

Hau, Lucy

Subject: FW: Milne Community Alliance letter to Councillors



Councillors Letter
moving Path...

-----Original Message-----

From: Reuben and Barbara Tang [mailto:rubarbtang@yahoo.com]

Sent: March 9, 2009 10:24 PM

To: Heath, Jack; Jones, Jim; Wong, Tony; Landon, Gord; Scarpitti, Frank; Burke, Valerie; Moretti, Carolina; Kanapathi, Logan; Shapero, Erin; Webster, John; Chiu, Alex; Horchik, Dan; Virgilio, Joseph

Cc: Bill Barnett; Shelley Bourne; Myra Chepack; Maureen Cowan; Landry Family; Joan Maddock; Chris May; Bernard Szederkenyi; Reuben & Barbara Tang; Carole Wilson; Dixie White Vinegar Hill

Subject: Milne Community Alliance letter to Councillors

Dear Mr Mayor and Councillors,

Please note that an important letter from the Milne Community Alliance was delivered by hand to each of your mail boxes today, Monday, March 9, 2009.

It is most important that you read this letter before the council meeting on Tuesday, March 10, 2009 at 7 p.m. in Council Chambers. It involves the proposed multi-use pathway in Milne Dam Conservation Park, on which you are being asked to vote at that meeting.

Yours truly,

The Milne Community Alliance.

MILNE COMMUNITY ALLIANCE,

- Banfield Home Owners Group,
- Boyington Heights Ratepayers Association,
- Milne Park Conservation Association,
- Vinegar Hill Ratepayers Association

Date: March 08, 2009

Councillor Carolina Moretti,
Town of Markham,
101 Town Centre Blvd.,
Markham, ON L3R 9W3.

Dear Councillor Carolina Moretti,

SUBJECT: **Conflict: Multi-use Pathway in Milne Dam Conservation Park, Markham; Part of the Province of Ontario's Municipal Infrastructure Investment Initiative (Miii) funding of the "Markham Cycling and Pathway System 2008"**

It is acknowledged that the Town of Markham has done much to promote the green spaces of Markham in the past and in opposing their intention in the present situation, it is in no way meant as a dismissal of their past accomplishments and encouragement of green initiatives. These past initiatives include the Pesticide Bylaw, the Tree-cutting Bylaw and the Trees for Tomorrow initiative, all examples of a forward looking Town Council led by Mayor Frank Scarpitti. But there is however, a current, very strong difference of opinion which we seek to address:

The various Ratepayers and other Groups and Associations, together with individuals within the Milne community of Markham have united for this project, into ONE **"Milne Community Alliance"**, (see Summary at the end of this letter for member groups and concerns). The Alliance wishes to make the following submissions to officers of Municipal, relevant departments of Provincial Government and associated management and environmental bodies that directly or indirectly affect the Milne Community and Markham residents at large, in their determination of the proposed Multi-use Pathway in Milne Dam Conservation Park:

1. In the Town of Markham's Application to the Ontario Government for Funding: the "Brief Description of Project" states: ... ".....a pathway connection ... that will link the Milne residential community... to the commercial area along Markham Road to the north". Since it is ourselves, the "Milne Residential Community", that the Town wishes to link up to the commercial area along Markham Road to the north, we propose the following Resolution already adopted by the Milne Community Alliance, and for it "to be recognised by the Town of Markham":
 - **"that the Milne residential Community does NOT wish the Town of Markham to take us cycling on a 3-metre wide pathway to be built through the Milne Dam Conservation Area, but instead wish to be routed via Highway 7 to the said commercial area along Markham Road to the north."**
 - **We propose that the Town instead lay down a dedicated cycle path along the south side of Highway 7, from McCowan Road to Markham Road. There is an ample width of grass verge, between the lamp standards and the south curb, on which to lay a dedicated, paved cycle pathway. As cyclists, the community or visitors can then safely cycle to school, church, work, or shop at and support all the commercial locations along Highway 7 and in Markham Village. Those cyclists, locals or visitors who wish to do so, could also access the Milne Dam Conservation Park using the transverse local roads and interconnected pathways within the residential subdivision, arriving at the conservation area within a distance of 300 metres. All this, without violating the conservation area with a 3-metre wide path and bridges that damage the ecological balance and flora of this sensitive area.**

2. A Highway 7 Dedicated Cycle Pathway would achieve **ALL the "Benefits"** that the Town of Markham's "Project Description" in their Application for Funding to the Ontario Government sets out as "Benefits to the Community"; whereas, the **Town's existing proposed Pathway through the Milne Dam Conservation Park FAILS to do so** for the following specific reasons:

Ref: The Application made by Town of Markham, to the Ontario Government for funding, (that includes the Milne Dam Conservation Park section of the Pathway):

In item "4. ... (Entitled) "Brief Description of Project":

The Application states (Quote) "... a parkway connection will be constructed that will link the Milne residential community and park system to the commercial area along Markham Road to the **north**."

- Looking at the pathway route presented, (see map Appendix #2), it does not appear to be going anywhere near the commercial area of Markham Main Street to the **North**. In fact it appears to be heading south for the 407.
- Looking further at the pathway route presented, (see map Appendix #2), it shows Princess Street as an exit point. Then what does one do.....ride north on the road or sidewalk to the commercial area? These are bad choices, since a) the sidewalk is illegal for bicycles and b) on Markham Road it would be extremely dangerous for a cyclist!

In item "5. ... (Entitled) "Briefly describe what benefits this project will create for the community...."

Economic Benefits:

(Quote) "Developing facilities for the commuters, children and others to cycle and walk to work, school and other destinations can lead to household cost savings associated with automobile travel."

- Again, looking at the route proposed by the Town:
- Would you let your young child walk to school along a pathway in a remote conservation area among the woods early in the morning? Or is it safer along the quiet nearby local streets where we **all** look out for each other's kids?
- Would a **busy** resident walk or cycle along this meandering inclined pathway to go shopping? Or would he/she use a more **direct** route such as Highway 7? See Map Appendix #2.
- Now consider a busy resident needing to cycle to work: A more **direct** route, such as Highway 7, would again serve his/her purpose better. This would more likely be used. Would it not?

Environmental and Sustainability:

(Quote) "Facilities that encourage active transportation are vital to supporting a shift away from increased automobile use....."

- We would suggest that for active transportation by bicycle to be encouraged instead of a car, it requires getting from Point A to Point B as **directly** as possible.
- Again, looking at the route presented: Active **transportation** in an alternative mode to an automobile, does **not** take place in a meandering, multi-incline conservation area as shown.

So once again we come back to that **Highway 7 dedicated Cycle Pathway**. **Direct** and in contact with all destinations, schools, church, work places, commercial businesses and of course Milne Dam Conservation Park just 300 metres away and easily accessible, by several **transverse** local roads running **directly** off highway 7.

3. For your information and to enable you to make your own comparison we are attaching the following in the text that follows:
- Appendix #1: Town of Markham's "Project Description" that was part of their Application to the Province of Ontario's Ministry of Infrastructure Renewal, for funding.
 - Appendix #2: Map of the Milne area and its proximity to Markville Mall, GO stn, Centennial Community Centre, shops, restaurants, pharmacies, supermarkets, schools, church, Library, Community Centre and the "commercial area along Markham Road to the North".

Appendix #1:

The following is Town of Markham's "Project Description" that was part of their Application for Funding from the Ontario Government. Obtained as public information from the Town's web site:

Subject: Municipal Infrastructure Investment Initiative – Town of Markham Grant Application.

Project Description – Cycling and Trail System:

Note: Anyone wishing to access this original document posted on the Town's web site may do so on web address:

<http://www.markham.ca/markham/ccbs/indexfile/Agendas/2008/General/gc080211/Municipal%20Infrastructure%20Project%20Description.htm>

1. **Project Title:** **Town of Markham - Cycling and Trail System - 2008**

2. **Project Category** (choose one)

[L:\Agendas\2008\General\gc080211\Municipal Infrastructure Grant Project Description.htm](#)

3. **Project Type** (choose one)

4. **Brief Description of Project:**

Markham has completed its Cycling and Trails Master Plans and have identified a system with over 340 km of bicycle routes and recreational trails. To initiate the development of the Cycling and Trail System, the Town will construct 18.5 KM of off-road multi-use pathways and boulevard trails that were identified in the 'Short Term' (0-5 years) Master Plan Implementation Schedule.

The multi-use Cycling/Trail facilities will be built along Major Mackenzie Drive, which runs east to west and then extends along the Donald Cousens Parkway (a.k.a. Markham bypass) north and south to 14 th Ave.. As an extension of this system and to enhance the existing multi-use pathway system in Milne Park a pathway connection will be constructed that will link the Milne residential community and parks system to the commercial area along Markham Road to the north.

5. Briefly describe what benefits this project will create for the community, the region or the province, under the following areas:

- Economic or Commercial Benefits
- Environmental or Sustainability Benefits
- Health and Safety Benefits
- Social or Community Benefits

1. Economic Benefits:

Developing facilities for commuters, children and others to cycle and walk to work, school and other destinations can lead to household cost savings associated with automobile travel. Providing facilities for people to cycle and walk to work, school and other destinations can lead to savings for municipalities and developers associated with road maintenance/expansion and parking.

2. Environmental and Sustainability

Facilities that encourage active transportation are vital to supporting a shift away from increased automobile use, thereby reducing the negative environmental and climate change impacts related to carbon dioxide and other tail-pipe emissions. The provision of infrastructure that allows commuters, children and families to cycle and walk will become increasingly important to maintain the quality of life in our community.

3. Health And Safety Benefits

Active living is becoming increasingly important for youth and Families and the Town is participating in the Provincial Active 2010 initiative which aims to increase participation in sport and physical activity throughout Ontario. Encouraging more residents to use active transportation for work, school and other trips leads to improved physical health and in turn contributes to healthier and happier personal relationships and providing facilities for cyclists that are separate from automobile traffic improves safety and leads to increased cycling activity.

4. Social and Community Benefits

Cycling and trail system facilities help families, friends and colleagues enjoy the health and social benefits associated with the physical activity of cycling, rollerblading and walking. Residents appreciate having pathway and trail systems in their communities and having 'more eyes on the street' helps to deter crime and provides neighbours and citizens with a sense that they are not alone.

6. **Project timing** (dd/mm/yyyy)

Start Date: October 1, 2008

Completion Date: December 31, 2009

7. Have all required studies been completed to allow the project to proceed to construction if a grant is awarded under this initiative? If the studies have not been completed, when do you expect them to be complete? Please describe.

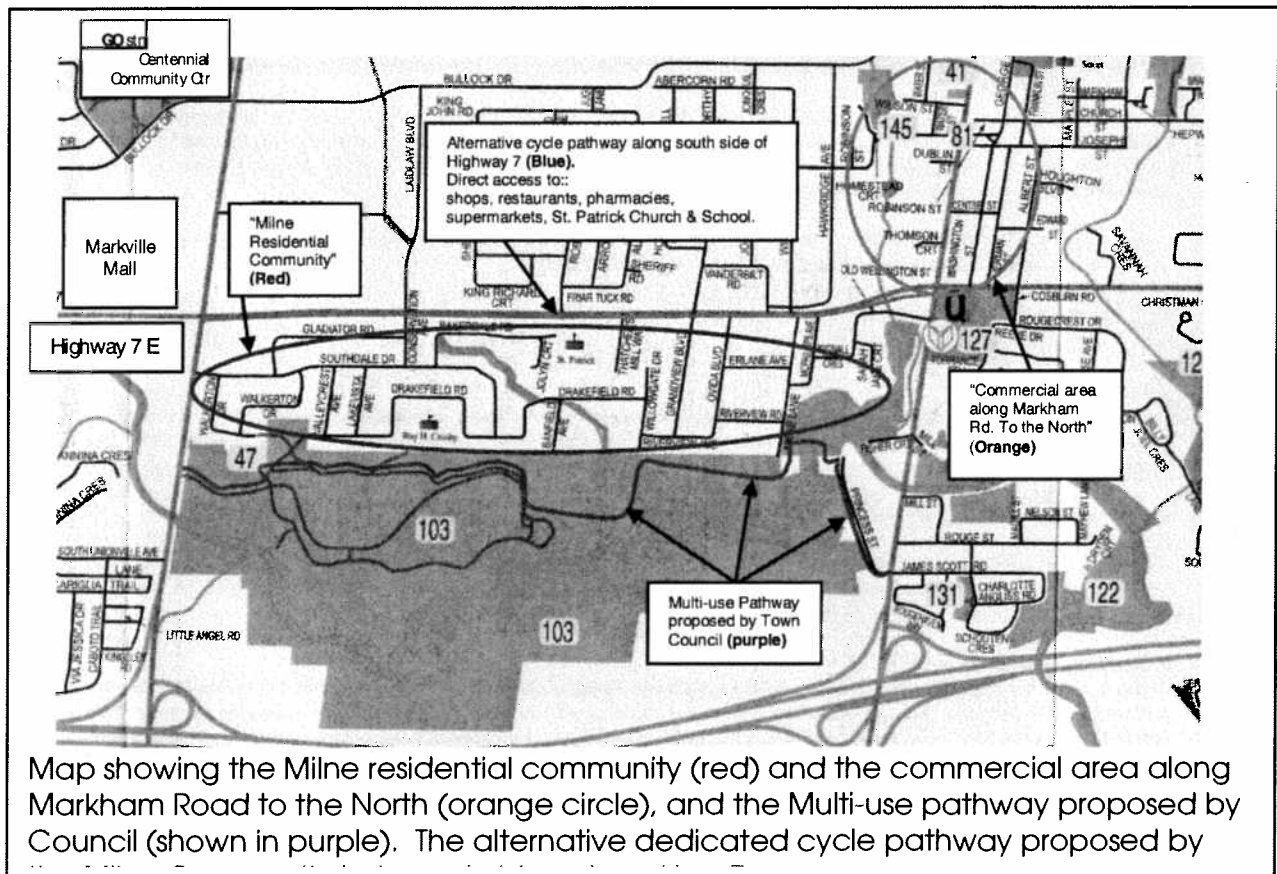
The policy context for these projects is with in the Markham Transportation Plan Study (MTPS 2002), the Parks, Recreation, Culture and Library Master Plan 2005-2021, the Town of Markham Cycling, Pathways and Trails Master Plans and the York Region Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plans. All facility designs and associated approvals have been completed for the Major Mackenzie boulevard trail and the Town is proceeding to the design stage for the Donald Cousens Parkway and Milne Park multi-use trails.

8. Estimated Project Cost: \$ 4,500,000.00

Further reference to the Municipal Infrastructure Investment Initiative – Town of Markham Grant Application, may be accessed under Report to General Committee. Report Date: January 2, 2008 on the Web address:
<http://www.markham.ca/markham/ccbs/indexfile/Agendas/2008/General/gc080211/Municipal%20Infrastructure%20Grant.htm>

The notification granting the funding from the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Government of Ontario may be examined on web address: <http://www.markham.ca/markham/ccbs/indexfile/Agendas/2008/General/gc080407/infrastructure.htm>

APPENDIX #2



Map showing the Milne residential community (red) and the commercial area along Markham Road to the North (orange circle), and the Multi-use pathway proposed by Council (shown in purple). The alternative dedicated cycle pathway proposed by

Summary

The Milne Community Alliance is comprised of stakeholder organisations and individuals within the Milne Community, that have united against the project of the Multi-use Pathway in the Milne Dam Conservation Park proposed by Town of Markham, and to propose instead an alternative dedicated cycle pathway along Highway 7:

This alliance consists of:

- Banfield Home Owners Group
- Boyington Heights Ratepayers Association
- Individual members from the Milne Community,
- Milne Park Conservation Association.
- Vinegar Hill Ratepayers Association

The main concerns of the Milne Community Alliance are on three themes:

1. We contend that Town of Markham's proposed multi-use pathway through Milne Dam Conservation Park, fails to implement the "Description of Project" used in the Application to the Provincial Government for funding. We also dispute the Application's claimed benefits that the multi-use pathway project will create for the community.
 - We are proposing an alternative route along Highway 7 that achieves **all** of the claimed benefits and specifically satisfies the "Description of Project".
2. We have major Safety considerations if a new 3-metre multi-use pathway together with bridges, are built within the North-central and North-eastern portions of Milne Dam Conservation Park that encourage cars to park on the streets local to access points to the new pathway. Considerations such as cars that may reverse into private driveways where children may be playing, and also Fire trucks or large EMS vehicles being unable to pass on the narrow local roads due to illegally parked cars, are issues that have been repeatedly brought to the notice of the local Councillors. These issues may form the basis of legal liability claims against the Town, should an accident occur. These safety considerations have been repeatedly stated both verbally and in writing. Signage and education programmes achieve little in these situations.
3. Environmental issues in the North-eastern portion of Milne Dam Conservation Park: A new 3-metre through-transport multi-use pathway and two bridges built across this space would destroy the very qualities of the natural and comparatively rare flora and fauna of this section of the Park that makes it a "conservation" area. Instead it could become simply yet another "pretty" section of a park where rare plants and natural species of wild life would be trodden and driven out.

This area, specifically part of the Greenbelt and the Natural Heritage Network along the Rouge River Valley is subject to the Environmental Policy Review & Consolidation, Background Report and Policy Framework document dated 28 October 2008. Appertaining to construction of infrastructure, Town of Markham is transgressing its own policy ref: section 1.D.2 Implementing Greenbelt Policy, sub-section 9, by this multi-use pathway unnecessarily traversing the area with negative impacts and disturbance of the landscape.

If you agree that our foregoing Resolution and Critique are justified or even if it casts doubt on the projected Multi-use pathway through the Milne Conservation Area, we believe that it is incumbent on you to vote against its progress beyond this point in Council. When there is a clearly viable alternative of a dedicated cycle pathway along Highway 7, we believe the ethical and moral direction in which to vote is undeniable.

The Milne Community Alliance sincerely thanks you for your attention and for your time in reviewing this material. We look forward to hearing from you at your early convenience with your affirmation that you have voted in support of the position assumed by this alliance of the Milne Community.

Yours sincerely

*Reuben Tang, Chair
Banfield Home Owners Group,
C/o 7 Banfield Avenue, Markham, ON L3P 1H3*

*Tupper Wheatley, Chair
Milne Park Conservation Association,
C/o 9, Willowgate Drive, Markham, ON L3P 1G1*

*Bernard Szederkenyi, Chair
Boyington Heights Ratepayers Association,
C/o 17 Milne Lane, Markham, ON. L3P 1C6*

*Dixie White, Chair
Vinegar Hill Ratepayers Association,
C/o 8 Dryden Court, Markham, ON L3P 3K4*