

Friends of the Trail Inc.

email: friendsofthetrail@yahoo.com

website: www.friendsofthetrail.ca

Presentation to the Panel on the Future of the Trent Severn Waterway
Quinte West City Hall
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Maria Luja
Chairperson
Friends Of The Trail Inc
613-398-0434.

The Friends of the Trail Inc. are pleased to be provided the opportunity to present to the panel an outline of a local initiative which we believe will preserve the cultural heritage of the Trent-Severn Waterway, conserve and protect the natural environment bordering the waterway, provide a four season recreational venue and create an economic and lifestyle asset for the various communities comprising the City of Quinte West.

Who Are the Friends of the Trail Inc.

The Friends of the Trail are a group of citizens mostly from Quinte West who organized in order to investigate what happened to the Tri-Ministerial/City of Quinte West commissioned Geoffrey Allen Report. The group was founded as a defense against the constant misuse of the vacated rail bed. We wanted to assist the owners to develop and manage the rail bed, which was designated a walking trail, into a ribbon of parkland. This ribbon would be beneficial to the community as a whole both as a trail for citizens as well as a tourist attraction. We were incorporated as a not for profit in September 2005. We produced a Management Report/Business Plan with the assistance of a Trenval Grant in April 2006. We applied for charitable status June 2007. We have been communicating with the various owners of the trail and with interested stakeholders. We expect to have a formal agreement to work on the development of the trail with the major owner the Province of Ontario within the next month.

Vision

As we explored the history and significance of the then deserted rail bed, we discovered what a diamond in the rough we had in Quinte West. A vision began

to emerge that when fulfilled will enhance the quality of life, provide a recreational asset and have a positive economic impact on the entire community.

We have described our vision as this:

The Lower Trent Trail will be an accessible asset which allows for preservation, enhancement and presentation of the natural environment while providing the public with a year-round multi-use, non-motorized recreational trail. Efforts will be made to conserve the corridor's diverse natural features and processes by minimizing human influences including intrusive signage, amenities and parking facilities. The trail will be developed to preserve and beautify the natural environment for the benefit of both wildlife and human populations. It will offer opportunities for public education and understanding of the natural, cultural and historic heritage. It will link rural and urban communities socially and economically. The trail will provide opportunities for out door physical activity and will also be a place for respite from a busy and hectic world; a place for people to slow down for contemplation and meditation”

History

The history of the trail is an integral part of the history of the river and its settlements. Settlements sprang up along the Trent River after the American Revolution. Many of these supported farmers settling in Sidney Township. In addition there was a thriving lumber industry and the Trent River was a natural route for rafting timber. Since the Trent River between Glen Ross and Trent Port was not the most hospitable of rivers, both the lumber industry and farmers were either looking for the seven set of rapids between Glen Ross and Trent Port to be tamed or for a railway to be built.

Eventually both were built. The railway opened to traffic North of Trenton Junction in 1884 with the Trent Canal being completed much later in 1920.

CN abandoned the rail line in the late 1980's and sold sections of the 17 kilometres between the 401 and Glen Ross to several private companies and to Sidney Township. The Province of Ontario acquired the remainder (71%) in 1998. The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources was to manage it.

The property is currently in the hands of the Ontario Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal. The Friends of the Trail Inc. expect to have an agreement in place within the month to follow through on the recommendations of the Management Report.

Bill Gray
Vice Chairperson
Friends Of The Trail Inc

The Lower Trent Trail follows the former Canadian National Railway line; it travels north-south from Glen Ross near Stirling to Trenton. The route follows the Trent River Valley and therefore the terrain varies from the hills formed in glacial times to flat farmland. The trail is 17 kilometers in length and has a right-of-way of 66 feet wide throughout most of its length. It passes by Oak Savannahs, drumlins and geological points of interest. The Lower Trent Trail has a wealth of natural resources. It supports many populations of wildlife species - providing food shelter and a continuous trail between areas of wooded cover.

Passing through all four wards of Quinte West, this 17 Km trail is strategically placed to take advantage of other trails. Where possible, the Friends Of The Trail Inc. will endeavor to integrate the Lower Trent Trail with other trails both in the City of Quinte West and beyond, to generally support a network of trails within the Trent River Valley

By its nature the Lower Trent Trail is an integral part of the Trent Severn Waterway. It offers the broadening of recreational opportunities and access to the Trent River at several points, providing individuals without watercraft, the opportunity to interact with the river. The eventual linking of the Quinte West Water Front trail and the Lower Trent Trail through the ECO center and the Glen Miller Conservation Area will provide easy access from the Trans Canada Highway and an ideal staging area from which to start their exploration of the Waterway's southern terminus.

The path the rail bed took at its creation was dictated by the Trent River, for not only did the river present an obstacle that had to be bridged to continue north but it also created the river valley that provided a gentle grade in which to lay the rail bed. The northern end of the Lower Trent Trail is located at the Glen Ross Lock. The rail bridge still spans the 200 meters of river that has to be crossed prior to reaching the Canal. It is our intention to work with the owners of this bridge to ensure a safe and picturesque walking bridge is constructed and maintained.

The Lower Trent Tail is definitely part of the Trent Severn Waterway and as roughly 5 times as many land based visitors use the waterway and surrounding facilities compared to boaters, it is easy to see the value that a parallel trail system brings to the waterway. Although the LTT is only 17 kilometers in length it forms the sound basis for a hiking and biking trail that could stretch the entire length of the Trent-Severn waterway. Imagine this canal and it's trails as a

thread that connects communities throughout the region and provides countless and varied recreational possibilities.

Donna Endicott
Fund Raising Chair
Friends Of The Trail Inc

Economic Impact

Opportunities for economic development along the Trent-Severn corridor extends beyond the waterway to interconnecting features such as the former rail line from Glen Ross to Trenton.

Development of this rail bed into the Lower Trent Trail will provide benefits to the environment, City of Quinte West, industry and private companies, tourists and governments.

Governments will receive tax revenues and foreign exchange, tourism operators will receive profits, local businesses will receive jobs and increased income from visitor expenditures and the environment will incur little degradation.

With its proximity to the Trent–Severn Waterway, the social, historical, and recreational attributes of the Lower Trent Trail will help promote local economic development as parks, trails and community leisure services are primary considerations and measures in a firm’s decision to move location and for developers of new residential housing.

The preservation of the green space provided by the trail through the urban areas, the environmentally sensitive areas abutting the trail and the enhancement of the trail’s natural features will showcase and support the City of Quinte West’s’ recently adopted marketing theme of “A Natural Attraction”.

By expanding the area’s network of trails and by providing a more suitable trail length for cyclists, the Lower Trent Trail will provide an answer to the Chamber of Commerce’s most frequently asked visitor question, “Where are your cycling trails?”

The Lower Trent Trail will be a catalyst for year-round tourism and eco-tourism opportunities in the areas stretching from Lock 1 to Lock 8. Local businesses will benefit from trail users spending for goods and services, and outfitters will benefit from goods purchased and equipment rentals. As use of the trail grows, jobs in tourism, outdoor recreation and service sector will emerge. New businesses such as bicycle shops and snack bars will be established to cater to trail users and other adjacent tourist attractions will experience increased numbers of visitors and revenues. When completed, it is anticipated that the Lower Trent

Trail will provide links with the Quinte West Waterfront Trail, the Kiwanis Riverfront Trail, Parks Canada Riverside Trail, the proposed Eco Centre, the Bleasell Boulder, Batawa Ski Trails, The Frankford Canal loop and Tourist Park, the Bata Island Trails, the locks system from Trenton to Glen Ross and a number of other connecting trails north of the city.

Because the Lower Trent Trail is a linear trail, users will spend money in more than one place by patronizing restaurants, shops and hotels along the trail route.

The preservation of railway corridors for public appreciation is important as part of our Canadian heritage. Because of its location The Lower Trent Trail offers a unique opportunity for educational tourism and geocaching activities sourced from the historical and cultural significance of both river and rail.

Ecological and Environmental Benefits

Because of its location parallel to the Trent River, the ecological benefits of The Lower Trent Trail are wide-ranging and quite extensive. The preservation of this rail corridor for non-motorized recreational use will provide a lower impact on ecosystems than other uses.

When developed, the Lower Trent Trail will benefit the natural environment by:

- Preserving and protecting the natural environment
- Providing habitat for wildlife
- Fostering and protecting biodiversity
- Providing a corridor for species migration
- Offering an alternative to automobile transportation for local trips
- Educating people about nature and local historical roots
- Increasing public awareness and sensitivity about the environment
- Contributing to the overall environmental health of the area

The Friends of the Trail have spent more than a thousand dollars on trees, seedlings, fruit-bearing shrubs and bushes in an effort to replace trail habitat destroyed by encroachment, misuse and neglect.

Partnerships

As community builders and contributors, our goal is to mobilize community interest, effort and involvement in the building of the Lower Trent Trail.

Our approach is one of building partnerships and alliances with governments, with other trail organizations and with local community agencies and groups.

Since our formation in 2004, we have established working relationships with the various owners of the trail such as The City of Quinte West, Batawa

Development Corporation, Sonoco Canada Corporation and the Province of Ontario.

The Lower Trent Conservation Authority has agreed to develop a link trail between the Bleasdell Boulder and Lower Trent Trail and a private developer has offered to build a connecting riverine loop at the site of the former Cardboard Factory in Frankford.

We have a plan with the Waterfront Trail Committee to build a connecting trail route along the east side of the Trent River to connect with the Lower Trent Trail at Glen Miller. This will also provide an easily accessible trail route for visitors to the planned Eco-Centre.

An access agreement to develop and manage the public lands is pending with the Province of Ontario and liability insurance is being obtained through Hike Ontario.

Donations of equipment, gravel and screening have been offered by local companies and several service clubs have indicated their willingness to participate in trail-building activities.

The Quinte West Chamber of Commerce's new Trails Map Brochure will include the Lower Trent Trail Route. The trail will be positioned as a site for trail events and activities; a healthy, green environmentally protected ribbon of parkland; and the only trail providing access to local natural attractions, loops and linkages with other trails and providing a connection with rail and river history of the area.

Conclusion

The history of the river, the railway and the canal are intertwined and those connections should be maintained even enhanced. The rail bed has been left to deteriorate far too long. The Lower Trent Trail requires general reconstruction and would form part of an integral historical, cultural, ecological and economic asset for the region and the City of Quinte West. To ensure that this comes to pass the assistance both moral and financial from the Federal government would be most helpful. We urge the panel to include in its recommendations that support be provided for the development of the Lower Trent Trail into a bona fide recreational asset as per the Management Report.