



MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Transportation Services and Accessibility Advisory Committees

FROM: Kathleen Llewellyn-Thomas, Commissioner of Transportation Services

DATE: September 9, 2009

RE: **York Regional Forest Trail Accessibility**

Staff has been working with the Oak Ridges Trail Association and members of the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee, to advance the consideration of the accessibility of trails for persons with disabilities in the York Regional Forest. In February 2009, the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee requested that staff assess providing one or two fully accessible trails in the York Regional Forest.

A York Regional Forest Trails Accessibility Sub-committee was formed with members from the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee, the York Regional Forest Advisory Team, a trails accessibility consultant and Regional staff (Natural Heritage and Forestry, and AODA/ODA Community and Health Services). This team met on August 4, 2009 to discuss this project and ensure that staff were on the right track.

The meeting was very positive and valuable in confirming the direction of staff (*Attachment 1 – Minutes*). Ian Buchanan, Manager, Natural Heritage and Forestry Services provided a presentation on progress to date (*Attachment 2*). An informative presentation (*Attachment 3*) by the trails accessibility consultant (Ms. Patti Longmuir, PEL Consulting) provided detailed background on the application and benefit of the Universal Trails Assessment Process (UTAP).

For trails in general, it has been identified that the greatest barrier to 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. Staff has had two trails evaluated under the UTAP. The UTAP is an international standard which allows objective information on trail conditions to be presented to users in a standardized way.

On July 14, 2009, the Ontario government released the draft Accessible Built Environment Standard for public comment. The Accessible Built Environment Standard includes the criteria

and information relevant to natural environment trails. Staff are currently reviewing implications of this standard to the Region and this York Regional Forest trails initiative.

Next Steps:

- August 2009 – assess the UTAP criteria for the Regional Forest trails against the draft Accessible Built Environment Standard, to determine the fit and inform the development of options.
- August/September 2009 – provide comments on the draft Accessible Built Environment Standard.
- September/ October 2009 – York Regional Forest Trails Accessibility Sub-committee tour of UTAP signed Oak Ridges Trail and also the candidate site for an accessible trail in the York Regional Forest.
- November 2009 – develop options and costs for discussion around the consideration of providing fully accessible trail(s) in the York Regional Forest.
- January 2010 – as appropriate, report to Committee (Transportation Services and Accessibility Advisory Committees) and Regional Council on options, costs and implementation.

Kathleen Llewellyn-Thomas
Commissioner of Transportation Services

IB/bm

Attachments (3)

Copy to: Lois Davies, Program Manager, AODA/ODA, Community Services and Health Department

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