York Regional Forest Accessible Trail Initiative
- Nature for All -

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OUTLINE:

• Who - Regional Municipality of York
• Why accessibility?
• Where - York Regional Forest
• What - 1st Trail - chronology of events
• How - Design Guideline
• What’s next.....
• Lessons learned

Urban Forest Innovation – Planning, Practice and Design
Location - the facts

Southern Ontario: Woodland Loss

Upland woodland- shrubland loss from pre-settlement to 1978, by municipality. Figures represent percentages.

Natural Heritage Information Centre (MNR)

municipality with no data
<30
50 – 70
>70 – 80
>80 – 85
>85 – 90
>90 – 100

southern boundary of Canadian Shield
municipal boundary
county/regional boundary

Region of York boundary
Location - the numbers

- Largest metropolitan area in Canada
- Part of Greater Toronto Area
- Within 2 hours drive for 6+ M people in the GTA
- Population currently 1,000,000 +
- 9 local municipalities
- Land base 1,776 km²
Legislation and Standards

• Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)
• Preliminary Draft Built Environment Standard, 2007
• Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, 2012
• Design of Public Spaces Standard – applies to outdoor spaces including recreational trails
• Accessibility in buildings through Ontario Building Code
• Applies to new or redeveloped public trails intended for recreation and leisure, but not wilderness or backcountry trails e.g. those built in a way to reduce environmental impact
• Includes design standards for trails, signage and parking
Why Accessibility?

• 1.85 M people in Ontario have a disability 15.5% (1 in 7)
• As population ages this increases to 1 in 5 by 2036
• The number of seniors 65 and over will more than double by 2036
• By 2017 for the first time, seniors will account for a larger proportion of the population than children under 14

Accessibility Benefits Everyone
York Regional Forest

- 1800’s forests cleared for pioneer settlement
- 1920’s Agreement Forest Program to restore degraded landscapes
- 2001 1st public forest to be FSC certified in Canada
- 21 properties, 2,300 hectares, 120 km of multi use trails

![Image of forest before and after restoration]
York Regional Forest

• 20 year Forest Management Plan (1998 - 2018) and 5 year Operating Plans

• Demonstration forest:
  ➢ silvicultural management
  ➢ public land management
  ➢ wildlife habitat
  ➢ environmental education
  ➢ passive recreation
  ➢ trail design and management
Trails Use and Management

• Access for maintenance, management and emergency access
• Multi-use trails – much on ORM
• Public recreation including:
  ➢ hiking & dog walking
  ➢ mountain biking
  ➢ nature appreciation
  ➢ horseback riding
  ➢ hunting
  ➢ snowshoeing/ x-country skiing
Accessible Trail – the beginning

• 2008 Region Accessibility Advisory Committee request to review legislation and evaluate options for accessible trails
• 2009 Accessible Trail Sub-committee
• Forest Public Advisory Team input
• Meetings, tours, site criteria etc.
• Hired expert to inform the process
• Primarily mobility and sight disabilities focus

Consultation, Collaboration and Learning
1st Accessible Trail at the Hollidge Tract

- 1 km loop re-construction - selected in the Hollidge Tract – key location
- Trail design based on draft Build Environment Standard - criteria
- 2010 summer - trail designed and constructed
- Official opening September 2010
- Promotion – tours, brochures, web site, 360° images
- Monitoring - trail cam, interviews, surveys, car counts...
Monitoring - Trail Cam
Monitoring - Trail Cam
Integrated Accessibility Standard - 2012

Regulation Sect. 80.9 (1) - requirements:

- Width min. (1m) & height (2.1m)
- Firm and stable surface
- Surface ‘openings’ criteria
- Edge guard (5cm) at water or drop off
- Trail head signage – length, surface type, avg. & min. trail width, avg. & max. running slope and cross slope, location of amenities (if provided)
- Consultation (‘approval’) with Accessibility Advisory Committee on the specific criteria

“Now! ... That should clear up a few things around here!”

http://go.to/funpic
Building on Success – 2012/13

- Fall 2012 - RFP for accessible trails based on our approved criteria:
  - Design guidelines to address requirements of 2012 Integrated Accessibility Standard
  - Detailed design for accessible trails in the; North Tract (2 km), Hollidge Tract (3 km), Eldred King Tract (2 km), Hall Tract (2 km)
  - 9km of shovel ready projects for implementation over next 10 years
York Region Accessible Trail Guideline

2013 specifications approved by Accessibility Advisory Committee:

• Width 1.5m allows for turning
• Surface firm, stable (screenings)
• Cross slope recommended < 1:20 (5%) never > 1:10 (10%)
• Running slope rec. 1:20 (5%) never > 1:10 (10%) max. & resting places
• Resting intervals and seating
• Others...
Next Steps & Lessons Learned

- 2014 - just completed construction of 2 km loop in North Tract
- Continued promotion of accessible trails – tours, events - spread the word, Google pilot (street view)
- Reconstruction or new trails - not that complex, not that expensive
- 2015 – new Forest Stewardship and Education Centre – accessible facility and trail hub
- Personal and professional learning
Who benefits – we all do

Challenge – Become an Accessibility Champion!
In memory and gratitude to Margaret Gaukel
- accessibility advocate
- trail champion
Thank you – questions?

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