

4.0 PLANNING CONTEXT AND OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

The first phase of the MCEA identifies and defines the existing conditions within the project area and results in a well-defined statement of the problem or opportunity that will be addressed via the MCEA process.

4.1 Problem and Opportunity Statement

The Mid Humber Gap constitutes a significant barrier to a continuous multi-use trail system along the HRT and is a discontinuity in the future Loop Trail. The Loop Trail is a 65 km off-road, multi-use ring that will connect multiple ravines, neighbourhoods and trail systems throughout the City of Toronto. Existing routes pose safety concerns to users forced to detour along busy local roads that lack designated cycling infrastructure and are not fully accessible.

This project is a critical component of Toronto's Cycling Network Plan, Ravine Strategy and TRCA's Trail Strategy. The MCEA aims to establish a preferred route to provide a complete connection between Mallaby Park and Crawford-Jones Memorial Park in the city of Toronto.

4.2 Identified Existing Problems and Opportunities

The following problems have been identified for the Mid Humber Gap MCEA:

- The existing gap is a significant barrier in the HRT system, which extends 29 km from the Claireville Dam to Lake Ontario, and is a discontinuity in the future Loop Trail;
- The lack of a fully connected multi-use trail through this section of the HRT forces trail users to detour along busy local roads that lack designated cycling infrastructure;
- The staircase at Mallaby Park presents a physical barrier to some users looking to enter or exit the HRT trail system and is not fully accessible to all ages and abilities; and
- Existing rights-of-way are constrained and do not have boulevard space for widening to accommodate a trail.

The following opportunities have been identified for the Mid Humber Gap MCEA:

- Remove the gap and provide for a complete multi-use trail connection between Mallaby Park and Crawford Jones Memorial Park;
- Develop an accessible multi-use trail connection that accommodates a variety of trail users;
- Improve user safety by minimizing or eliminating conflicts between trail users and motor vehicles;
- Provide enhanced opportunities for users to access, enjoy, and learn about Toronto's ravine system;

- Aligns with Toronto's Strong Neighbourhood Strategy (2020) by prioritizing active transportation projects in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas; and
- Build on existing City of Toronto, TRCA, and Province of Ontario planning initiatives for trail construction, expanding the bikeways network.