

Survey Summary

Pilot Implementation Survey

Toronto Parks & Trails Wayfinding Strategy (Phase II)

September 30 — November 6, 2017

1. Overview

Between September 30 and November 6, 2017, the City of Toronto's Parks, Forestry, and Recreation Division hosted an online survey to seek feedback about wayfinding signs installed in Riverdale Park and the Lower Don Trail. The signs were installed as part of a pilot implementation of the City's Parks & Trails Wayfinding Strategy (Phase II). Close to 200 respondents took the survey, sharing feedback about:

- The look and feel of the parks and trails signs
- The usefulness and readability of the maps on the parks and trails signs
- The effectiveness and clarity of new Emergency Information Signs

Ian Malczewski, part of the facilitation team working on the Parks & Trails Wayfinding Strategy, prepared this summary. The purpose of this document is to summarize both the quantitative and qualitative feedback from the survey.

This summary is organized into seven sections:

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3. Feedback about the park maps (pg. 6)
4. Feedback about the trail signs (pg. 11)
5. Feedback about the trail maps (pg. 14)
6. Feedback about new Emergency Information signs (pg. 18)
7. Next steps (pg. 20)

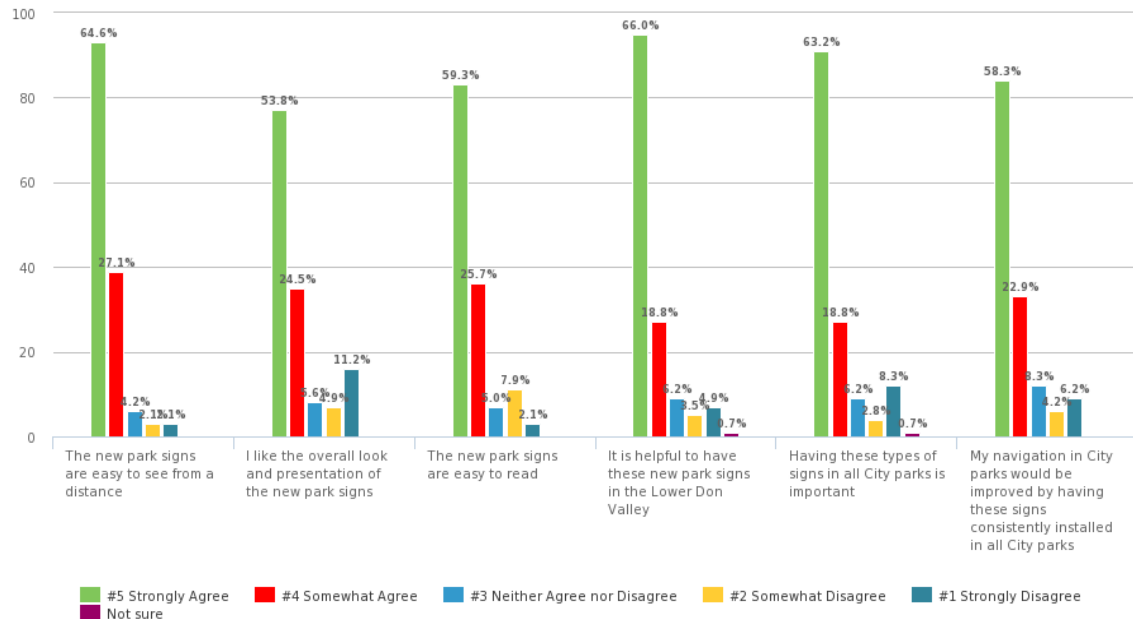
2. Feedback about the park signs



The following pages summarize feedback respondents shared feedback about the parks signs, including:

- overall feedback about the park signs;
- feedback about the park sign's look and feel;
- feedback about the number and size of signs;
- feedback about the stories and photos on the signs;
- suggested refinements to the park signs, and;
- other feedback about wayfinding and parks.

Overall feedback about the parks signs



Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with the following statements:

- The new park signs are easy to see from a distance
- I like the overall look and presentation of the new park signs
- The new park signs are easy to read
- It is helpful to have these new park signs in the Lower Don Valley
- Having these types of signs in all city parks is important
- My navigation in city parks would be improved by having these signs consistently installed in all city parks.

Almost all respondents (91.7%) agreed that the new park signs are easy to see from a distance and most (85%) said the signs are easy to read. Many (78.3%) said they liked the overall look and presentation of the signs, while most (84.8%) agreed that the new park signs were helpful. Most (82%) agreed that it is important to have these types of signs in all city parks and most (81.2%) agreed that their navigation in city parks would be improved by having the signs consistently installed in all city parks.

A few respondents thought the signs were unnecessary, saying most people would use smartphone apps and have no need for the signs. A few said that these signs would be most useful in tourist or “destination” parks but not necessarily in local community parks. There was also concern shared about the size of the holes needed to install the signs and concern that the signs could become covered in graffiti.

Feedback about the park sign's look and feel

Many liked the park signs, calling them modern and sleek. A few did not like the signs, calling them cold, industrial, and more appropriate for a bank than a park.

Respondents had different opinions about how well the park signs fit in Cabbagetown. Some preferred the older signs, saying the “leaf mosaic” fit better with the area’s character — they suggested the City develop a different version that better complements heritage areas. Others felt the new signs worked very well in Cabbagetown and said the new signs did not detract from the heritage character at all.

Feedback about the number and size of signs

Several respondents felt there were too many signs in Riverdale Park West, saying the park is too small to have five signs. Others said that the signs were too large and suggested the City consider reducing their height. Respondents who were concerned about the size and number of signs said they detracted from the park’s natural feeling.

Feedback about the stories and photos on the signs

Respondents liked the stories, photos, and graphics about the area’s history. A few suggested adding more historic information to signs in the park and neighbourhood. There was a suggestion to use a photo of something other than an elephant on the sign about Riverdale Farm since neither the farm nor the Toronto Zoo has elephants.

Suggested refinements to the signs

Respondents shared concerns and suggestions about the information on the signs:

Information on the signs

- Show seasonal information on the signs. Some park features, like washrooms and water fountains, are not available 365 days a year. The signs also say that pets need to be on a leash, but Riverdale Park West allows dogs off-leash from November 2 to May 20.
- Reconsider the information hierarchy: it’s confusing that park rules are at the bottom of the sign (in red circles) while park amenities are at the top (in green icons).
- Consider adding arrows next to the green icons for park features (since Riverdale Park is huge and it would be helpful for the sign show people where to go to find the washroom). These arrows should also help people understand the broader geography of Cabbagetown by pointing to the neighbourhood as being south, west, and north of Riverdale Park West.
- Consider including an address or code for the sign (rather than the park address) to help people coordinate meeting locations.

- Consider including “bigger picture” navigation. It should be easier for cyclists to see broader cycling routes (like the route between Lake Shore and Steeles).

Legibility and visibility of the signs

- Consider making the typeface bigger and/or increasing the typeface contrast to make information easier to see at a glance.
- For the larger signs, consider increasing the size of the map and decreasing the panel with name of the park to improve the map’s legibility.
- Consider adding lighting to make the signs more legible in winter and/or at dusk.
- Add icons to the map key on the sign at the northwest corner of Riverdale Park.

Other suggested refinements

- Add an image of a cabbage or a neighbourhood logo (to make it feel more a part of the area).
- Use a darker colour than bright green at the top of the sign.

Other feedback about wayfinding and parks

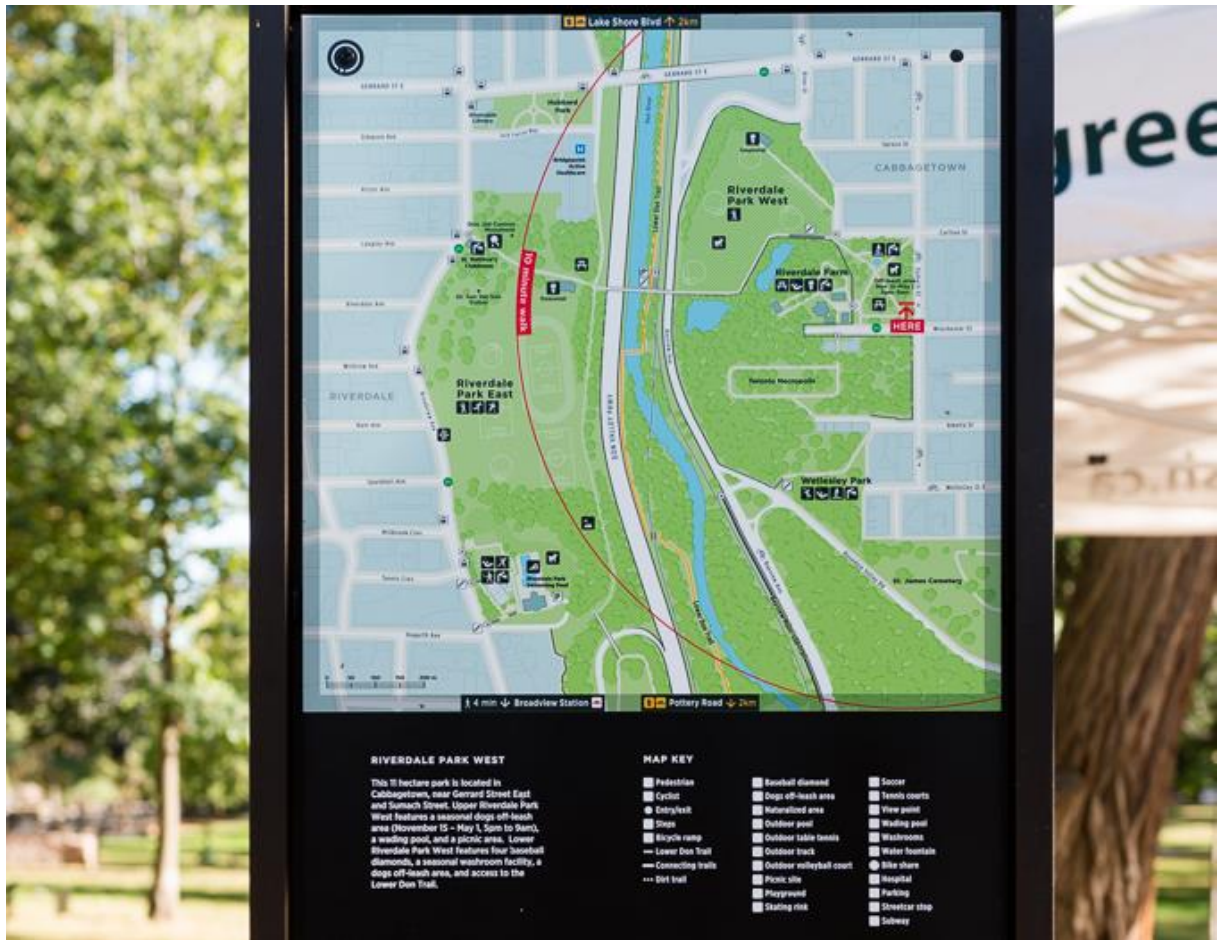
Respondents suggested specific locations for the City to consider adding wayfinding signs, including: at Lake Shore and Cherry (a major cycling intersection that is difficult to navigate) and in Corktown Common (where it’s difficult to find the entrance to the Lower Don Valley Trail).

Respondents also shared suggestions for developing online wayfinding tools, including putting wayfinding information online (so people can make decisions about visiting parks before leaving home) and adding links to “friends of” groups on signs so people can learn more about them and their programming in parks.

Some respondents thanked the City for hosting the survey and providing the opportunity to share feedback. There was a suggestion for the City to consult with area residents about whether the signs should be installed in the park instead of consulting them about the already-installed signs.

Finally, respondents shared other, general feedback about parks in Toronto, including requests for more garbage and recycling bins and parks, more frequent garbage pickup in parks, and more signage about when a park or trail is closed.

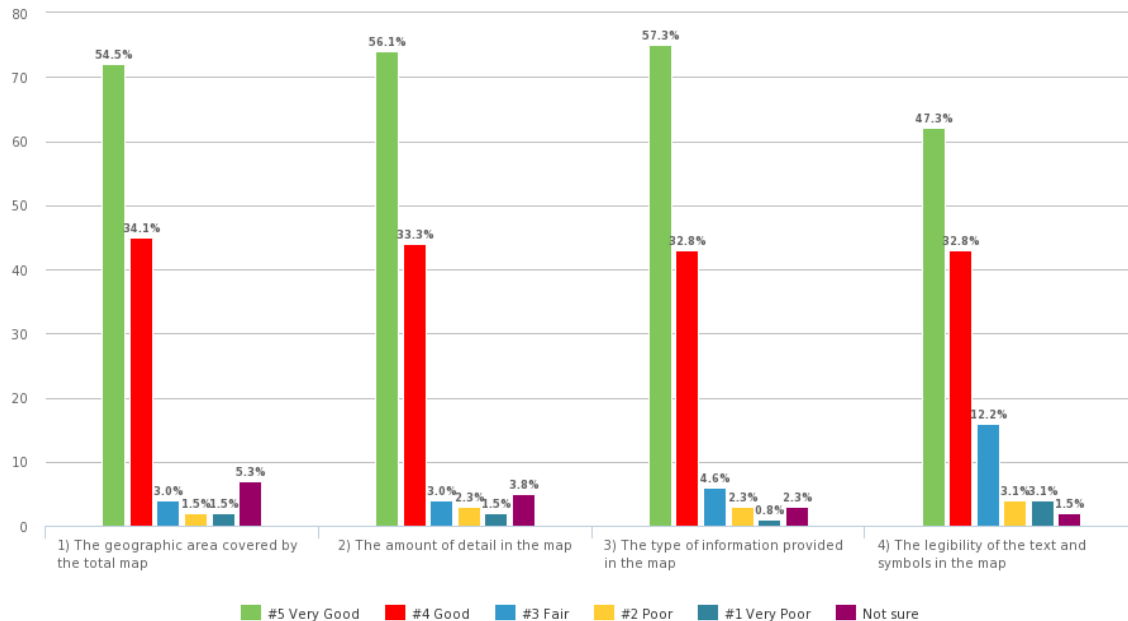
3. Feedback about the park maps



The following pages summarize feedback respondents shared feedback about the park maps, including:

- overall feedback about the park maps;
- feedback about the amount of information on the park maps;
- feedback about the usefulness of information on the park maps, and;
- suggested refinements to the park maps.

Overall feedback about the park maps

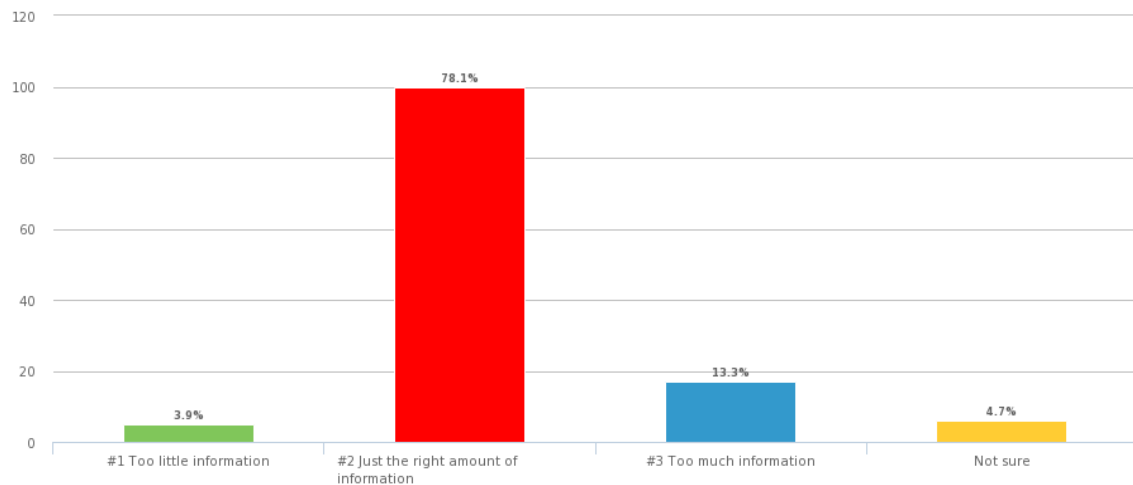


Respondents were asked to rate the park sign’s map on four features: the geographic area covered by the map, the amount of detail in the map, the type of information provided in the map, and the legibility of the text and symbols in the map.

Most (88.6%) rated the geographic area covered by the total map as very good or good, and most (89.4%) rated the amount of detail in the map as good or very good. Almost all (90.1%) said the type of information on the map was good or very good, and most (80.1%) said the legibility of text and text and symbols in the map as good or very good.

Most respondents liked that the park sign maps were oriented “heads-up” (in the direction people are facing), though a few said it was confusing at first. A few did not like the heads-up map at all and suggested maps should be oriented north-up. A few said the maps were busy and hard to read and suggested increasing the size and prominence of the map key and text on the maps.

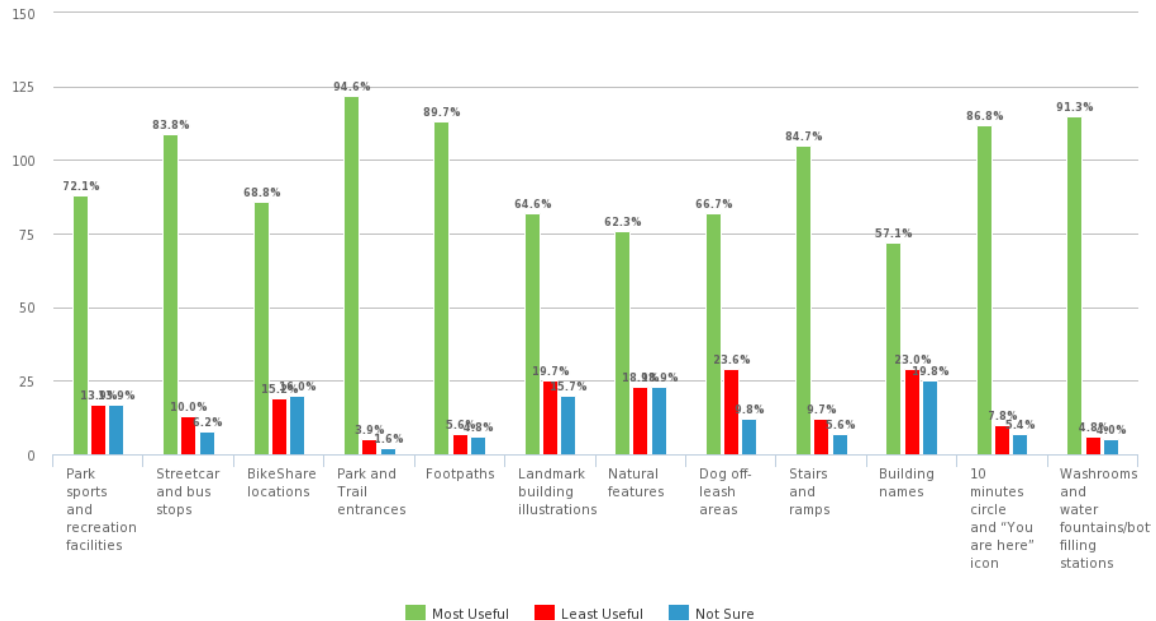
Feedback about the information on the park signs' maps



Respondents were asked about whether they thought the park sign maps had too much information, not enough information, or just the right amount information. Many (78.1%) said they had just the right amount of information, while a few said it had either too much (13.3%) or too little (3.9%). A very small percentage of respondents (3.9%) were unsure about whether the map had the right amount of information or not.

Many said the maps were helpful, easy to use, and “covered all the bases.” They liked that the information provided would help many different park users.

Feedback about the usefulness of information on the park sign's maps



Respondents were asked to identify which information on the park map was most useful and least useful (or if they were unsure whether the information was useful or not). The table below summarizes respondents ranking of this feedback, ordered from most useful to least useful.

Park map information	Percentage of respondents saying this information was most useful	Percentage of respondents saying this information was least useful	Percentage of respondents unsure how useful this information was
Park and Trail entrances	94.6%	3.9%	1.6%
Washrooms and water fountains/bottle filling stations	91.3%	4.8%	4.0%
Footpaths	89.7%	5.6%	4.8%
10 minutes circle and "You are here" icon	86.8%	7.8%	5.4%
Stairs and ramps	84.7%	9.7%	5.6%

Streetcar and bus stops	83.8%	10.0%	6.2%
Park sports and recreation facilities	72.1%	13.9%	13.9%
BikeShare locations	68.8%	15.2%	16.0%
Dog off-leash areas	66.7%	23.6%	9.8%
Landmark building illustrations	64.6%	19.7%	15.7%
Natural features	62.3%	18.9%	18.9%
Building names	57.1%	23.0%	19.8%

Suggested refinements to the park signs' maps

Respondents suggested a number of refinements to the map. A few suggested adding more information, including shops, on-street bike lanes, and information about transit routes. There was also a suggestion to add red arrows (similar to the HERE arrow) that pointed people towards major landmarks. Others suggested corrections or refinements to the maps, including:

- Consider illustrating cemeteries and parks differently. Cemeteries are fenced off and have different rules, but the maps don't indicate this difference.
- Clarify that you cannot drive on the circular loop in the Necropolis Cemetery — the map makes the loop in the cemetery look like its car-accessible.
- Change the name of the Lower Don Trail from "Recreational Trail" to "Active Trail" to encourage its use as an active transportation corridor.
- Double check whether the 10-minute walk circle is accurate; it may be more of a 15-minute circle (and longer for children or seniors).
- Consider removing “obvious” features (like Bike Share stations)

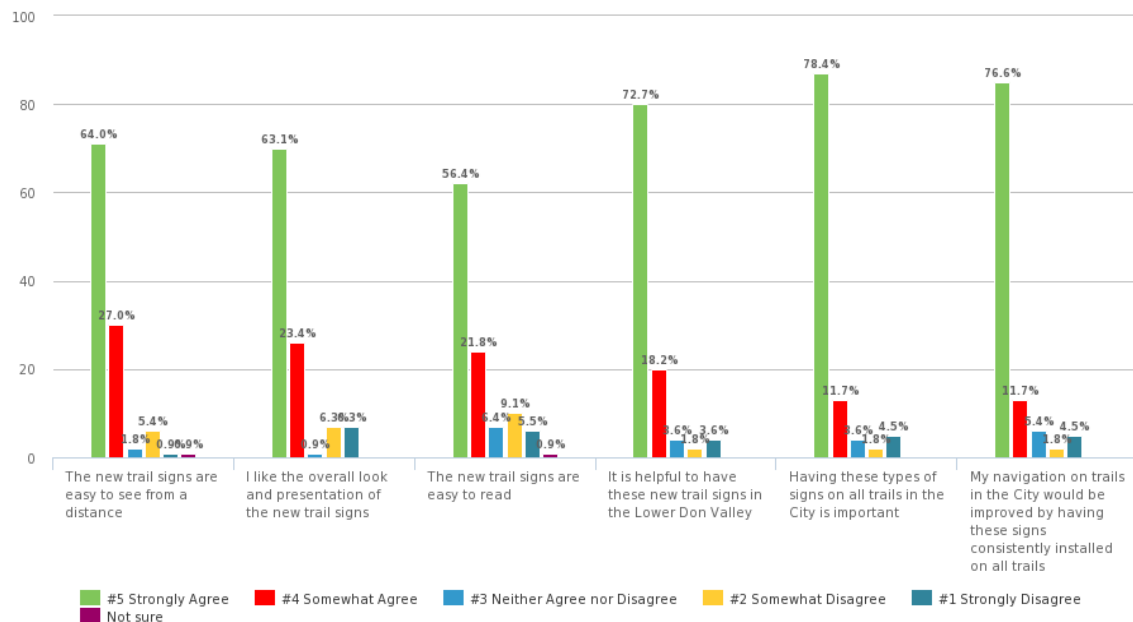
4. Feedback about the trail signs



The following pages summarize feedback respondents shared feedback about the trail signs, including:

- overall feedback about the trail signs;
- suggested refinements to the trail signs' look and feel, placement, and information, and;
- other feedback about trails and wayfinding.

Overall feedback about the trails sign



Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with the following statements:

- The new trail signs are easy to see from a distance
- I like the overall look and presentation of the new trail signs
- The new trail signs are easy to read
- It is helpful to have these trail signs in the Lower Don Valley
- Having these types of signs in all trails in the city is important
- My navigation on trails in the city would be improved by having these signs consistently installed on all trails.

Almost all respondents (91%) agreed that the new trail signs were easy to see from a distance. Many (78.2%) said the signs were easy to read. Most (86.5%) said they liked the overall look and presentation of the signs, while almost all (90.9%) agreed that the new trail signs were helpful. Almost all (90.1%) agreed that it is important to have these types of signs in all city trails and most (88.3%) agreed that their navigation in trails would be improved by having the signs consistently installed on all trails.

Of those that supported the signs, some especially liked: the vertical orientation; the reliable, consistent information about which kilometre of the trail you are on and what the upcoming points of interest are; their orange colour; historic information. Others did not like the signs — some strongly — saying there are already too many signs in the city. A few noted that some of the signs had already been defaced and were concerned it would be difficult to prevent future vandalism. There was a suggestion for the City to instead focus on adding missing street signs, upgrading or maintaining the trails themselves, or adding consistent signage for bike lanes.

Suggested refinements to the trail signs

Some respondents shared refinements and concerns about the trail signs' **look and feel**:

- Consider changing the signs' colour or adding reflective material so they're easier to spot and read in the dark.
- Consider refining the design so they fit better with the natural environment.
- Increase the size, contrast, spacing of text, and size of the map.
- Consider reducing the size of the signs to make them less obtrusive.
- Concern the signs are underweight and that panels could be easily pried out.

Respondents also shared suggestions about the trail signs' **placement**:

- Consider adding directional markers or finger posts at forks of paths.
- Consider reducing the number of trail signs and placing them only at trail entrances and exits.
- Make sure the signs are not located too close to busy intersections.
- Make sure signs have sufficient standing area around them. They should be placed in a way that prevents people from stepping into bicycle traffic or mud.
- Add trail signs to Corktown Common (to help people find the trail) and around the Lower Don Trail, Cherry Street, and the waterfront trail (there are often confused people in these areas).

Finally, respondents shared suggestions about the **information** on trail signs:

- Reconsider the etiquette section. A few suggested removing the trail etiquette section altogether, saying most of the etiquette listed is common sense. Others said the etiquette section should do more to remind cyclists that the trail is a multi-use and to encourage cyclists to ring their bells when approaching walkers.
- When identifying upcoming intersections, the signs should indicate whether trail users can actually access the intersecting streets/destination or not. For example, trail users can access Riverdale Park via stairs, the Brick Works by a fully accessible trail, and cannot access Bloor-Danforth at all.
- Consider bringing back route numbers — it was easier to follow "Route 45" than a series of changing trail names.
- Make sure all trails are marked the same: the signs are confusing because some trails are marked differently from others.

Other feedback about trails and wayfinding

Respondents shared other feedback about trails and wayfinding, including suggestions to add speed bumps on trails to slow cyclists down and ensuring trail information about trails is available online so trail users can plan trips in advance.

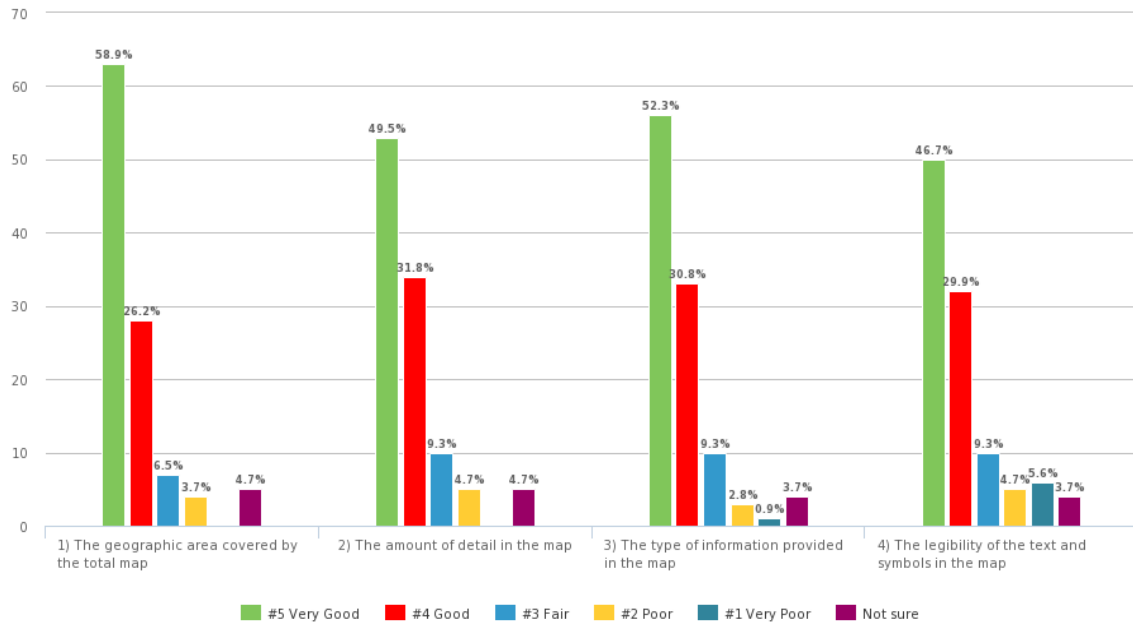
5. Feedback about the trail maps



The following pages summarize feedback respondents shared feedback about the trail maps, including:

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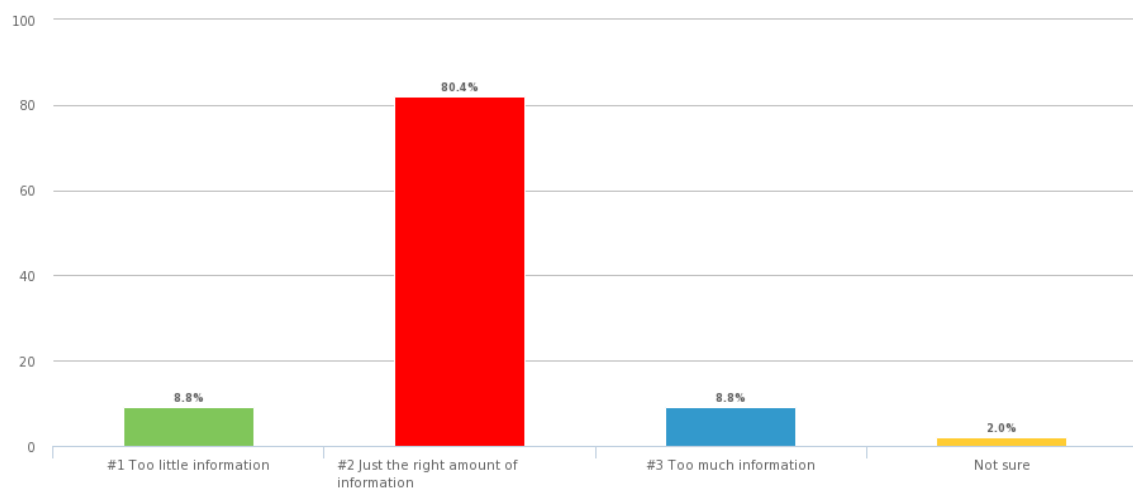
Overall feedback about the trail maps



Respondents were asked to rate the map on four key features: the geographic area covered by the map, the amount of detail in the map, the type of information provided in the map, and the legibility of the text and symbols in the map.

Most (85.1%) rated the geographic area covered by the total map as very good or good, and most (81.3%) gave the same rating to the amount of detail in the map. Most (83.1%) said the type of information on the map was very good or good and many (76.6%) similarly rated the legibility of text and text and symbols in the map.

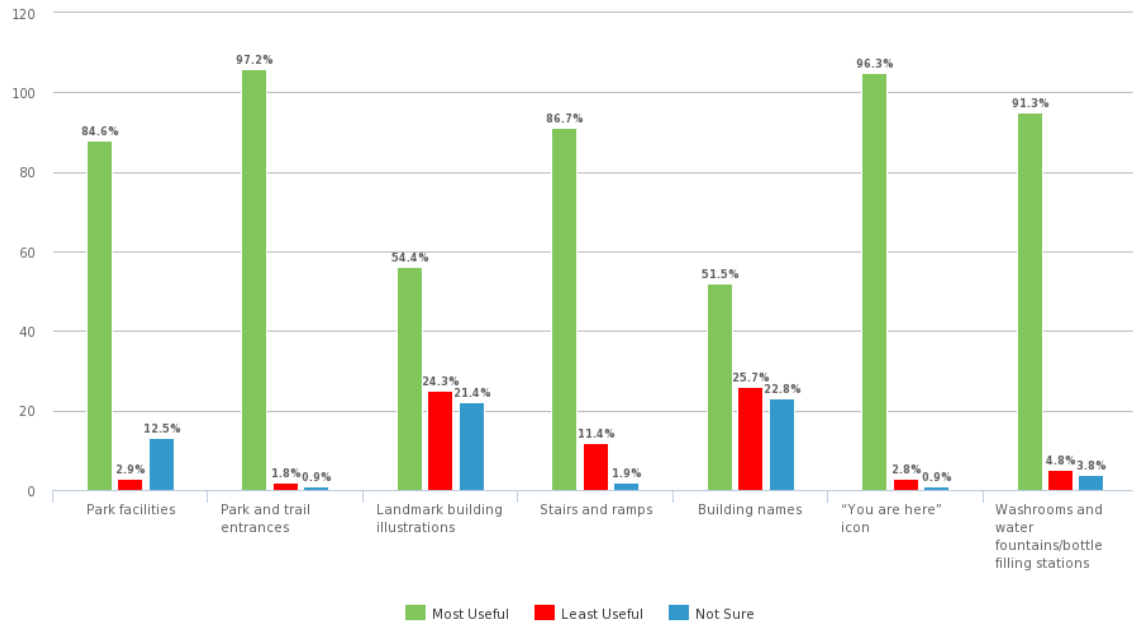
Feedback about the amount of information on the trail maps



Respondents were asked whether they thought the trail signs' maps had too much information, not enough information, or just the right amount information. Most

(80.4%) said they had thought they just the right amount of information, while a few said it had either too much (8.8%) or too little (8.8%). A very small percentage of respondents (2%) were unsure about whether the map had the right amount of information or not.

Feedback about the usefulness of information on trail maps



Respondents were asked to identify which information on the trail map was most useful and least useful (or if they were unsure whether the information was useful or not). The table below summarizes respondents ranking of this feedback, ordered from most useful to least useful.

Trail map information	Percentage of respondents saying this information was most useful	Percentage of respondents saying this information was least useful	Percentage of respondents unsure how useful this information was
Park and trail entrances	97.2%	1.8%	0.9%
"You are here" icon	96.3%	2.8%	0.9%
Washrooms and water fountains/bottle filling stations	91.3%	4.8%	3.8%

Stairs and ramps	86.7%	11.4%	1.9%
Park facilities	84.6%	2.9%	12.5%
Landmark building illustrations	54.4%	24.3%	21.4%
Building names	51.5%	25.7%	22.8%

Other feedback and suggested refinements to the trail maps

Many respondents really liked the elevation map showing changes in the trail's grade (though a few were not sure how useful they the elevation map was). Respondents suggested a number of refinements to the map:

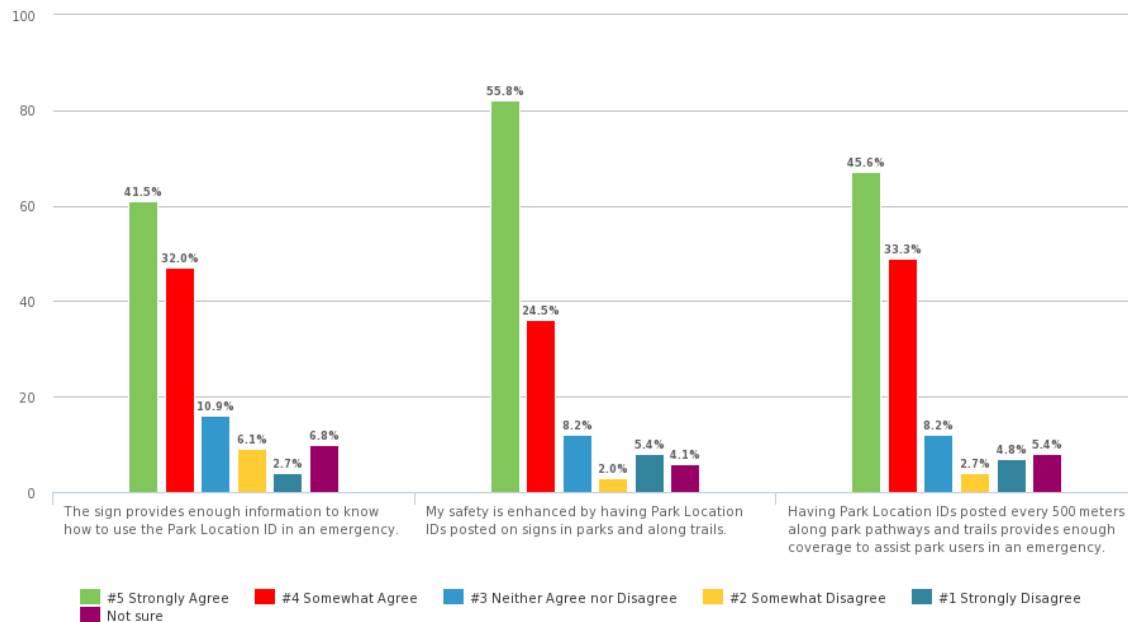
- Clearly identify trail connections to other routes or streets, including: all on-street bike lanes, the Cherry Beach trail, the Leslie Spit, Wellesley Park, the Belt Line (through the Brick Works), and Rosedale Valley Road.
- Consider revising the zoomed-in map to explain what destinations are available in the direction you are facing. The sign current at Pottery Road does not provide a zoomed-in map explaining that the path continues northbound.
- Consider using a different symbol for washrooms (something other than a toilet)
- Reconsider the location of “you are here” identifiers — they seem to point to surface / cross-streets (not the trail).
- Show grade challenges at ravine entrances and exits
- Put the key map adjacent to the map (not beneath it)
- Increase the font used on the map

6. Feedback about new Emergency Information signs

A unique park location identifier was added to both the park and trail signs to help Emergency Services locate the scene of emergencies and incidents. Respondents were asked to share feedback about the new Emergency Information, how clear it was, and how frequently it should appear.

The following pages summarize respondents feedback about the new Emergency Information Signs, including: overall feedback about the new Emergency Information signs and feedback about the clarity of the Emergency information.

Overall feedback about the new Emergency Information



Respondents were asked to state their level of agreement with the following statements:

- The sign provides enough information to know how to use the Park Location ID in an emergency.
- My safety is enhanced by having Park Location IDs posted on signs in parks and along trails.
- Having a Park Location ID posted every 500 metres along park pathways and trails provides enough coverage to assist park users in an emergency.

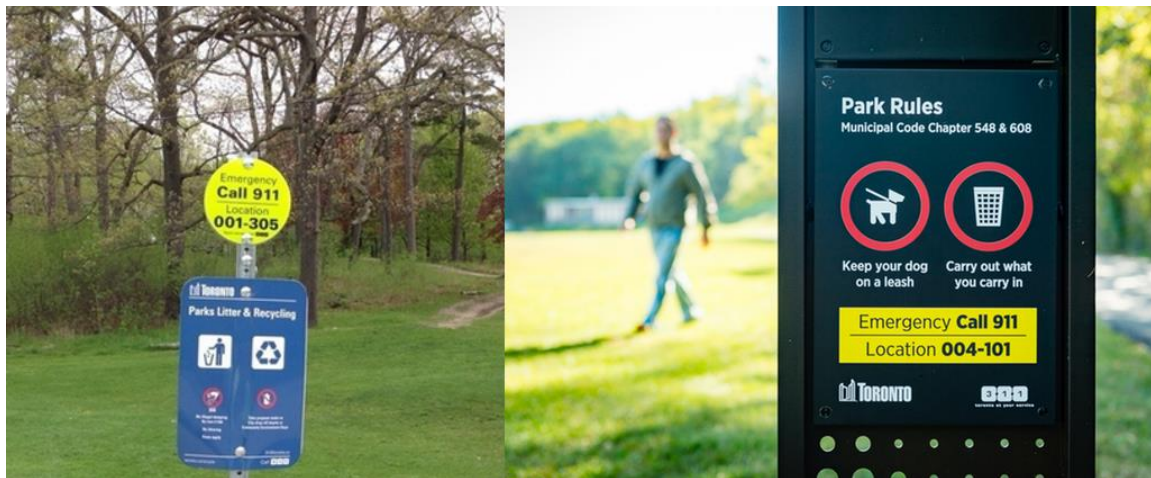
Many (73.5%) said the sign provides enough information to know how to use the ID in an emergency, while most (80.3%) felt their safety was enhanced by having a park location ID posted in signs in parks and along trails. Many (78.9%) agreed that posting signs every 500 metres provided enough coverage to assist park users in an emergency.

A few said they didn't know the City had Park Location IDs and thought they were a great idea. They said these identifiers would have more value when more people are aware of them and when they appear consistently throughout the city. There was a suggestion to add these identifiers to bridges and public washrooms, too.

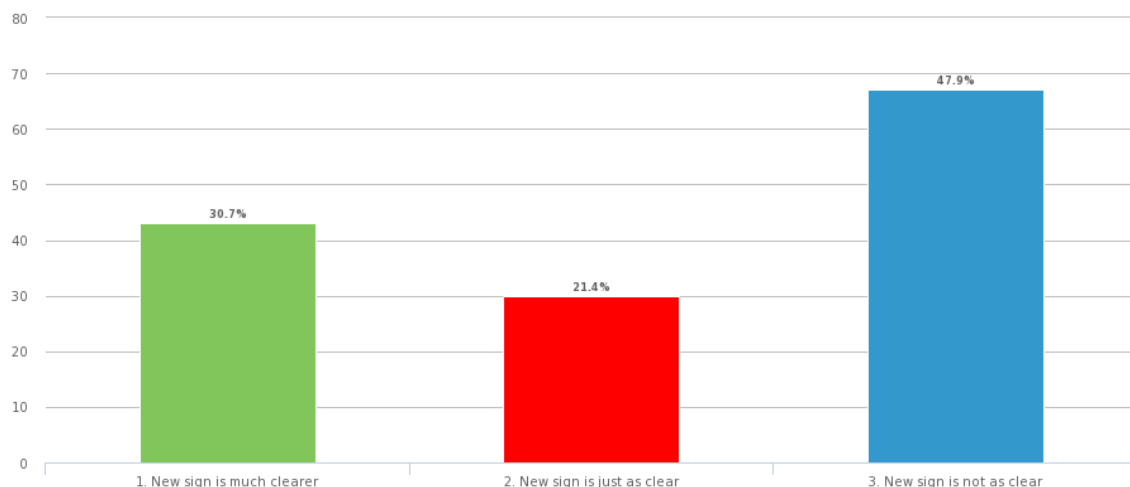
Respondents had mixed opinions about how frequently the signs should appear. Several agreed that signs every 500m would make sense, while some said they should be more frequent — potentially every 150 metres. Several said signs appearing every 500m was excessive, saying signs that frequently would be too costly and disrupt natural settings.

A few questioned whether the identifiers were necessary, saying they could make people feel worried or unsafe or feel like they were in a “nanny state.” Others suggested Emergency Services could more easily locate people using GPS and/or cell phone.

Feedback about the clarity of the Emergency Information



Respondents were asked to compare two signs containing Emergency Location IDs; an original version, and the version included on the new wayfinding signs.



Respondents had mixed opinions about the clarity of the Emergency Location ID on the new signs compared to the previous version. Less than half (47.9%) said the new sign is not as clear, 30.7% said the new sign is much clearer, and 21.4% said the new sign is just as clear.

A few said they thought the new identifier stood out well and that, if they appeared consistently on all signage, would be easier to spot than the older signs, which stood alone and appeared infrequently. Many said that, while the new identifier looked nice, it did not stand out enough or as well as the previous identifier. Suggestions on how to the identifier stand out more included:

- Add a more prominent, recognizable icon that is bigger and bolder, like a red cross, a police icon, or a fire icon.
- Make the whole identifier larger, potentially taking up an entire panel.
- Locate them on a more prominent place on the sign like very top.
- Make sure it's visible at night, potentially by lighting it up.

7. Next steps

The City of Toronto and its consultant team will use the feedback shared in this survey (along with feedback shared in a September 30 Pop Up event) to inform the evaluation of the pilot implementation and potential refinements to the signs and maps.