

DELEGATION REPRESENTING THE GUELPH HIKING TRAIL CLUB RE. The Guelph Trails Master Plan
Council of the whole meeting Monday June 7th Item #9.

Mr. Mayor, council representatives and city staff,
My name is John Fisher, I am the President of the Guelph Hiking Trail Club and I am representing the Club.
The Club has over 400 individual and family memberships, and close to 2000 Facebook and e-mail supporters.

I am here on behalf of the Club and we want you to know we support the Guelph Trails Master Plan 2021 and we ask that council does the same.

I can tell you that staff have been terrific in their engagement with community groups and the Guelph Hiking Trail Club. They have been open to suggestions throughout the process and the final product indicates they have considered and supported many of those suggestions. We see them as allies in our goal to improve quantity and quality of trails in Guelph.

The report is comprehensive, thorough, ambitious, optimistic and establishes a foundation of aspirations and boilerplate technical considerations and methodology regarding how decisions are made and where funding comes from. That is really useful. The report does an excellent job of trying to educate us all on the criteria used to manage and plan with finite resources.

But for GHTC it is all about getting things done. It is in Chapter #6 Implementation that we are conditioned to lower our expectations. One or 2 city build projects a year!

Table #11 lists 15 city building projects in priority order that had strong community support.

1)The GMTP categorises them by alphabetical importance.

3 are A projects Immediate short term action

9 are C projects that prevent immediate action

3 are B projects Maybe action Opportunistic

2) GJR - 3 of the top 5 trail priorities involve GJR .

They are rated as complex projects including land acquisition. The city owns the railroad. I would urge council to consider GJR as a City dept. It is possible that running GJR as a private business is actually de incentivising actions that benefit the public realm. It will take top city level engagement to navigate which policies result in the greater public good.

3) Land Acquisition- 7 Priorities are related to land acquisition

Projects 6 and 14 are sited in the Downtown GID (critical). They are both short connecting links along the river. The city already owns 75% of these short trail links and has already invested capital \$ and which have created trails to nowhere. Both projects involve land acquisition, or negotiation to formally complete the link. The GTMP talks about developing a "land acquisition policy". Why does Parks have to take that on? Why can't council direct legal and real estate divisions to start talking

to those property owners and get started on the process and additionally develop a land acquisition policy?

Long term proposals were to build a riverside public park on the SW corner of Wellington East and Wyndham. That is 10-20 years away and will cost tens of millions of \$. The city could complete the development of this riverside trail now for a fraction of the park cost and citizens will have immediate benefit. It should be added to this year's budget plans.

Fortunately the Parks Dept recognized the limitations of leaving all trail building to Growth and City Building and they introduced an incredibly powerful third tier trail building solution to engage the community and enhance the city's trail inventory more quickly for the benefit of all Guelph citizens at no cost to tax payers.

They coined a magical term

“Community led, City supported”

The department recognizes there are many opportunities to deliver interim, first rung trail solutions that can be provided more quickly outside of the more formal processes utilizing experienced third party community organisations.

The report claims to be “action oriented”. I hope so. In Chapter#7 Next Steps there are lots of really good commonsense ideas. Many of them imply that with the council's approval they will be able to start developing policies and actions around these ideas. I really hope we are further along on a lot of these ideas and that policies can be developed concurrently with actions and used to inform those policies. We must consider all the things that can go right with these initiatives rather than trying to think about all the things that can go wrong before we get our feet wet.

City trails staff are engaging with GHTC and community groups in an open and productive fashion. While there were always individuals who stuck their neck out, I always had the feeling it was “cooperation” by “stealth” lest they risked getting their head cut off. Now the conversations are frank and open, “no promises, but we will see if there is a way to get to yes” is a typical response.

In conclusion GHTC trust the department and its employees and enjoys our working relationship. They want what we want, but we recognize they have a lot more balls in the air. They tell us they need this document approved by council to carry out their vision. GHTC urges you to approve the plan and to go further in your support by addressing some of the points I have made and making sure that every other proposal that comes before you has an advocate that asks the question “how could this proposal improve the trail network?”.

Thank you

John Fisher President Guelph Hiking Trail Club

Guelph Trails Master Plan Additional items requiring clarification.

Chapter 1 Exec summary p2-5

Trails are essential to the everyday life of many Guelph residents for recreation, health and mobility
Community led, city supported projects
Action oriented.

Implementation of the GTMP will require continued investment through both operating and capital budgets

Chapter 2 Overview p6-23

Useful classification Growth, City building, Community led city supported.

P6 Secondary plan policies provide area-specific guidance for trails. Each secondary plan provides direction for trail planning— so our plan does not provide detailed route planning for these areas. Wherever possible, we have included trail or active transportation routes for these areas on our maps. While the GTMP does not plan trails within the secondary plan areas, potential trail connections between the broader trail network and these areas are identified.

This is confusing and lacks accountability. Perfect opportunity for trail priorities to fall through the cracks. E.G. Operations Campus in the GID. The OC proposal does not mention GID. The city, who is the developer and regulator, makes no provision for trail enhancement although it plans to spend \$200 million on the campus.

P8 There are also some areas that are owned and managed by the GRCA, like the Kortwright Waterfowl Park and Guelph Lake. These areas are not a focus of this plan.

Why isn't Kortwright contemplated in the plan? The 2005 plan indicated a trail on the river frontage of Niska waterfowl park lands. The GRCA needs to be pressed by both staff and politicians to PRODUCE its management plan for public overview by the end of the year. Citizens deserve to have this city asset accessible to the public realm as a priority.

The City paid out to GRCA a "special benefitting levy" of 40-50% of the cost of acquiring and developing these lands. Without public access, they are a wasting open space asset.

A basic tenet of open space planning is to overlay forest cover, water and topography to see where these align. This would show that the link between Preservation Park and Niska waterfowl park along Hanlon Creek should become a priority but it is not in the plan, even though almost all of it is in city or GRCA ownership.

Chapter 3 Framework P27-46

How the plan fits with other city goals. 13 goals Aspirational boilerplate Ambitious

Goal #9 – Work together with our community

Goal #10: Accommodate placemaking along trails

The Urban Design Action Plan, volume 2, identifies the need for a city-wide public art master Plan and sustainable funding policy.

The parks department is not equipped or staffed to provide small scale site enhancement. The city needs a different model. I.E. Reimagine Guelph.

Goal #11: Improve branding of trails and trail materials

Chapter 4: Trail network development P47-68

Study area Maps. As regard to GID I found the maps somewhat confusing and inconsistent. They confuse statements about GMTP and Secondary plans.

Useful trail classification data

Interim solutions P 67 This is a very important mechanism identified in the plan to improve connectivity and trail inventory in advance of perfect plans.

Chapter 5: Design guidelines P 69-121

P120 Where third party trails are using city trails as their route the third party trail name or blaze could be incorporated into city trail markers to assist with navigation.

This is important for navigation of GHTC trail network crossing the city

Chapter 6:Implementationp121

P 123 ● The decision making and design process to integrate trails in development areas shall include a careful examination of factors including topography and drainage, water levels, slopes, soil conditions, plant and animal communities, microclimate and human comfort, historic/cultural resources, public education opportunities, and significant views and vistas ● In new development areas, **Think Operations Campus in GID trails should be constructed prior to or concurrently with the construction of other infrastructure**

Table 9 top priority in decision making is alignment with other city infrastructure projects.

We can do 1 or 2 a year

Project #12 Hanlon underpass north bank. Needs to get elevated to an A project and be a part of 2022 capital budget. \$400,000-\$500,000 Dolime irrelevant to this north Speed trail.

It should include Councillor Salisbury interim plan, bridge over the drain, and north Speed Hanlon underpass improvements. It then links to the Skate park.

NB to the east the trail leaves the city and returns at the Niska Bridge back into the city.

Project #13 needs to be dropped and coordinated with Dolime Quarry proposals and existing Dolime bridge.

Chapter 7:Next steps

Identify a pilot project for trail lighting on a section of the ATN P156 This is really important in maximising the benefits of already built infrastructure. Can't this be delegated to Ops dept?

Land acquisitionP160 see comment in body of main document.

Flexibility

The plan should explicitly recognize that opportunities for useful links beyond the scope of the plan can arise due to legitimately better ideas, and serendipitous things like sudden private land owner approvals that create useful links. There should be a kind of future flexibility clause within the approval for the plan that allows for minor changes to the priorities due to changed information or circumstances such as these. A plan such as this cannot be all knowing a decade out.