

In Review
*Policy Direction for the East Segment
Scarborough Waterfront Project*

*Prepared by Jen Falvy, Friends of the Bluffs
www.torontonaturalshorelines.com
February 24, 2017*



Introduction

The TRCA has selected an alternative for the East Segment of the Scarborough Waterfront Project that will destroy 1.7 km of the natural sand beach of Grey Abbey. The TRCA claims they are bound by policy direction. This report reveals some key points and highlights from the documents they are referring to. We would like to open the door to further public inquiry. What's at risk is the loss of Toronto's longest remaining natural sand beach.

SWP East Segment Grey Abbey Beach

Grey Abbey Beach to East Point Park is a heritage shoreline over 2 km in length. The sand shore has accumulated over time and works in harmony with the surrounding landscape, providing an essential aspect of the near and off-shore ecosystem. The land along the table of the bluffs is a combined natural corridor of over 60 hectares of land. This is a place where you can walk along the water's edge, uninterrupted by development, and enjoy the sound of waves rolling along the beach beside you. The area is designated an Environmentally Significant Area and an Area of Natural and Scientific Interest.

TRCA Policy Direction Documents

1. The City of Toronto Official Plan directs us to move the Waterfront Trail to the water's edge, where feasible.
 2. The TRCA's Living City Policies and Strategic Plan also support this approach.
 3. City of Toronto Multi-use Trail guidelines (5.4 - 7.6 metre trail width, hardened or paved surface, AODA accessible where feasible, separated pathways where feasible)
 4. Metrolinx expansion will displace portions of the Waterfront Trail in the East Segment.
-

IN REVIEW - The City of Toronto Official Plan

City of Toronto Official Plan is the first document that the TRCA lists in the December 2016 update on Policy Direction for the SWP. The TRCA claims "the City of Toronto Official Plan directs us to move the Waterfront Trail to the water's edge, where feasible."

Green Spaces and Urban Development

1. Toronto is connected by a wonderful system of green space - from beaches and bluffs, through deep ravines, to parks and cemeteries. This system is vital to both our quality of life and to the health of our natural ecosystem. They should be protected, improved and added to whenever feasible. (p. 2-24)
2. Protects, enhances and restores the region's system of green spaces and natural heritage features, the natural ecosystem and the natural corridors that connect these features (p. 2-2)
3. Acquiring land or easements, where appropriate and where funds allow, to i) keep ravines and watercourses in a natural state; or ii) implement other stormwater management improvements. (p. 2-7)
4. The natural environment is complex. It does not recognize boundaries and there are limits to the stresses resulting from human activity that it can absorb. To be good stewards of the natural environment we must acknowledge that it has no boundaries and we must respect its limits. (p. 3-32)
5. Protecting Toronto's natural environment and urban forest should not be compromised by growth, insensitivity to the needs of the environment, or neglect. (p. 3-33)

Accessibility

1. A key city-building principle is that public buildings, parks and open spaces should be open and accessible all members of the public, including people with disabilities. As with all general principles, there are important exceptions. (p. 2-26)
2. In some of our natural heritage areas, public access will damage natural features and functions. (p. 2-26)
3. In other areas severe topographical features such as ravines and bluffs are largely inaccessible today and in the absence of benign, non-intrusive technology, making them accessible would be impractical. (p. 2-26)
4. Providing universal accessibility is one of many public expenditure priorities facing the City. Balancing the benefits and costs in individual cases will have to be carefully evaluated to ensure that our scarce dollars are wisely spent. (p. 2-26)

First Nations

1. The Plan policies call for an engagement protocol with First Nations and the Métis for heritage properties and archaeological sites that may be of interest to them, as well as ensuring that information is provided to First Nations and Métis where archaeological resources are found to be First Nations or Métis in origin. (p. 3-11)
2. In collaboration with First Nations, Métis and the Provincial Government, the City will develop a protocol for matters related to identifying, evaluating and protecting properties and cultural heritage landscapes on the Heritage Register, archaeological sites and artifacts where they may be of interest to First Nations, or Métis. (p.3-14)

Heritage Landscapes

1. The Official Plan provides for the conservation of Toronto's urban forest, ravines and river valleys in policies protecting the Natural Heritage System contained in Section 3.4 and Map 9 of the Plan. The conservation of important heritage resources includes those policies protecting Toronto's Natural Heritage Areas. (p. 3-14)
2. Potential cultural heritage landscapes will be identified and evaluated to determine their significance and cultural heritage values. Significant cultural heritage landscapes will be included on the Heritage Register and/or designated under either Part IV or Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act. (p. 3-18)
3. Our natural heritage features and functions require special attention. They are an evolving mosaic of natural habitats that supports the variety of nature in the City. (p. 3-33)
4. The natural heritage system is made up of areas where protecting, restoring and enhancing the natural features and functions should have high priority in our city-building decisions. We must be careful to assess the impacts of new development in areas near the natural heritage system. (p. 3-33)

Protecting Biodiversity

1. Protecting, restoring and enhancing the health and integrity of the natural ecosystem, supporting bio-diversity in the City and targeting ecological improvements, paying particular attention to: i) habitat for native flora and fauna and aquatic species; ii) water and sediment quality; iii) landforms, ravines, watercourses, wetlands and the shoreline and associated biophysical processes; and iv) natural linkages between the natural heritage system and other green spaces. (p. 3-34)
2. All proposed development in or near the natural heritage system will be evaluated to assess the development's impacts on the natural heritage system and identify measures to mitigate negative impact on and/or improve natural heritage system, taking into account the consequences for: a) terrestrial natural habitat features and functions including wetlands and wildlife habitat; b) known watercourses and hydrologic functions and features;

c) significant physical features and land forms; d) riparian zones or buffer areas and functions; e) vegetation communities and species of concern; and f) significant aquatic features and functions including the shoreline of Lake Ontario. (p. 3-36)

1. Areas of land or water within the natural heritage system with any of the following characteristics are particularly sensitive and require additional protection to preserve their environmentally significant qualities:
 1. a) habitats for vulnerable, rare, threatened or endangered plant and/ or animal species and communities that are vulnerable, threatened or endangered within the City or the Greater Toronto Area; or
 2. b) rare, high quality or unusual landforms created by geomorphological processes within the City or the Greater Toronto Area; or
 3. c) habitats or communities of flora and fauna that are of a large size or have an unusually high diversity of otherwise commonly encountered biological communities and associated plants and animals; or
 4. d) areas where an ecological function contributes appreciably to the healthy maintenance of a natural ecosystem beyond its boundaries, such as serving as a wildlife migratory stopover or concentration point, or serving as a water storage or recharge area. (p. 3-36)
3. Development will not occur on lands within the natural heritage system that exhibit any of these characteristics. Activities will be limited to those that are compatible with the preservation of the natural features and ecological functions attributed to the areas. An impact study, as referred to in Policy 12, will be required for any proposed undertaking in those areas not already the subject of an Environmental Assessment under the Environmental Assessment Act. (p. 3-36)

IN REVIEW - The City of Toronto Multi-Use Trail Guidelines

The TRCA has listed The City of Toronto Multi-Use Trail Guidelines with specifications (5.4 - 7.6 metre trail width, hardened or paved surface, AODA accessible where feasible, separated pathways where feasible), as the third document in the December 2016 update on Policy Direction.

1. While these guidelines may be broadly applicable for the design of any multi-use trail, it is important to note that they have been developed primarily as a resource for the design and operation of a specific network of multi-use trails in Toronto. These are not local park walkways or natural environment trails, and they are also not dedicated bicycle lanes. (section 1.1, p. 1)
2. Wherever possible, Toronto's Multi-use Trails should strive to exceed existing best practices and "raise the bar" for excellence. (section 1.2, p. 1)
3. Environmentally Significant Areas and Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest are specific demarcated areas that in most cases are not compatible with multi-use trails. (section 6.3.2, p. 66)
4. Environmentally sensitive sites and habitat corridors are not compatible with lit facilities or with certain types of winter maintenance, and may be more heavily impacted by twinned trails or other larger configurations; therefore they may not be compatible with the more intensive trail classes. If a trail must be located in these areas, additional mitigation measures should be considered on a site specific basis. (section 3.5, p. 10)
5. Trails should not be routed through wetlands or seepage zones, or areas that have persistent or seasonally wet soils. They may be planned near these areas or in already impacted parts of such areas. (section 6.2.2, p. 62)
6. Reducing conflicts between wildlife and human activities includes a range of issues such as preventing disruptions to wildlife patterns, preventing risks to wildlife safety and preventing risks to human safety. These need to be assessed on a site-by-site basis, and may include choosing routes that avoid nesting areas, limiting

artificial lights in habitat corridors, providing snake basking areas away from the trail, and a wide range of other possibilities. (section 6.3.2, p. 66)

7. Designers and decision-makers should exercise every effort to comply with these guidelines whenever possible. Situations may arise where a designer's judgment may be that the guideline should be exceeded, and in other situations, a designer's judgment may determine that there are sound reasons that a design may be considered appropriate despite a certain guideline not being met. (section 1.3, p. 1)
8. Designers should strive to comply with the guidelines, recognizing that every trail is unique and may require new solutions. Where a design solution is proposed that does not comply with these guidelines, a more rigorous justification of design decisions should be provided, and robust mitigation measure should be included. (section 4, p. 13)
9. Throughout the City's network of multi-use trails, examples can be found of facilities that in some substantial way do not conform to the recommendations of these guidelines. In some cases, the non-conforming qualities are a defining characteristic of those facilities. An example of this is the Kay Gardner Beltline Trail which is surfaced with "trap rock," a sand material made from crushing and sieving granite. Although this material is not recommended in this guideline for use on any new multi-use trails, this guideline does not recommend that the Beltline be converted to some other surface. The trap rock surface is a defining characteristic of the trail. Any such changes should be reviewed through consultation with trail users and the local community. (section 4.8, p. 32)

Policy Direction Documents for the East Segment

Toronto City Planning. Toronto Official Plan. Toronto: June, 2015.
<http://www1.toronto.ca/planning/chapters1-5.pdf>

Toronto Transportation Services, Parks, Forestry and Recreation. *Toronto Multi-Use Trail Design Guidelines*. Toronto: 2014.
http://www1.toronto.ca/City%20of%20Toronto/Transportation%20Services/Cycling/Files/pdf/TORONTO%20MULTI-USE%20TRAIL%20DESIGN%20GUIDELINES-December%202014_Fina_4.pdf