

The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole
Transportation Services
June 11, 2020

Report of the Commissioner of Transportation Services

Rouge National Urban Park Future Trail Expansion

1. Recommendations

1. Council authorize installation of pedestrian trail crossing signals at four Regional road crossings (14th Avenue, 16th Avenue, Major Mackenzie Drive and York-Durham Line) to facilitate the creation of a trail network connecting within the Rouge National Urban Park, to be funded by Parks Canada on the condition that long-term connectivity and integrated use of these Rouge National Urban Park trails with Regional and local trail networks is assured.
2. The Commissioner of Transportation Services be authorized to engage in further negotiations with Parks Canada to ensure opportunities regarding trail network connections benefitting Regional and local users are appropriately affected in the future.
3. The Regional Clerk forward this report to Parks Canada and the local municipalities.

2. Summary

Parks Canada has requested Council approve installation of four pedestrian signals on Regional roads for the Rouge National Urban Park (Attachment 1). Parks Canada is prepared to fund installation of these signals. Given the partnership benefits and significance of future Regional trail network connection opportunities, the responsibility for future maintenance and operating costs is proposed to be assumed by the Region.

Key Points:

- Parks Canada's proposal has the potential to be the first part of a broader trail network vision including the future South York Greenway Cycling and Pedestrian Corridor
- Pedestrian signals would provide enhanced crossings and connections to the trail networks for pedestrians and cyclists
- Council has authority to approve pedestrian signals when the Traffic and Pedestrian Signal Policy volume requirements for stand-alone installations are not strictly met

3. Background

Parks Canada is requesting approval to install four pedestrian signals on Regional roads for the Rouge National Urban Park

Rouge National Urban Park is the largest urban park in North America overlapping the Cities of Toronto, Markham and Pickering and the Township of Uxbridge. Rouge National Urban Park welcomes hundreds of thousands of GTA residents and international visitors to the park each year to use more than 40 kilometres of hiking and cycling trails.

Rouge National Urban Park is an ecologically protected zone in the Greater Toronto Area consisting of 79.1 square kilometres of culturally and ecologically significant landscapes. Rouge National Urban Park is home to vast biodiversity with some of the last remaining working farms in the Greater Toronto Area, Carolinian ecosystems and human history dating back more than 10,000 years, including some of Canada's oldest known indigenous sites. The park will serve as a gateway for new, urban and young Canadians to experience and learn about Canada's environment and heritage. The Region is one of the original partners in the creation of Rouge National Urban Park and plays a role in providing services to residents and visitors.

Figure 1

Hikers on the Orchard Trail in Rouge National Urban Park



Parks Canada has a mandate to expand trail networks within Rouge National Urban Park, which border a portion of the southeast limits of the City of Markham and intersect with Regional roads at 14th Avenue, 16th Avenue, Major Mackenzie Drive and York/Durham Line. Parks Canada has requested the Region approve installation of four pedestrian signals at trail crossings intersecting Regional roads (Attachment 2). Parks Canada is prepared to fund installation of the pedestrian signals and has requested the Region cover maintenance and operating costs.

Pedestrian signals provide a safe crossing and enhanced connections to trail networks for pedestrians and cyclists

A pedestrian signal provides stop control for motorists only when a pedestrian presses the push button. This triggers the pedestrian signal to display a red indication for motorists and a walk signal for pedestrians to cross safely. Motorists are delayed as pedestrians cross the road. During all other times, motorists receive a green indication. Figure 2 illustrates a pedestrian signal crossing installed at Milne Dam Conservation Park. Balancing safety and traffic flow while facilitating connections to regionally significant points of interest for pedestrians and cyclists is an important consideration.

Figure 2

Milne Dam Conservation Park Pedestrian Signal



McCowan Road south of Highway 7

The Region partnered with Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, Parks Canada and the City of Markham for construction of enhancements in the Rouge National Urban Park as part of the Southeast Collector project

In May 2010, the Region entered into a \$6 million financing agreement with Toronto and Region Conservation Authority to plan, design and implement the Bob Hunter Memorial Park plan, including other enhancements aimed at providing a positive legacy for the environment in the Rouge National Urban Park. This agreement was part of the total \$15 million enhancements approved by Council in [November 2008](#) as part of the Southeast Collector project. Enhancements funded by the Region built in the park were completed in December 2015 and included:

- Three pedestrian bridges across Little Rouge Creek (Figure 3)
- Three parking lots with space for more than 100 vehicles
- More than 10 kilometres of various trails (Figure 4)
- Ten wetlands
- More than 24 hectares of new planting, including creation of various habitats for birds, insects, amphibians and small animals

Figure 3

Pedestrian Bridge across Little Rouge Creek in Rouge National Urban Park



4. Analysis

The Region has an opportunity to partner with Parks Canada to establish future trail networks connecting to the Rouge National Urban Park

The Region continues to promote active modes of transportation and enhancing pedestrian and cycling connections to key points of interest. Creating these connections may help improve the efficiency of our Regional road network by redistributing travel modes to more sustainable options, such as cycling or walking. This is an exciting opportunity for the Region to partner with Parks Canada creating a vision for connecting future trail networks. Figure 4 illustrates a trail along Little Rouge Creek in Rouge National Urban Park constructed in partnership with the Region. This will benefit residents and visitors offering safe and enjoyable recreational options by creating a sustainable multi-use trail system. To prepare for such an opportunity, it is proposed the Commissioner of Transportation Services be authorized to negotiate the details of longer-term agreements with Parks Canada to ensure Regional-level trail opportunities are appropriately integrated with the Rouge National Urban Park trail system.

Figure 4
Trail Along Little Rouge Creek in Rouge National Urban Park



Initial request for pedestrian signals is limited to the Rouge National Urban Park

Parks Canada has identified the need for the four proposed pedestrian signals as part of a 10 kilometre trail network expansion in York Region, scheduled to be completed in 2021. The connection will form a link from the Bob Hunter area to Boyles Cemetery. The expansion forms part of connections within the Rouge National Urban Park trail system to park amenities, nearby attractions and green spaces and local and Regional trail and cycling networks. Figure 5 illustrates the 19th Avenue trailhead sign and park amenities.

Figure 5
19th Avenue Trailhead Sign and Park Amenities



The pedestrian signals could be the next step in achieving a broader trail network vision to complete trail connections for York Region residents and visitors

Rouge National Urban Park provides residents and visitors with opportunities for connections to Regional and Provincial trail and cycling networks, including The Great Trail, Greenbelt Route, Oak Ridges Trail and the future South York Greenway Cycling and Pedestrian Corridor (Attachment 3), which benefit recreational trail users and other pedestrian and cycle users within the Region.

Parks Canada aims to link Lake Ontario and the Great Trail to the Oak Ridges Moraine through long-term partnerships as part of a national trail strategy. Parks Canada is working towards achieving a park-wide trail network linking the Greater Toronto Area from Lake Ontario through the Great Trail to the Oak Ridges Moraine through ongoing expansion. This goal is part of their 10-year management plan and has been developed through continued partnerships with the Region, other municipalities and community partners.

Council has the authority to approve pedestrian signals when the Traffic and Pedestrian Signal Policy precludes installation

Parks Canada's pedestrian trail volumes and results of traffic studies provided by Parks Canada's consultant indicate peak demands for pedestrian signals are expected to occur during the weekend when vehicular traffic volumes are considerably lower. Weekday pedestrian trail volumes are low in comparison to weekend volumes, resulting in minimal delay to traffic during weekday peak periods. Based on these operating conditions, pedestrian signals do not satisfy the strict warrant calculations under the current Regional approval policy that would allow staff to install pedestrian signals without specific Council direction.

Pedestrian signals will demonstrate the Region's commitment to ensuring a positive legacy for communities. There have been instances in the past where, due to the complexity of other circumstances, staff has recommended and/or Council has directed signal crossings to be installed despite the warrant not being strictly achieved.

5. Financial

Parks Canada has proposed to pay installation costs of the pedestrian signals, which are approximately \$150,000 per location, and is requesting the Region cover annual maintenance and operating costs of approximately \$2,000 per location per year.

6. Local Impact

The requested pedestrian signals will provide a safe connection for residents and visitors to the Rouge National Urban Park and the potential to serve a broader trail network. The recommendations of this report have been shared with local municipal staff.

7. Conclusion

Parks Canada has requested Council approve installation of four pedestrian signals on Regional roads for the Rouge National Urban Park at their cost. Parks Canada proposes the Region cover maintenance and operating costs. Pedestrian signals provide a safe crossing and enhanced connections to trail networks for pedestrians and cyclists. The pedestrian signals have the potential to be the first part of a broader trail network vision to influence the future South York Greenway Cycling and Pedestrian Corridor. Pedestrian signals will demonstrate the Region's commitment to ensuring a positive legacy for communities. There have been instances in the past where, due to the complexity of other circumstances, staff has recommended and/or Council has directed signal crossings be installed despite the warrant not been strictly achieved.

Council has authority to approve pedestrian signals when the Traffic and Pedestrian Signal Policy precludes installation.

For more information on this report, please contact Joseph Petrunaro, Director Roads and Traffic Operations, at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 75220. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.

Recommended by: **Paul Jankowski**
Commissioner of Transportation Services

Approved for Submission: **Bruce Macgregor**
Chief Administrative Officer

May 22, 2020
Attachments (3)
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