

Rouge Park Bridges Transportation Master Plan

Phase 2 Consultation Report

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Executive Summary

Phase 2 consultation of the Rouge Park Bridges Transportation Master Plan (TMP) focused on presenting and collecting feedback on the recommendations for the five bridges within the Rouge National Urban Park (RNUP) – whether to retain, rehabilitate or replace the bridges. Stakeholder and public consultation activities were undertaken as part of Phase 2, including notification by mail and email, individual stakeholder meetings, a Preservation Panel meeting, a public meeting, and an online feedback form.

Feedback was largely supportive for the locations where the project team recommended to retain the bridges (Sewell's Road Bridge and Maxwell Bridge). Feedback was mixed for the locations where the project team recommended to replace the bridges (Milne Bailey Bridge, Hillside Bridge and Stotts' Bridge). Frequently heard comments disagreeing with the recommendations to replace bridges revolved around the following key concerns: the bridge replacement will result in widening and unwanted increase in vehicle traffic; the safety of people walking and cycling should be prioritized, the unique/historic character of the bridges needs to be maintained and the associated environmental impacts needs to be factored into the recommendations, design and construction phases.

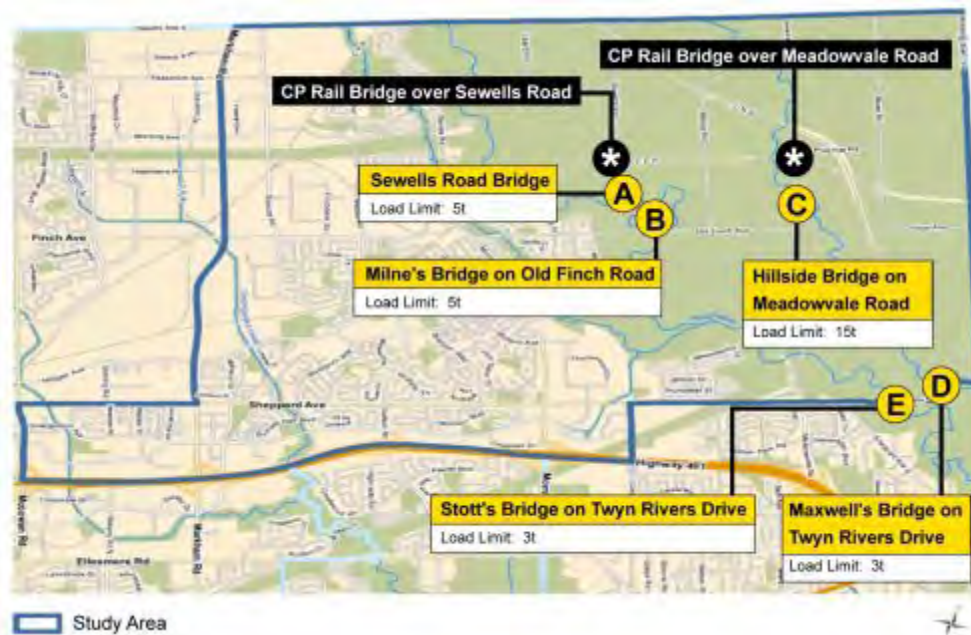
Project Summary

The City of Toronto is undertaking a Transportation Master Plan (TMP) to study five bridges within the Rouge National Urban Park (RNUP). Many of these historically and architecturally significant bridges were built in the 1900s and now require repairs. The bridges provide crossings over the Rouge River and Little Rouge River. Additionally, there are two CP Rail corridor underpasses in the RNUP that are being considered as part of the TMP. Once complete, the TMP will recommend a set of priorities, design options and strategies to support any necessary repairs, replacement, or closures.

This report summarizes consultation activities and feedback received during Phase 2 consultation, which took place from January 2022 to August 2022.

Phase 2 of public consultation focussed on the recommendations for the five bridges, following an in-depth evaluation of the alternatives and collecting feedback on the recommendations. Phase 1, which took place from December 2020 – December 2021, was focused on collecting information on users' experiences of the bridges and adjacent roadways.

Map of Study Area



Notification Activities

A variety of methods were used to notify stakeholders and members of the public about Phase 2 consultation:

- Project web page: www.toronto.ca/rougebridges
- Canada Post direct mail (25,867 addresses of residents and businesses in the study area)
- Email to project list (9 contacts)
- Email to stakeholder list (see below) including residents associations, community groups, organizations, institutions, and elected officials (80 contacts)
- Email to compulsory (40 contacts) and case-specific agencies (45 contacts)
- Email to Indigenous communities (9 communities)

Consultation Activities

Indigenous Communities

The Notice of Public Consultation for Phase 2 was sent to the following Indigenous communities via email: Alderville First Nation, Beausoleil First Nation, Chippewas of Georgina Island, Chippewas of Rama First Nation, Curve Lake First Nation, Hiawatha First Nation, Huron-Wendat First Nation, Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. The project team offered to meet each community individually to overview the project and receive feedback.

The project team met with Curve Lake First Nation on April 13, 2022. Feedback from this meeting is outlined a subsequent section.

One Window Commenting

Stakeholders and members of the public were invited to share comments and ask questions via phone, email, or written letter. A total of 6 comment submissions were received between January 2022 and August 2022 relating to project feedback. All comments were recorded and reviewed for consideration and response by the project team.

Stakeholder Meeting(s)

Targeted stakeholder meetings were conducted in small groups or one-on-one with major stakeholders of the RNUP, specifically the Scarborough Preservation Panel, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) and Parks Canada. Feedback from the meetings and emails is outlined in a subsequent section.

A broader stakeholder meeting was held on Monday, July 18, 2022 from 6:30 – 8:30 pm through the Webex meeting platform. More than 165 individuals across many stakeholder groups were invited to attend. Representatives from 6 local organizations participated virtually and are listed below:

1. Local Resident/10,000 Trees
2. Rouge Valley Conservation Centre
3. Rouge Park Volunteers
4. Parks Canada
5. City of Pickering
6. Waterfront Regeneration Trust

The meeting was facilitated by Alyssa Cerbu, Senior Coordinator in the Public Consultation Unit, and featured a presentation by Chris Haines at Dillon Consulting. Opportunities for questions and feedback followed the presentation, and a notetaker recorded minutes. Participants were encouraged to fill out the online feedback form or send in comments via email afterwards.

Public Event

The public event took place on Wednesday, July 20 from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. through the Webex Events online meeting platform and was attended by 14 people.

The materials prepared for the public event, including the presentation slides, were posted to the project webpage, and hard copy materials were made available upon request.

A summary of comments received at the event is provided below.

Online Survey

To provide additional feedback opportunity, an online survey was available from July 11 to August 10, 2022. The survey received 43 responses. Participation was anonymous.

The survey included background information on the project and asked respondents to identify their relationship to the project and indicate their level of agreement with the recommendation for each of the five bridges. The survey included an opportunity to provide additional comments related to each bridge and to the study overall.

Feedback Summary

Indigenous Communities

No response was received from the Indigenous communities aside from Curve Lake First Nation.

Feedback from the April 13, 2022 meeting with Curve Lake First Nation is outlined below.

Significant Lands

- Understand the cultural and natural heritage significance of the park for Curve Lake First Nation.
- Build on the work Parks Canada has done over the past 10 years to engage Curve Lake First Nation and other Indigenous communities.

Natural Environment

- Maintain biological connectivity
- Have biologists from Curve Lake First Nation present when you conduct Environmental Assessments (EAs) and heritage assessments
- Include culturally significant species in EAs – they tend to only include species at risk and endangered species
- Ensure compliance in accordance with Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)
- Complete an underwater archaeological assessment if the project will eventually impact a site, as all of the bridge sites extend into the water.
- Complete an underwater survey from a historic and Indigenous perspective
- Specify how studies were conducted and over what length of time (i.e. over a single season or longer). Prefer a four-season approach.

EA Process and Future Consultations

- Conduct consultations in advance of and during construction phases
- Consider cumulative affects of the various changes in the area, including infrastructure and new development projects
- Ensure we are represented during Stage 2 of the EA and construction monitoring. Would like to be there for construction and stripping to monitor as cultural heritage sites are in the water everywhere
- Refer to Curve Lake document package that outlines processes and steps that we would like to be taken in the future. Includes the consultation accommodation standard package and the archaeological protocol package.

Oral History

- Include and integrate our oral history in your Archaeological Assessment.
- Read it thoroughly and understand the point.

Other:

- Look for opportunities to change the names of the bridges to acknowledge and recognize the significance of the land to Indigenous communities. This would highlight the 10,000-year history and Indigenous culture.

Stakeholder Meeting & Comment Submissions

During the July 18th stakeholder meeting and through comments received via email, participants expressed questions and comments summarized below:

Please note that many of the comments collected focussed on the design and construction of the bridges rather than the recommendations. These comments will therefore be better used to inform future phases of the project, such as design and implementation planning.

Vehicle traffic:

- Continue to consider emergency vehicles and servicing.
- Ensure that bridges are not all closed for construction at once and sequenced in a way to minimize inconveniences to the local community (especially the Hillside bridge).
- Maintain connections to Twyn Rivers Drive.

Active transportation:

- Consider repurposing or reusing the suspension bridges as pedestrian or car-free bridges.
- Make it safer for people to walk and cycle on the bridges.
- Create a wide, attractive pedestrian space.
- Consider separating the sidewalk and the cycling lanes from the traffic with a barrier.
- Consider adding look-out spots and benches in scenic area for people to enjoy the view and rest.
- Easily walkable and accessible path connections should exist to connect the bridges to nearby trails.
- Include easy-to-understand wayfinding on or in the vicinity of the bridges.
- Use Sewell's Road Bridge for people walking and cycling and construct a second bridge that would be used for motor vehicle traffic.
- Maintain Milne Bailey Bridge for people walking and construct a second, parallel bridge for motor vehicles.
- Consider reducing Maxwell Bridge to one lane of vehicle traffic and converting the surplus space to space for people walking.

Retain character:

- In favour of retaining the Sewell's and Maxwell bridges for their heritage character.
- Retain Sewell's road bridge - it is unique and the only suspension bridge in Toronto.
- Consider imitating/using the heritage elements on the existing bridges when they are going to be replaced.
- Support the recommendation to retain Maxwell Bridge because of its concrete arch design.

Other:

- Support the recommendation to replace Hillside Bridge and Stott's Bridge and recommend replacing them with modern bridges.
- Do not reconstruct the bridges with surfaces that will require salt in the wintertime as it is toxic.
- Consider reusing bridge materials for art installations.
- Control erosion around the bridge structures, especially north of Hillside Bridge on Meadowvale Road.
- City of Pickering is in favour of the recommendations.

Scarborough Preservation Panel

During the May 24, 2022 meeting with the Scarborough Preservation Panel, the following comments were expressed:

- Coordinate emergency services between Markham, Toronto, and York Region so that certain bridges do not need to be suitable for emergency service vehicles.
- Do not enhance or widen the bridges to increase motor vehicle traffic.
- Coordinate plans for CP Rail and nearby GO station with Metrolinx.
- Maintain historical and architectural factors and features.

Toronto & Region Conservation Authority

An email from the TRCA sent on July 26, 2022, outlined the following comments:

Milne's Bridge

- The only one that has TRCA-owned lands adjacent to the bridge.
- Any disturbance on TRCA-owned lands, such as construction, staging or stockpiling areas and access may need an archaeological assessment prior to construction activities.

Draft Natural Heritage Existing Conditions Memo

- TRCA has a large dataset for flora and fauna. TRCA recommends a data request be made and added to the memo.
- Add fisheries data from TRCA and MNRF.

Evaluation criteria

- Add 'improve ecological function' to the criteria.
 - o Would provide overall benefit to natural heritage system (i.e., improve erosion, wildlife crossings, riparian habitat, thermal impacts, and invasive species management).

Baseline Conditions Report

- Review and reference the TRCA Trail Strategy.
 - o Identifies the following existing and proposed trails that will fall within the study area:
 - The Meadoway (Finch) – proposed; and
 - Rouge Trail - Existing and proposed.

Fluvial Geomorphology Study

- Recommend studying all five bridges to understand observed and potential stream erosion.

*Note – detailed, technical comments for each bridge that expand upon the above are outlined in a TRCA memo. Many of these comments relate to the potential impact of each of the recommendations.

Parks Canada

The project team held a meeting to discuss the recommendations with Parks Canada on May 20, 2022. The following comments were shared:

- Parks Canada supports the recommendations and associated bridge removal.
- Ensure roads and the bridges that connect them support people walking and cycling.
- Consider Parks Canada's new and future trail project – newest one is anticipated to open in November 2022.
- Consider minimizing the impacts of staging and construction in the areas where those activities occur.

Public Event

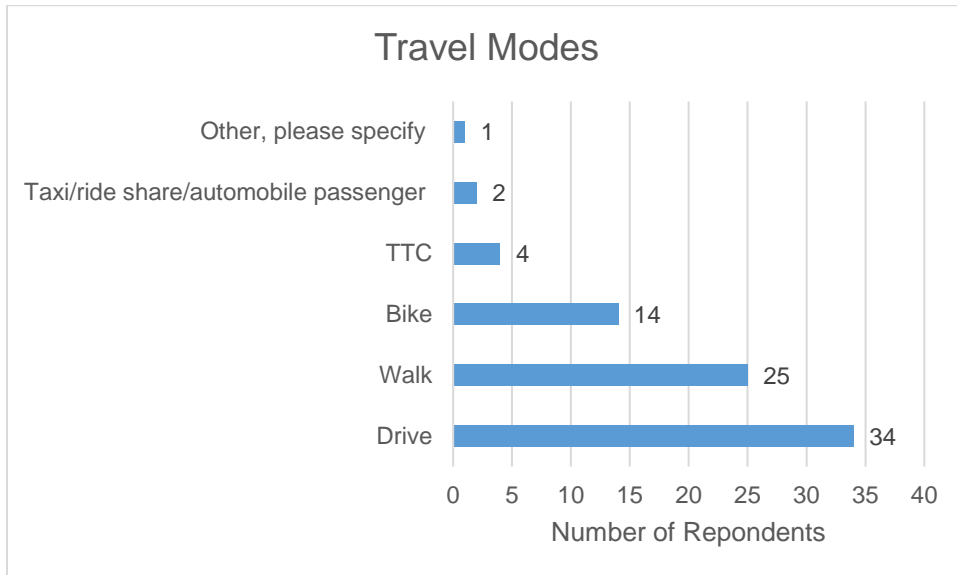
During the July 20th public event, participants expressed questions and comments summarized below:

- Provide an update on the widening of Steeles Ave at Markham Rd. This is significant for the flooding and climate change conditions and ecological integrity of the RNUP.
- Minimize additional traffic to the area – there is already a lot of cut-through traffic. Commuter and truck traffic makes the park noisier and more dangerous and puts additional strain on the existing bridges.
- Make Twyn Rivers Drive safer – it is very dangerous, and people are racing through it.
- Consider improving the road visibility, specifically on Sewell's Road Bridge – coming up from the south and heading north, there is a bend in the road that affects visibility for people driving.
- Do not lower the roadway under the CP rail overpasses – would encourage overweight and large vehicles to use the roads and may result in failure or a lower life cycle of the bridge.
- Undertake a traffic demand management and traffic flow analysis and determine alternatives. Consider associated turn and time-of-day restrictions
- Examine noise issues associated with the grated bridges, along with lighting and ecological enhancement.
- Support active transportation for people cycling and walking.
- Consider terrestrial and aquatic connectivity.
- Do not support the bridges being converted into two lanes – encourages more traffic, does not match the Greenbelt and rural context of the park, and increases road mortality for species such as turtles and snakes.
- Factor in the increase in development in Durham Region, especially the likely increase in traffic on Meadowvale, Plug Hat and Bear Roads.

Online Survey

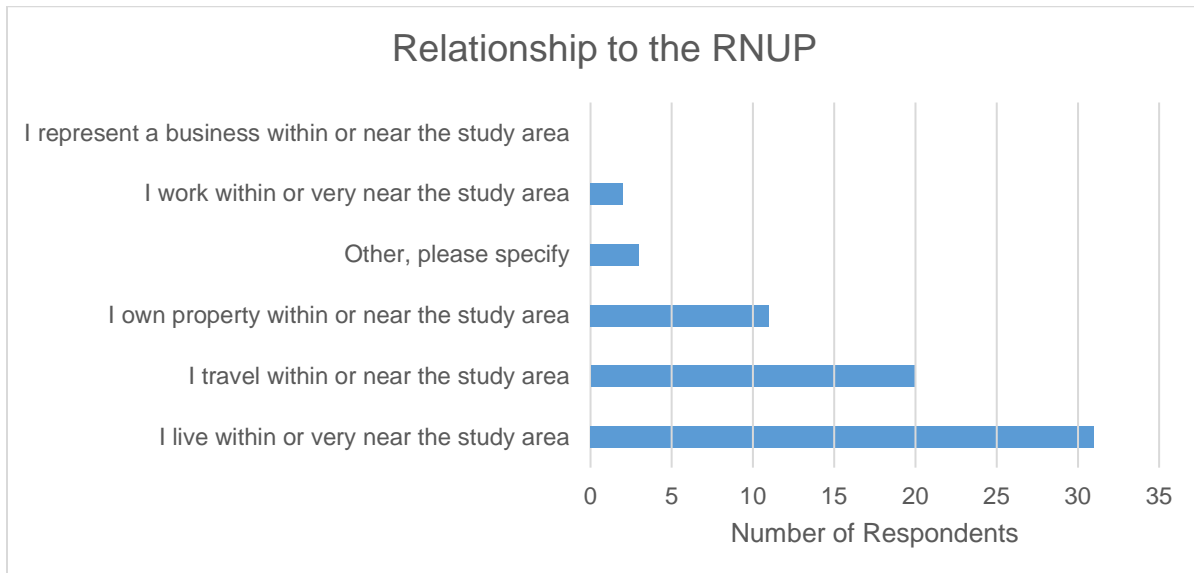
Responses received to each question in the online survey are described in this section.

Question 1) How do you typically travel within or near the Rouge National Urban Park (RNUP) and the five bridges? Check all that apply.



Of the 43 respondents, the majority (79%) drive within or near the RNUP. the one respondent who answered 'Other, please specify' identified 'motorcycle' as their mode of travel.

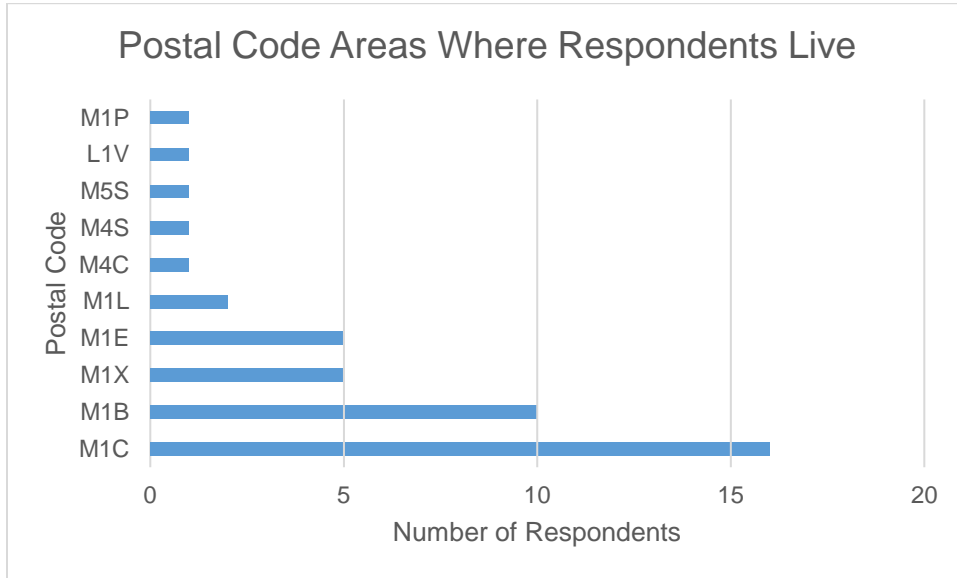
Question 2) Please describe your relationship to the Rouge National Urban Park. Check all that apply.



Of the 43 respondents, the majority (72%) live within or very near the study area. Of the 3 respondents that answered 'other, please specify,' the following answers were collected:

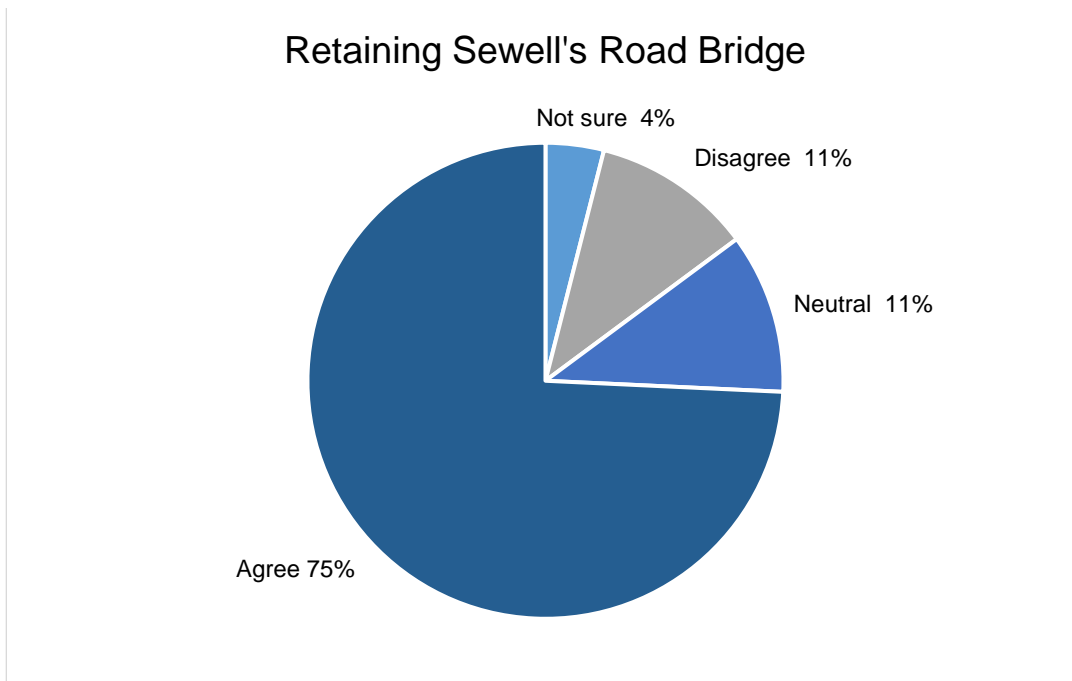
- Guided hike leader and avid park user
- I represent Walk Toronto, which advocates for better walking conditions across the city of Toronto, including parks.
- I am deeply committed to protecting the Rouge Valley.

Question 3) What are the first 3 digits of your postal code?



The majority of the 43 survey participants live in the M1C, M1B, M1X and M1E postal code areas, which are all within or proximate to the study area.

Question 4) Do you agree with the recommendation to retain Sewell's Road Bridge?



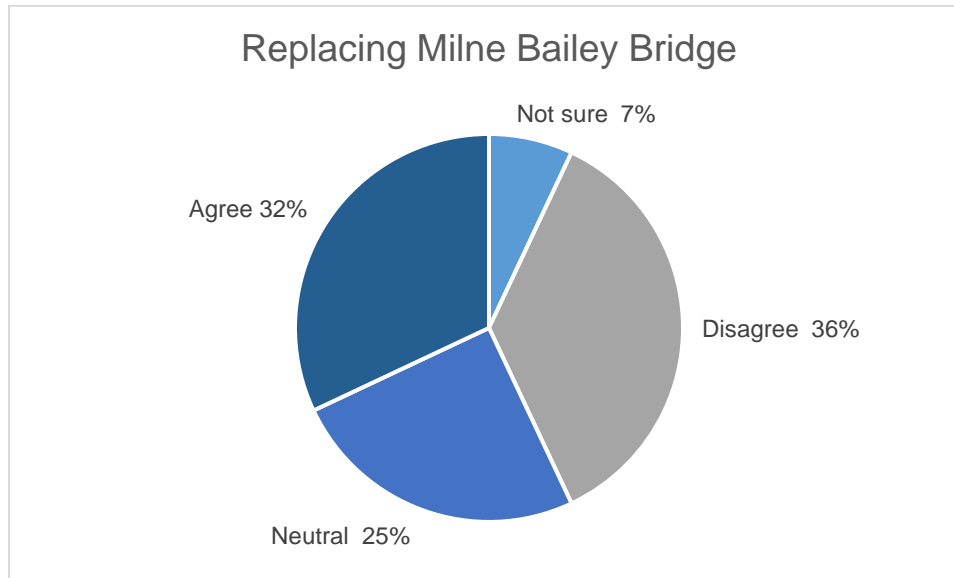
Most of the survey respondents (75%) agree with the recommendation to retain Sewell's Road Bridge.

Comments about the recommendation for Sewell's Road Bridge:

- Maintain the historical structure and feel.
- Improve the aesthetics and add paint

- Make it structurally sound to last the next 50 years.
- Do not widen the bridge or the approach.
- Add signage to ensure drivers are aware it's a single lane bridge.
- Do not replace it – it's beautiful.

Question 5) Do you agree with the recommendation to replace Milne Bailey Bridge?

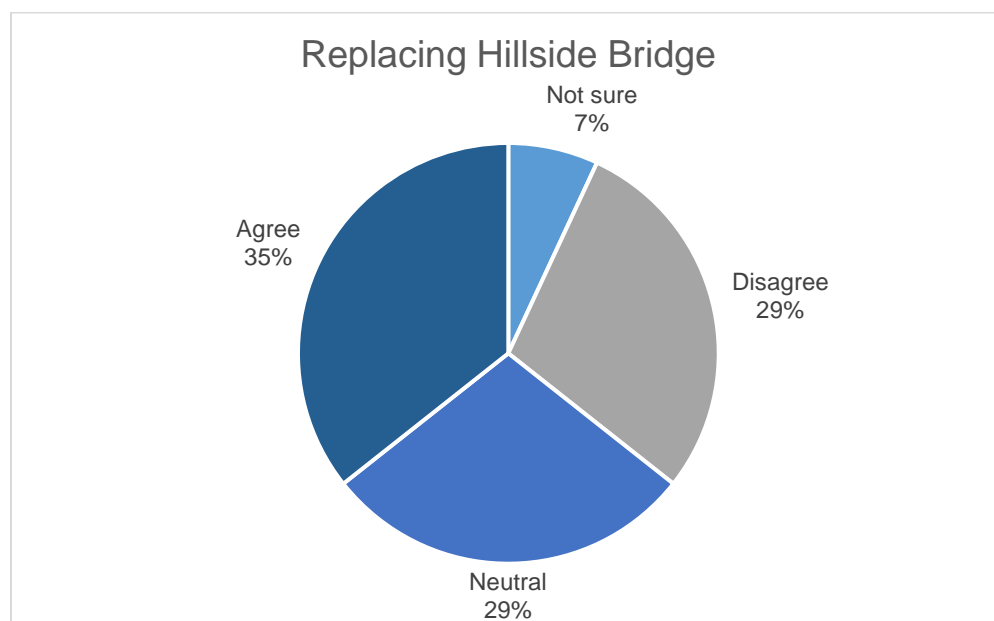


Responses to the question were mixed – 32% agreed, 36% disagreed and 25% were neutral on the recommendation to replace Milne Bailey Bridge.

Comments about the recommendation for Milne Bailey Bridge

- Disagree with recommendation – retain instead:
 - o Prefer to retain it.
 - o Need it to get around in Hillside; traffic flow works well with traffic light.
 - o Retain historical, unique, and significant characteristics.
 - o Make it structurally sound.
 - o Do not widen the bridge or the approach.
 - o Use as an education opportunity about how climate affects human settlements as this is a historic landmark built after hurricane Hazel.
- Agree with recommendation - replace:
 - o Deck is dangerous for people cycling and walking, especially when wet.
 - o Traffic light requires patience for people cycling.
 - o It's old, in bad repair and been neglected far too long.
 - o Enable people cycling and walking to safely cross with a more modern bridge.
 - o Prioritize the movement of people cycling and walking instead of people driving and should be directed to use Steeles Ave and Sheppard Ave to travel across the area.

Question 6) Do you agree with the recommendation to replace Hillside Bridge?



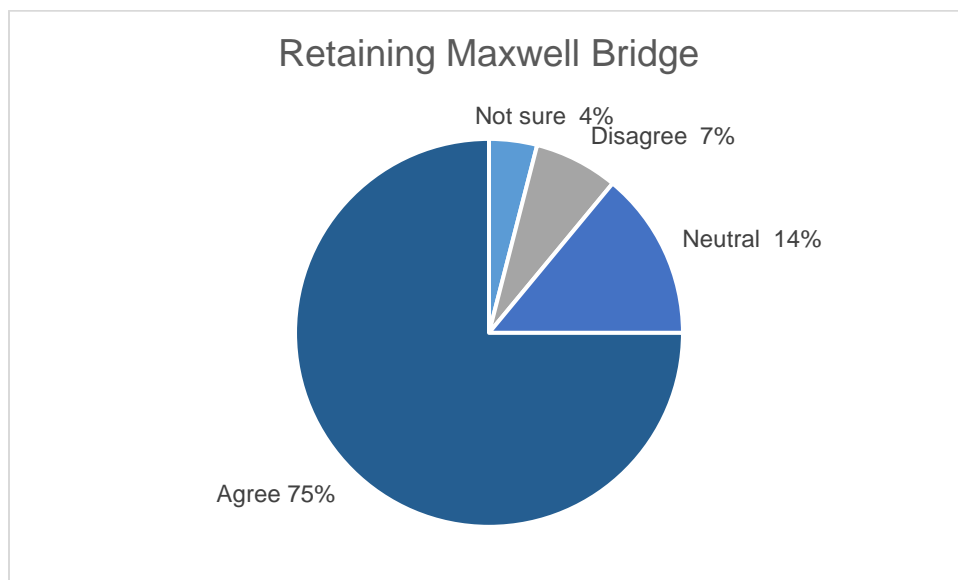
Responses to the question were mixed – 35% agreed, 29% disagreed and 29% were neutral on the recommendation to replace Hillside Bridge.

Comments about the recommendation for Hillside Bridge

- Disagree with recommendation – retain instead:
 - o Keep its characteristics and historical feel with minimal changes.
 - o Make it more structurally sound, maintain and upgrade it.
 - o Do not increase traffic on it.
 - o Do not widen the bridge or the approach.
 - o Keep one-way bridge – they are unique to the area and help to slow down traffic.

- Agree with recommendation - replace:
 - o Prioritize the safety of people cycling and walking – they have had serious accidents on the platform/mesh deck.
 - o Install traffic lights, especially to direct traffic for people cycling.

Question 7) Do you agree with the recommendation to retain Maxwell Bridge?

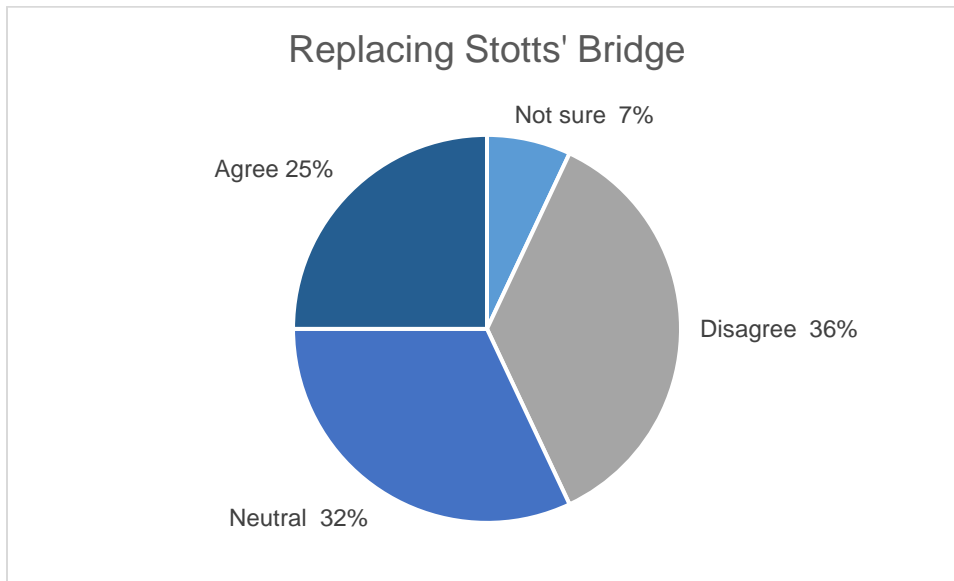


Many of the participants (75%) agree with the recommendation to retain Maxwell Bridge.

Comments about the recommendation for Maxwell Bridge

- Prioritize safety for people walking.
- Retain its characteristics and historical feel.
- Make it structurally sound.
- Do not widen bridge or the approach.
- Divert people hiking from this bridge crossing.
- Protect wildlife.
- Vehicle travel:
 - o Close access from the Pickering side of Twyn Rivers Drive to eliminate traffic and make it more pedestrian friendly.
 - o Limit vehicle speeds.
 - o Discourage commuters using the park to cut through.
 - o Do not increase traffic.
 - o Do not remove this bridge or Twyn Rivers Drive becomes redundant.

Question 8) Do you agree with the recommendation to replace Stotts' Bridge?



Responses to the question were mixed – 25% agreed, 36% disagreed and 32% were neutral on the recommendation to replace Stotts' Bridge. Many of the comments listed below were received from individuals who disagreed with the recommendation and were in favour of retaining the bridge.

Comments about the recommendation for Stotts' Bridge:

Disagree with recommendation – retain instead:

- Reduce speed and excess traffic by keeping the one-way bridge at the bottom of a hill.
- Keep its characteristics, including narrow form and historical feel.
- Make it structurally sound and upgrade it.
- Do not increase traffic – will increase pollution.
- Do not widen the bridge or the approach.
- Improve upon previous repairs completed a few years ago.
- Prioritize wildlife and recreation, not commuters.

Question 9) Do you have any additional comments regarding the study or the recommended alternatives for the Rouge Park Bridges?

Many of the responses to this question touched on the need to limit vehicle traffic, to improve conditions for other park users, including people walking and cycling, and to retain the historical and environmental significance of the bridges and park.

Vehicle traffic:

- Restrict traffic.
- Do not allow for and do not encourage an increase in traffic.
- Add traffic controls.
- Keep single-lane bridges to reduce traffic.
- Prevent long road closures due to construction.

Active Transportation:

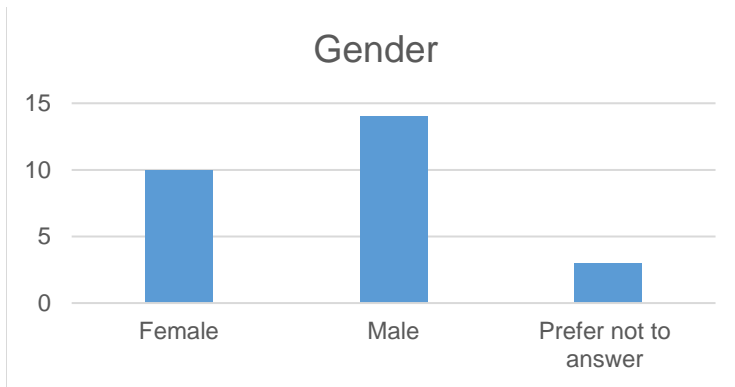
- Improve infrastructure and increase safety for people walking and cycling.
- Connect to trails in the RNUP.
- Prevent street racing in the RNUP.

Retain significance/character:

- Do not replace any of the bridges.
- Preserve the landscape of Rouge Park.
- Retain historical bridges and significance.
- Do not replace bridges if they can be adequately repaired instead.

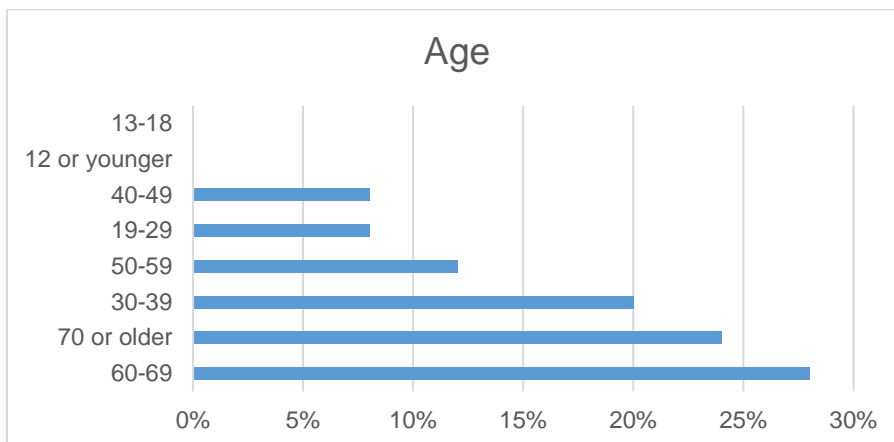
Survey Participant Demographics

Gender



The majority of respondents identify as male. 27 respondents answered this question. Note that none of the survey participants answered trans female, trans male, or gender fluid, gender queer, gender non-conforming, non-binary, or trans.

Age



Of the 25 respondents, a majority was 60 years or older.

Conclusion

Feedback was largely supportive for the bridges proposed to be retained (Sewell's Road Bridge and Maxwell Bridge), but quite mixed for the bridges proposed to be replaced (Milne Bailey Bridge, Hillside Bridge and Stotts' Bridge).

Vehicle Traffic

- Discourage cut-through vehicular traffic, especially larger transport vehicles and trucks
- Ensure emergency services and overall roadway connectivity is maintained, including during construction phasing
- Not in support of increasing some of the bridges to two lanes of traffic
- Consider the effects of nearby road widening and development projects

Prioritize Active Transportation

- Prioritize the safety for people cycling and walking on these bridges
- Enhance connections to existing and future trails and destinations near and within the park
- Improve wayfinding, signals and intersections for people cycling and walking

Highlight Character and History

- Maintain heritage character, architecture, and historical significance of the bridges, especially when they have unique designs and features
- Improve the aesthetics of existing bridges
- Change the names of the bridges to acknowledge and recognize the significance of the land to Indigenous communities.
- Integrate oral histories and Indigenous knowledge into final report and recommendations.

Minimize Environmental Impacts

- Control erosion around the structures
- Minimize ecological and environmental disturbances during staging and construction
- Identify more opportunities to benefit and improve natural heritage systems and wildlife connectivity
- Identify and analyze impacts to culturally significant species, not just species at risk and endangered species.
- Conduct an underwater survey from a historic and Indigenous perspective

Comments and feedback have been shared with the project team for consideration and inclusion in the final recommendations for the Rouge Park Bridges Transportation Master Plan.