

# German Mills Creek Geomorphic Systems Master Plan - Creek Restoration and Water Infrastructure Protection Study

## **Public Consultation Report**

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# Executive Summary

The City of Toronto is carrying out a study to identify sewer, storm and watermain infrastructure within German Mills Creek that is at risk of damage due to erosion impacts as result of high flows from storms and snow melt.

This study looks at how the City's sewer, storm and watermain infrastructure can be protected within the creek using recommended solutions to help reduce or prevent future impact to City infrastructure resulting from erosion. This will ensure the City's infrastructure continues to operate and service residents and businesses. The solutions will be part of a Geomorphic Systems Master Plan (GSMP) for the creek to be implemented over a multi-year period.

This report details the activities and feedback received during consultation on the German Mills Geomorphic Systems Master Plan Study that took place between August 1, 2023, and September 1, 2023. During consultation, information was provided about the risks to sewer and watermain infrastructure along the creek along with a summary of the recommended solutions. Interested individuals were able to ask questions and provide feedback on the recommended solutions for creek restoration and water infrastructure protection.

Summary of engagement:

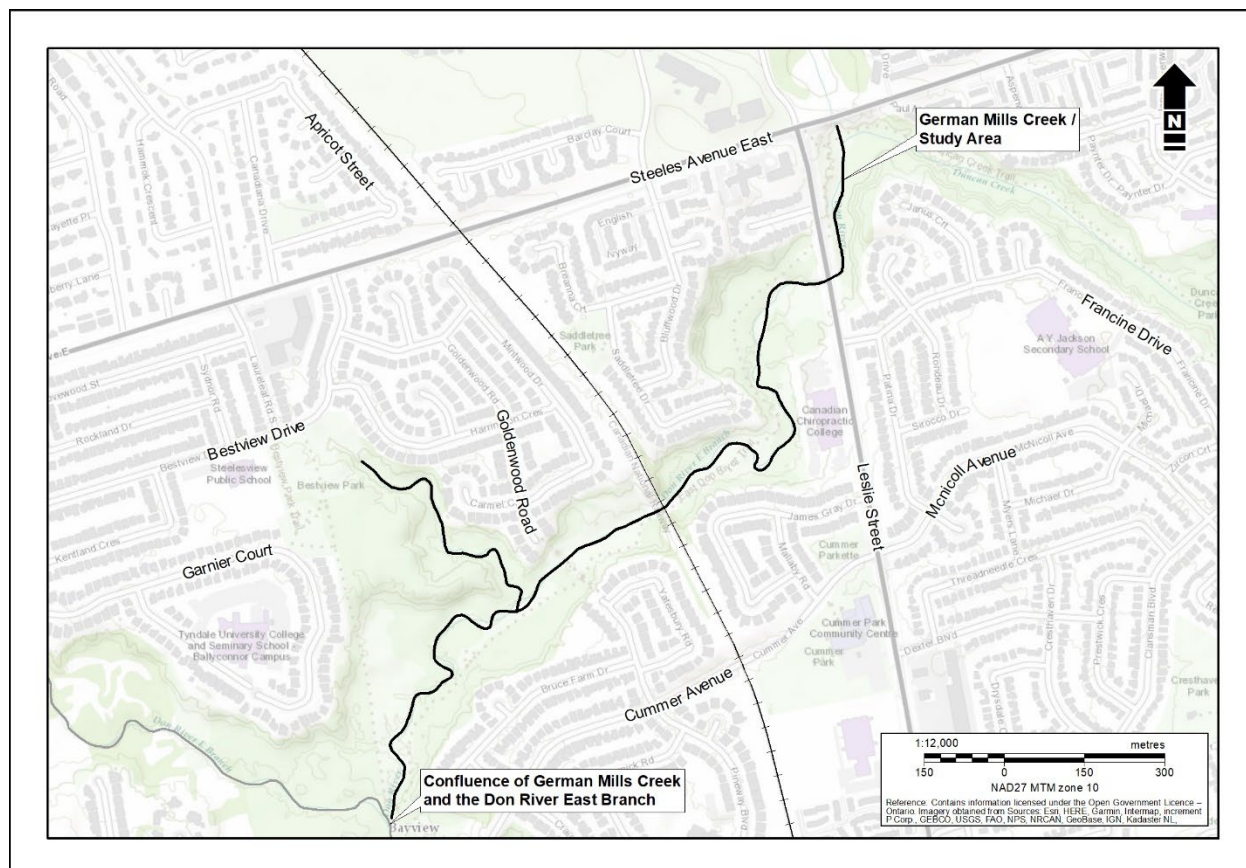
- One public event with 49 participants
- Thirteen comment submissions received via telephone and email
- Seventeen survey responses



Overall, most participants were concerned with erosion along the creek and there was general support for the recommended solutions. Concerns were raised about the potential impacts of project implementation, such as tree removals, impacts on wildlife habitat and temporary trail closures. Participants who use the trails within the study area were concerned about the length of time required for construction and the impacts it will have on access to the trail.

## Study Summary

### Study Area



The study area is a two-kilometer length of German Mills Creek from Steele's Avenue East to where it meets the East Don River in the west. Within the German Mills study area, there is a multi-use trail along the course of the creek. The trail is used regularly throughout the year (weather permitting), by residents of all ages for walking, running, cycling as well as recreation.

## Study Summary

This report summarizes consultation activities and feedback received during consultation for the German Mills Creek Geomorphic Systems Master Plan Creek Restoration and Water Infrastructure Protection Study (the Study), which took place between August 1, 2023, and September 1, 2023.

The purpose of the Study is to identify appropriate solutions for protecting the City's water infrastructure, which is at risk of damage from erosion. The study was carried out following the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (MCEA) master planning process for Schedule B projects.

Following a risk analysis of 43 water and stormwater infrastructure sites, possible solutions to address 11 priority sites were evaluated according to a range of criteria including overall ability to address risk to infrastructure, improvements to the physical and natural environment, protection of the social and cultural environment, economic considerations and technical and engineering requirements.

Based on the risk assessment and evaluation, the City is recommending creek restoration through natural channel design for six local works projects that are less than 200 metres in reach, and five local works projects that are less than 200 metres with floodplain connections. Implementation of the recommended projects will be prioritised over the medium to long term, city-wide, and construction is not expected to begin until 2025.

## Notification & Consultation Activities

### Notification

A variety of communication methods were used to notify interested community groups and members of the public about consultation.

A Notice of Commencement was circulated in October 2022 to First Nations, Agencies and Utilities to providing information on the study and the study process.

The following communications were issued on the week of August 1, 2023 at the onset of the public consultation period:

- An update on the project website including public consultation materials and link to the feedback survey [toronto.ca/germanmills](https://toronto.ca/germanmills)
- Notice sent through Canada Post direct mail to 5,412 addresses in the study area
- Direct email to 71 contacts including utility companies, government agencies, community interest organisations and community groups



- Direct email to First Nations identified by the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks:
  - Alderville First Nation
  - Beausoleil First Nation
  - Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation
  - Chippewas of Rama First Nation (Chippewas of Mnjikaning)
  - Curve Lake First Nation
  - Hiawatha First Nation
  - Huron-Wendat First Nation
  - Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation
  - Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation
  - Six Nations of the Grand River

## Consultation Activities

### Public Event

A public drop-in event and site walk took place on August 19, 2023, from 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. at the entrance to the multi-use trail on the west side of Leslie Avenue, south of Steeles Avenue. The event was attended by 49 registered participants in addition to several people who have dropped in.

Information panels were displayed at the drop-in area and staff were available to provide information and respond to questions. The project team on site included representatives from Engineering & Construction Services and Toronto Water. A site-walk to view the creek and infrastructure at risk was led by the project manager.

The site walk included stops at two infrastructure locations along the creek. One of the sites has a clearly exposed maintenance hole which is considered high-risk for potential damage. During the walk there were opportunities for questions, feedback and dialogue between participants and the project team. Cantonese and Mandarin interpretation was provided.





## Survey

An online survey was used to collect feedback on the study and recommended projects. The survey was available August 1, 2023 - September 1, 2023. Seventeen responses were received. Participation was anonymous.

## Phone & Email Comments

Questions and feedback were accepted via phone, email, or written letter. Comments were received from 13 people during the consultation period. All comments were recorded and reviewed for consideration and response by the project team.

## Outreach to First Nations Communities

The Provincial Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) has been delegated by the Crown to ensure consultation with “Aboriginal communities” where there is possibility that treaty rights could be impacted. Consultation with First Nations is part of the standard process for environmental assessments. The MECP has provided instruction on communications with relevant First Nations communities in the study area. As Newtonbrook Creek is within Treaty 13, 1805 with the Mississaugas and within the Traditional Territory of both the Mississaugas of the Credit and Williams Treaties First Nations (WTFN), the following First Nations communities were contacted:

- Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation
- Curve Lake First Nation

- Hiawatha First Nation
- Alderville First Nation
- Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation
- Chippewas of Rama First Nation
- Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation
- Beausoleil
- Williams Treaties First Nations

Communications was sent by email at various stages of the consultation process.

An Archaeology Report was completed with the purpose of identifying whether the lands under study potentially contained archaeology value or evidence. The report was shared with First Nations in December 2023 with an invitation to provide feedback.

In October 2023 the Public Consultation notice was circulated to provide information about the study outcomes and recommendations and invite feedback as part of the public consultation process.

### Outreach to Agencies and Utilities

Communications with agencies forms part of the study review process. Communication with utilities ensures there is no infrastructure conflict. Communications with agencies and utilities included circulation of the Notice of Commencement and Public Consultation notice with an opportunity to provide feedback.

## Feedback Summary

Many of the participants who provided feedback observed erosion in the creek. There was a general desire to see necessary improvements to protect water and sewer infrastructure as soon as possible and with minimal impact on the environment. Most concerns focused on the future impacts of construction. There was also expressed interest in trail improvements and concerns for erosion on private property, which are both outside the scope of this study.

### Public Event

A summary of questions and comments received at the Public Event are summarized below.



Participants raised questions about design details for the recommended projects and construction staging. The project team clarified that these can only be responded to in the future, during the later phase of detailed design work leading up to project implementation.

Participants asked questions about:

- Design details and the aesthetic of the solutions;
- Whether realignment of the pedestrian bridge is necessary;
- Possible changes to the course of the creek (creek realignment) and what it would look like;
- Whether there will be continued access to the trail during construction;
- More information about restoration plans; and
- Consequences of the “Do nothing” option, and whether the concrete structure surrounding the maintenance hole at Priority Site #2 could protect the shaft if project work was not pursued.

Participants provided observations on current conditions:

- Foul smell and an increase in mosquitos from the creek and the marsh areas adjacent to the creek;
- Spreading of invasive plant species along the creek and in the valley; and
- Erosion and changes in watercourse are impacting private property

Most comments and concerns were related to project implementation and construction:

- The tree canopy is greatly appreciated and there is a concern for the loss of trees, specifically mature trees and the tree canopy as a whole; reference was made to Duncan creek which is currently regrowing but will take a few years to mature;
- Concerned about the impacts of construction, including the impact on wildlife habitats as a result of tree removal;
- Necessary tree felling to be done carefully so that logs and branches will be kept off the trail;
- Concerned about the length of time the trail would be closed:
  - The trail is important to residents and cyclists in the area, they cannot afford to lose the trail for a long period of time;
  - Reference was made to other trails in the trail network that were blocked off for extended periods of time; i.e., Duncan Creek, Sheppard/ 401 and Leslie Avenue;
  - Whether temporary or alternative trails could be provided during construction, so as to provide residents with continued enjoyment of nature; and

- Ensure to provide the community with clear communication around construction timelines.

There was interest in the details of restoration, which will be confirmed during the later detailed design

- Whether native trees will be planted post-construction; and
- Whether trees could be identified and labelled

## Email and Phone Comments

Comments received from residents via email stressed the need for clear communication about project timelines and trail closures. Comments received via phone/email from members of the public are summarized below.

Participants asked questions about:

- The cost analysis of realigning the bridge compared to re-routing the creek to work with the current bridge configuration, as the bridge is relatively new;
- How the impacts of climate change and building for resiliency relate to this study;
- The life cycle for the recommended solutions and the ongoing maintenance work that will be required; and
- Whether the recommended solutions provided additional benefits for the area.

Several participants provided observations on current conditions:

- Recognition of exposed infrastructure;
- Appreciation for and need to protect the mature trees which provide a much-needed canopy along the trail in the summer;
- Animal habitats and ecosystems along the creek including beavers, deer, loons, etc.;
- Erosion of the creek spreading on to private property;
- Increasing muddy conditions; and
- Some participants felt that the creek does not need restorative work.

Many comments and concerns were related to project implementation:

- That construction will be lengthy; reference was made to Duncan Creek which was closed for 2-3 years;
- That the project will not be completed on time due to a lack of accountability with construction projects, reference to the Eglinton Crosstown LRT construction;

- Comments that additional reinforcements will be needed along the bank to provide protection of the multi-use trail;
- Potential damage to the trail as a result of construction and the potential need for additional reinforcement to provide protections;
- A desire for continued access to the multi-use trail during construction, as the trail connects the north and south portions of German Mills Creek and Duncan Creek, extending to the East Don Trail, it is an important neighbourhood amenity for many residents;
- The possibility for a detour along the trail to avoid the construction if necessary, such detour should be provided prior to construction; and
- More clear communication around trail closures and the construction schedule.

One participant expressed a desire to see erosion on private property addressed as part of the project implementation. For concerns raised about erosion on private properties that do not intersect with a recommended project, owners were directed to reach out to the Toronto Region and Conservation Authority.

There was interest around the details of restoration and some concerns stemming from previous experience with Duncan Creek:

- Replanting after similar projects does not meet expectations, as there does not appear to be enough space for trees to grow back; and
- It was recommended that City staff should review and improve the approach to replanting.

## First Nations Communities

There were no objections to the recommended projects.

In response to Archaeology report, the Chippewas of Rama First Nation would like the historical account reviewed, and the Six Nations of Grand River would like to participate in any potential Stage 2 archaeological assessments.

All feedback has been shared with the project team and will be resolved or passed forward in the Environmental Study Report.

## Agencies and Utilities

All feedback has been shared with the project team and will be resolved or passed forward in the Environmental Study Report which is the technical report that will move forward with the project.

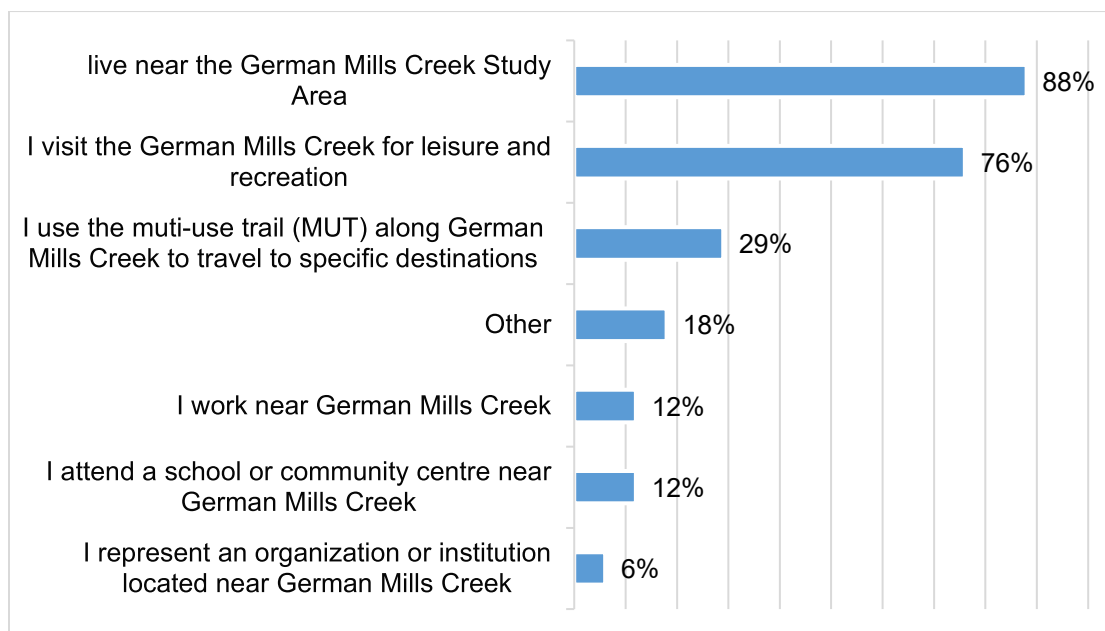
## Survey

There were 17 survey respondents. Responses received to each survey question are described in this section.

### About You

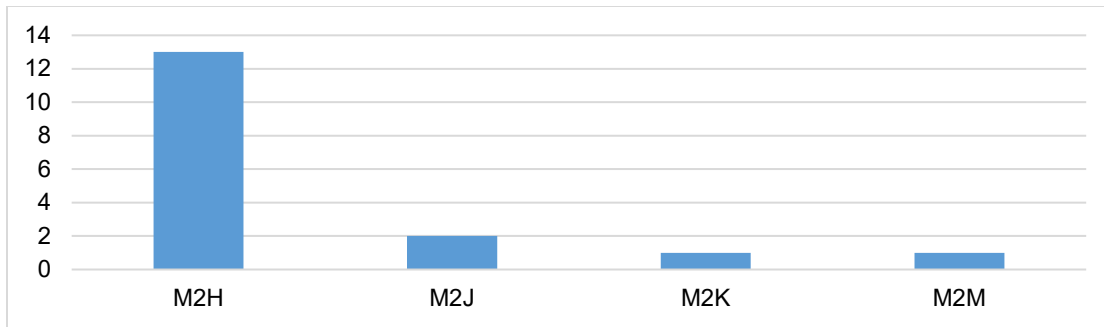
This section of the survey asks respondents about their relationship to the project area which provides context for the responses received.

#### Which statements best describe your relationship to the project?



Most of the survey respondents live near German Mills Creek and use the creek for leisure and recreation. Those who responded with “Other” indicated that they live in the broader area or represent an organisation located near German Mills Creek.

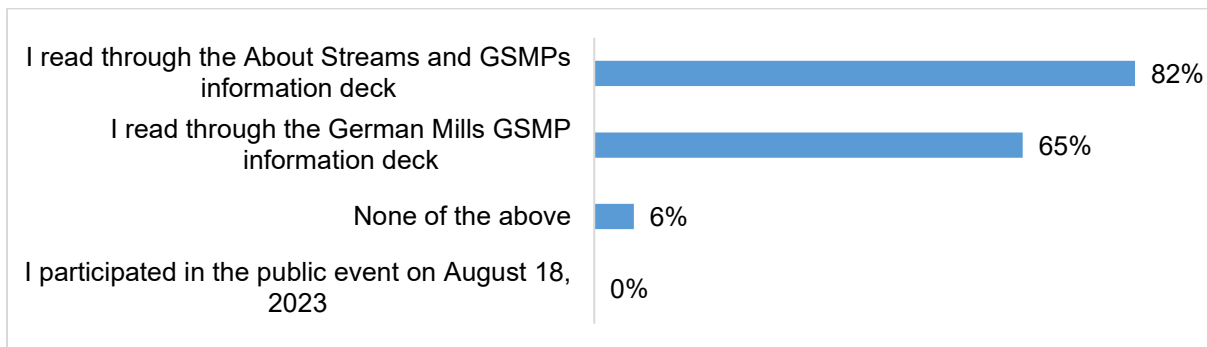
#### What are the first 3 digits of your postal code?



Postal code data is requested to gauge where in the city respondents who have an interest in the project are coming from. Self-reported postal code data verifies that most respondents were local to the area.

### How did you review project information?

It was recommended that respondents review the project information on the webpage or at the public event prior to giving feedback.



There is a high level of confidence that responses were well informed. Most respondents (82%) reviewed the About Streams information panels. More than half (65%) of survey respondents read about the German Mills GSMP in the information panels, which provided details on the study risks, alternative solutions, selection criteria and recommended projects. None of the survey respondents attended the public event.

### Study Details

Respondents were provided with an opportunity to provide feedback on each of the 11 recommended projects and for the study recommendations overall.



## Do you have specific comments for any of the recommended projects?

**Project #1:** Solution 3 Improvements through local works less than 200 metres and floodplain connections:

- Support for the recommended Alternative (Solution 3);
- Consideration for the lifespan of the bridge should be made, and whether the work can wait until the bridge reaches the end of its lifespan; and
- Erosion along the creek is reaching the trail, which is also at risk.

**Projects #2 and #3:** Solution 3 Improvements through local works less than 200 metres and floodplain connections:

- Support for the recommended Alternative (Solution 3).

**Projects #6 and #7:** Solution 2, Local work less than 200 metres:

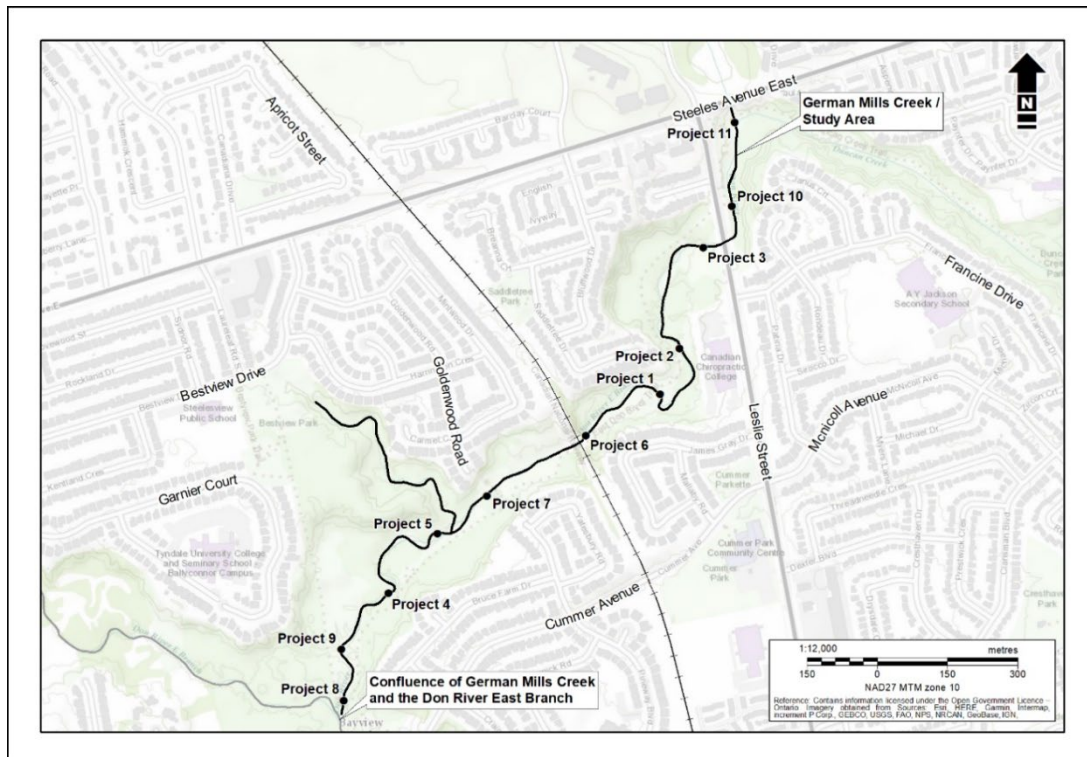
- Interest in having the trail repaired along with project implementation work.

One respondent preferred the 'Do Nothing' alternative for all projects.

## Do you have any general feedback about the study recommendations?

Responses are summarized below:

- Acknowledgement of and support for the study and recommended projects;

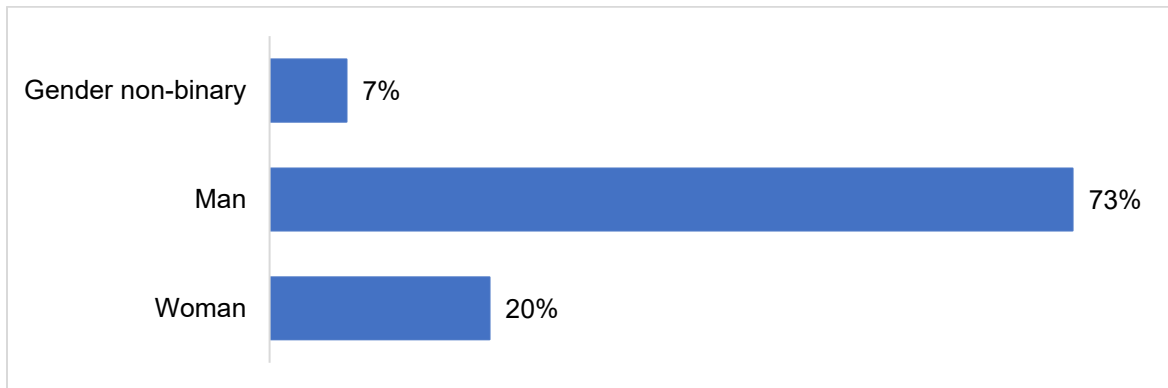


- Request to complete the work as soon as possible, with emphasis on the urgency of Project #1, Project #2, and Project #3;
- Emphasis on the need to engage and inform the community leading up to implementation with respect to construction schedules, trail closures and restoration plans; and
- Requests for improvements that are outside the scope of this study: widen the trail, place armour stone for seating, and assist with the removal of invasive plant species (during future tree removals).

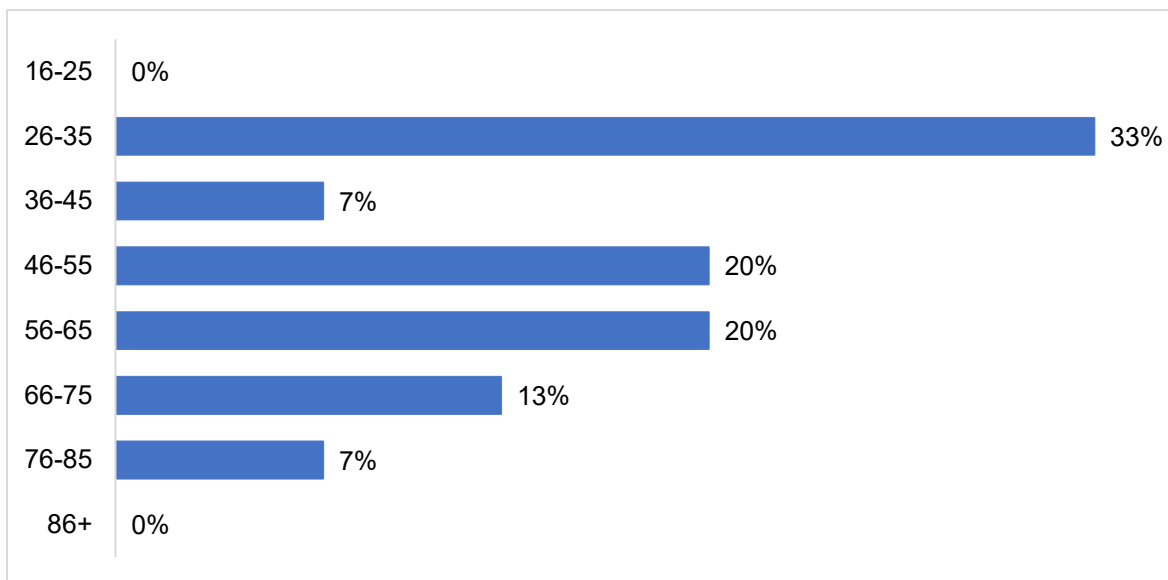
## Appendix – Survey respondent demographic information

A total of 15 of the 17 respondents provided optional demographic information described below:

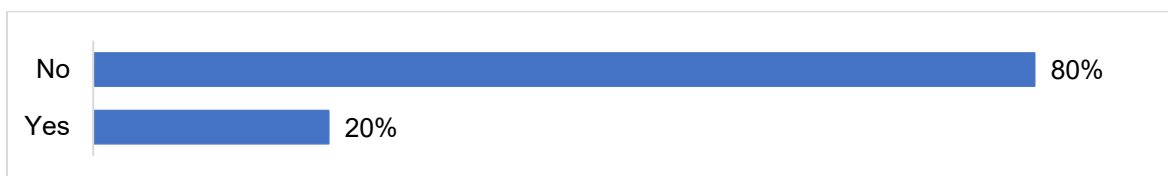
### What is your gender identity?



### What is your age category?



### Do you identify as a person with a disability?



### Which of the following best describes your current employment status?



Most respondents were between the ages of 26 – 35, with no responses provided from individuals over 85 or under 26 years of age. Males represented 73% of responses. Women and those with a disability each contributed 20% of the responses.

Majority of the 15 respondents, 60%, are employed full-time with 33% retired or unable to work.

### Source of Information

#### How did you hear about this study?

