



Waterfront Regeneration Trust

March 4, 2014

Mr. Denis Kelly
Regional Clerk
York Region
Administrative Centre
17250 Yonge Street
Newmarket, Ontario
L3Y 6Z1

RE: *Request for Endorsement of the Proposed Alignment for the Greenbelt Route in York Region*

Dear Mr. Kelly:

This letter is written to request the Region's endorsement of the Greenbelt Route on the section that passes through York Region on regional roads and facilities. The Greenbelt Route will be a signed mostly on-road cycling route that travels 460km through seven regions. Endorsement of the Greenbelt Route is being sought during Spring 2014 in order to implement the route and install signage in time for the Greenbelt Route launch in summer 2015. Requests are similarly being sought from lower tier municipalities for endorsement on local roads and recreation facilities.

The Waterfront Regeneration Trust has been working closely with Regional staff from Transportation and Community Planning as well as staff from lower tier communities to identify an alignment for the proposed Greenbelt Route.

The proposed Greenbelt Route is a project of the Greenbelt Foundation and the Waterfront Regeneration Trust to create a signature provincial cycling route from the County of Northumberland to the Region of Niagara using existing infrastructure wherever possible. The Greenbelt Route will showcase Greenbelt communities and provide a way for Ontarians to experience the countryside, towns and municipalities en route. As project lead, the Waterfront Regeneration Trust has developed a focused three-year work plan to identify, sign and launch the route by 2015. The Greenbelt Foundation is funding the WRT's work on this project.

The following letter gives a short background on the project, outlines the work completed to date, and lays out the action plan and the current request.

Project Background

The Greenbelt Route will create a 460 km signature provincial cycling route that traverses six regions: the County of Northumberland, Regions of Durham, York, Peel, Halton, Niagara and the City of Hamilton. It will showcase communities en route, and provide links to urban centres along the Greenbelt as well as connections to the 1400 km Waterfront Trail.

Working in partnership with Transportation Options, the project includes six Welcome Cyclists Workshops to inform local businesses and attractions of the Route, the associated benefits of the cycling tourism market, and engage them in the promotion of the route to enhance their own business.

The new route will take advantage of the rapidly growing interest in cycling tourism. In 2010, 2 million Canadian visitors went cycling while traveling in Ontario and spent \$391 million, (an increase of 25% and 18% respectively from 2009.) According to the League of American Cyclists, American cyclists spend \$47 billion annually while cycle touring. Quebec vacationing cyclists spend \$134 million annually. Building on this trend, the Greenbelt cycling route will inspire Ontarians to connect to the communities in the Greenbelt in a new and exciting way - by touring and exploring by bike.

Work to date

In fall of 2012, the Waterfront Regeneration Trust (WRT) completed a feasibility study for the cycling route, which was funded by the Greenbelt Foundation. Since then, the WRT has met with both regional and local staff to determine a preferred route through York Region. The preferred alignment was guided by both local and regional transportation plans. The current route represents the preferred alignment of the Greenbelt Route through York using a combination of local and regional roads.

The preferred route was presented by York Region representatives at a Greenbelt-wide Mapping Workshop that was attended by staff from across the Greenbelt communities. The workshop identified local attractions, services en route, and areas where extra caution or notes are appropriate.

Proposed Greenbelt Route Alignment:

The proposed Greenbelt Route alignment can be found on the project website here:
<http://www.greenbeltcycles.com/route-maps.html>

Future Work Plan

Winter – Spring 2014

- WRT will seek local and regional approvals for the preferred route.
- WRT will commission the creation of Greenbelt Route maps
- Welcome Cyclists Network workshops to be held across the Greenbelt Regions to introduce the route to local businesses and expand community support

Spring 2014

- Mobile Workshop: The Waterfront Regeneration Trust will lead a mobile workshop for staff, political leaders and experts from Ontario, Quebec and the US to assess its readiness and test the draft maps through a combination of expert presentations, facilitated discussions and cycling.
- Wayfinding Workshop: The WRT will lead a session to develop a consistent wayfinding strategy for directional signage along the route and its connections.
- Signage Audit: WRT will assess the route to determine the appropriate directional signage to mark the route. Each municipality will review results to confirm audit results reflect local and regional standards.

Fall 2014 – Spring 2015

- Signage will be provided to municipalities by the WRT. The Greenbelt Foundation is providing funding to cover the cost of the production of directional signage. The local and regional councils will be responsible for installing the signage on their respective facilities

Summer 2015

- The Greenbelt Route will be launched with a fully supported recreational bike tour of the entire route modeled after the Great Waterfront Trail Adventure and organized by the Waterfront Regeneration Trust.
- In addition the Greenbelt Foundation will publish various promotional resources. A website featuring detailed maps will be made available to public and the Route will be promoted through multiple channels

Roles and Responsibilities

The Greenbelt Foundation grant includes funding for signage, mapping and the launch event. It does not include funding for infrastructure improvements.

In return for their involvement the Municipalities and Regions will gain a signed provincially significant cycling route, and a tremendous promotional partner in the Greenbelt Foundation. For example, the Foundation has plans to launch a guide and web resources for visitors and residents. The Greenbelt Route will showcase and connect people to the businesses and attractions in the area.

Community Partners

York Region's involvement is essential to moving forward and would involve:

1. Formally endorsing the route through appropriate channels
2. Installing Greenbelt Route directional signage provided by the Greenbelt Foundation on the identified route
3. Participating in the launch celebrations in 2015

The Waterfront Regeneration Trust

The WRT will provide ongoing leadership on the Greenbelt Route including:

1. Liaise with Regional and local municipality staff to ensure the necessary approvals are sought and obtained
2. Conduct signage audit and determine quantity of signs needed
3. Provide signs to York Region
4. Work with Transportation Options and the Ontario by Bike/Welcome Cyclists program to engage businesses in how to profit from cycle tourism in the region
5. Launch the route with an end-to-end event

Next Steps

To move forward with the implementation plan described above, the Waterfront Regeneration Trust requests York Region's endorsement for the preferred alignment of the Greenbelt Route by summer 2014 so as to support plans to implement the route in time for a 2015 launch. The WRT will continue to work with local and regional staff to assess the route and determine if updates are needed.

Please feel free to contact me or Peter Lipscombe, project manager (pl@wrtrust.com or 416-943-8080) with any questions you may have.

We look forward to working with you on this exciting initiative.

Regards,



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cc: Steve Kemp, Director, Traffic Management & ITS, York Region
Loy Cheah, Director, Transportation Planning, York Region