

ETP-E4-1



REFERRAL TO Environment, Transportation, Planning Services  
RECOMMENDED  
DIRECTION REQUIRED \_\_\_\_\_  
RECEIPT RECOMMENDED \_\_\_\_\_

May 22, 2009

CFN 42397

Ms. Charlotte Gravlev  
Regional Clerk and Director of Clerk's  
10 Peel Centre Drive, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Brampton, Ontario  
L6T 4B9

LEGISLATIVE SERVICES	
COPY TO:	
Chair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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RECEIVED

MAY 27 2009

REGION OF PEEL  
CLERKS DEPT.

Dear Ms. Gravlev,

**Re: Trail Surface Standards Report and Request for Representatives to participate on the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's Trail Guidelines Advisory Committee.**

This letter is being sent along with a recent Trail Surface Standards Report that went to the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority Board Meeting #3-09, held on Friday, April 24, 2009. At this meeting the Authority approved Resolution #A54/09:

*"THAT the report on Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) and municipal trail surface standards in the Toronto region be circulated to the municipalities in TRCA's jurisdiction."*

We are also requesting that our municipal partners appoint a Councillor and staff representative to participate on our Trail Guidelines Advisory Committee. The purpose for the committee is to provide input and direction towards the update of the original TRCA Trail Planning and Design Guidelines Manual that was completed in 1992.

For your information, we will be completing the trail guidelines update in two phases. The first phase will be a scoping process that we will start in June of this year and it will last until the end of 2009. At this time, we anticipate 3 meetings with the Advisory Committee (June, September and November) to complete the first phase. The second phase of the project will include additional research and report writing. This phase should last approximately 1 year and we anticipate meeting 5 times during the course of 2010, to discuss and finalize the report.

As additional background information, we have experienced an increase in public interest in green space trails over the last number of years. Trails represent an important part of healthy living, recreation and smart transportation in our communities. The TRCA created a Trail Planning and Design Guidelines Manual in 1992, which has been referenced extensively by municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area. This manual is now in need of an update in order to address new information on natural heritage protection, trail sustainability and trail accessibility. After receiving the TRCA staff report

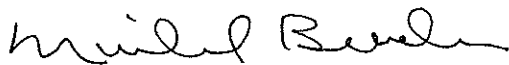


on Municipal Trail Surfacing Standards (attached), the Authority Board requested that the TRCA trail guidelines update be completed as soon as possible.

The TRCA appreciates that the new Trail Guidelines document will be used as a tool for many municipalities, and that each area has unique priorities and challenges. For these reasons, we would like your input as we move forward with the project. Therefore, we request that one municipal staff person and a municipal Councillor be appointed to represent your municipality on our project Advisory Committee.

Please contact the undersigned if you have any questions or require additional information. To confirm your staff and Councillor representative on the TRCA Trail Guidelines Advisory Committee, please contact Lesli Rynyk, Conservation Lands Administrative Coordinator, Phone: 416-661-6600 ext. 5579, Email: [lrynyk@trca.on.ca](mailto:lrynyk@trca.on.ca) or mail to 5 Shoreham Drive, Downsview, ON, M3N 1S4.

Yours truly,



Mike Bender, B.L.A., OALA  
Manager, Conservation Lands  
Toronto and Region Conservation Authority  
Phone: 416-661-6600 ext. 5287  
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Attach. TRCA Trail Surface Standards Report

cc: Jim Dillane, TRCA  
Ron Dewell, TRCA  
Kathy Stranks, TRCA

**TO:** Chair and Members of the Executive Committee  
Meeting #2/09, April 17, 2009

**FROM:** James W. Dillane, Director, Finance and Business Services

**RE: STANDARDS FOR TRAIL SURFACES**

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**KEY ISSUE**

Report on Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and municipal trail surface standards in the Toronto region.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT the report on Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) and municipal trail standards in the Toronto region be received.**

**BACKGROUND**

TRCA's Executive Committee requested a report on Toronto region municipal trail surfacing standards for informational purposes. The following report is a compilation of the trail surfacing guidelines across the region. The TRCA trail construction guidelines are included because of the municipalities that reference TRCA guidelines as their standard.

**TRCA Trail Guidelines**

The development of trails on TRCA-owned lands is guided by TRCA's *Trail Standards and Design Guidelines: A Handbook for an Inter-Regional Trail System in the Greater Toronto Area* (1992).

Table 1 provides a summary of trail design and construction criteria included within TRCA's *Trail Standards and Design Guidelines*.

Table 1: Trail Design and Construction Criteria Summary, TRCA

	Hiking	Walking	Skiing	Equestrian	Bicycle or Combined Walking/Bicycle (rural/low-use)	Combined Walking/Bicycle (urban/high-use)
<b>Surface Type</b>	native with spot hardening	Native hardened or paved	Native/cleared flush	Native with spot hardening	Stone fines	Asphalt
<b>Desirable Grade</b>	0-10 %	0-3 %	0-10 %	0-10 %	0-5 %	0-3 %
<b>Maximum Sustained Grade</b>	15 %	5 %	15 %	15 %	7-8 %	6 %
<b>Minimum Clearing Width</b>	1 m	2.5 m	2.5 m	2.5 m	4 m	7 m
<b>Minimum Clearing Height</b>	2.5 m	3 m	3.5 m	3.5 m	3 m	3 m
<b>Trail Lengths (+ refer to no real maximum)</b>	min 1 km max 10 km	no min max 2 km	min 5 km max 15 km+	min 5 km max 30 km+	min 2 km max 10 km+	min 2 km max 10 km
<b>Tread Width</b>	0.5 m	1.5 m	2.5 m	2.5 m	3 m	3 m

### **Municipal Trail Surfacing Guidelines**

Most of the municipalities in the Toronto region have informal trail construction guidelines. Surfacing is most often determined by projected use and trail location and is decided formally on a case by case basis. The following document outlines some local and regional municipal surfacing guidelines and illustrates the factors involved in trail construction choices for some of the municipalities in the Toronto region. The focus is largely on the local municipalities, and is not exhaustive.

#### **City of Pickering**

The City of Pickering does not have any approved standards for trail surfacing. Any trails that are to be heavily traveled as multi-purpose trails are typically 3.0m wide asphalt surfaces. In Pickering parks where the trails are less traveled, stone screenings on a gravel base are used. The City of Pickering has also considered using wood chips on some of the minor trail systems through wooded areas, where accessibility is not as much of a concern (Arnold Mostert, City of Pickering).

#### **Town of Ajax**

Ajax trail surfacing specifications are subject to trail use and location. "Trail Corridors" which connect the subdivisions and aid transportation, are paved. Bark mulch or stone screenings are used in natural or environmentally sensitive areas (Town of Ajax; Parks Services, 2009). Currently, Ajax is trying to promote "Trails as Active Transportation" and will therefore be looking to create more paved trails. Nothing is specified about the nature of the paving materials.

**Region of York**

In York Region, multi-use trails are meant to connect walking and cycling pathways throughout the region. However, there are no specifications on trail construction that apply to the York Region as a whole in the York Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan (2008).

**City of Brampton**

Brampton's Block Plan Design Guidelines (2003) state that combined pedestrian/bicycle trails shall be paved but that trail development should be limited through wood lots in order to keep the existing vegetation healthy. Brampton's Pathway's Plan prioritizes multi-use trails and bike routes, both of which shall be paved. There is currently no exploration of permeable surfacing as a viable option in the City of Brampton trail design guidelines (City of Brampton Pathway's Master Plan, 2002).

**Town of Caledon**

While trail surfacing specifications are not currently included in the Caledon Trail Master Plan (2002), the plan is being updated for 2009 and will include construction and surfacing guidelines for Caledon region trails. In general, trails that connect housing subdivisions to downtown areas are paved, while trails through natural greenspaces are natural or limestone screening surfacing (Caledon Public Works, 2009).

**City of Toronto**

The City of Toronto does not currently have trail construction guidelines but does much of its trail work in partnership with TRCA and therefore follows TRCA's guidelines and standards (Alex Shevchuk, Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation).

**Town of Richmond Hill**

When considering which materials to use in a trail build, the Town of Richmond Hill takes the following factors in to consideration:

- environmental protection;
- safety;
- accessibility;
- desired trail experience;
- maintenance.

Asphalt is used for surfacing main trails and some supporting connections while limestone screening or mulch is used for nature or "challenge" trails. The trail design and construction guidelines for Richmond Hill are well developed and can be found in the town's *Parks and Open Space Design and Construction Guidelines* (2007).

**City of Vaughan**

Surface options may include asphalt, concrete, granular and unit pavers, depending on the pathways intended use, setting and context. In urban areas, an asphalt surface is likely most appropriate, but it is recognized that in natural or environmentally-sensitive areas, a more natural surface type may be more suitable (City of Vaughan; Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan, 2008).

**Town of Markham**

All trails are constructed using asphalt (or another hard surface) over compacted limestone screens (Lorenzo Mele, Engineering Department, Town of Markham).

**Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville**

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville works in conjunction with TRCA on much of their trail construction projects and follows the TRCA *Trail Planning and Design Guidelines* (1992) when constructing trails in the area. This means that in town, trails are hard surface (i.e. asphalt) and in natural areas, trails are constructed using woodchips, or natural surfacing (Rob Raycroft, Leisure Services, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville).

**Township of Uxbridge**

The Township of Uxbridge uses wood chips for their trails in naturalized areas and limestone screenings through park areas. According to Town of Uxbridge staff, when these materials are compacted, both surfaces are accessible and fairly easy to maintain as well as accommodate bikes, strollers and wheelchairs for shorter distances. The Town of Uxbridge avoids the use of asphalt because of cost considerations (Bob Ferguson, Facilities, Town of Uxbridge).

**RATIONALE**

Generally, urban trails in the Toronto region intended for multi-use, especially those designed for bikers and commuters, are paved. Nature trails and/or trails in environmentally sensitive areas are primarily surfaced with gravel or woodchips. For the most part, the municipalities do not follow regimented trail surface standard guidelines. One of the exceptions however, is Richmond Hill which has a progressive and well formulated trail surfacing protocol that can be reviewed in the *Open Space Trail Design and Construction Guidelines* (Town of Richmond Hill, 2007). Overall, trail surface is determined on a case-by-case basis and factors include trail location, permitted uses and user numbers.

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**Date: February 13, 2009**