## **CLC Question**

Will the number of bridges change based on the routing?

## **Project Team Response**

Yes. The feasibility study is just one approach. This will change based on the routing alternative selected.

## Comments and Considerations related to the Evaluation of the Alternatives To

### Functional Value

- For impact #3, please add that that it improves accessibility to a variety of users. VT noted that the team would look into how this could be incorporated further.
- Please make multi-modal transportation more front and centre as this trail could become part of a multi-modal transportation network. VT noted that this was addressed through the inclusion of the Eglinton LRT study.
- Economic value - can we capture the increase in value to the area (assessment change)?
- Natural environment. Please note that impacts to the natural environment will be minimized.

### Natural and Physical Environment

- No specific comments during the meeting

### Social and Cultural Environment

- A survey should be completed to show what potential this project will have on the economics of the area. AF noted that this is outside of the scope of the project but may be done by others in the future.
- Why did you assess impact to aesthetics the way you did? Please add that though in the short-term there will be impacts to the aesthetics, in the long-term there will be trees added and the number of native species will be increased.
- It was noted that aesthetic are very difficult to assess and are very subjective.
- It was also noted that the existing trail north of the study area has been completed and it is a huge improvement. This should be considered.
- There are a number of points in common between functional value and social/cultural there is some overlap and redundancy that may cause these areas to be more heavily weighted than they should be. VT noted that the team will look at these to make sure there isn't any redundancy.

### Technical/Engineering

- Should technical feasibility really be part of the evaluation? Shouldn't the question be how and where the trail can be implemented? To say that it the most preferred, just adds a category that builds an argument against the flora/fauna in the area. In theory the trail will be technically feasibility because it is just a matter of engineering. VT responded to say yes, that is a critical question. When the opportunities for the alignments come up, this is where we can discuss this.

There are technical opportunities to do this but there are places that this could be really difficult (e.g. near Flemingdon).

Natalie Seniuk (NS) – with TRCA - will set-up a Dropbox link where summarized comments and CLC materials will be stored. CLC members will have access to this folder so they are able to read each other's anonymous comments. Natalie will place a word version of this table into Dropbox so that members can modify a digital version.

**CLC Question**

How much have they earmarked for the operations and maintenance of this trail? And, what is the commitment?

**Project Team Response**

What we know is that the capital costs have been allocated, and attention to trails is growing within the City. Once the trail is built operational/maintenance costs will be submitted as part of budget process for this new trail infrastructure.

**CLC Question**

Does that address winter maintenance?

**Project Team Response**

No, there will be no winter maintenance at this time.

**CLC Question**

As part of the meetings with key stakeholders have you discussed potential partnerships opportunities? For example, for areas where the rail infrastructure is at risk and needs to be replaced or repaired.

**Project Team Response**

There are a number of factors that are being discussed and cost will be only one of them.

**CLC Question**

Who owns the rail line now?

**Project Team Response**

GO and Metrolinx

**CLC Question**

Is a 3 m to 4 metres (m) asphalt trail a given?

**Project Team Response**

Yes, because it is a multi-use trail criterion for trails to be surfaced with asphalt and 3 to 4 m in width.

**CLC Question**

What about the other users of the area (i.e. informal users)? How will they be accommodated?

**Project Team Response**

The City is undertaking a natural surface trails strategy that includes the informal uses as a separate process.

**CLC Question**

Will this project and the trails strategy be parallel processes?

**Project Team Response**

Yes. They are separate processes but will take each other into consideration.

**CLC Comment**

This is a really good learning opportunity about how the EA process works and how it fits into the greater plans for the City. It is a great way to learn about how different processes interact with each other.

**CLC Question**

If it is decided that the trail is the preferred Alternative To, will we have choices for the alignment of the trail?

**Project Team Response**

Yes, once we complete this stage we will be assessing the trail alignments. The detail increases at each stage of the process.

**CLC Question**

Were the existing East Don Trail and park completed in the same way?

**Project Team Response**

No. It did not require the EA process but because of the extent of the trail and the complexity it was decided that this project should be undertaken through the EA process.

**NEXT STEPS**

VT went through the Next Steps for the project.

NS agreed to send a Doodle calendar request to members all CLC Members regarding CLC Meeting #3.

The Chair closed the meeting.

**Note regarding additional comments and submissions:**

1. It should be noted that the following written comments were received by Friends of the Don East representative John Routh who was unable to attend CLC Meeting #2, after reviewing the materials provided from the meeting:

*The lower Don River where it flows through the City of Toronto is a highly modified river system. In many places the river has been rerouted, straightened, or bank protected to prevent it from damaging man-made works such as roads, railways, trails and property. The area in the East Don that is subject to the EA is one of the few places where bank protections have been limited. The river in this section is generally free to develop its channel unencumbered.*

*As you know, whenever banks are protected, the energy flowing through the river system is transferred to a new place. While it may make sense to perform bank protection on an ongoing basis in one specific place or another, cumulatively these projects add up to an impact on the overall system.*

*Currently the Lower Don is suffering from a death through a thousand cuts. As each project protects one more section of bank, the river has no choice but to react in another place in the system and it is this legacy of the past 60 years of modifications that we are experiencing today.*

*When bridges are designed for this new trail some additional bank reinforcement will be necessary for the new construction. Once in place it may be necessary in the future to make further reinforcements near these new bridges as future storms modify the channel nearby.*

*With this in mind, I suggest that the placement of any new bridge be designed in such a way that it crosses the river as far away from current cut bank areas as possible, thus minimizing the need for any future bank protection measures. Also, the trail should be placed as far away from natural banks as is feasible or at least run closely to sections of the riverbank that have already experienced previous protection measures.*

2. It should be noted that the following written comment was received by BIKE 25 representative Ronald Kluger regarding information and a weblink that were discussed at CLC Meeting #2:

*The blog that covers the don valley area in very nice detail is:*

*<http://walkingthedon.wordpress.com/>*