



Dear York Region Council and Committee:

Parks Canada is pleased to provide this letter of support for the creation of four pedestrian-activated signalized crossings for Rouge National Urban Park within the Regional Municipality of York, and we are grateful for our excellent working relationship with York Region officials and staff. Please also consider this letter as a request for us to work in partnership on aspects of this project – specifically the long-term maintenance of these important community assets.

In 2012, Parks Canada began working with all levels of government, including York Region, as well as Indigenous partners and other stakeholders to establish Rouge National Urban Park in the Greater Toronto Area. With the maintenance or restoration of ecological integrity as the first priority in all aspects of the park's management, Rouge National Urban Park protects nature, culture and agriculture within its 79.1 km² study area. As one of the original partners in the creation of Rouge National Urban Park, York Region works closely and collaboratively with Parks Canada to provide services to residents and visitors in areas of jurisdictional overlap, as many park users are York Region residents.

Rouge National Urban Park welcomes thousands of area residents and visitors to the park each year through a variety of visitor service offers such as seasonal events, educational programs, a free shuttle bus, and an award-winning guided walk program. The trail system throughout Rouge National Urban Park, which is currently undergoing a significant expansion, is the park's main visitor offer and most frequently used attraction.

To this end, Parks Canada is working towards completing a park-wide trail network in Rouge National Urban Park that links Lake Ontario and the Oak Ridges Moraine – a longstanding goal of municipalities and community partners that have worked on establishing the park. This trail network is also a key aspect of the park's 10-year Management Plan that was developed with the strong participation of York Region. The safety of park users and pedestrians in York Region as they cross roads along the trail network is a vital aspect of this plan.

The trail network Parks Canada is designing for Rouge National Urban Park will allow visitors to explore the park's unique natural, cultural and agricultural landscapes. Trails will support the protection of natural, cultural and agricultural resources by selecting routes and construction methods that support ecological integrity, as well as the protection of cultural heritage.

Since the formal establishment of Rouge National Urban Park in 2015, Parks Canada has seen increasing numbers of visitors using the park's trails. In our last park survey, it was shown that 92 per cent of park visitors live less than one hour's drive away from the park, with many living in York Region. As one example, the Bob Hunter area of Rouge National Urban Park, located in York Region, sees significant daily use from local residents, with increasing visitation during special events and peak times in the fall. Park visitation is only expected to continue to grow as we work to complete the park's extensive trail network.



The creation of a 10 km section of the trail network scheduled to be completed in 2021 and located in the York Region area of the park will form a vital link from the Bob Hunter area to Boyles Cemetery and to the greater park-wide trail network. This section of trail will be multi-use and universally accessible to welcome and accommodate all types of visitors.

There are four immediate pedestrian-activated signalized road crossings that Parks Canada has identified the need for along York Region roads in order to complete trail connections, and they are as follows:

- 14th Avenue, west of York-Durham Line,
- 16th Avenue, east of Reesor Road., and
- Major Mackenzie Drive, west of Reesor Road.

The fourth road crossing in York Region is needed at York-Durham Line, north of Concession 8, for trail connectivity to the park's overall trail network. As routing is still being developed at this time for portions of this section of the trail, there may also be a potential need for one or two additional road crossings. Parks Canada is currently investigating the need for these additional road crossings and will report back to staff at York Region as soon as we have a clearer understanding of what is required.

A road crossing is also needed at Reesor Rd., north of 16th Ave., which falls under the jurisdiction of the City of Markham. Parks Canada has been in contact with Markham regarding this crossing and initial reviews indicate that they are supportive of a pedestrian-activated signal crossing at this location.

Parks Canada is also liaising with the Ministry of Transportation regarding a Highway 7 crossing, East of Reesor Rd. in the Locust Hill community. Initial discussions support a Level 2, Type B PXO pedestrian crossing approach.

It's anticipated that the new 10 km trail connection and the surrounding trail network in Rouge National Urban Park will be used by York Region residents, as well as visitors. As such, Parks Canada seeks to create these proposed pedestrian-activated signalized road crossings within York Region in partnership with the regional municipality. It is proposed that Parks Canada would pay for all of the initial capital, construction and installation costs associated with this critical infrastructure, and is seeking support from York Region to provide future servicing and maintenance requirements.

To advance this work, Parks Canada has been working with transportation engineers from WSP, an engineering consulting firm, as well as various government and regional authorities and experts, including York Region's Nelson Costa, Manager, Corridor Control and Safety. Parks Canada has been in contact with these authorities for preliminary discussions regarding options on the types of crossings to ensure pedestrian safety and that our plans align with local



government priorities. After many collaborative discussions and initial reviews with York Region staff, it has been determined that a pedestrian-activated signal crossing is the best type of crossing to ensure visitor safety and accessibility, and the ability to work with regional traffic monitoring requirements. Our partners within the municipality are supportive of reviewing this submission to implement these proposed signalized crossings at the locations noted above within the York Region area of Rouge National Urban Park.

Again, Parks Canada is grateful for the excellent working relationships we share with York Region officials and staff, and we're pleased to make this submission for the consideration of York Region Council and Committee. Parks Canada appreciates the opportunity to work closely with York Region to deliver these important trail connections so that local residents can enjoy and experience the best that the Rouge and its surrounding communities have to offer.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

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