

## What are the Next Steps?

Over the course of the next few months, the Project Team will continue to identify and evaluate candidate routes. Once the trail planning and design guidelines are complete and the routes have been identified, the Project Team will recommend a network implementation strategy to help Chatham-Kent prioritize the phases of trail development. The completed Trails Master Plan will also include estimated costs for trail improvements and will recommend a funding strategy. As the Chatham-Kent Trails Master Plan moves forward, you are encouraged to provide comments and feedback.

## How to reach us:

To be added to our mailing list for this study or to submit your comments on the Trails Master Plan, please contact:

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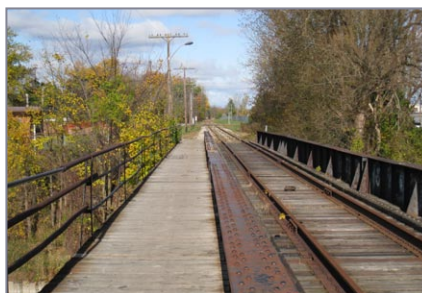
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## WE NEED YOUR INPUT AND COMMENTS ON OUR STUDY!

Please take a few minutes to complete the enclosed comment sheet. We encourage you to offer any suggestions or identify any issues that you think should be addressed in this study. Also, please indicate if you would like to be added to our contact list to receive future newsletters and to be notified of upcoming meetings or events associated with the Chatham-Kent Trails Master Plan study.



CSX Railway Trestle over the Thames River between Stanley Ave. and Grand Ave., Chatham

## COMMENT SHEET

- Yes, I would like to be added to the Chatham-Kent Trails Master Plan mailing list and be notified of upcoming events and meetings. My name, mailing address, phone number and e-mail address are:

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1. What are your top three suggestions for improving trail conditions in Chatham-Kent?

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2. Do you consider yourself primarily:

- Recreational trail user (e.g. for leisure)  
 Utilitarian trail user (e.g. to go shopping)  
 Both of the above

3. Where are some of the key barriers to trail use in Chatham-Kent (or in your particular neighbourhood) and what do you think could be done to overcome these barriers?

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4. Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

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Photo Credit: MMM Group Limited

Municipality of  
Chatham-Kent  
Ontario, Canada



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# Chatham-Kent Trails Master Plan



## This newsletter is designed to inform you about the Municipality of Chatham-Kent's study to develop a Trails Master Plan.

The Municipality of Chatham-Kent has initiated a study to develop a Trails Master Plan. The plan will define a strategy for developing a municipal-wide trail network that will link communities, neighbourhoods, parks, schools, shopping areas, and other destination areas and open spaces. The plan will also identify short and long term trail network priorities, identify partners, recommend trail design, signage and construction guidelines, outline policies to support the implementation of the plan and estimate the cost to implement the plan over 20 years.

A municipal led Study Steering Committee has been formed to guide the study and includes representatives from a number of trail stakeholder groups, municipal staff and trail planning and design specialists. Chatham-Kent has retained a team of trail planning experts including MMM Group, Stantec Consulting and TransActive Solutions to assist the Steering Committee and municipal staff in the development of this plan.

## WHY ARE TRAILS IMPORTANT?

Trails are important because trail use provides a number of health, social, economic and environmental benefits, and they are considered to be a safe and preferred location to walk, cycle and use other non-motorized forms of recreation. Trails promote increased physical activity, which helps lower the risk of obesity and illness. In fact, individuals who have access to trails increase their recreational activity on average by 44% (Irish Trail Strategy, 2006). The health benefits of trail use are so great that one study has estimated 40% of chronic illness could be prevented by regular physical activity and suggested that urban planning could offer opportunities for increased physical activity by creating walking and cycling alternatives, such as trails, to motorized transportation (Heart & Stroke Foundation of Nova Scotia, 2004).



Claire Taylor Optimist Park, Blenheim



Informal walking paths, Paxton's Bush, N Chatham



Wildlife Viewing Trail: St. Clair National Wildlife Area

Providing infrastructure that supports alternative modes of transportation, such as an integrated trail network for walking and cycling, will reduce traffic volume and reduce pollution emissions and exposure. Replacing vehicle use with trail use can not only curb greenhouse gas emissions, but saves valuable green space and provides efficient land use.

A more active, healthier population that walks and bikes on a trail network integrated with other transportation infrastructure will produce economic benefits that spread over a wide sector of society. Identifiable gains can be shown through increased tourism, and increased property values for those with homes located near trail facilities.

## Results of Outreach Survey

An online survey was developed by the Study Team to engage the public and stakeholders and obtain their views on what an appropriate trail system for Chatham-Kent should look like. The survey was posted on November 21, 2007 and was concluded on June 30, 2008. There were a total of 257 responses. The following is a summary of the responses provided.

- Over 98% of respondents are in support of the Municipality of Chatham-Kent developing an expanded and better connected trail system
- 37% of respondents typically use existing trails in Chatham-Kent daily or 1 to 2 days a week
- The top four trail uses that respondents think should be considered in the development of a comprehensive trail system for Chatham-Kent include walking/hiking, cycling, cross-country ski/snowshoeing and all terrain vehicle (ATV) use
- The top three reasons why respondents would like to use a trail in Chatham-Kent are enjoyment of natural environment, recreation/fitness and travel to visit family/friends/shopping/errands.
- The top three reasons why respondents think a trail system for Chatham-Kent should be developed include improving quality of life and health of Chatham-Kent residents, providing places to walk and cycle within communities and providing access to natural areas.
- Respondents ranked "Balance of Urban/Rural" as areas where Chatham-Kent should initially focus its efforts in developing new trails followed by "Rural areas" and "Urban areas".

(continued in sidebar on page 3)

## TRAIL ROUTE SELECTION PRINCIPLES

Guiding principles help to define the character of the trail system. The following is a list of draft guiding principles that will be used to identify trail corridors and missing links that together with existing trails will form the network portion of the Trails Master Plan. The principles have been grouped around several main themes:

### 1 Planning and Design

- **Accessibility:** Trails should be accessible from strategic locations throughout the Municipality. In general, trails should be available to all users and levels of ability. However, not all trails will be accessible by all users in all places. A hierarchy of trail types will be employed to define appropriate uses and cater to various levels of physical ability. For example, the hierarchy may include multiple use trails and single use trails along with a range of design standards for fully accessible trails through to trails for "expert" users.
- **Appealing:** Trails should appeal to a variety of trail users, abilities and interests; therefore the network should consist of a variety of trail types and trail experiences.
- **Integration with other Modes of Travel:**
  - Trail routing will focus primarily on off-road routes. On-road routes will be utilized to provide links between off-road routes where other alternatives do not exist.
  - Trails will be located so that they provide opportunities to develop links with other modes of travel (i.e. public transit in urban areas).
- **Public vs. Private Lands:**
  - Trails will be located on public lands. Private lands will only be considered where a mutually acceptable agreement can be reached between the Municipality and the land owner.
  - Linear corridors such as unopened road allowances, closed roads, transportation corridors, abandoned railway corridors and utility corridors on public lands/with public easements will be sought as important "spines" for the trail system.
- **Direct / Connections:** The trails network should connect existing trail segments and add new trails to provide connections to destinations such as natural and cultural heritage features, tourist attractions, service facilities, as well as routes to schools, community and neighbourhood parks and shopping facilities.
- **Unimpeded:** Trails should provide connectivity across major barriers (i.e. Highway 401, Thames River arterial roads, and railways).
- **Expandable:**
  - Trail routing will consider future opportunities within the Municipality (i.e. new development areas) as well as provide links to surrounding municipalities, regional, provincial, and national trails.
  - In areas of new development, planning for trails will be an integral part of the land use planning process.
- **Route Density:** Route density should generally respond to population density. For example, it is generally anticipated that route density will be highest in urban residential areas.
- **Supporting Services and Facilities:** Supportive services and facilities such as benches and bicycle parking should be available along trails and at destinations. Trails routes should be selected that provide opportunities to develop supporting facilities.

### 2 Cultural Heritage

The trail network should link and/or provide access to cultural heritage features in Chatham-Kent. Such features may include historic buildings and sites, historic bridges, mills, rivers and canals, historic cores of villages and towns, and significant culturally modified landscapes.



Older asphalt trail in Memorial Park, Tilbury

### 3 Economic Development and Tourism

In addition to serving the needs of Chatham-Kent's residents, trails should also be considered a valuable tourism asset and catalyst for economic development. Therefore trail routing and marketing should:

- include access to popular tourist destinations, and
- be part of strategies that promote Chatham-Kent as a great place to "live, work, and play/recreate".

### 4 Natural Heritage and Environmental Considerations

The trail network should take advantage of natural features that persist within the municipality and that constitute the natural legacy from pre-settlement conditions. Natural features include plant and animal life, wetlands, woodlands, valley lands, surface water features and groundwater features. The provision of, and location of trails routes should be based on the objective to create a balance between the need to provide recreation opportunities and the need to conserve the unique natural heritage of the site. In some locations preservation may take precedence over recreation, therefore trails may be limited to certain areas. Some areas may be accessible only for research and monitoring.

Some specific considerations include:

- **Minimize / Avoid Sensitive Areas:** The trails network should minimize intrusion into core natural areas and avoid known locations of rare or sensitive species.
- **Hazard Lands:** Where possible and practical, trails should avoid hazard lands which are prone to flooding and erosion, such as valley corridors and floodplains. In some cases making trail connections via floodplains and hazard lands will be necessary to create a connected system. Where this is necessary, the details of the trail design should respond to the conditions of the site.
- **Soil Conditions:** Trails should be routed in areas where soils are well drained and stable, and wet, boggy or organic soils should be avoided. Where this is not possible or where controlled access will provide excellent educational opportunities, trail hardening (i.e. boardwalks) should be considered to clearly define the route and encourage users to stay on the trail.
- **Topography:** Trail routing should avoid steeply sloped areas (greater than 20%). If this is not possible, appropriately designed structures to provide necessary access (i.e. stairs) will be provided.
- **Environmental Buffers:** Trails may be located in environmental buffer zones provided that the width and condition of the buffer can support the trail without compromising the intended function of the buffer.
- **Existing Disturbances:** Where possible and practical, trails in natural areas should make use of existing corridors and disturbances such as existing informal trails, sanitary sewer easements and gas pipelines, rather than impacting undisturbed areas.

### 5 Risk Management and Asset Management

- **User Safety:** To the extent that it is possible, trail routing and design should minimize users' exposure to potentially hazardous situations. Safety will not be compromised in the interest of minimizing cost. Current and widely accepted guidelines will be used as the basis for design.
- **Sustainable Design:**
  - Trails should be routed and designed to minimize or reduce the need for extensive maintenance over and above what is considered normal.
  - Materials that are sustainable and/or renewable and sympathetic to the location should be considered wherever practical and possible.
  - Layout, details and materials may be used strategically to encourage appropriate uses.
- **Trail Management:**
  - Trails will be implemented and maintained to acceptable standards. Facilities will be monitored in an appropriate manner and initial capital costs will not be considered in isolation of long-term maintenance costs.
  - Signing and other wayfinding elements will be developed as an integral part of the trail system. Wayfinding elements should be designed to be easily recognizable, clear and concise.

(Results of Outreach Survey continued)

- The main challenges identified that need to be overcome in the successful development of an expanded trail network include the following:
  1. Initial cost and long term maintenance
  2. Funding and commitment from the municipality
  3. Gaining public support
  4. Resistance from private property owners
- The top four locations or corridors in Chatham-Kent that new trails or missing links in existing trails should be considered include the following:
  1. The development of a continuous trail system along the Thames River
  2. Create trails from abandoned railway lines
  3. Link communities to each other
  4. The development of a trail system within Chatham-Kent itself that links existing trails.



Waterfront Promenade in downtown Wallaceburg



Lookout tower at McGeachy Pond Conservation Area, Erieau