

DELEGATION REPRESENTING THE GUELPH HIKING TRAIL CLUB RE. THE REAL ESTATE ASSETS UPDATE

Council Meeting Monday October 25th

Agenda item: Real Estate Assets Update, 2021-277

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

I want to talk about the Real Estate Assets Update Presentation at this month's Committee of the Whole Meeting, specifically as it related to the status of the McQuillan's Bridge.

As I understand it the current plan is for the bridge to undergo an EA in 2028 followed by design and construction in 2030. Its current designation as a "stranded/non active asset" has left it at the back of the queue in attracting funds to maintain the structure.

Many councilors questioned its non active status and the length of time it has been waiting to attract restoration \$. Staff indicated they would see if that could be improved on for the end of month council meeting. I wanted to add the Guelph Hiking Trail Club's support for an improved restoration timing plan.

Last May I delegated at the council meeting where consideration for the new Operations Campus was being voted on. The scope of the Operations campus was being discussed from a very narrow lens and I was trying to convince council and staff to enlarge that lens.

I made these comments specifically about the trailhead link that McQuillan's bridge is an integral part of;

"This link is ugly, makeshift and totally unplanned and unimproved since the decommissioning of the McQuillan's Bridge. The McQuillan's Bridge itself is a "stranded Heritage Asset" that is deteriorating due to neglect and vandalism. Designed and planned links are critical in making trail networks welcoming and interconnected. They are also very difficult to prioritise for improvement and funding as stand alone projects".

I made 2 specific requests of council:

- 1) to expand the Operations Campus study area to include the area below the Stone Rd bridge at the South West corner of the proposed campus site to a size sufficient to incorporate a designed MUP underpass on both sides of the river interconnecting the Radial Line Trail, and the OR Side Trail.
- 2) request staff make necessary changes to the Operations Campus Proposal and staging plan to include a Trail Development and Open Space component.

I would suggest to council that restoration of the McQuillan's Bridge is not a unique, singular decisions, rather it is pars of an ecosystem where the "the sum of the individual parts are greater than the whole".

The McQuillan's Bridge Heritage ecosystem is adjacent to and spans the Eramosa River. It includes the O.R. Quarries, the Wooden Trestle Bridge, and the Toronto Suburban Railway. The site is an active transportation link to both sides of the Eramosa River, already includes a managed trail network and a car park. It is perfectly poised for the city to invest money now to maximize the inherent economic value and attraction of the location.

I respectfully suggest it starts with the EA of the bridge and that that EA be added to the one currently in progress for the Operations Campus. This bridge will not survive another 10 years of neglect. It is one falling lump of concrete away from being declared a liability. Resulting in a currently active transportation link being closed to the public to await an all too familiar ultimate fate of "demolition by neglect".

Thank you,
John Fisher

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/bFr75JPYjxfKbAzJ7>