

# Trans Canada Trail/Guelph to Goderich Trail stakeholder meeting summary

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Meeting date: Thursday, October 22, 2020  
Location: Virtual meeting via WebEx  
Time: 9-11:30 a.m.

## Project background

### About the Trans Canada Trail alignment

A 3-kilometre gap exists in the Trans Canada Trail (TCT) route between the City of Guelph and Guelph-Eramosa Township. The alignment would connect the multi-use path along Woodlawn Road in Guelph to the Kissing Bridge Trail, which intersects Wellington Road 39 (Silvercreek Parkway) connecting Guelph to a network of trails across Ontario.

The connection has a complicated history of property ownership, environmental, technical and financial challenges. There is a desire to connect the gap through an off-road route using existing rail and hydro corridors instead of an on-road route. The connections require a partnership between the City of Guelph, Guelph-Eramosa Township, Wellington County, other approval agencies and various trail non-profit groups.

The TCT route is being investigated as part of the [Guelph Trail Master Plan](#) (GTMP) update. The GTMP is a strategic document that helps us plan, design, fund, build and maintain our trail system. TCT may be presented separately from the GTMP.

### About the meeting

There are a number of trail advocacy and user groups in Guelph and representatives from these groups are considered key trail stakeholders.

City staff met with key stakeholders on October 22 through a virtual meeting to review findings from the Trans Canada Trail route study. The meeting was requested by the key stakeholders and scheduled as part of engagement for the GTMP update.

### Purpose of the meeting

The purpose of the meeting was to listen to the work completed by the stakeholders and to use the feedback to determine a recommended route.

Background information, study process, key findings and next steps were discussed with the meeting participants. There were a number of engagement questions posed to the

stakeholders, like: why is the connection important, what type of trail should be built and what route is preferred.

Representatives from the following user groups were engaged: Royal City Trail Committee (RTC), Guelph to Goderich Rail Trail (G2G), Guelph Hiking Trail Club (GHTC), Speed River Cycling, Guelph Victors, and Guelph Coalition for Active Transportation (GCAT).

## What we heard

### Why is the TCT/G2G connection important?

Stakeholders were asked why the TCT/G2G was important to them and why is it needed. We heard the following:

#### **Public safety**

People are already creating their own connections and some of them are not safe or ideal. There has been observed increases in trail use (this link specifically) as a result of COVID-19.

#### **Regional connections**

This link provides ability to get into and out of the city. SW Ontario is becoming a destination for tourism. We need all municipalities along the G2G to recognize it as one big corridor. We also need it to be part of larger efforts to improve connectivity and develop well laid out trail infrastructure.

#### **Economic benefits**

Economic benefits to the city and region are significant. There are already trail tours and groups that use it for recreational travel, but many see the barrier into Guelph as a problem. This is a missed opportunity.

#### **Tourism**

The rest of G2G is largely complete so we need take advantage of it as an opportunity for tourism, recreation and travel.

#### **Accessibility**

G2G has recently made accessibility improvements to completed sections of trail and heard from stakeholders this is important. Connecting to downtown Guelph without curbs, grade changes or other accessibility barriers is key. A trail of that length with such a minimal change in grade could be a world-class asset.

#### **Activity and recreation**

This link provides active options for cycling and hiking, which helps to support a healthy active community.



### Future funding and grants

Funding opportunities will be available, and the City needs to be ready for them. We need to compress timeline as much as possible to get it constructed and take advantage of the G2G.

### What type of trail should be built? Who are the main users?

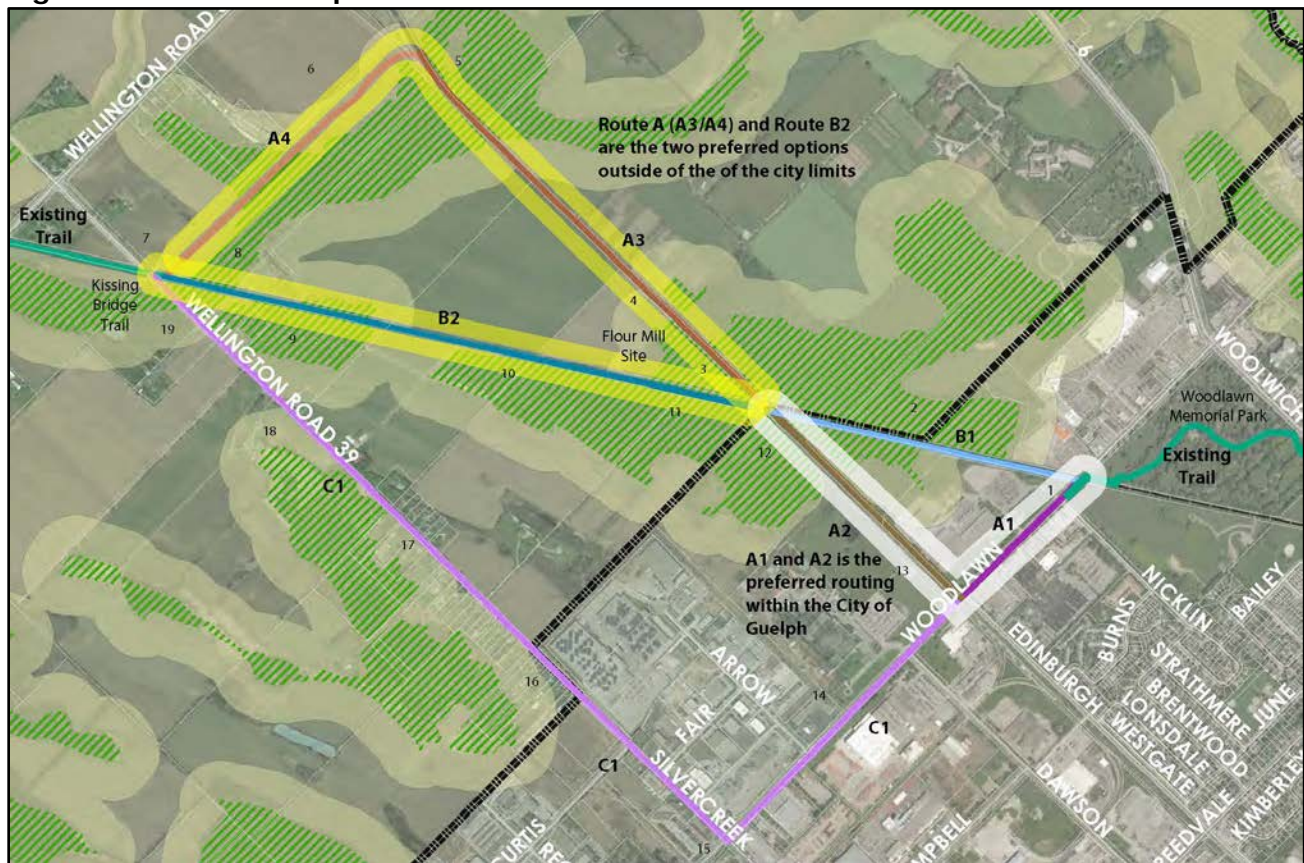
The group agreed that we should be building a trail that is accessible for all ages and abilities. The rest of the G2G has been upgraded recently to improve conditions so that all users can access it. There is very little grade change throughout the whole corridor – “130 kilometres of trail with a longitudinal grade of three per cent or less is a world class asset.”

“Ideally, we want a trail for people who cycle, walk, elderly, children, families with strollers and wagons, mobility and aid devices like wheelchairs, dog walkers, etc. So this should be built for all types of users. What we’re planning needs to be an accessible route.”

### Route options discussed with stakeholders

The following image shows the three routes that were discussed with stakeholders.

**Figure 1 - TCT route options**



## Feedback on the route options

The preferred option for stakeholders is a phased approach that includes:

**Phase 1. Secure and construct Route A (A1, A2, A3, A4)**

**Phase 2. Secure and construct Route AB2 (A1, A2, B2)**

**Phase 3. Secure and construct Route B (if feasible or as a long term goal)**

Stakeholders noted that the most direct and intuitive connection from the Kissing Bridge Trail to downtown Guelph is preferred. There was some concern about not being able to construct a trail along segment B1 and preference to continue to advocate for this segment in case Guelph Junction Railway decommissions this section in the long-term future. It was noted that City policies would not permit a trail in this location as there would be too much impact to the adjacent wetland.

Route C was not preferred by stakeholders. An off-road safe connection is what is preferred and represented by Route A and AB2.

There was also discussion to expand the study area to include a connection along the Guelph Junction Railway connection Woodlawn Road to Woolwich Street (close to the Speedvale Avenue intersection). It was noted as something for the Guelph Trails Master Plan (GTMP) to review and prioritise.

### **Other ideas and feedback from stakeholders on route options included:**

- Segment A3 is parallel to the trails on the Ignatius Jesuit Centre. There is a desire to connect the TCT/GTG trail to those trails, if possible as it would add value to the network.
- There was a suggestion to investigate an option parallel to the proposed routes that makes use of footpaths existing in the natural area on private property.
- If the GRCA does not permit cycling on the Marden Tract (segment A4), there may be opportunity to connect all the way to Marden Road.
- There were concerns about the long terms plans of the proposed Flour Mill development in Guelph-Eramosa Township (Township). There is some indication and/or correspondence that a development may not be proceeding in that location.
- Stakeholders do not believe the site constraints are insurmountable, however, they do require third party willingness to explore the options and the stakeholders are prepared to start taking steps to do that in partnership with the City.
- There were some questions and comments about the need for upgrading railway crossings and how they are dealt with throughout the city. The stakeholders also offered information about cost estimates for railway crossings from other cities.

## Other stakeholder feedback

Throughout the conversation with stakeholders, we heard some key feedback and ideas about the project overall.

The biggest feedback received was that stakeholders are concerned the City is not moving fast enough to negotiate and expedite the process. Stakeholders want construction to happen in 2021 – however staff noted that this was unlikely due to the complicated nature of the proposed routes and technical work that is still needed. We also heard the following thoughts and ideas:

- Since the COVID-19 shutdown, cycling has gone through the roof and cycling stores are running out of bikes (increase of 400 per cent). It is important to capitalize on this momentum and position Guelph as a key cycling destination for tourists.
- The stakeholders have been developing an economic impact report for this trail. Preliminary estimates show it could bring in nearly \$3 million to Guelph, making it urgent to construct. There was a desire to have the Economic Development/Tourism Department involved in the meeting.
- The G2G foundation has significant data on east trail use and economic impacts. There is a great measure of who is using the trail and what numbers. Stakeholders identified that tourism should be involved to understand the impact of being able to have trail users visit our city.
- This trail will provide education, transportation, cultural and historical significance.
- There are already people using these routes. In order to keep people safe, the route is needed. In some cases, people don't make the link into Guelph or start at Marden, which is a missed opportunity.
- The final connection needs to be supported by a strong wayfinding and signs to help orient visitors and direct them to key destinations in Guelph.
- There were some concerns expressed from stakeholders about GJR and the long-term needs of the railway line in the city.
- The G2G has been working with local and provincial governments on the G2G. The whole G2G spans five provincial ridings and there haven't been discussions with Members of Provincial Parliament about further grants and funding opportunities. If the project proceeds there will be opportunity to capitalize on this work done to date.
- There was also a request to partner or keep the stakeholders updated on a more regular basis. We noted that is something we are willing to do and figure out a way to do this in the best way possible. Stakeholders requested to have someone external on a City 'champion' team.

## How we will use this feedback

Community feedback is one factor we use to make decisions, we will also consider:

- Alignment with other plans and strategies (e.g. Community Plan, Strategic Plan)
- Overall community benefit
- Environmental sustainability
- Future trends and population changes
- Technical considerations and operating impacts
- Financial sustainability

## Next steps

The feedback we received will help us plan for community-wide engagement and determine our plan moving forward. Our intention is that recommendations on the TCT will be presented to Council in 2021. We will determine if this work can be presented to Council separately from the GTMP.

The next round of engagement of the whole community is planned for late 2020. In the next phase, we will be receiving feedback on the TCT and the GTMP together. We will review a draft trail hierarchy and draft network maps. We will also review what we should tackle first.

Sign up to receive updates and participate at [haveyoursay.guelph.ca](https://haveyoursay.guelph.ca).

