

East Don Trail Project Environmental Assessment

Community Liaison Committee Meeting #4 Notes

Flemingdon Park Library
2nd Floor, Meeting Room #1
August 12th, 2013
6:30pm – 8:30pm

Meeting Chair: Adele Freeman
Note Taker: Natalie Seniuk

Attendance:

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
Ronald Kluger, Bike 25
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
Chris Winsor, Resident Ward 29
Paula Davies, Todmorden Mills Wildflower Preserve
Charles Chaffey, Toronto Field Naturalists
George Bizios, Victoria Village Community Association
Jon Riddell, Woodbine Gardens Homeowners Association
David Moore, Wynford Concorde Residents Group

Regrets: Mandy Karch (OREG – Ontario Road Ecology Group), Anne Marie Leger (Toronto Ornithological Club), Abid Hussain (Resident Ward 26), Nancy Smith Lea (Toronto Centre for Active Transportation), Mike Jones (Walk Toronto)

WELCOME AND OPENING COMMENTS

The Chair, Adele Freeman (AF or The Chair) – Director of Ecology Division at Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) - welcomed everyone to Community Liaison Committee (CLC) Meeting #4. AF informed CLC Members that Lisa Turnbull (LT) – Project Manager at TRCA – would be recording key comments throughout the duration of the meeting, and that Natalie Seniuk - (NS) – Project Coordinator with TRCA – would be recording meeting notes.

The Chair provided an overview of the materials provided as part of CLC Meeting #4, including: PowerPoint Presentation, Agenda, and Handouts to be completed by CLC Members.

The Chair asked CLC meeting participants and project team members 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 NS to review the agenda, housekeeping items and project updates.

HOUSEKEEPING AND UPDATES

NS reviewed the agenda for CLC Meeting #4 including the intended purpose of the meeting which was 1) to present the preliminary evaluation of the alternative trail alignments and, 2) to receive feedback and input from members regarding the preliminary evaluation completed by the project team.

Confirmation of CLC Meeting #3 Notes

NS asked CLC members if there were any changes or corrections required to the CLC #3 Meeting Notes. Participants did not have any comments. The CLC #3 Meeting Notes were accepted as presented.

Project Updates

NS provided an update regarding the project process and timelines.

NS informed CLC Members that the Alternatives To had been revised and finalized, and that a copy of the final Alternatives To would be provided in the CLC Dropbox.

(ACTION)

NS informed CLC Members that a date and time was chosen for Public Event #2, and that it would be taking place on September 12, 2013 from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm at the Estonian House (958 Broadview Avenue, Toronto), and would be an open house formal with a presentation that would be given twice during the evening. NS informed members that a copy of the advertisement would be circulated once completed, and requested that members provide the information to their communities. NS also invited CLC Members to attend the Public Event. **(ACTION)**

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.

SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK HEARD AFTER CLC MEETING #3

VT presented a summary of the feedback received following CLC Meeting #3. This included suggestions concerning the Alternative Trail Alignments and evaluation criteria to be used to evaluate the Alternative Trail Alignments. VT noted that although the information being presented did not represent all comments received, NS will be circulating a responses to CLC Members.. **(ACTION)**

CLC Question

Regarding Area #1, this proposed alternative is not steep, and it seems that the rail crossing is the issue. Would a level crossing of the rail line be permitted? If not, could the trail cross the rail line using an underpass?

Project Team Response

The topography suggests that some steep grades are present adjacent to Sulkara Crt. In regards to level crossings they are not preferred by Go/Metrolinx. However, the existing trail in this area currently floods during storm events, and given that a rail line underpass would require the proposed trail to be built at a lower elevation, the frequency of flood incidents on the trail would be increased if a rail line underpass was to be chosen as the preferred method of crossing the rail line.

CLC Question

What is the clearance requirement for under crossings of the rail line?

Project Team Response

The project team is not aware of what the required height clearance for rail line underpasses are but will ensure this information is obtained during the refinement of the preferred alternative. **(ACTION)**

CLC Comment

Regarding Area #2, the trail alignment assumes that the trail will run along the west side of the rail line. If the trail stays east of the rail line the crossings won't be required. Has this been considered?

Project Team Response

Yes it has and this is a valid point. At this time, the rail line alignment options assume that the rail line could run either west or east of the rail line. Which side of the rail line the trail will run along will be determined during the refinement stage if one of the rail line alignments becomes a preferred alternative. However, due to space constraints and topography issues where the trail would cross under Eglinton, the trail will most likely have to stay west of the rail line and then cross to the east once it is south of this area. This would add an additional rail line crossing to this alignment.

CLC Comment

Regarding Area #2, it should be noted that the trail would pass through a significant wetland if it was placed on the east side of the rail line and that would impact the trail significantly.

VT asked if there were any questions about the information presented. No questions or comments were received.

EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVE TRAIL ALIGNMENTS

VT presented the evaluation of the alternative trail alignments. VT explained the detailed evaluation method undertaken by the project team and informed the group that what was being presented at CLC Meeting #4 was a summary of the results from the detailed evaluation undertaken. VT then reviewed the evaluation criteria and indicators used to evaluate the alignments.

VT informed CLC members that she would like to have open conversation and discussion concerning the evaluation throughout the duration of the presentation, and that if the CLC had any questions to please ask them at any time. VT went through each criteria theme in each area separately. The areas included Area 1, Area 2, and Area 3.

The criteria themes included:

- Functional Value
- Natural and Physical Environment
- Social and Cultural Environment
- Cost
- Technical

VT provided a summary for each Area after going through all of the criteria themes.

CLC Question

Are the criteria and sub-criteria weighted equally?

Project Team Response

The broader criteria themes are all equally weighted. The project team did assess the outcome of weighing each sub-criteria equally as well, this produced similar results.

CLC Question

Did you run an analysis of various types of users regarding fitness, accessibility, etc.?

Project Team Response

Yes, as suggested in the comments received after CLC Meeting #3, an analysis of various users of the multiuse trail were assessed. This analysis was then rolled up into one criterion and given a value based on the number of user types that would benefit from the trail. This was done to ensure that users groups were given equal weight.

CLC Question

Was each use equally weighted with regards to trail users? (note the question above)

Project Team Response

Yes, when they were rolled up they were equally weighted. No one type of user was given a higher weighting.

CLC Question

Cost seems to be an impossibility for the purposes of CLC member evaluation. I do not think we can give an estimate of cost, and I do not think this should be a criterion for members to respond to.

Project Team Response

To clarify, the project team is not requesting that CLC members estimate the costs associated with the construction or maintenance of the trail. The team is providing a summary of the evaluation that was undertaken for the Cost of building and maintaining the trail and requesting CLC members respond if they feel that additional considerations should be factored into the evaluation.

CLC Question

Regarding Area #1, what does “some challenge to fitness users” mean?

Project Team Response

Within Area #1 there is varying topography (hills) that would provide an increased opportunity/challenges for fitness users.

CLC Question

Regarding Area #1, Forest Trail A could stay east of the river until you get to the southern end (where the current crossing that allows for a west-side undercrossing of the Eglinton bridge is). If you did this, you could reduce the number of bridges required to five (5), could you not?

Project Team Response

There are serious technical difficulties associated with staying to the east side of the East Don River. These were identified in the Feasibility study that was completed by RV Anderson.

CLC Question

Regarding Area #1, bridges 2 and 3 could be removed by going around the river bend, could they not?

Project Team Response

In this area, the water course runs close to the valley walls. The trail would be required to go out of the valley entirely to stay on the east side of the river in this area.

CLC Question

Regarding Area #1, would Forest Trail B have higher impacts on river processes? I think there should be a higher consideration given to the erosion control work that would be required as part of Forest Trail B.

Project Team Response

Both Forest Trail alignments would have impacts on river processes. In the case of Forest Trail B, impact would be due to the erosion control work that would be required, while Forest Trail A requires two (2) additional bridges.

CLC Comment

Regarding the two alternatives presented in Area #1, slope stabilization should have higher affects within the physical and natural processes due to the major effects to the

river as a result of the work required. The write-ups say that they are similar but they are not. Please elaborate.

Project Team Response

The preliminary ranking for Area #1 identified more significant impacts and greater impacts to river processes for Alternative B which involved stabilization of the slope. This alternative received a score of -2, lower than Alternative A which does not involve significant channel and slope restoration.

CLC Comment

Agreement was expressed to the previous comment regarding slope stabilization. Slope work within an area often results in much larger impacts than the work itself, and this should be considered.

Project Team Response

Comments have been noted. The project team will look into this once more to ensure that this is appropriately accounted for. **(ACTION)**

CLC Comment

The evaluation as presented is agreeable. If bridges are proposed within the Study Area, they should be designed and built to withstand flooding and to last over time. The bridges at Wilket Creek are a wonderful example.

Project Team Response

The intent of the bridge design will be to withstand significant flood events, such as the 100 year flood. Under extreme flood conditions the bridge may be overtopped, however, will be designed to remain stable with minimal repair or maintenance required.

CLC Question

Regarding Area #2 – Functional Value, what do you mean when you say it meets additional criteria for planning initiatives?

Project Team Response

There are a number of plans outside of the EA process that were considered including the Pan Am Path, TRCA's watershed plan for the Don Watershed, and the Eglinton LRT.

CLC Question

Regarding Area #2 – River Walk, Alternative A provides better access to the Gatineau Corridor for users heading north and Alternative C provides better access to the Gatineau Corridor for users going south. Can you not have multiple alignments chosen for an area (for example, A & C)?

Project Team Response

Unfortunately, at this time, budget will not allow for that. However, this could be recommended for future improvements to the trail.

CLC Question

Regarding Area #2 – River Walk: if you obtain the golfcourse, you could implement River Walk and Rail Trail. Would this be expensive to do since the golf course would already be purchased and this purchase is outside of the project budget?

Project Team Response

Depending on the feedback received through TAC, CLC and public review, multiple alternatives may be taken forward for refinement and decisions on implementation would need to be made with budget considered.

CLC Comment

Regarding Area #2 – River Walk, this is an important consideration as there are major access points from each direction. Some alignments perform poorly and some perform well depending on what area you are coming from (north vs. south or east vs. west) and this should be considered.

Project Team Response

These access points and the ease of implementation and use have been considered within the evaluation of the alternatives, under Functional Value.

CLC Question

Is there a history of flooding of the golf course that you know of?

Project Team Response

At this time, the Project Team is not certain. This will be looked into. **(ACTION)**

CLC Comment

Personal Observations indicate that the golf course floods at the second hole regularly (e.g., flooded in the 2005 storm). The rest of the course does not flood regularly.

Project Team Response

Observations on flooding are noted.

CLC Question

Regarding Area #2 – River Walk B, you are missing a connection at the existing level crossing in the middle of the golf course. It is not shown on the mapping provided.

Project Team Response

Thank you for pointing this out. That was an oversight when the maps were created. River Walk B does make a connection at the existing level crossing. This will be corrected on the maps. **(ACTION)**

CLC Comment

Regarding Area #2, River Walk, there are not many original forest areas left in Toronto and the effects of putting a trail within this area would be large.

Project Team Response

Agreed. It was taken into consideration. It should be noted that the forested area within the south end of Area 2 also contains many areas of invasive species and is currently used informally. This forested area is also common to all but two of the Area 2 alignments: Road Link A and C. However, the Road Link scores lower than River Walk in the Natural and Physical criteria as all Road Link options travel through additional forested areas. One of these areas is a native restored forest area and the other is wetland habitat. In addition Road Link C crosses an additional wetland and travels through an L3 community.

CLC Comment

Regarding Area #2 – Rail Trail, the map shown is misleading in that it does not show the full extent to which the golf course is located at the south. The golf course, in fact, extends south of the hydro corridor.

Project Team Response

This has been noted. However, this slide is meant to show property ownership.

CLC Question

Is acquisition of the golf course required for all River Walk alternatives?

Project Team Response

Yes this is correct.

CLC Question

Regarding Area #2 – Rail Trail: when you talk about vegetation removed it seems that all of the alternatives share a lot of the same routing. However, one alternative is ranked highest impact and contains a high amount of invasive species. Wouldn't removal of invasive species be considered a positive?

Project Team Response

That is correct. The invasive species are mainly located within the forested area in the south that is common to the majority of alignments. Though removal of invasive species is considered a positive, the quality of vegetation removed was looked at independently from the quantity, however both were evaluated. In terms of the Rail Trail a survey of ELC communities has not been completed for the section within the rail line right of way, however based on site visits the area is highly vegetated with successional forest species and many of them native species.

CLC Question

Is acquisition of the golf course realistic?

Project Team Response

Currently, discussions are underway between the City of Toronto, TRCA and Flemington Golf Course. This is not an unrealistic opportunity.

CLC Comment

Golf course acquisition is a major drawback for users of this facility. As a cyclist, the Rail Trail alternatives are most appealing. Keeping the course may be the most cost effective. Removal of the golf course may be negatively perceived by the community.

CLC Comment

The social and cultural disruption of removing another recreational use must be considered.

Project Team Response

The project team will continue to look into this. **(ACTION)**

CLC Comment

There is a lot of concern with regards to the users of the golf course. The golf course is a social and political issue that falls outside of the EA process. Advice needs to be provided from these authorities, as this is something that can derail a project.

Project Team Response

What we are noting is that the CLC is expressing that we may not have accurately considered the social and cultural effects that a potential closure of the golf course could have on the community. **(ACTION)**

CLC Comment

One of the major points or objectives is connectivity. The acquisition of the golf course will greatly improve opportunities for this. Even if connections are not looked at in detail at this point, if the River Walk option is a possibility it could be implemented in combination with another alternative in the future.

Project Team Response

Agreed. It is possible that more than one option will be brought forward for consideration in the detailed design stage.

CLC Question

Regarding Area #2 – Rail Trail B: has anyone spoken to GO/Metrolinx about the level crossing?

Project Team Response

This has been discussed with GO/Metrolinx . They would prefer avoiding level crossings where possible. There may be a possibility to build a bridge at this location. Further investigation is needed.

CLC Question

Would construction of a bridge not be costly?

Project Team Response

Yes, however the level crossing has high costs associated with it due to the safety infrastructure required (barriers, etc.)

CLC Comment

In terms of increasing connectivity to communities, River Walk should be considered.

Project Team Response

Noted. This has been considered in the function value area of the evaluation.

CLC Comment

Regarding Area #3, the community of Wynford Concord (which is noted on the maps) should be changed to Flemington Community. This is inaccurate on the slides.

Project Team Response

Noted. This will be changed. **(ACTION)**

CLC Question

Regarding Area #3, will the second bridge at Access Route B be there permanently either way as it is required for Toronto Water access?

Project Team Response

The project team is in discussion with Toronto Water concerning this bridge and adequate access for them. Access for Toronto Water has also been considered in the evaluation. The goal is to ensure the alignment also offers access to Toronto Water so that only one bridge will have to be constructed in this area. If Access Route A is chosen the culvert temporary access would most likely be removed.

CLC Comment

Regarding Area #3 – Access Route B: a bridge here would have a higher impact than the bridge in Access Route A

Project Team Response

That is correct and that is what is shown in the evaluation.

CLC Question

Did any weighting go into the tertiary benefits for Taylor Creek bridge (which has been damaged many time and needs work)? Is this considered? Or, are there other plans to repair this in the future outside of this process?

Project Team Response

The trail and bridges in this area are being looked by the City of Toronto; however no details are available at this time.

CLC Question

Regarding Area #3, if Access Route C is not chosen and the existing bridge at Taylor Creek is lost, is there a way to maintain access at the north side so that it can have access to the rest of the system?

Project Team Response

What you are saying is to maintain a route on the north side of the river even if one of the other routes is chosen?

CLC Response

Yes.

Project Team Response

There would be a significant amount of work required to do this.

CLC Question

Can this be assessed as part of the access route discussion?

Project Team Response

Yes. **(ACTION)**

CLC Comment

Regarding Area #3, there is a Charles Sauriol memorial plaque and rock located near Access Route A that should to be relocated to the preferred trail if this route is not chosen.

Project Team Response

Noted. The memorial plaque relocation will be discussed if this is the preferred trail. **(ACTION)**

CLC Comment

At the path coming off the Don Valley path (Access Route A) it is very steep and people move quickly and this should be considered.

Project Team Response

Noted. This will be considered in the detailed design phase if Access Route A is the preferred alternative.

CLC Comment

The common route for Area #3 (section between mouth of Taylor Creek) needs to be identified as common to two not all three.

Project Team Response

Noted. The legend on the map can be altered to reflect this. **(ACTION)**

CLC Question

Will there be further analysis of what is coming out of the evaluation as the highest ranked option?

Project Team Response

Yes, once you provide your feedback and we modify this, it will go to the public for feedback and then there will be a further refinement of the chosen alternatives.

CLC Question

Will there be a flood analysis done?

Project Team Response

Yes. Flood analysis will be done at the refinement stage. Aquafor Beech has looked at the existing conditions modeling (what floods under the regional flood conditions), and that has been considered in operations and maintenance. When we move forward to refinement of the location of bridges, impacts of implementation of infrastructure (e.g., bridges) will be assessed.

CLC Question

If the golf course is purchased who would be responsible for converting it to another use?

Project Team Response

If the golf course was purchased it is expected that the City of Toronto and TRCA would look at future use and management planning collectively.

Project Team Question

Do any of the CLC members know what type of use is happening in the parking lot connected to/along the road to the trail to ET Seton Park (in Area 3)?

CLC Response

It has been observed that very few trail users are utilizing this parking lot. Most of the parking lot users are engaging in questionable activities and it has an unwelcoming/unsafe atmosphere.

Project Team Response

The parking lot is out of scope for this project. However, Toronto Parks and Recreation has been looking at the function of this parking lot and will report back if there is any new developments or plans for the area.

NEXT STEPS

VT went through the Next Steps for the project.

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

The Chair closed the meeting at 8:30 pm.