



TOWN OF
HALTON HILLS
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REPORT

TO: Mayor Lawlor and Members of Council

FROM: Mark Taylor – Senior Landscape Architect

DATE: March 24, 2025

REPORT NO.: CSE-2025-008

SUBJECT: Silver Creek Trail Feasibility Study

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report CSE-2025-008 dated March 24, 2025, regarding the Silver Creek Trail Feasibility Study, be received;

AND FURTHER THAT the recommendations in the Silver Creek Trail Feasibility Study, as outlined in Report CSE-2025-008, be included in the Town's 2026-2035 capital budget and forecast, for consideration by Budget Committee;

AND FURTHER THAT staff advance the implementation of the project as outlined in Confidential Appendix B, through existing budgets;

AND FURTHER THAT staff advance the initial studies (Fluvial Geomorphology) to advance permit requirements, as outlined in Report CSE-2025-008, through existing budgets;

AND FURTHER THAT staff report back pending the outcomes of the initial studies, if required, to update Council on any changes to the overall scope or feasibility of the Silver Creek Trail.

KEY POINTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- The Silver Creek Trail was identified as a potential/desired trail through the Active Transportation Master Plan, the Mill Street Study, the Destination Downtown Secondary Plan, and the GO Station Secondary Plan.

- Council approved the Silver Creek Trail Feasibility Study as part of the 2023 Capital Budget, through Project 8500-22-2402.
- Town staff and a consultant team reviewed the feasibility of trail construction through the Silver Creek Valley corridor.
- There are a number of technical, permit and property considerations that need to be addressed in order to develop the trail.
- Recommendations are provided for strategic advancement of the trail development over the next 10 years, subject to budget review and approval.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:

The Silver Creek Trail was identified in the 2018 Active Transportation Masterplan (ATMP) as a long-term project with a 10+ year horizon. As part of the Mill Street Neighbourhood Street Study in 2019 and the Destination Downtown Secondary Plan in 2019, further interest in the trail was confirmed as part of the public consultation and neighbourhood engagement for those projects. Ongoing work on the GO Station Secondary Plan continues to highlight the desire for additional trail systems in the GO Station area, as well as the need to maximize recreational opportunities due to the parkland needs that will be required as a result of intensification and population growth.

In order to advance the feasibility for trail development within the Silver Creek valley, between Maple Avenue northward to Wildwood Road, staff carried out a technical feasibility study. The study was completed using a combination of internal staff resources and a specialist consultant, North South Environmental Inc. The viability of the trail was determined - considering ecological, topographic and property ownership factors. The study also includes cost estimates, prioritization of trail sections development, and identifies key barriers to implementation – including Endangered Species permits from Ministry of Environment Conservation & Parks and private property considerations. Additional details are contained in the Study, attached as Appendix A.

Key staff findings include:

- Trail feasibility is contingent on the ability to resolve private property ownership considerations and obtain Ministry and CVC permits;
- The most feasible section, from a technical perspective, is between College Avenue and Ewing Street;
- A phased approach to studies and trail development is recommended to advance the project, with a strategic sequence of funding; and
- Approximate cost for trail construction is \$1,115,000, excluding property considerations and permit costs.

Key results from the Ecological Review (Appendix 2 of the Study) include:

- Relevant environmental legislation at the federal, provincial and municipal levels;
- Importance of protecting natural heritage features, including habitat;
- Identifying additional studies required to address species at risk;

- Identifying endangered species present, including Redside Dace, four species of bats, Jefferson Salamander, Rusty-patched Bumble Bee, Black Ash and Butternut trees; and
- Recommendations on protecting habitat and opportunities for enhancement;
- Trail design and alignment recommendations, based on best practices.

Key Feasibility Study recommendations related to trail construction phasing, to be further considered as part of the Town's capital budget and recognizing the Town's financial capacity, are:

- 2025: Initial Studies (fluvial geomorphology): existing budget
- 2026: Further studies, retain consultant for MECP permit and further design (\$40,000) and conduct Phase 2 ESA on former United Coop lands (\$45,000)
- 2027: Complete studies and start permits
- 2028: Capital project funding for Railway to Ewing St trail (\$70,000)
- 2029: Capital project funding for Guelph St to Railway (\$90,000)
- 2031: Capital project funding for Park Ave. to Guelph St. (\$280,000)
- 2034: Capital project funding for Ewing St. to Ontario St. (\$635,000)

It is recommended that the Parks & Open Space section's workplan and associated capital budget forecast further consider the projects/studies identified above, for the 2026-2034 timeframe, as part of the annual Budget Committee process. Initial next steps related to works for 2025 and funded with an existing budget are noted above and detailed in Confidential Appendix B.

Recognizing that existing Parks & Open Space staff are at capacity advancing other priority projects, the timing of advancing this major multi-year trail project will be dependent on resource availability.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report identifies natural areas and heritage as one of the Town's Strategic priorities. Providing increased access to parks, open spaces and trails is one of the Town's Strategic Plan priorities.

RELATIONSHIP TO CLIMATE CHANGE:

This report impacts and/or helps address climate change and the Town's Net Zero target through climate mitigation. Trails and pedestrian facilities encourage walking and cycling, and reduce the reliance on the automobile for local trips and other recreational activities.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Public Engagement will be required in the future as further viability of each trail section is reviewed. When each section has been confirmed to be technically feasible, staff will engage residents of that neighbourhood and those directly neighbouring the land where the trail is proposed.

The Town's Active Transportation Committee was consulted regarding this Study and provided recommendations on prioritization of the trail sections.

Past public engagement occurred through the Town's Active Transportation Master Plan, where the proposed Silver Creek Trail was identified as well as through the Mill Street Neighbourhood Study. Both the Destination Downtown and GO Station Secondary Plans identified the desire/need for the trail linkages and included significant public consultation. Public engagement included Online Surveys, Public Open House/PIC/Workshop and Stakeholder Meetings. Staff will also engage with the Steering Committee for the GO Station Secondary Plan.

INTERNAL CONSULTATION:

Staff from Finance were consulted in the preparation of this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

This report will require funding in a future budget year and therefore needs to be referred to the Budget Committee for tracking purposes.

In the 2023 Capital Budget, the Silver Creek Trail Feasibility Project (8500-22-2402) was approved with a budget of \$50,000. To date, \$15,000 has been spent to complete this study.

Subject to Council approval of this report, staff will allocate the remaining \$35,000 to advance the recommendations outlined in Confidential Appendix B and to undertake essential Fluvial Geomorphology and related studies as outlined above. These initial studies are required to advance meeting permit requirements and inform detailed design decisions. These key studies will further refine the feasibility of future trail development before additional funding is considered through the budget process. Any further studies or requirements identified through this work will be included in future budget requests for Council's consideration.

It is important to note that the estimated cost of trail construction (\$1,115,000+) and ongoing operating costs (+\$5,000 per year) are not currently incorporated into the Town's 10-Year Capital Forecast or Long-Range Financial Plan. These additions will be subject to future affordability assessments as part of the Budget Committee review and updates to the Long-Range Financial Plan.

Additionally, implementation of this multi-year project may require additional staffing resources, such as a Landscape Architect, or the reprioritization of other Parks & Open Space projects, depending on budget approvals and staff capacity at the time.

Reviewed and approved by,

Kevin Okimi, Director of Parks, Community Development & Environment

Damian Szybalski, Commissioner of Community Services and Acting Chief
Administrative Officer