



Trail classification table

Trails can run through a variety of different areas such as busy parks or in remote natural heritage areas. Trails can also be used in a variety of different ways, with most users commuting from point A to point B on some trails, while others may have users out for a relaxed stroll, while others might cater to more intense hikers. They can have different features such as surfacing, width, accessibility, connections and other design considerations. For these reasons, we trail classification to simplify the many different trail attributes into standard types that will fit for specific uses and contexts. We use trail classifications to:

- To help with consistent decision making in acquiring, developing, operating and managing our trails;
- To help communicate decision making or trail expectations to the community; and
- To help develop standard tools, budgets, measures, maintenance and practices to help our day-to-day work.

The trail classification system has been updated and includes six categories of trails. The classification table provides structure, but it is flexible enough to respond to unique trails. It also identifies the many different contexts and factors that impact trail design. For instance, the system recognizes the difference between trails intended for transportation and trails intended for recreation. The trail classification system is a forward-looking standard. This means that what a trail is classified as now may not match the existing attributes of the trail. Some existing trails may need to be changed through their lifecycle to match their new classification. The trail classification is also not a succession plan. This means that secondary trails are not in waiting to be upgraded to primary trail standards eventually.

Below is a summary of trail classifications with details shown in the classification table.

Primary trails

Primary trails are significant cross-city trails that provide direct routes to destinations. They are designed to accommodate high volumes of diverse trails users, including walkers, runners, people using mobility devices, cyclists, rollerbladers, skateboarders, etc. Trails that are designated part of the Active Transportation Network (ATN) are all primary trails, but not all primary trails are part of the ATN.

Neighbourhood connector trails

Neighbourhood connector trails provide connections to destinations such as schools or other community facilities. They are intended to support high volumes of neighbourhood transportation and recreational use. An example is a trail through a park that provides a more direct east-west connection through the neighbourhood. These trails have a distinct classification as they should be priorities for year-round maintenance.





Secondary trails

Secondary trails have a recreational focus and a soft surface material. This makes them most appropriate for moderate volumes of walking, running, some mobility devices, and cycling. The trails are loops or connect to other trails.

Stormwater management trails

Stormwater management trails provide a recreational opportunity at a neighbourhood level, most often with loops. They are similar to secondary trails, but are classified as a separate category due to a few unique attributes. These trails are paved and have their own defined maintenance standards. The trails use as a service road informs their design standard and their role in the trail system.

Tertiary trails

Tertiary trails have a recreational purpose and are a destination of their own. They have natural surfaces and are designed for hiking and/or mountain biking. Tertiary trails should be designed in a way that works with the shape of the land, views and other landscape features. They are intentionally indirect.

Third-party trails

Third-party trails can provide a variety of different purposes, their features can vary but include paved trails and mountain biking trails. However, third-party trails are not owned by the City. We intend to work with these trail owners and managers to make sure that up-to-date information is available to communicate closures, rerouting, allowed uses and trail conditions.



Table 1 - Trail Classification Table

	Primary Trail	Neighbourhood Connector Trail	Secondary Trail	Stormwater Management Trail	Tertiary Trail	Third Party Trail
Example	Downtown Trail	Trail through O'Connor Park	Loops in parks, connections to primary trail network	Loops associated with Stormwater Management facilities	Natural surface trail in the Hanlon	GORBA Trails near Guelph Lake
Transportation or recreational focus	Primarily transportation focus	Primarily transportation focus	Primarily recreational focus	Recreational focus	Recreational focus	Recreational focus – GTHC, GORBA, Arboretum Transportation focus – University of Guelph
Description	Move throughout the city along major corridors; provide principle access links to/from major destinations with Guelph and to communities outside the city	Provides neighbourhood links to primary system but not designated ATN; focus on Safe Routes to Schools and other local destinations outside/off the primary network	Provides neighbourhood links to primary system but not designated ATN; focus on recreational opportunities; loops in parks	Recreational loop without focus on providing link to primary system	May have a local neighbourhood focus, but more often are a destination for specific user groups; Routes in special locations or caters to specific uses that may be in part dictated by the characteristics of the location	Trails owned and operated by partner organizations (note: not intended to be assumed by the City)
Origin/Destination Information	Important links to major community facilities (such as community centres, colleges and universities, major commercial nodes and important municipal government building)	Improved access to schools; trail traffic that tends to be more locally oriented	Access to local points of interest; creates local neighbourhood or community recreational loop opportunities	Recreational loop	Directly connected to neighbourhood connector trails or secondary trails and in some cases primary trails Includes stand-alone loops	Depends on focus
Relationship to ATN	Can have ATN designation. Not all Primary trails are part of ATN.	Not designated ATN	Not designated ATN	Not designated ATN	Not designated ATN	Not designated ATN
User Type /User Groups	Widest range of user abilities	Wide range of user abilities	Range of user abilities	Range of user abilities	Special (single or restricted) use	Depends on focus
Mode	Will be designed to accommodate multiple uses such as cycling, walking, users with mobility-assisted devices, strollers, small wheeled uses such as skateboarding, in-line skating and scooters	Will be designed to accommodate multiple uses such as cycling, walking, users with mobility-assisted devices, strollers, small wheeled uses such as skateboarding, in-line skating and scooters	Will be designed to accommodate multiple uses such as cycling, mobility-assisted devices, strollers, walking and running; Other uses such as skateboarding, in-line skating and scooters will be accommodated where possible and appropriate.	Will be designed to accommodate multiple uses such as cycling, walking mobility-assisted devices, strollers, and running; Other uses such as skateboarding, in-line skating and scooters will be accommodated where possible and appropriate.	Will be designed to accommodate single or restricted uses such as walking and running only, or cycling only; Other uses such as mobility-assisted devices, strollers, skateboarding, in-line skating and scooters are typically restricted by the nature of the trail alignment, width and surface types	Depends on focus
Volume of Use	Potential high volumes of use	Potentially high volumes of use	Moderate volumes of use	Moderate to lower volumes of use	Moderate to lower volumes of use	Depends on focus

	Primary Trail	Neighbourhood Connector Trail	Secondary Trail	Stormwater Management Trail	Tertiary Trail	Third Party Trail
Ownership	Owned or managed through agreement by the City	Owned or managed through agreement by the City	Owned or managed through agreement by the City	Owned or managed through agreement by the City	Owned or managed through agreement by the City	May be on land owned by the City but trail not managed by the City or A trail on land not owned or managed by the City.
Trail Standard	High standard trail types; Refer to standards outlined in ATN for all Primary trails	Design standard will vary depending on the location of the trail (refer to chart on Figure 5-1 for details)	Design standard will vary depending on the location of the secondary trail (refer to chart on Figure 5-1 for details)	Dependent on stormwater management area	Typically uses "low tech" design standards that are appropriate for the location and volume of use	Depends on focus, not owned or maintained by the City
Surface Trails close to or adjacent to Natural Heritage areas will be studied on a case-by-case basis.	Typically asphalt (refer to standard outlined in ATN)	Will typically consist of asphalt or compacted granular surface; may include hard surfacing on slopes where erosion is a problem;	Typically granular: A compacted granular surface; may include hard surfacing on slopes where erosion is a problem Asphalt: An asphalt surface may be used where appropriate or preferred outside of a Natural Heritage area	Typically asphalt	Typically consists of a natural earth or woodchip surface to a variable standard depending on type of uses Hard surface with appropriate trail hardeners only where necessary	Depends on focus – City standards do not apply
Width	Wide (refer to standard outlined in ATN) Typically 3.0m-4.0m	Wide Typically 2.5-4.0m	Dependent on context Typically 1.8-3.0m	As required for stormwater management area access – minimum 2.0m	Generally narrow and follow the topography quite closely Narrowest possible, maximum 1.5m wide	Depends on focus/responsibility of third party trail manager
General Maintenance	High level of priority for maintenance activities	High level of priority for maintenance activities	Average priority for maintenance activities. Trails should be clear and maintained for daily use	Low level of maintenance activities, as needed for service access to area	Trail obstructions such as deadfall trees and rocks will remain in place and be removed only where deemed necessary	Responsibility of trail manager
Winter Maintenance	Priority network for winter maintenance	Priority network for winter maintenance	Depending on volume and type of use; some sections may be maintained for year-round use	As needed based on stormwater management area	Not winter maintained	Responsibility of third party trail manager