

November 13, 2023

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To the City of Markham Council and Clerk office

**RE: Deputation regarding the South York Greenway Feasibility study. Section 8.1 of the Development Services Committee Agenda | Meeting No. 24 | November 14, 2023 | 9:30 AM**

We are submitting this letter to voice our strong opposition to the building of a pathway in behind the houses of Squire Baker's Lane and Colonel Butler Drive (the pathway) in Markham, Ontario.

We have already contacted the York Region office and our area City of Markham councilor. We have received unsatisfactory responses about our concerns for the construction of the pathway from these 2 places. Both Vicky T., Customer Relations Coordinator, Initiatives & Strategic Programs, Public Works Department, York Region and Karen Rea, City of Markham councilor for Ward 4, failed to answer our primary question.

Why is the York Region creating a duplicate path in behind the houses of Squire Baker's Lane and Colonel Butler Drive?

There is a serviceable path already in existence around the Markham Green golf course (south of the 407) that connects with 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue, which has bike lines etc. to get someone to the Bob Hunter Park and to the additional existing York Region trails. This path is serviceable to individuals with differing abilities. We thought that this is the ultimate goal. The additional path in behind Squire Baker's Lane and Colonel Butler Drive does nothing to further this goal. Furthermore, the cost of this project both monetarily and ecologically with the vast number of trees that would have to be destroyed to build this path, would seem to far outweigh any apparent benefits.

We have outlined below our concerns about the pathway.

1. Tree destruction and removal that is against the city of Markham tree removal bylaw. For the past 20 years trees have grown and have provided a nice buffer to the 407 noises, including any informal pedestrian traffic on the trail. Mostly this informal trail is used by people living in the neighbourhood and follows access around trees and vegetation growth. Our hope was that with continued tree and vegetation growth that the path would naturally start to move close to the fence line where the path starts by Colonel Butler Drive and where it eventually continues along the cliff above the Rouge River. That is the point - it is

informal. Why do we need to have everyone traipsing through this area? Isn't the fact that we have the 407-toll road in behind the house enough?

We are extremely upset with the thought of all the trees being cut down that were planted to provide the residents of Squire Bakers Lane and Colonel Butler Drive with some buffer to the 407-toll road noise and pollution. We have nurtured these trees and shrubs over the past 20 years and we are happy with their growth and resilience. Especially from the ice storm in 2013. They have created a wonderful barrier and privacy screen. We have a wonderful green, tree oasis. We can only assume that all the pines and native shrubs were planted in the first place to provide a buffer for the residents to the newly created 407 highway. At least this was some compensation.

2. The current path is informal. As a result, it is generally only accessed by the neighbours living in this area. Why are you proposing to add additional car traffic and parking issues to this area where there already is strict parking by laws? Are you also also to propose building a parking lot to accommodate the increased public presence? Why are you impeding on a housing neighbourhood. Why is the City and the region continuing to destroy the natural habitat? And along with the increase of general public presence in our neighbourhood, comes the concern with security. You are providing a spotlight to this quiet undisclosed area of Markham. Having this path right in behind the backyard of the houses makes our houses easy targets for break-ins & trespassing. This is not to say we want any lighting in the back. We DO NOT want lighting, as the lighting will make the path even more popular with pedestrian use at night.
3. Motorized vehicles. We cannot stress this issue enough. Yes, there is a bylaw that says motorized vehicles are forbidden on the paths in Markham. Please tell me who is going to enforce this? A bylaw is only a suggestion until it is enforced. Saying that motorized vehicles are not allowed is pointless. We can name multiple times when motorized mopeds, off road vehicles (motor bikes), e-bikes, segways and e-scooters are used on the paths and the pathway in behind my house. Making a clearly delineated path is going to make this problem worse.

We can name one instance this past week. On November 8<sup>th</sup> around 2:30pm, two off-road motor bikes were motoring along on the path in behind Squire Baker's Lane. So, what are you going to do about that? What do you expect us to do about it? Go chasing down motor bikes on foot telling them "No – No you are not supposed to be riding those back here. There is a City of Markham by-law against this." How are we even supposed to catch up to them? Who on a Sunday afternoon are we supposed to call when the bylaw is broken? How are we even to determine who is breaking the bylaw? And for contacting the City of Markham all we can do is leave a message on the municipal phone line to complain. How does that resolve anything?

Even if by some miracle we find out who is breaking the bylaw, does the Region

and the City expect us to confront/inform these individuals? You expect us to put our lives in danger, open ourselves up to the potential of verbal or potential physical abuse and confront these individuals? We have no idea how they are going to react. Since they are knowingly already breaking the law, they are not going to care what a woman in her 50's is telling them or anyone else.

4. We are also extremely disappointed that after 40 + years of trying to save the Rouge River ecosystem/watershed that we are still fighting this battle in 2023. For all the lip service that the City of Markham provides about planting how every many trees in the city and conserving our natural spaces, that they would even consider disturbing this tiny natural space.

I remember in the 80's when I was a teenager, the battle to stop the urban sprawl into the Rouge River watershed area. And now we continue to disturb and disrupt this watershed. Since the current Rouge River path was created off of Tuclor Lane that goes to the Milne Dam and all the bridges built, the wildlife corridor has been disrupted in this area. There are no longer deer seen in the back. When I moved here 20 years ago they were always spotted. Such a shame.

In the information pamphlet that we received in July 2023 about a feasibility study on the South York Greenway in my neighbourhood, we would like to know if this study is going to be made public and when? We would very much like to see what is being said about the cliff that is slowly eroding away due to the highway 407 vibrations. The path along this route has substantially narrowed in the past 20 years. I can provide photos of this erosion as we have been watching it very closely.

We are extremely discouraged by the responses that we have received from Vicky T. from the Public Works Department at York Region and Karen Rea. It doesn't seem that we would be able to stop any path being created in behind our backyard. However, we will summarize some points below that we hope can be taken into consideration when this thing is built.

1. Consider having the path created closer to the 407 fence line, as the path does tend to follow the fence line in between Colonel Butler and the Rouge River ravine/cliff. Keep the path as far away as possible from the backyards of the houses on Squire Baker's Lane and Colonel Butler Drive. If the path is close to the fence line that will help with fence maintenance.

2. Keeping the path close to the fence line may discourage trespassing and unwanted intrusion to our backyards. With increase pedestrian use, this will keep the trash, dog poop, public use noise, motorized vehicles and security concerns at bay.
3. We want to be kept informed when the York Region Council or the City of Markham Council is reviewing anything to do with this path / South York Greenway. This will allow us to make informed decisions on what our next steps will need to be based on timelines that the Region and City decide. We want to be prepared and know when construction vehicles are going to show up on the doorstep of our backyard, disturbing our piece of mind.

With all due respect,  
Natascha Gaul and Frank Lekivetz