

City of Toronto

# Lower Don Valley Access Improvements

Public Consultation Summary #1

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Summer, 2014.

## 1. Project Overview

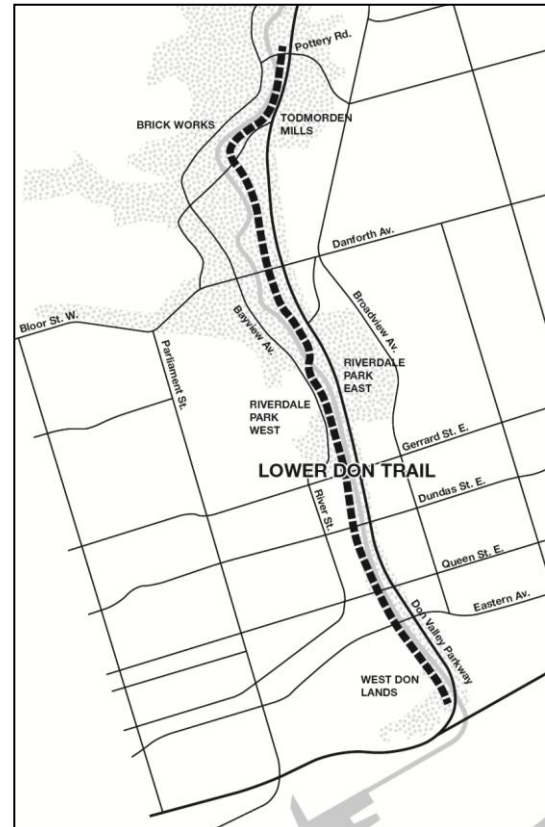
The Lower Don Trail is a 4.7 kilometre section of trail that runs along the Don River from Pottery Road to Corktown Commons. It is a multi-use trail for pedestrians and cyclists. As a result of the Lower Don Trail Master Plan, which was completed in September, 2013, a number of recommendations were provided to improve the trail conditions, access to the trail and address flooding concerns.

From the list of improvements in the Lower Don Trail Master Plan, the following 7 priority improvements will be carried forward to detail design and construction:

1. Pottery Road Bridge and Connection
2. Bayview Avenue Multi-Use Trail
3. Trail Surface Improvements
4. Belleville Underpass Realignment
5. Staircases at Dundas and Gerrard streets
6. Trail Widening and Drainage
7. Art Fence

The Lower Don Trail is a key part of the Pan Am Path, an 82 kilometre trail to link communities across Toronto and leave a legacy of the Pan Am/Parapan Games. For more information on the Pan Am/Parapan Games, visit the webpage [www.toronto2015.org](http://www.toronto2015.org).

The dedicated webpage for this project is [www.toronto.ca/lowerdon](http://www.toronto.ca/lowerdon).



## 2. Project Phases

The Lower Don Valley Access Improvements project was divided into 4 main study phases:

1. Site Investigation and Study
2. Design Development
3. Contract Documents
4. Bidding, Tendering and Contract Administration

The objectives of the first phase included conducting background research and technical studies, reviewing land surveys and base plans, and preparing arborist reports.

The second phase of this project was developed based on the previous information gathering to prepare preliminary design options, criteria and evaluation, select a preferred design approach and identify improvement strategies. This current study

phase included a public information centre to present these design considerations for feedback and input from the community and trail users.

The Art Fence is being carried out through a separate process that will be coordinated and integrated with the other 6 main improvements. Through a competitive bid process, Paul Raff was selected by a panel to design the Art Fence.

### 3. Consultation Overview

#### Purpose of Consultation

The main objectives of presenting this project to the community included:


- To present design options and considerations at an early stage in the design process
- To seek feedback on design options to consider in the development of refined design plans
- To answer any questions and concerns
- To engage the community and provide ongoing updates related to this project

#### Consultation Activities

The first public information centre took place at St Simon the Apostle Church at 525 Bloor Street East on Tuesday, May 27, 2014 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

It was attended by 22 people. The agenda for the meeting included an hour to browse project poster boards on display, a presentation by the project consultants, and opportunities to ask questions/clarifications and discuss.

Appendix A (page 8) provides a summary of questions asked by attendees and the project team responses.



### Lower Don Trail Valley Access Improvements – Public Drop-in Event

St Simon the Apostle, 525 Bloor St East • Tuesday, May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014 • 6 pm to 9pm

#### AGENDA

6:00 pm	<b>Doors Open</b> <i>Please sign-in and browse the display boards. Project team members are available for one-on-one discussion.</i>
7:00 pm	<b>Presentation</b> <i>Mark Langridge and Bryce Miranda, Project consultants from DTAH will present an overview of the improvements scheduled for this project</i>
7:30 pm	<b>Question / Answer</b> <i>Opportunity to ask for clarification on the presentation and ask questions to project team.</i>
7:45 pm	<b>Roundtable Discussion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The room is divided into 5 sections:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Gerrard and Dundas Staircases</li><li>2. Lower Don Trail Condition Audit</li><li>3. Bayview Avenue Multi Use Trail</li><li>4. Belleville Underpass</li><li>5. Pottery Road Bridge and Connection</li></ol></li><li>• Each section of tables will contain comment sheets for that topic.</li><li>• Table facilitators are available, but will not record your comments. Please write down your feedback on the comment sheets provided.</li><li>• Note: there will be two opportunities to change table sections to discuss other topics and meet other participants</li></ul>
8:30 pm	<b>Roundtable Highlights</b> <i>Top highlights from each table discussion will be shared with the plenary group. Following highlights, project team members will be available for informal discussions.</i>
9:00 pm	<b>Adjourn</b>

Submit your comments by June 13, 2014:

- Tonight
- Email [kkusiak@toronto.ca](mailto:kkusiak@toronto.ca)
- Mail: post-paid envelope available at sign-in table
- Online [www.toronto.ca/lowerdon](http://www.toronto.ca/lowerdon)

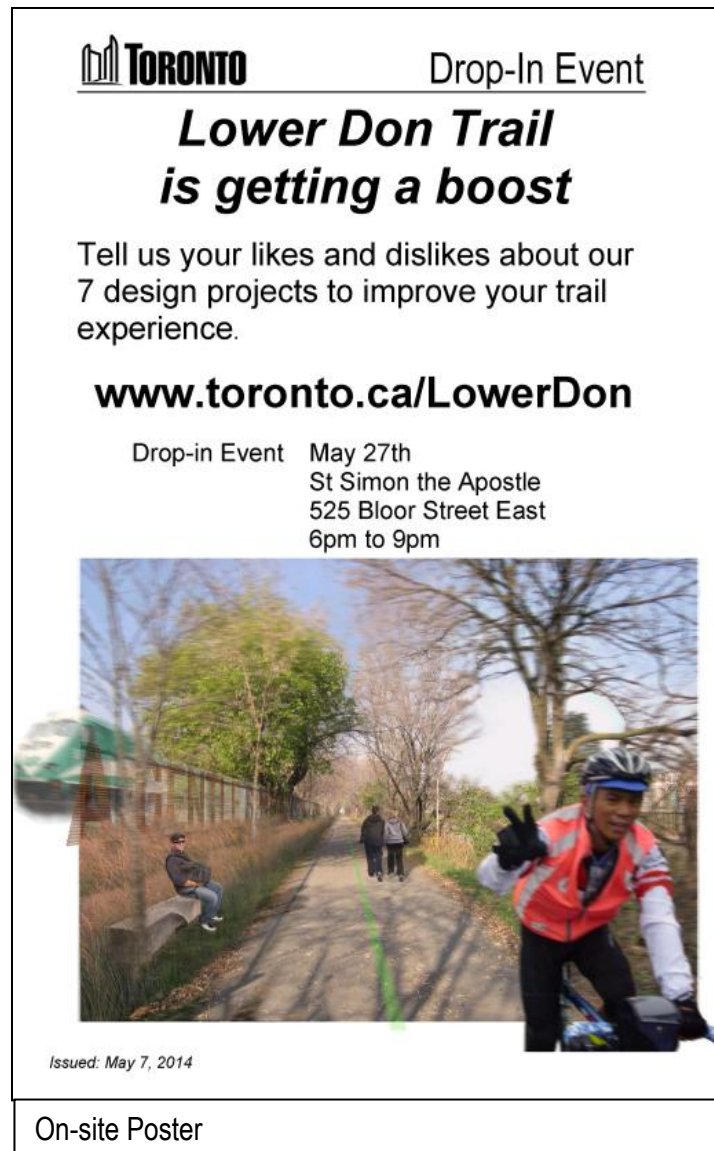
### Meeting Agenda

## Notification Methods

The following notification channels were used to promote this public information centre:

- Local newspaper advertisements –May 15
  - NOW Magazine
  - Beaches Mirror
  - East York Mirror
  - City Centre Mirror
- On-site signage at the following access points into the trail:
  - Pottery Road parking lot
  - Pottery Road crossing
  - Staircase at Queen Street
  - Corktown Common Bridge over the Don River
- Email blasts
  - To previous stakeholder and participant list from Lower Don Trail Master Plan, including local area community groups and organizations
  - Through stakeholder networks at:
    - Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
    - Waterfront Toronto
    - City of Toronto Transportation Services - Cycling
- Social Media
  - @GetInvolvedTO (City of Toronto Consultation)
  - @TO\_Cycling (City of Toronto Transportation Services - Cycling)
- Project Webpage

In addition a news release was issued on May 29, confirming the public artist selected for the Art Fence.



## 4. Summary of Comments Received

Comment sheets were available at the meeting and online. The deadline to submit comments was Friday, June 13, a comment period of 2.5 weeks.

The following three questions were asked on comment sheets for the following improvements ; Belleville Underpass, Lower Don Trail Condition Audit and Narrows, Dundas and Gerrard Streets Staircases, Pottery Road Bridge and Connection and Bayview Multi-use Trail:

- What are your reactions to the proposed design concept?
- What are the impacts and benefits of the proposed design concept for trail users?
- Are there other opportunities or considerations to keep in mind? Other Comments?

A total of 43 comments were received. Eight comments were handed in at the public information centre, 23 comments were received through the online survey, 4 comments were recorded on social media messages (Twitter), and 8 comments were received by email. See Appendix B (page 12) for all comments received.

Overall, the proposed changes were viewed as positive improvements that the trail needed. The link between the improvements and increased safety was also identified.

A few examples of comments highlight positive acknowledgements for proposed changes:

"Love it. This needs to happen as soon as possible."

**Pottery Road Bridge and Connection**

"Fixing up these trails along Bayview would be a godsend, particularly with how amazing Brickworks is. It needs to be more safely accessible on bike and on foot."

**Bayview Multi-Use Trail**

"It is a fun area but there are a lot of busy roads around and it needs to be safer for families to be able to use this beautiful area of the city that I have enjoyed for many years."

**Overall safety**

"Overall this is a huge safety improvement over the existing dangerous tunnel."

**Belleville Underpass**

"Art and better asphalt is great to make the trail feel less sketch/haphazard."

**Trail Conditions and Audit**

"I think this could bring far more people onto the trail, which is great. With these people coming onto the trail, we'll need better sight lines. I love the inclusion of the scenic lookout."

**Staircases at Gerrard/Dundas**

The following are examples of concerns about the trail, some of which were related to safety, maintenance, and accessibility for other types of users.

"Regular maintenance after storms is needed to remove the dangerous silt buildup on trails."

**Trail Conditions and Audit**

"Most people cycling down Bayview will be on the west side [of the road, and will] continue riding on the west side to the Brickworks entrance, rather than crossing to the east side at Pottery Road, following the trail to the south Brickworks entrance, then crossing back over."

**Bayview Multi-Use Trail**

"My concern with mixed use paths is always conflict between speeding bikes and pedestrians."

"Separate bikes from pedestrians where possible"

**Lower Don Trail and Bayview Multi-Use Trail**

"[W]ill not be universally accessible as a ramp would be (i.e. for wheelchairs)"

**Staircases at Gerrard/Dundas**

## A Note about the Staircases at Dundas and Gerrard streets

A collaborative of local community groups proposed ramps instead of staircases as trail entry points from Gerrard Street and/or Dundas Street. The project team met with representatives of these local groups to review their proposal and respond to their interests and concerns. The following reasons summarized and explained how ramps cannot be included in this project:

- Technical
  - The slope guidelines in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act would produce an extensive, long and inconvenient ramp and would reach most (about 3/4) of the way/distance between Gerrard and Dundas streets.
  - If the width of the ramp matches the trail width, it would require a central railing which would reduce usable space on the trail.
  - Flooding concerns of a ramp would pose major design and construction challenges in order to improve/maintain the flood conveyance capacity in this part of the Don River.
- Safety
  - A continuous downhill ramp would generate significant speed and increase the risk of losing control and potential conflicts between faster- and slower-moving users.
- Visual
  - As an important natural area in the City, objectives to enhance the natural appearance and experience of the valley would be impacted by the length

of a ramp. The staircase would be 1/10 the length of the ramp, minimizing visual impacts.

- Cost
  - Due to the above listed concerns raised by the project team and resolved in the process to assess base conditions, design and build, the potential total cost would be significantly greater than the staircase.

## 5. Next Steps

The project team consultants will be reviewing comments for further consideration to be included in refining designs for these improvements. A second public information centre will be scheduled later in the Fall/Winter, 2014 to present these preliminary designs.

## Appendix A: Questions of Clarification at the May 27 Meeting

Q.	Have you considered separating pedestrians from cyclists?
A.	The Lower Don Trail is a multi-use path and the City does not typically separate pedestrians from cyclists along multi-use paths. Line markings can be used to separate different directions of travel. At present, the trail is narrow in some areas (approx. 2.5m width) and one of the project aims is to widen the trail to 4m wherever possible.
Q.	At present, many people gather and meet around the area of the Pottery Road crossing and there are safety concerns with traffic along Pottery Road and cyclists.
A.	The preferred concept for the new Pottery Road pedestrian bridge includes a meeting area. The meeting area is separated from the trail and is intended to encourage/ draw people away from traffic along the Pottery Road and cyclists along the trail.
	Team Observation: Several participants supported the concept of a new gathering place close to the new Pottery Road Pedestrian Bridge
Q.	The Belleville underpass is located in close proximity to the Don Valley Parkway and might not be the highest priority location to create a new gathering place. Asked to consider other locations as priority, such as junction points with other trails or destinations
A.	When evaluating locations for new gathering places, the design team will consider locating new gathering places where they have the best impact.
Q.	Have you considered narrowing lane widths along Bayview Avenue to slow traffic
A	Yes, the option to reconfigure line markings is being considered in the design development of the Bayview Avenue Multi-Use TrailMUT.
Q.	One concept for the multi-use trail along Bayview Avenue illustrated a guide rail as a barrier to protect cyclists and pedestrians. How will this affect snow removal on the trail? If the trail is covered in snow during the winter months will cyclists ride along Bayview Avenue?
A.	.At present there is no plan for winter maintenance on the Bayview Multi-Use Trail. There is only one trail that the City maintains in the winter, the Martin Goodman TrailIssues of snow removal and drainage have been discussed with City Traffic and Road Operations and they agreed that a guide rail is better than a Jersey Barrier in that snow and water can be moved to the east of the shoulder.

Q.	As you approach the railway tracks from the east there are limited sightlines northward and it might be difficult for some people to see a train approaching. Have you considered including signage?
A.	The inclusion of signage will be considered. Other elements along the approach to the crossing such as 'P-gates' will be considered. There is also an auditory signal and lights from the existing signal arm. Any treatment at the rail crossing is subject to Metrolinx approvals.
Q.	If there is a flood situation, will the pickets you are proposing as railings be a debris blocker?
A.	Guard railings meet the height and spacing requirements of the bridge code for safety. The design team will consider flood issues in the engineering design and the designs are required to be reviewed and approved by the TRCA.
Q.	Is the Belleville rail line decommissioned?
A.	No, it is currently inactive. Metrolinx would like to have the opportunity to use the line in the future if needed.
Q.	South of Pottery Road, just as the trail passes below an existing overpass/bridge, the trails opens up and there is a great opportunity for creating a special node or meeting place.
A.	The design team will consider this suggestion.
Q.	There is potential to access a reserve fund for park land acquisition or other elements that are considered too expensive. At present the only access points to the trail are from Corktown Common or Pottery Road. Bridge Point Health is located part way along the trail and there is demand for disabled people to access the trail. Can the City make enquiries to see if additional funding can be sought out to make ramp connections into the valley.
A.	The City is aware of this funding opportunity, and yes they are looking at all opportunities for funding. The consultant team has reviewed a memo that the city received about making ramp connections to the valley and has identified a number of technical challenges. A future meeting to further discuss opportunities and constraints about a ramp is to be held with local councillor, the City, the consultant team and advocates for a ramp.
Q.	Can lighting be considered along the trail or at certain locations where there is no light spill from the DVP?
A.	Consultation during the master plan process determined that lighting would not be included along the trail. Flood impacts on electrical supply, impacts on wildlife and

	plants are some of the issues.
Q	Will the design of the realigned Belleville underpass consider the Toronto Water services located near the entrance on the west side
A	Yes, the initial alignment concepts are designed to avoid this constraint.
Q	People are throwing bottles from the bridges onto the trail. Please consider the problem of shattered glass in your design of the path.
A	Noted.
C	The clean up after the ice storm was great.
A	Noted. This comment will be passed on to the City team that performed the maintenance.
Q.	What assurance can the City give that the ideas developed as part of this process will be delivered?
A.	This is not a planning process. The seven projects identified here tonight are on track to be constructed. Funding is in place for 6 of the 7 projects. Part of the funding comes from the Pan Am Legacy Fund and Parks, Forestry and Recreation and Transportation Services capital budgets. Some elements of this project need to be completed before the Pan Am Games 2015
Q	Please put additional garbage cans along the trail. Currently people are putting bags to collect garbage.
A	Some areas there is not a lot of space for garbage cans (i.e. narrows). In this case, the equipment used to empty the cans cannot fit along the trail. If the design proceeds with the intended 4m trail width then perhaps garbage and recycling bins can be located along the trail.
Q	One participant noted that many of the trees between the trail and the River along the Narrows were planted and did not want to see any of those trees removed when the trail is widened.
A	The design team is considering widening the trail towards the Metrolinx railway so this should not affect these trees. An arborist report has been undertaken and a tally of all trees done.
Q	What coordination have you had with wayfinding?
A	No coordination has taken place at this time. However, the City will be

	undertaking a separate wayfinding strategy and signage required for this part of a pilot project will be coordinated with that work.
Q	Have you considered urban artist opportunities? There is a long history and great opportunities along the trail.
A	Yes, As part of the Pan Am Path several sites for urban art in the valley are proposed.
Q	Along the narrows, people are cutting holes in the fence to take short cuts to Bayview Avenue. How will this be prevented?
A	The inclusion of stairs will provide additional opportunities for accessing and exiting the valley, which would in turn reduce the desire to trespass over Metrolinx rail lines.
Q.	Between Gerrard and Queen Street there is a large hole (1m x 1m) which is covered with a piece of wood.
A.	Noted and will be addressed in future designs.
Q.	Bike traffic / usage is undergoing a shift. More people are using baby carriers, three wheel bikes etc. All of these changes require ramp connections in the valley. If you do stairs you should make the landings bigger, tunnels should be wider and bridges should be wide.
A.	The design team will consider the width of the bridges, tunnels and landings as the designs are developed.
Q.	Will toilet facilities be considered along the trail?
A.	Currently, toilets are not being considered along the trail. There are toilets at Brick Works, Todmorden Mills, and Corktown Common

## Appendix B: Comments Received

### **Bayview Multi-Use Trail**

#### **What are your reactions to the proposed design concept?**

- YES! Bayview feels like a dead zone that benefits cars and hurts bikes. Fixing up these trails along Bayview would be a godsend, particularly with how amazing Evergreen Brickworks is. It needs to be more safely accessible on bike and on foot.
- This is certainly a good idea as the current situation for cyclists (and pedestrians) on Bayview at the BrickWorks is dangerous.
- The design concept is great!
- great to have a separation from traffic. What about a 1 meter high concrete barrier?
- The Pottery Road bridge and connection is extremely needed, as well as widening the path as you travel south towards the lake. I'm not convinced about the value of the art wall. If the art wall is to be completed, it should be designated as a graffiti wall intentionally... instead of it being an art wall that will eventually become a graffiti wall. A program should be linked with this wall to animate or "reset" the art at least once a year
- Looks good but not part of my normal route
- I'd like to see the barrier as a mix of planters and curbs to extend the "valley" onto the road. Almost like a mini linear park.
- Access for bicyclists from the trail to Corktown Common's new park is very difficult. There are only stairs and no parking for bikes. i was there today and at least a dozen people were carrying their bikes up the stairs or locking them to the fence. I am a senior and could not carry my bike up the stair to the park.
- Excited and anticipating
- Good idea. Very needed. The current site is unsafe to get onto the pottery road trail.
- Good idea to provide safer access to Brickworks.
- Good ideas! Check whether a jersey barrier might be safer/more space efficient. Steel-beam guiderail requires a rear "safe area" to accommodate deflection from a collision - this could considerably reduce the useable space for cyclists.
- overall very favourable

### **Bayview Multi-Use Trail**

#### **What are the impacts and benefits of the proposed design concept for trail users?**

- Give us safe bike lanes on Bayview, and all will be well.
- Looks good to me.
- More people will use them and hopefully do so without endangering themselves and others.
- improved safety

- The impact of the Pottery Road bridge and connection is massive. Right now one must ride onto Bayview Ave if heading to the Brick Works.
- Good addition to the trail system
- Access for bicyclists from the trail to Corktown Common's new park is very difficult. There are only stairs and no parking for bikes. i was there today and at least a dozen people were carrying their bikes up the stairs or locking them to the fence. I am a senior and could not carry my bike up the stair to the park.
- To make Bayview less dangerous, and accessible for all ages / confidences. Access between the brick works, mud and yellow creek trails and the don valley trails
- Benefits - sense of safety for cyclists/pedestrians Impacts - none that I can see if lane widths remain the same
- more people will use it

### **Bayview Multi-Use Trail**

#### **Are there other opportunities or considerations to keep in mind? Other comments?**

- It is all about getting more access to the Brickworks as far as I'm concerned.
- The traffic lights at Bayview and the BrickWorks entrance are sometimes VERY slow to change for cyclists leaving Brickworks. The timing may need attention?
- The DVP southbound traffic at Lakeshore (where the DVP ends), the crosswalk at the entrance of the Lower Don River Trail is hard for vehicles to see. Many times they roll through it or stop in the middle of it, which is very dangerous.
- walkers and cyclists -- how will they know where to be so there are minimal conflicts?
- Are there opportunities to naturalize the flow of the Don River?
- I use the northbound Bayview shoulder from Pottery Road to Moore Avenue. It is well used by cyclists as an informal bike lane but the surface is very poor, dangerous in places. Cyclists use the southbound shoulder as well. It wouldn't take much investment to bring the shoulders back up to standard and it would extend and improve access to the Bayview Multi-Use Trail.
- The trail conditions on rose dal valley road a quite poor. There is cracks in the path, poor signage, sharp turns that make it dangerous, and the path is quite narrow. If you intend for people to come down the path and connect on Bayview it would be worth while to improve that path as well.
- Access for bicyclists from the trail to Corktown Common's new park is very difficult. There are only stairs and no parking for bikes. i was there today and at least a dozen people were carrying their bikes up the stairs or locking them to the fence. I am a senior and could not carry my bike up the stair to the park.
- Northbound route that connects to Pottery - needs to be a smoother transition for cyclists - not a stop light, but re-directing cyclists East and merging with Pottery before the level crossing.

- Is this trail accessible from Wellesley park? How does this trail connect to the city users? Right now there is no good safe way to get to the trail from cabbagetown down some old stairs.
- My concern with mixed use paths is always conflict between speeding bikes and pedestrians. I hope there will be monitoring of speed and the consideration of speed bumps if there is conflict. This holds for all the proposed trails.
- See above. [ie. previous question]
- access points need to be accessible
  
- Overall this is a great addition to the cycling network in the Lower Don, and a significant improvement to safety (and the perception of safety) for cyclists.
  - It is disappointing to see the southern extension of the trail from Rosedale Valley Rd to River St didn't make it in this proposal. This segment would provide a vital connection to the onstreet cycling network.
  - Having the trail on the east side hampers access to the Brickworks.
    - Most people cycling down Bayview will be on the west side, with traffic. They will continue riding on the west side to the Brickworks entrance, rather than crossing to the East side at Pottery Rd, following the trail to the south Brickworks entrance, then crossing back over.
    - In the absence of sidewalks, pedestrians often use the shoulder on the west side of Bayview to walk to the Brickworks.
  - The pinch point at the northeast corner of Bayview and Pottery Rd should be eliminated
    - When the intersection was repaved, the wide shoulder was replaced with a hard curb and sidewalks.
    - Cyclists travelling north on Bayview are squeezed into the travel lane by the curb, which ends abruptly some 5m to the north.
    - The curb should either be removed, or the sidewalk should be widened to a multiuse trail with a large, wide curb cut facing the intersection.
  - Winter will be a challenge on this section of trail.
    - Snow windrows will accumulate over the guardrail over winter. Since the roadway is crowned, snowmelt will travel over the surface of the trail.
    - Separate plowing will be needed on the trail to keep it passable in winter. Extra care will be needed to remove the windrows and prevent snowmelt from refreezing over the trail and creating ice slicks.
  - If the trail is provided, motorists may become more aggressive towards cyclists riding on the roadway.
    - In the winter, cyclists won't have a choice and will be forced onto the road.
  - If motorists wish to use a highway in the Don Valley, they can drive on the Don Valley Parkway. The design of Bayview Ave. should encourage its use as a city street.

- The speed limit on Bayview Ave is 60km/hr. Presently, lanes are over 3.5m wide, encouraging traffic to speed well over that limit.
- The project team should consider further narrowing the road lanes in order to encourage driving behaviour consistent with Bayview's role as a street

### **Pottery Road Bridge and Connection**

#### **What are your reactions to the proposed design concept?**

- The existing bridge is very dangerous, having a separate bridge for the trail is a very good idea!
- looks great!
- Love it. This needs to happen as soon as possible.
- A great improvement. At the moment the crossing is designed as if all riders will keep going north or south on the Don Valley Trail and not access Pottery Road/Bayview (which I do)
- Great, but concerned about level crossing
- Love it
- Excellent idea.
- Is this really necessary? It's a pretty short stretch between the trailhead on Pottery to the intersection with Bayview. Cars aren't travelling very fast on this curvy section and I've never had a problem sharing the road with cars as a cyclist. Seems a bit expensive/overkill to me to install a separate bridge. Improving the existing sidewalk connection would be fine for pedestrians. I would strongly recommend that this improvement suggestion be value engineered and/or eliminated.
- Great

### **Pottery Road Bridge and Connection**

#### **What are the impacts and benefits of the proposed design concept for trail users?**

- This will directly bring the Brick Works site into the Don River trail system. The current terrifying trek along Bayview Ave to the Brick Works is eye opening.
- Safety and a more comfortable experience.
- Great separation from traffic.
- Safety benefits and ease of access.
- Benefits - not much as outlined above - seems like overkill. Impacts - environment - new bridge abutments at river edge, trail connections through some trees, etc
- easy and safe access

### **Pottery Road Bridge and Connection**

#### **Are there other opportunities or considerations to keep in mind? Other comments?**

- Ensure proper signage on bridge and elsewhere to try to separate cyclists and pedestrians.
- Is a new bridge really necessary? Wouldn't it be cheaper to widen the existing pottery road bridge?
- Needs to be very wide for cyclists in both directions in this windy and bumpy (rails) route.
- If the access / continuation of the trail is to be at grade, similar to the existing Pottery Road crossing, it would be good to have traffic lights (on demand) so that safety is increased for pedestrians / cyclists. Cars come around that corner very quickly and you need to run to cross safely around 50% of the time.
- Would suggest saving money by improving the existing sidewalk connection rather than building a new bridge with its higher construction (and ongoing maintenance) costs. Money could then be better spent improving the Bayview Ave shoulders up the Bayview hill that are increasingly used by pedestrians/cyclists to exit the valley. (The shoulders are in horrible shape right now - spring 2014.)
- make sure that there is a real solid barrier between the bayview and the bike lanes. Perhaps put lighting on the barrier to then display colours, themes, advertising. Make it light up like the CN Tower.
- Overall this is a great improvement over the pinch point that exists with the current bridges.
  - The P-gates near the train crossing are a hazard to cyclists.
    - P-gates should not be installed on new trails, as they
      - create a choke point
      - instigate conflict between trail users, especially those with longer bicycles (bikes with trailers, recumbents or tandems)
      - divert cyclists' attention to negotiating around the P-gate when the real focus should be the train tracks
    - To alert cyclists as to the train tracks, a combination of pavement markings, flexible bollards and posted signs should be used.
      - Bollards slow down bikes while permitting multiple people to pass through the same location, even in opposite directions.
  - The meeting space should be placed sufficiently far back from the trail so that a large group does not block the main trail.
  - The bridge should be as wide or wider than the trail
    - Bridges create a natural attraction and stop-off point
    - There should be sufficient space for trail users to pass the stopped traffic on the bridge.
    - 3m is probably too narrow a width; 4m would allow for more comfortable passing
    - Galvanized steel rails work better on sides of the bridge than wood, but the design should avoid the possibility of people injuring their heads against rail tips
  - The space in the junction area just to the east of the bridge should be generous, as three streams of trail traffic will be meeting at this point

- This rest area would be an excellent candidate for a bicycle service station, such as this example installed at the Evergreen Brickworks by Steam Whistle Brewery:



- There should be curb cuts leading from the trail to the Crothers Woods parking lot and access point on the north side of Pottery Rd.

#### **Gerrard and Dundas Staircases**

##### **What are your reactions to the proposed design concept?**

- This is Genius! I have often ridden under these bridges and wondered why there are no stairs. I particularly love the repetition of the galvanised steel sights at Pottery as road name markers. Also, I'm terrified every time I need to veer around those bridge columns, so greater sight lines are welcome.
- At least one of the bridges should have a ramp to accommodate the disabled and bicycles. When the RFP was drafted I requested that it include a requirement for bidders to consider ramps. I see no evidence the ramps have been considered.
- Good idea, though I hate carrying my bike up (or down) stairs there is really no choice.
- Great
- It is hard for older people and kids to get bikes up and down the stairs. Also no one in a mobility scooter or a wheel chair can get into the valley at the south / mid section. A ramp might help.
- The more access points to the trail system, the better.
- Good to improve access - will probably not use them myself
- Shame it can't be a switchback ramp
- Great.
- Need a ramp. There is no way to use the trail if you are in a wheelchair or have a stroller between pottery road and cork town commons park.
- Great ideas.

- Looks good! Not sure "viewing platforms" are really needed given that better views are there at the top of the bridge. Save money if possible! Make sure these things look good in 10 years after weathering. Better yet, use standard construction material - at the end of the day, they are just stairs.

#### **Gerrard and Dundas Staircases**

##### **What are the impacts and benefits of the proposed design concept for trail users?**

- I think this could bring far more people onto the trail, which is great. With these people coming onto the trail, we'll need better sight lines. I love the inclusion of the scenic lookout.
- The disabled will have no access between Pottery Road and Corktown Commons, which is unacceptable. You propose troughs for bicycles but troughs are not good enough. It is difficult to push a bike up or down a trough.
- More access/ egress points
- Much safer for those who dared try to take their bikes up the steep stairs.
- more access is probably good.
- Currently, trying to get to the Don Trails through Riverdale Park is difficult. The baseball fields are always wet and difficult to ride across. The paved path is always under a puddle.
- will not be universally accessible as a ramp would be (i.e. for wheelchairs)
- Possible increase in traffic along the trail.
- Increased accessibility.
- Benefits - More access out of the valley. Impacts - None.

#### **Gerrard and Dundas Staircases**

##### **Are there other opportunities or considerations to keep in mind? Other comments?**

- Those piles have got a lot of concrete in them. Let's get some nice murals/"urban illustration"/graffiti on them!
- If a trough is provided, it should be in the middle of the stairs so a bike can be kept vertical. The ones at Queen and Riverdale are awful! Also attached 4 pages of additional information.
- The existing bike wheel track on the King/Queen Bridge is too narrow or too close to side rail of bridge. The design of these 'tracks' needs to be examined and if a better (wider) one can be devised I hope the King/Queen bridge can be retrofitted.
- See first question regarding accessibility
- Options to regrade the lower sections of Riverdale Park should be considered. Right now this part is typically bogged down and muddy. If the City wishes to maintain the three baseball diamonds in this location, then drainage, regrading and creating wetlands/greenways should be considered.
- rails on both sides to allow bikes to be dragged up and down at the same time.

- Please consider a large landing area with a trail bypass (like Riverdale), especially for Gerrard (very large cement columns obstruct sight lines), so that passing cyclists are not endangered by people coming onto the path. Would like to see at least one accessible entrance to the trail, with an elevator, similar to New York's High Line.
- Put in a ramp in addition to stairs.
- How long will the trail be closed while the work is going on? or will closures be intermittent and the work done in stages?
- Why not another at-grade access across the tracks to the Bayview Ave/River Street intersection? Would track protection for an at-grade connection be more expensive than one of the staircases? If not, an at-grade connection may be more useful.
- they need to be ramps not stairs. Have to accessible to those in wheelchairs or using baby strollers or joggers.
- We strongly urge the design team to explore building at least one ramp from Dundas or Gerrard to the trail.
  - This issue was the subject of a separate ongoing discussion with members of our group and neighbouring Cycle Toronto ward groups.
  - If a staircase is the only option, then the landings should be sufficiently large to accommodate larger bikes such as recumbents or tandems.
    - Linear stairs are easier to navigate with a bicycle than scissor stairs.
    - Enlarging a landing to provide a lookout is useful for people who need to catch their breath, but we suspect that as a viewing area a lookout will afford a less scenic view than what might be seen from the sidewalk on the bridge, which of course is higher
  - If a staircase is the only option, we support a design that splits trail traffic, so that users travelling north are channelled to one side of the concrete bridge pier, while those going south are channelled to the other side. This will substantially reduce the danger of collisions, which is presently acute owing to poor visibility and short sight lines in the vicinity of the piers.
  - The bike gutter should be in the centre of the staircase, rather than the side, as in the examples below:



### **Lower Don Trail conditions and Audit**

#### **What are your reactions to the proposed design concept?**

- Drainage improvements and re-surfacing the trail are my primary issues
- The art fence is important as it preserves the culture and heritage of the Lower Don for future generations and Pan Am athletes. It should remain consistent with the chosen Palette and include an abundance of reclaimed wood.
- Yes! Condition Audit! Let's fix some asphalt so I don't need to do as much dodging of brightly spray painted depressions, cracks, etc, along the path. Paul Raff is sexy and great, but I'd love for some artistically-smooth asphalt.
- The narrows are now a real mess and widening the trail and dealing with trail surface are excellent.
- The design concepts sounds great!
- need to have some dense planting along the trail where the highway is close (e.g. the image with the washout on the hillside) This will improve the view, reduce traffic noise and reduce dust / improve air quality.
- Love the improved sightlines offered by option 1 for the Bellville Underpass.
- A lot of improvement required here - not sure how much improvement (e.g. sight lines, widening) will take place. Separate bikes from pedestrians where possible.
- This completely ignores the massive problem of trail flooding in riverdale park when you try to get onto the don trail from the west side. Many days the trail itself is dry but you can't get on it because the access trail in the baseball diamond is flooded because it's at a low elevation point. Is anyone looking at that?
- All looks good to me! Regarding the "art fence": have the designer do an "in 10 years" mock up so that you can get a sense of what it will look like after salt, rust, plants, bird, etc. impacts. Too many recent outdoor artworks are being installed based on "day 1" looks not on how it will look after being out in Toronto's elements for a while. (Winter especially beats up on wood.)

### **Lower Don Trail conditions and Audit**

#### **What are the impacts and benefits of the proposed design concept for trail users?**

- Improved facilities and experience will make the trail much better for users
- The art fence should not be a flat surface. The installation should be organically uneven, and jut out randomly. By removing a flat surface, any attempts to deface the fence with graffiti would be removed.
- Divided path is awesome. Art and better asphalt is great to make the trail feel less sketchy/haphazard.
- Less cyclist/cyclist and cyclist/pedestrian conflicts.
- Increased enjoyment
- The impacts are much improved safety, especially when using the trails with other fast moving bikes.
- The silt after a flood is likely a health hazard given the condition of the river during flood conditions as well as a safety issue (skidding, bike stability), so any improvements to help that would be valuable.

- Nice but the flooding in riverdale is a more urgent problem. You can't get to it.
- Benefits - improved trail for users. Impacts - none that I can see.

#### **Lower Don Trail conditions and Audit**

##### **Are there other opportunities or considerations to keep in mind? Other comments?**

- Art fence along the Narrows will not discourage people from cutting holes in the fence to cross the tracks onto Bayview.
- Art fence: Graffiti, racial slurs, defacement. I can see the installation being a prime boycott target for defacement if it remains flat.
- All this Paul Raff, super industrial design is sexy and good, but there is some really great, really artistic, "urban illustration"/graffiti along the Belleville rail line, under the Viaduct. We should take a lesson from Rue St. Laurent in Montreal, embrace some quality/commissioned graffiti murals and incorporate them on the concrete spaces in around the cold Paul Raff stuff.
- Add some seating areas close to trail.
- We should make traffic crossings around the trail entrances more safe.
- Mutual respect and awareness needed between cyclists and other users - pedestrians need to be aware there are other trail users.
- I'd like to see more greenery to stabilize the banks on the river. Also the path can be quite dangerous for pedestrians with fast cyclists so maybe put speed limits or dedicate one side of the path for people going at a slower speed.
- Flooding in riverdale park.
- See above. [previous question]
- any new access points such as stairs at dundas or gerrard need to be accessible. Stairs are not enough. You need ramps so that those in wheelchairs(or using baby strollers/joggers) can access the trail network. Old stairs at queen and cabbagetown access points need to be upgrade to ramps.
- Trail Audit
  - We strongly encourage regular trail audits, especially in the spring and after heavy storms
  - We would be happy to help perform such audits together with City staff
  - Even better, we would be willing to perform the audits independently to ease the burden on City staff during peak maintenance times
    - There should be a clear mechanism for submitting the audit results to the City for followup
- The Narrows
  - Trail widening is welcome in this section.
  - Regular maintenance after storms is needed to remove the dangerous silt build-up on trails.
    - The City did an excellent job cleaning up after the summer 2013 flooding.
  - Dogs often become agitated when trains pass by, running across the trail unpredictably. In The Narrows, this is a safety hazard for all trail users.

- Signs should be posted along the trail reminding owners to keep their dogs on a leash and in control.
- The Art Fence should incorporate perforations, slits or openings
  - this will give it a translucent appearance
  - as opposed to an opaque design, which would impart a claustrophobic feel to the trail and make “The Narrows” seem narrower than it really is

#### **Belleville Underpass**

##### **What are your reactions to the proposed design concept?**

- I HATE this underpass. The faster you guys , make it better, the happier I'll be. It is a DEATH TRAP.
- It could not be worse than now so anything (wider, better site lines etc) is good.
- Great
- looks good.
- It's a tricky crossing at the moment so safety improvements are good.
- Good
- This improvement is long overdue.
- Great idea. So many near collisions!
- Necessary improvement and a good idea.
- Finally! Great concept!
- Fine

#### **Belleville Underpass**

##### **What are the impacts and benefits of the proposed design concept for trail users?**

- This is a fairly dead part of the trail with lots of space around it on the west side, so it's a great place for a gathering space.
- Safety
- The slight bend may mean line of sight is impaired
- Increased safety for cyclists, increased safety for female pedestrians (with lighting and increased sight lines).
- Increased safety and hopefully less ice in winter months.
- Benefits - better, safer trail for all! Impacts - none.

#### **Belleville Underpass**

##### **Are there other opportunities or considerations to keep in mind? Other comments?**

- I agree with someone's comment that a space WEST of the Belleville line is better for gathering than the east side because of the proximity to the DVP.
- It is generally not good to have a blind corner just before or after a hill as cyclists tend to go too fast down hill (or are trying to maintain speed to start climbing.
- What about stairs up to the "rail trail" above

- the present bend does make people slow down - concerned people may zoom through but won't be able to see when going from bright to dark.
- Please ensure that you decrease the turn radius--it is currently almost 90 degrees in both directions and incredibly dangerous on a bike--on a muddy day this turn is hazardous (I speak from the experience of a serious concussion due to a fall at this spot). Is it possible to install emergency call boxes somewhere in this area (at minimum, and along the trail ideally); there are people who live / camp in the valley between here and the Prince Edward Viaduct and, as a female who frequently uses the trail as a pedestrian and as a cyclist, this would be very reassuring.
- Maybe the walls of the new tunnel should be "graffiti" walls on purpose. Otherwise the taggers will just have a field day.
- Could the accesses to the Don River bridge just to the south also be improved? Those 90-deg turns are just as unsafe as the existing 90-deg ones to the Belleville Underpass.
- Overall this is a huge safety improvement over the existing dangerous tunnel
  - The underpass should be lit, just like the Corktown Common underpass under the Bala subdivision is also lit at night.
  - We prefer option 1, because it follows a straighter and more predictable path
  - Since option 1 is about 2m longer than option 2, the design should incorporate features that compensate for the extra length:
    - the width of the underpass should be in excess of 3m
    - the sides of the tunnel should flare out at the ends
  - A gathering space should not be built anywhere within the immediate vicinity of the tunnel since it would
    - trail users should be focusing their attention on getting through the underpass safely, rather than trying to decide whether they want to stop at the gathering area
- gathering spaces are best suited to scenic areas and junctions – the underpass is neither

### **Additional Comments Received**

- Access for bicyclists from the Don river bike trail to Corktown Common's new park is very difficult. There are only stairs leading into the park from the culvert and no parking for bikes. I was there today and at least a dozen people were carrying their bikes up the stairs or locking them to the fence. I am a senior and could not carry my bike up the stair to the park. hope you can make this easier for us.
- Improvements to the Lower Don Trail are long overdue and the plans look great BUT I hope that either as part of "State of Good Repair" or general upkeep or ?? something will be done with the trail from the GO train yard road to immediately south of the Corktown Common entrance. I realise that this is NOT in your study area BUT the trail there leads to/from the Lower Don Trail (and the trail that runs along Lake Shore Blvd east of the Don. This segment REALLY needs to be

resurfaced and, at the place it crosses the rail spur and turns a right-angle 90 degree turn, widened slightly. Though I suspect that this area of the trail will be completely redone sooner or later, it makes no sense to have a 'state of the art' trail north of Corktown Common and the current very poor trail south of it!

I have reported trail problems in this section for several years and every year am promised that repairs will be made - nothing ever happens and this part of the trail is also the continuation of the main East-West trail that runs along Lake Shore Boulevard east of the Don so is quite busy.

- I am an avid runner and have used this trail for many years. I have looked through your list of improvements and I am glad that this is happening. I have some feedback, some of which I believe you are addressing and some you are not.

The low area after the first hill heading south from pottery road below the train bridge is often flooding, I understand you will be addressing this which is needed. Also, I find the path narrow there at the bottom of that first hill with the cement pillar below the train bridge dangerously close on the right of the trail. I mean bikes seem to come down that hill very fast and there can be other traffic there causing a potential if someone collides and falls to hit it.

I also find it difficult crossing Pottery rd as both sides have curves and drivers do not slow down. For safety, I think it is wise to make improvements to that crossing, ideally an overhead bridge would be a good way to separate the trail traffic from car traffic especially with small kids riding there bikes or babies in strollers.

One other thing that I recommend is access to the brick yard from the bike path. It is a fun area but there are a lot of busy roads around and it needs to be safer for families to be able to use this beautiful area of the city that I have enjoyed for many years.

- Thank you for your reply to my concerns; it's good to hear from you. As I wrote, I've lived in Cabbagetown for nearly 30 years and think that the trail is one of the glories of the neighbourhood and the city. I post pictures and rapturous stories on my blog.

And from the beginning, I've been concerned about speeders. My fantasy has been to make myself a t-shirt with SLOW DOWN in huge letters on the front and back. I sometimes shout it to a particularly fast cyclist as he or she whizzes by. I doubt they hear me.

I have indeed noticed the 15 kmh signs and the shared path signs and thank you for them.

However, I have to say that I think the city is being much too subtle. The single speedracers and the teams of them - often there are groups dressed, as I wrote, in full Tour de France gear, going as fast as possible - are not going to pay the slightest attention to a nice sign showing people walking and rollerblading as well as biking.

Also, I have absolutely no idea what 15 km. feels like on a bike. I don't know anyone with a speedometer on a bike - except perhaps the racers who won't pay any attention.

There need to be large signs at each entrance to the trail, explaining in clear irrefutable language - in words and with pictures - that this trail is for everyone and that the trail is NOT designed for speed. That it's a major safety concern and that violators will be prosecuted. And there need to be police on bikes down there occasionally, visibly monitoring.

I also suggest setting aside one time a week - say, Saturday or Sunday mornings from 6 to 9 a.m., specifically for speeders. Let them have their time and then leave the place in safety for the rest of us.

- Last week I emailed the impassioned note below to a general address - I had not noticed your contact info. So now I am resending it to you.

I was biking on the trail today, one of my favourite days of the year because the Ride for Heart closes the DVP and it's like being in the country. (Pictures on today's blog on my website.) I notice that there are now more notices about speed limits - 15 mph. Thank you - that's a great start! As a cyclist, though, I have no idea what 15 mph is, and I can assure you that the speedsters down there don't either.

with best wishes and thanks,

May 25/15

Dear City planners:

I was riding my bike on the Don Valley Trail today and saw a sign about input on the plans for the trail. I am replying as a Cabbagetown resident, a longterm bicyclist who does not own a car, and someone who uses the trail as often as possible.

I feel very strongly that there's a major difficulty on the trail you have not addressed, though I have not read your plan in full. Every single time I'm down there - and I adore the place - my time is wrecked by people speeding far too fast on bikes. I'm amazed there hasn't been a serious accident with one of the racers running down a pedestrian, a child, a dog or another bicyclist. One after the other, in full Tour de France racing gear, they pedal by at top speed as if they're on a racing track. Their reckless speed makes the trail dangerous for everyone. I

would not consider going down there with a child.

What can be done? The city needs to make clear that this is a recreational trail for everyone, not a training track for bike races. This issue needs to be specifically addressed with large, clear signs at each entrance to the trail. Another solution would be to set specific times for racers - maybe from 6 to 9 a.m. on the weekends, for example, something like that, when they can speed to their heart's content and then go far away and leave the trail for the rest of us, biking at normal speed or strolling, to enjoy.

Today there was a run down there, so the path was full of runners, and still bikes were charging by at top speed. Why hasn't the city addressed this issue before someone is seriously hurt? Though I resent the racers, I guess if I wanted to race, the trail would be one place I'd go since there is nothing indicating that this is not the right place for speeding.

Or if the city wants to make this a racing track for speed racers, then please give us another trail safely free of them.

I would go to your meeting Tuesday but I work Tuesday evenings. Please let me know if I can write a letter or in some way publicly address this issue I feel strongly about.

but I applaud the effort to improve the Lower Don Trail.

One key issue I hope will be addressed is a real plan to deal with the extensive graffiti vandalism, littering and illegal encampments in the area. These three are all closely related. They totalling undermine the attractiveness of this area to families or recreational users. Any investment in improving the Lower Don Trail will be undermined by a failure to maintain it and tackle these issues head on.

I have made numerous requests to 311, Councillor MacConnell and Councillor Wong-Tam regarding this topic to little effect. I hope you have better luck.

#### Social Media – Twitter messages related to project

- **@good\_egg**: As Lower Don Trail runner, excited about Pottery Rd bridge & art - needs more accessibility though [toronto.ca/lowerdon](http://toronto.ca/lowerdon) @mfragedakis
  - **@TodmordenMills**: We agree! Pedestrian access from here to @EvergreenCanada Brickworks could use improvements
  - **@good\_egg**: At Pottery or south: getting from east trail to Brickworks is tough and dangerous, forced to run curbside w speeding traffic
- **@Walk\_TO**: Great plan by City to widen the Lower Don trail and provide more access points, but needs one new accessible access