



City of
Peterborough

To: Members of the Committee of the Whole

From: W.H. Jackson, Director of Utility Services

Meeting Date: July 27, 2015

**Subject: Report USTR15-012
Snowmobile Access to former CP Rail Right of Way
Lansdowne Street to City Limits**

Purpose

A report to update Council on the development of the Trans-Canada Trail from the Lang-Hastings section to Lansdowne Street and to seek approval in principle for the construction and maintenance of a separate snowmobile trail from the south-eastern limit of the City to the Endicott Fuels property at 700 Ashburnham Drive.

Recommendations

That Council approve the recommendations outlined in Report USTR15-012, dated July 27, 2015, of the Director of Utility Services as follows:

- a) That Council support in principle the proposal for construction and maintenance of a separate snowmobile trail within the former CP Rail right-of-way from the connection to the Trans-Canada Trail at the south-eastern limit of the City to Endicott Fuels; and
- b) That staff continue to work with the Rice Lake Snow Drifters Inc. on the snowmobile trail design and an Agreement for snowmobile trail construction and maintenance.

Budget and Financial Implications

The Rice Lake Snow Drifters Inc. are applying for a grant to cover the costs to develop the snowmobile trail and require approval in principle from Council to qualify for the grant. All the capital and operating costs associated with the snowmobile trail, will be borne by the Rice Lake Snow Drifters Inc.

Background

Council approved Report USTR15-001 entitled “Trans-Canada Trail – Lansdowne Street East, South to the City Limit” on February 2, 2015 with the following recommendations:

That Council recommend that the permitted uses of the Trans-Canada Trail between Lansdowne Street and the City limits be consistent with the City’s Active Transportation By-Law;

That the initial trail design take into consideration potential future users;
and

That in the event that proposals come forward, that staff prepare the appropriate report for Council’s consideration.

1. Activity Undertaken Since February 2015

Since Report USTR15-001 was approved, staff have been working on the Trans-Canada Trail project with construction anticipated for this fall. The property acquisition process is completed and removal of the rails and ties is anticipated this summer. This project is largely funded by grants obtained by the City from the Pan-Am Games and the Trans-Canada Trail Foundation. This is the last stretch of trail needed to connect Peterborough to the Trans-Canada Trail to the east of the City.

In addition to the gap in the City, there is a 650 metre section of unfinished trail between the City limits and the beginning of the Lang-Hastings section of the Trans-Canada Trail. This section currently has tracks on it and has been declared surplus by CP Rail as well. The Peterborough Hastings Trans-Canada Trail Association has a two-year lease with CP Rail and permission to construct the trail in this location. The Trans-Canada Trail Foundation has provided funding, through the Pan-Am Games, for construction of this section of trail so that it can be constructed as part of the city project and at no cost to the City. The future ownership of the trail has yet to be finalized as the province, who owns the rest of the land for the trail to Hastings, has indicated that it is not interested in purchasing this section. The two-year lease with CP Rail will allow the Peterborough Hastings Trans-Canada Trail Association to finalize arrangements for future trail ownership.

2. Snowmobile Trail

Staff have also been working with the Rice Lake Snow Drifters Inc. (The “Drifters”) on the proposal to have a snowmobile trail into the City (See Location Map: Appendix A). In April 2015, the Drifters submitted a formal proposal to the City for the construction of a snowmobile trail along the former CP Rail right-of-way. As discussed in Report USTR15-001, staff recommended that the permitted uses of the TransCanada Trail between Lansdowne Street and the City Limits be consistent with the City’s Active Transportation By-Law, which prohibits all motorized vehicles (including snowmobiles) from the trail. To address the desire of the Drifters and the direction from Council, a separate parallel snowmobile trail is proposed to be constructed within the former CP Rail right-of-way to provide access for snowmobiles and grooming equipment to the rear of the Endicott Fuels property on Ashburnham Drive. This solution would allow the snowmobile club to access the fueling station at Endicott Fuels for their grooming machine and for trail users. The use of a separate trail also addresses the concerns regarding damage to the paved trail from snowmobile use, the potential conflicts with non-motorized trail uses during winter months (walkers, cross country skiers, etc), and the concerns with control of snowmobile use on other trails in the City.

The Drifters have indicated their longer term desire to obtain access for snowmobiles between Lansdowne Street and the rear of the Best Western property along the former CP Rail corridor. Access beyond the Endicott property would require mid-block crossings of both Lansdowne Street and Ashburnham Drive in close proximity to this major signalized intersection. The section of former rail line from Ashburnham Drive to behind the Best Western property is adjacent to existing residential properties which could be expected to raise concerns about noise from snowmobile use. It is anticipated that this section of the rail corridor will be prioritized for future multi-use trail development, which would preclude snowmobile use unless a similar separate trail could be designed. For the above reasons, staff suggested that the separate snowmobile trail be limited to the section between the East City Limit and the Endicott Fuels property on Ashburnham Drive at this time.

The route for the proposed snowmobile trail is shown below (concept only) and route design details still need to be developed to the City’s satisfaction. A legal survey is needed to confirm the corridor boundaries and how the snowmobile trail will be placed within those boundaries. This will be completed at the cost of the snowmobile club and the club will be responsible to obtain applicable approvals from external agencies. In principle, the separate snowmobile trail will be located on the west side of the former CP Rail right-of-way and will provide a 3.5m gravel surface that can accommodate trail grooming equipment and snowmobile use. The proposed snowmobile trail will follow the former rail spur line that crosses Technology Drive approximately 70 m west of the main trail crossing. The club is proposing to build a staging area/parking lot off Technology Drive adjacent to the TransCanada Trail on a portion of the former CP Rail lands adjacent to the main rail line. The parking area would be used by snowmobilers and potentially by other users of the Trans-Canada Trail. Providing a parking area in this location is desired to provide a safe and convenient place to park for trail users, and

snowmobilers with trailers. Many of the other access points east of the City are along narrow Township roads or busy county roads. From the parking area, the Drifters are planning to construct the snowmobile trail parallel to the main TransCanada Trail and a bridge has been proposed to cross the watercourse running through the property so that the snowmobile trail can join the main rail corridor where it passes under the Highway 7/115 bridge. From the Highway 7/115 bridge to the Endicott Fuel property, the snowmobile trail would be located close to the main paved trail with a minimum 2.0m offset between the two trails to facilitate snow storage (when the paved trail is plowed in winter), provide a safe separation between users, and to facilitate drainage.

The costs for construction and maintenance of the separate snowmobile trail will be borne by the Drifters, who are currently preparing an application for funding from the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs. As part of the application process, the snowmobile club is required to demonstrate they have gained approval for use of the lands for the trail from the respective landowners (in this case the local municipality). Providing an approval in principle at this time will allow the Snow Drifters to finalize their application for funding. Staff are working with the Drifters on finalizing an agreement to govern the construction and maintenance of this separate snowmobile trail within the right-of-way and staff propose to bring this forward to Council at a later date for review and approval before construction starts.

Summary

The Trans-Canada Trail from Lansdowne Street to the Lang-Hastings section of the Trans-Canada Trail is on schedule to be constructed this fall. Staff are working with the Rice Lake Snow Drifters on an agreement for construction and maintenance of a separate snowmobile trail within the Trans-Canada Trail right-of-way between the City limits and Endicott Fuels and a parking lot/staging area off Technology Drive. At this point, staff are seeking agreement in principle from Council for the snowmobile trail and parking lot, providing the Rice Lake Snow Drifters the opportunity to apply for funding to build their trail section. Staff are still working with the group on details of the design, and the construction and maintenance agreement, which will be brought to Council at a later date.

Submitted by,

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Attachment:
Appendix A: Location Map

Appendix A USTR15-012: Location Map

