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**From:** Switzer, Barbara on behalf of Regional Clerk  
**Sent:** Monday, June 29, 2020 11:07 AM  
**Subject:** Regional Council Decision - Rouge National Urban Park Future Trail Expansion  
**Attachments:** Rouge National Urban Park Future Trail Expansion.pdf

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On June 25, 2020 Regional Council made the following decision:

1. Council authorize installation of pedestrian trail crossing signals at four Regional road crossings (14<sup>th</sup> Avenue, 16<sup>th</sup> 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.

The original staff report is attached for your information.

Please contact Joseph Petrungaro, Director Roads and Traffic Operations, at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 75220 if you have any questions with respect to this matter.

Regards,

**Christopher Raynor** | Regional Clerk, Regional Clerk's Office, Corporate Services

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Our Mission: **Working together to serve our thriving communities – today and tomorrow**

# **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 (14<sup>th</sup> Avenue, 16<sup>th</sup> 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, 16<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue trailhead sign and park amenities.

**Figure 5**  
**19<sup>th</sup> 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.

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For more information on this report, please contact Joseph Petrungaro, 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)  
10638471





Parks  
Canada

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Canada



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 km<sup>2</sup> 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.

Canada



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:

- 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue, west of York-Durham Line,
- 16<sup>th</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> 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,

Omar McDadi

Acting Field Unit Superintendent, Rouge National Urban Park

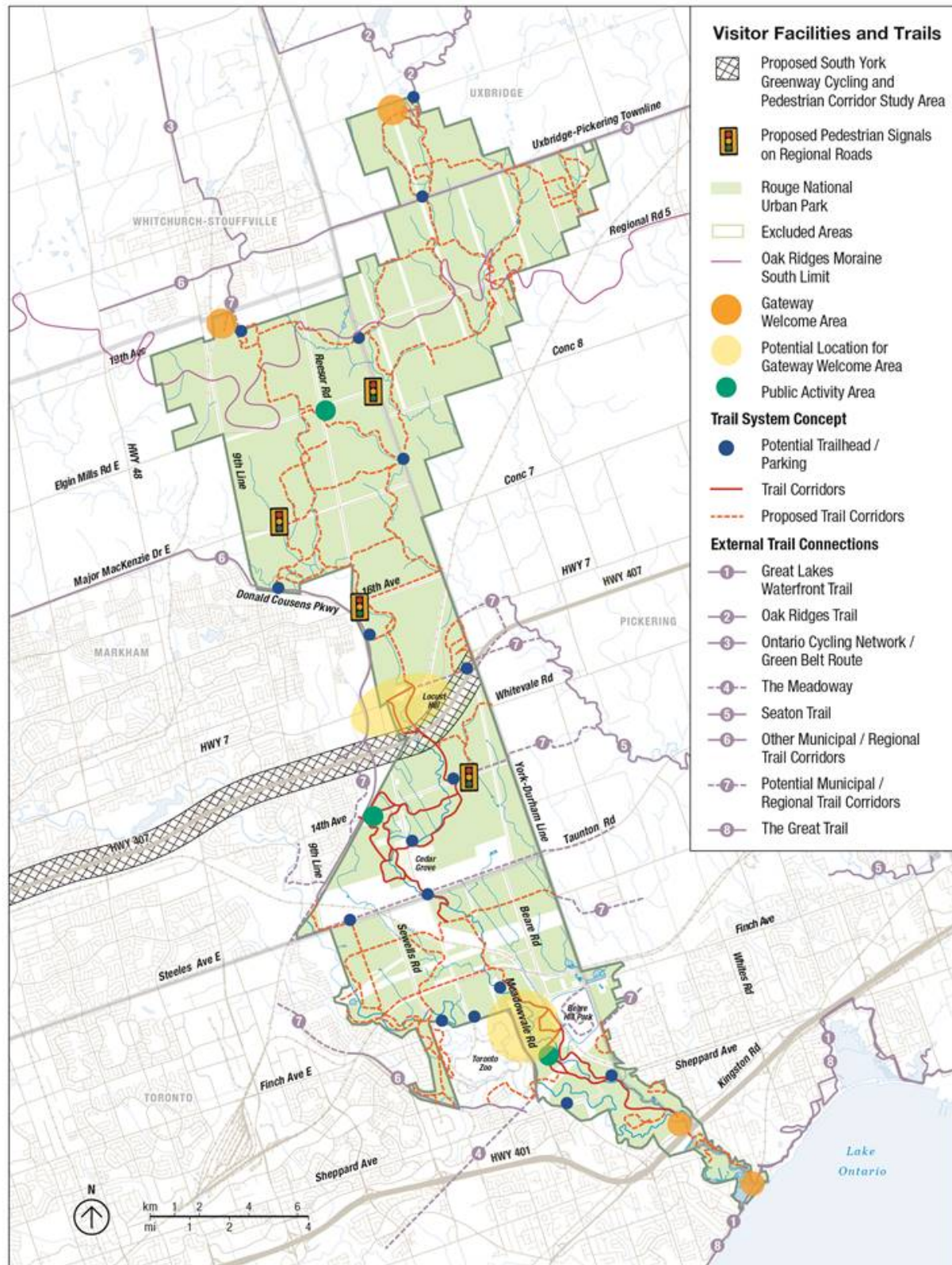
Parks Canada, Government of Canada

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Directeur p.i., Parc urbain national de la Rouge

Parcs Canada, Gouvernement du Canada

## Future Trail Connections Map





## REGION WIDE TRAILS

