



REPORT OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE  
ON THE FEASIBILITY OF A  
COMMUNITY TRAIL USING THE RAIL CORRIDOR  
RIGHT-OF-WAY

APRIL 28, 2016



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Municipality of Chelsea has an Active Transportation Master Plan which identifies the potential of the conversion of the rail corridor into a multi purpose community trail
- Council, in May 2015, mandated an Ad Hoc Committee to advise it on the feasibility of such a project (Resolution 174-15)
- The Equiluqs firm conducted a study on the technical aspects and the potential costs of the project
- The Ad Hoc Committee recommends that Council move forward with the conversion project based on the findings of the study produced by Equiluqs



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Committee recommends the development of a multi purpose non-motorized community trail on the right-of-way of the rail corridor from the Municipality's northern border to Loretta Road in the south of the municipality
- The Committee recommends public consultation on this project proceed as soon as possible
- The Committee recommends the creation of a committee that would seek external and community financing for this project to minimize costs for the Municipality.

# INTRODUCTION

## ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN

- An Active Transportation Master Plan was adopted by Council in December 2014 (Resolution 354-14).
- The Plan proposes guidelines and planning that would lead to the implementation of community trails responsive to the needs of Chelsea residents.
- Section 3.3 of the Plan identifies the conversion of the railroad corridor into a non-motorized multi purpose trail, linking the the municipality south to north.



# INTRODUCTION

## WINTER TRAIL

- For 10 years, the railway corridor has been groomed in the winter to allow cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and walking and has become very popular with residents
- A partnership between the Municipality, Chelsea Trails, local businesses and voluntary organizations make this winter trail possible
- The winter trail is now 18 km long

# INTRODUCTION

## MUNICIPAL DECISIONS

- Council terminated the lease with the CCFO in August 2015 (Resolution 269-15)
- On March 30<sup>th</sup> 2015 Chelsea Trails presented to the General Committee its vision of a multi purpose community trail project (<https://sentierschelseatrails.org/linear-park-vision>).
- Council adopted, on May 4<sup>th</sup> 2015, a resolution mandating an Ad Hoc Committee to conduct a feasibility study and provide recommendations on the next steps of the project (Resolution 174-15)

# LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS AND ZONING

- A legal opinion was received by the Municipality specifying advance notice be given to the Quebec Ministry of Transportation and publication of a announcement stating its intention to remove the railway infrastructure as mandatory steps prior to commencing work on the community trail.
- The use of the corridor as a multi purpose non-motorized community trail does not require rezoning.

# FEASIBILITY STUDY

- The Equiluqs engineering firm was hired to carry out a feasibility study on costs and technical aspects associated with the project
- The firm's report specifies an initial obligation to conduct environmental studies before commencing work
- Work to remove the rails and ties should be undertaken in the short term

# PUBLIC CONSULTATION

- We believe in an open and transparent consultation process to gather the widest input for establishing community consensus
- We believe that holding meetings in the neighbourhoods along the corridor will be necessary to understand the concerns of residents
- Consultations should be held before the call for tenders on work related to the first phase

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## IMPLEMENTATION

- We recommend Council adopt two principles to guide this project: respect of the environment and minimize negative impacts on neighboring properties
- The Committee recommends that Council proceed with and complete the environmental and geotechnical studies as proposed by Equiluqs (areas A, B and C)
- If environmental studies indicate it is possible, the Committee recommends that Council proceed with the work in areas A and B

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## IMPLEMENTATION

- The Committee recommends proceeding with the work of removing the rails and ties
- The Committee does not recommend proceeding with work in area C
- The Committee does not recommend proceeding with the standardization and certification work of a multi purpose trail (described as Step 2 and 3, Section 8.1 "Proposed works - General" of the Equiluqs report)

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## DESIGN

- We recommend a community trail:
- Focused on the needs of residents;
- Accessible to active transportation;
- Free of motor vehicles;
- With a screened stone surface to reduce bike speed.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## SAFETY

- We recommend installing pedestrian crossings at the intersections of Route 105 and River Road
- Installing barriers at important municipal road crossings and stop signs at other road crossings and private roads
- Ensuring the safety and security of bridges and areas with significant drop offs
- Creating a network of volunteers who live along the trail. This network would report to the Municipality any accidents or incidents that might compromise the safety of users and neighboring properties

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## SIGNAGE

We recommend signage on all aspects of the trail's use:

- Drawing up a code of ethics for users;
- Non-motorized environment;
- Waste;
- Dogs and their litter;
- Noise;
- Well-marked parking areas at: access points, zones of prohibited parking to ensure clear passage for emergency vehicles.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## PARKING

- We recommend that the Municipality identifies parking spaces on municipal land where possible. The Gleneagle, Kirk's Ferry and Farm Point sites could be improved by adding appropriate signage to maximizing parking safety in the first phase of the project
- The Municipality should provide, in subsequent phases, parking spaces along the trail where the need is identified.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## SANITARY INSTALLATIONS

- After some experience of use, we recommend that the Municipality look into the possibility of installing a public toilet in a suitable place

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## RIVER ACCESS

- We recommend that the Municipality investigates the possibility of providing at least one access to the river for trail users. This access would reduce the temptation for users to encroach on neighboring properties.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## MUNICIPAL SERVICES

- We recommend that the Municipality plans appropriate maintenance for four-season use
- Prioritization should be given to:
- Stability work and drainage;
- Annual cutting of brush and grass along the trail;
- Maintenance of multiple barriers on the trail;
- Cleanliness of the trail by providing animal resistant garbage containers.

# RECOMMENDATION

## FINANCING

- We recommend Council establishes a committee to bring together representatives of business and community groups to set up a fundraising campaign.
- We recommend exploring all provincial and federal government funding programs and opportunities with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and proceeding with appropriate funding applications.

# COMMITTEE MEMBERS

## SIGNATURES

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Yves Béthencourt,  
Municipal Councillor

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Simon Joubarne,  
Municipal Councillor

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Michel Gravel,  
Sentiers Chelsea Trails

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Alain Piché,  
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Michel Hébert,  
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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- We wish to thank the Municipal staff that have contributed significantly to the deliberations and work of this Ad Hoc Committee:
- Ronald Rojas, Recreation Director
- Marie-Danielle Michaud, Recreation
- Paola Zurro, Director of Public Works
- Maria Elena Isaza, Director, Urbanization and Planning