

CORRESPONDENCE TO COUNCIL REPRESENTING THE GUELPH HIKING TRAIL CLUB

Committee of the Whole Meeting Monday Feb 7th 2022

Agenda item: 5.2 Municipal Accommodation Tax

Mr. Mayor, council representatives and city staff,
My name is John Fisher, I am the President of the Guelph Hiking Trail Club representing the Club.

The Club is also an active partner of the Guelph Trail Users Coalition.

The Municipal Accommodation Tax is an exciting new funding source dedicated to marketing the destination attractiveness of Guelph and the health of its tourism related industries. It can also add infrastructure and amenities that contribute to the everyday enjoyment and lifestyle of Guelph's residents.

The Guelph Hiking Trail Club supports the 4 staff recommendations.

The Guelph Hiking Trail Club would contend it has spent the last 50 years creating opportunities for tourist and resident outdoor experiences on the 80 km, hiking and biking trail network that the club developed and manages. Three trail spokes radiate from the Guelph central hub: The Radial Line, east to Limehouse, connects to the Bruce Trail; The Speed River Trail, west to the Grand River in Cambridge and ; north west to the first leg of the Kissing Bridge Trail which is now part of the destination tourism magnet, the G2G.

Last Monday night you heard a compelling presentation from Lorenz Calcagno of the Guelph Cycling Club and a GHTC member. He presented a vision in the area of the Boathouse at the iconic Covered Bridge which would be a "Go To" cycling destination hub and trail head for G2G. GHTC supports that vision in all its aspects and the opportunities to assign MAT funds to make that happen.

What you may not know is that The Guelph Hiking Trail Club was one of the early adoptors who recognized the vision of a G2G Trailway and along with 4 other community groups stepped up to sign agreements in 1997 to manage a part of the 45km Kissing Bridge Trail with the County of Wellington and the Regional Municipality of Waterloo .The Guelph section runs from Silver Creek Parkway to the Grand River, crossing Hopewell and Cox Creeks. In 2003 the Club improved

those creek crossings by installing two Eagle metal bridges with the support of philanthropic donations and grants.

This hiking pathway has been improved over the last 20 years from a little known hiking trail of 45 km to a regionally renowned multi use pathway that stretches all the way to Goderich and now markets itself as The G2G experience. As Mr. Calcagno stated in his presentation, in order to leverage that experience into a Visit Guelph recovery strategy we need a safe intuitive MUP from the proposed Covered Bridge cycling hub to the G2G trailhead at Silvercreek. Last year Council approved the Trails Master Plan and the #1 city trail building priority was to complete this link.

In 2020 GHTC signed a licence agreement with the University of Guelph to develop and manage the James St Trail. Last year GHTC installed The Gosling Bridge with help from 4 other trail user groups, government agencies and the community. That bridge now enhances connections from the Covered Bridge through Maryanne's Park, to the Arboretum and to other outdoor experiential points all the way out to the Bruce Trail. We hope these connections will form part of any Visit Guelph marketing strategy.

GHTC's latest initiative to improve the trail system, is to restore the O.R. Wooden Trestle Bridge. We are working with Infrastructure Ontario to gain permission to repair and restore the bridge which connects to the OR property, as well as the Quarries, Operations Campus and GID across the Eramosa River. It's not hard to imagine the newly restored bridge being featured in a Visit Guelph tourism promo that would include Guelph's own mini version of "Bridge to Bridge". We hope that as we move the restoration process along the committee administering those Municipal MAT funds will find our arguments to support the restoration compelling and direct funding in support of this initiative.

Conclusion

As we celebrate our 50th anniversary year of the Guelph Hiking Trail Club we look forward to contributing to the success of the Visit Guelph Tourism strategy and implementation of MAT.

Sincerely

John Fisher President Guelph Hiking Trails Club.