



York Regional Forest - Accessibility

Tuesday August 4th, 2009 10:00 – 12:00 noon
Transportation Services
90 Bales Drive East
Conference Room 169

Present: Ian Buchanan (York Region), Wilf Morley (Vice Chair - York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee), Kirsten Hill ((York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee), Kevin Shackleton (Regional Forest Advisory Team), Dave Puttock (Regional Forest Advisory Team), Patricia Longmuir (Accessibility Consultant, PEL Consulting), Lois Davies (Program Manager, AODA/ODA, York Region), James Lane (York Region), Catherine Collinson (York Region).

Regrets: Regional Councillor John Taylor (York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee), Marg Gaukel (York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee)

1. Welcome and Introductions (IB)

2. Purpose of the Meeting (IB)

- York Region and its partners are advancing the accessibility of York Regional Forest (YRF) trails. Considering the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee (YRAAC) request to consider implementing 1 or 2 fully accessible trails in the YRF.
- Need to determine if York Regional Forestry staff is on the right track in regards to the steps taken to determine the current and future accessibility of trails, and that the Universal Trails Assessment Process (UTAP) is fully understood by committee members.
- What does the UTAP mean to people with disabilities, and what does it mean to be fully accessible? The issue is much larger than just the physical trail; it means the marketing, parking, signage, and the whole experience.

3. Accessibility - Universal Trail Assessment Process (UTAP) - presentation Patti Longmuir, PEL Accessibility consultant.

- Greatest barrier of trail use by persons with disabilities is a general lack of information about on-trail conditions and lack of knowledge about the location of access points.

- UTAP generates objective trail information which allows individuals to make informed decisions about the accessibility of the trail. Key UTAP information: length, grade, width, cross slope, surface, features, and facilities.
- UTAP provides a standardized way to provide information on trail conditions with comparable signage to other trails.
- Objective information includes: access and use; construction and maintenance; mapping and interpretation; environmental protection and management; compliance with design standards.
- Signage at the head of the trail must be developed in order to convey the information provided by the UTAP to the trail users and educate the users on what to expect.
- Careful consideration for the types of trails and materials used for the surface must be made. Limestone screenings are good, there have been problems with asphalt – the grades and cross slopes are key, while being sensitive to drainage and maintenance.
- Surface and Cross Slope are very important in the accessibility of a trail.
- York Region needs to give careful consideration when choosing how to make the trail surface accessible and install it correctly. Compaction of surface material to create stability is the key.
- The current trail surface may already be accessible as long as the cross slope is right. A Rotational Penetrometer to measure compaction of the base, could help determine the accessibility of the YR trails.
- Along with surface material considerations, drainage issues must also be considered. Poor drainage can cause the trail to become inaccessible even with the proper surface material. Whenever possible the natural drainage pattern of the trail should not be changed.
- Choosing a current trail that is frequently used by the public is important in educating the public of the accessibility of the trail.
- **Key consideration:** Members' suggestion - making the trail fully accessible may be the wrong goal, making the trail as accessible as possible may be a more realistic goal. Fully accessible indicates that all of the standards are met; however a trail can meet 99% of the standards and can still be very accessible to a wide range of persons with disabilities.

4. Overview of York Regional Forest Proposal - presentation

Ian Buchanan, Manager, York Regional Forest

- 3 step process: 1) Apply the UTAP to 1-2 trails in the YRF (done), 2) match information against recent (June 2009) draft Built Environment Standard for accessible trails i.e. assess match with fully accessible trail criteria, 3) report back with options.
- The Hollidge Tract has been chosen for the focus of this initiative because it is very popular and has a better surface base than many of the other tracts (not as sandy).
- North Loop is the most attractive because it has less horse traffic (which may damage trail base).
- Status Review:
 - Trails (2) UTAP assessed in 2008.
 - Input from the YRAAC- fully accessible trail (Feb 2009).
 - Assessed against the Accessible Built Environment Standard - pending.
 - Review parking access options and functional trail linkage -ongoing.
 - Develop cost estimates/ options – report to Committee (YRAAC/ TRN).

- Installation target for 2010.
- Marketing of the trail.
- Education of the trail usage.
- Monitoring the trail: use, horse damage, ecological footprint, and maintenance issues.
- Adaptive management approach should be taken with this initiative.

5. Discussion

- Realistically, many of the Regional Forest trails probably are not far off the standard and could be inexpensively brought up to the standards with a little bit of funding and manual labour. Alternatively, cost out upgrades to provide full accessibility. For this natural environment experience, the Oak Ridges Moraine sand and trail grades are the biggest issue for the YRF.
- Report back to committee – Vice Chair of YRAAC suggested:
 - **Action** (York Region): prepare a memo for the September YRAAC
 - **Action** (York Region): Put together site visit to Seneca King Campus to view the UTAP trail and the proposed areas of the York Regional Forest. Invite the committee members.

6. Next Steps

- Prepare brief minutes and copy presentations.
- Draft a memo to send to the Accessibility Advisory Committee.
- Set up site visit and send out invitations.
- Assessment of the selected trail against Built Environment Standard (draft 2009).
- Cost out options
- December/January report to Committee (YRAAC/TRN).

Meeting adjourned 12:05

UTAP presentation - Patricia Longmuir, and
York Regional Forest Proposal presentation - Ian Buchanan
- attached to these minutes.

Minutes prepared by Catherine Collinson/ Ian Buchanan – errors or omissions, please advise.