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The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

From: Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development
Report: #2023-INFO-71
Date: August 25, 2023

Subject:

Durham Meadoway Visioning Study: Phase 2 Community Engagement

Recommendation:

Receive for information

Report:

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the community engagement component of the Durham Meadoway Visioning Study.

2. Background

2.1 The Planning Division (Transportation Planning section) is coordinating the Durham Meadoway Visioning Study in partnership with the City of Pickering, the Town of Ajax, the Town of Whitby and the City of Oshawa. Proposed as an active transportation corridor and greenspace extending from Rouge National Urban Park in the City of Pickering to Harmony Road in the City of Oshawa, the Durham Meadoway will connect four municipalities along more than 30 kilometres of the Gattineau Hydro Corridor. The Durham Meadoway will be the easterly extension of the existing 16-kilometre Meadoway that has transformed the same hydro corridor through Scarborough.

2.2 The Visioning Study will establish a common vision and framework to guide future detailed planning, coordination and implementation of the Durham Meadoway. Along with active transportation infrastructure, the corridor provides opportunities for ecological enhancements, gateway features and community amenities. Community input is a key component of the study as it progresses.

3. Previous Reports and Decisions

3.1 [Report #2022-INFO-95](#) provided information to Council on the study, which commenced in October 2022.

3.2 [Report #2023-INFO-24](#) provided an update to Council in March on the Phase 1 community engagement component of the study.

4. Project Status

4.1 The Visioning Study is being conducted in three phases, as illustrated below.



4.2 Phase 2 of the study, which took place between March and July 2023, gathered community and stakeholder input on:

- a. Alignment alternatives and identifying a preferred route for the Durham Meadoway multi-use path.
- b. Two interim routes in advance of establishing the longer-term preferred route in certain sections.
- c. Potential areas for gateways, amenities and programming as part of the concept plan.

4.3 The primary community engagement activities within Phase 2 included:

- a. Stakeholder Meeting #3 held on April 17, attended by representatives from the Region and 12 organizations.
- b. Public Open House #2 held on April 26, attended by approximately 55 residents.
- c. Two area municipal council and committee presentations (Town of Ajax Council on April 17; and the Town of Whitby Active Transportation and Safe Roads Advisory Committee on May 9).

4.4 Secondary community engagement activities included:

- a. An online interactive map survey held between June 10 and July 17, showing the preferred route alignment. The interactive map survey was intended to solicit feedback on the alignment, features and ideas presented at the Public Open House. It was hosted on the “Your Voice Durham” project webpage, which received 75 submissions.
- b. Two online communication campaigns promoting the Public Open House event as well as the interactive map survey.
- c. Opportunities for municipal and agency stakeholders to provide comments on materials circulated by email, including the preferred route, programming and amenities.

4.5 Attachment #1 provides an overview of the consultation activities, participation and the key themes that emerged.

4.6 Materials that were presented to the public for input at Public Open House #2 on April 26 are available from the project webpage [<https://yourvoice.durham.ca/durham-meadoway>].

5. Next Steps

5.1 Input collected from municipal, agency and community stakeholders will be used to:

- Identify any refinements for the preferred route and interim routes if necessary, as well as considerations for future design work; and
- Review the location of potential amenities, programming and places of interest along the preferred route.

5.2 Regional staff intend to present the content of the draft Visioning Study report to area municipal committees and/or councils in the fall. Regional staff will reach out to Pickering, Ajax, Whitby and Oshawa staff to make the necessary arrangements.

5.3 It is anticipated that the final Visioning Study and recommendations from this work will be presented to a future Standing Committee in fall 2023.

6. Relationship to Strategic Plan

6.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:

- a. Objective 1.1: Protect, preserve and restore the natural environment, including greenspaces, waterways, parks, trails, and farmlands.
- b. Objective 1.5: Expand sustainable and active transportation.
- c. Objective 2.1: Revitalize existing neighbourhoods and build complete communities that are walkable, well-connected, and have a mix of attainable housing.
- d. Objective 3.3: Enhance communication and transportation networks to better connect people and move goods more effectively.
- e. Objective 5.1 Optimize resources and partnerships to deliver exceptional quality services and value.

7. Attachments

Attachment #1: Durham Meadowway Visioning Study: Phase 2 Community Engagement Summary

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

Brian Bridgeman, MCIP, RPP, PLE
Commissioner of Planning and
Economic Development



Durham Meadowway Visioning Study

**Phase 2 Community Engagement Summary
August 2023**



Planning and Economic Development
Department
Transportation Planning

Project Introduction

What is the Durham Meadowway?

The Durham Meadowway is a proposed pedestrian and cycling route and linear park that will connect people to destinations across more than 30 kilometres of Durham Region. In addition to providing a significant east-west recreational facility and active transportation spine, the Durham Meadowway also has the potential to become a multi-faceted space for people that includes ecological enhancements, public art and community amenities.



What is the purpose of the Visioning Study?

The Durham Meadowway Visioning Study will provide a robust vision and framework that will guide the future detailed planning and implementation of the corridor. The study will identify a functional (high-level) route for the multi-use path and create a concept plan for the types of experiences, amenities, gateways, public art and other elements that community stakeholders would like to see programmed or evolve over time. The Visioning Study will be the first of several initiatives that will be needed to take the Durham Meadowway from concept to construction.

The Durham Meadowway Visioning Study will culminate with a final report that will be presented and made publicly available in fall 2023.

Project milestones

We are here



Phase 1: October 2022 to March 2023	Phase 2: March 2023 to July 2023	Phase 3: July 2023 to November 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vision and guiding principles• Route option identification and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Amenities and programming concept plan• Concept illustrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Study finalization• Final presentations to councils and/or committees

Community Engagement

Overview

Phase 2 of the Durham Meadoway Visioning Study took place between March and July. Goals of Phase 2 included:

- Evaluation of alignment alternatives and identification of a preferred route for the Durham Meadoway multi-use path.
- Recommendation for two interim routes to provide for more immediate connectivity in advance of establishing the preferred route in these sections.
- Identification of potential areas for gateways, amenities and programming located along the multi-use path as part of the concept plan.
- Presentation of draft visualizations and renderings for sections of the Durham Meadoway.
- Continued outreach with Indigenous Communities

Community engagement activities in Phase 2:



1 Open House



1 Online Interactive Map Survey



1 Municipal and Agency Stakeholder Working Group meeting



2 council and committee presentations



2,765 visits to project website on Your Voice Durham (as of mid-July)

How will this information be used?

	Open House	Online Interactive Map Survey	Agency and Municipal Stakeholder Working Group	Council and Committee Presentations
Inform amenities and programming concept plan	✓		✓	✓
Inform route option selection and evaluation	✓	✓	✓	✓

Engagement Activities and Timing

All Community Stakeholders

Dec 2022
Your Voice Durham page launch

Jan 2023
Communications campaign (direct mail and social media)

Jan 2023
Public Open House #1 (two locations)

Feb 2023
Online Survey #1

Apr – Jul 2023
Online Survey #2 (Interactive Map)

Apr 2023
Public Open House #2 (one location)

Jun – Jul 2023
Communications campaign (social media)

Municipal and Agency Stakeholder Working Group

Nov 2022 – Jun 2023
Input on draft materials

Nov 2022
Project kick-off meeting

Dec 2022
Vision and guiding principles discussion

Dec 2022
Route option discussion

Jan 2023
Municipal and Agency Stakeholder open house

Apr 2023
Preferred route, amenities and programming discussion

Aug – Sep 2023
Input on Draft Visioning Study Report

Council and Committees

Nov 2022 – Jun 2023
Area municipal council and Committee presentations

Nov 2022
Regional Council Information Report: [Link](#)

Mar 2023
Regional Council Information Report [Link](#)

Sep – Oct 2023
Area municipal council and Committee presentations

Nov 2023
Final report to Regional COW or PED Committee

Legend  Ongoing  Upcoming  Completed



Municipal and Agency Stakeholder Engagement

1 Municipal and Agency Stakeholder meeting

1. Preferred route, programming and amenities discussion – April 17, 2023

Additional engagement activities

- Meeting with Hydro One on potential for renewable energy facilities on hydro corridor lands – March 13.
- Meeting with Ministry of Transportation, Ontario (MTO) to discuss trail alignment alternatives across Highway 412 – March 15.
- Meeting with Town of Whitby staff to discuss trail alignment alternatives across Highway 412 – May 9.
- The April meeting materials were circulated to stakeholders for input, which was received from April to June.

Participating organizations

- Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority (CLOCA)
- City of Oshawa
- City of Pickering
- City of Toronto – Beare Hill Park
- Durham Active Transportation Committee (DATC)
- Durham OneNet
- Durham Region Cycling Coalition (DRCC)
- Hydro One Networks Inc. – Real Estate Services
- Infrastructure Ontario
- Parks Canada
- Region of Durham
- Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA)
- Town of Ajax
- Town of Whitby

Stakeholder input – key themes



Infrastructure Considerations

Municipal and agency stakeholders were asked to review and comment on the evaluation of route options and the selection of a preferred route (and interim route in two areas). The following themes emerged from the input:

- Need to confirm that the preferred route alignment can be realistically constructed (e.g., through areas with challenging topography, wetland areas and at major watercourse crossings).
- Clarify scoring of certain route options based on technical information available.
- Consider potential costs to construct trail more explicitly as part of evaluation criteria.
- Consider connectivity of different trail types (boardwalks, hiking trails) and modes including across different seasons (e.g., cross-country skiing, snowshoeing).
- Incorporate green energy along the hydro corridor.



Interact with Nature

Municipal and agency stakeholders provided a variety of input on the proposed trail alignment as well as potential amenity areas in terms of their interaction with the surrounding environment. Main themes included:

- Ensure protection and/or enhancement of environmentally significant features, particularly for the Nature Space topology areas.
- Use native plants for restoration or enhancements of woodland or meadow cover, including drought-tolerant species.
- Minimize litter and promote recycling for Durham Meadoway users.
- Consider dark sky compliant principles to minimize light pollution, especially for natural areas.



User Experience

Municipal and agency stakeholders provided a variety of input on aspects of the Durham Meadoway that will contribute to the experience of users, including amenities, programming and focal points. Themes that emerged from these comments included:

- Ensure gateways meet proper setback requirements from road rights-of-way and zoning requirements with respect to adjacent land uses.
- Make the Durham Meadoway preferred route AODA compliant as well as other multi-use path connections to it.
- Integrate wayfinding and educational signage.
- Ensure road crossing treatments are safe; consider additional grade separations at certain locations.
- Consider best practices for low-impact pathway lighting.



Public Open House #2

55 participants

Have your say on the vision for the Durham Meadoway!

Join us at our final open house:

April 26, 6 to 8 p.m.
Regional Headquarters, 605 Rossland Road
East, Whitby



Learn more and RSVP: yourvoice.durham.ca/durham-meadoway

- Held on April 26 at the Regional Headquarters building.
- Presentation materials included:
 - Project background, including final Vision Statement and Principles.
 - Route evaluation criteria.
 - Route alignment alternatives evaluation for areas where multiple options were examined
 - Typologies for gateways, amenity areas and programming for the Durham Meadoway.
 - Draft visualizations.
 - Large map showing preferred route, connections to trails and destinations, and potential locations for gateways, amenity areas and programming.
- Participants provided input at the Public Open House and through an Online Interactive Map posted on Your Voice Durham following the event (from June 10 to July 17).

How was the open house promoted?



Public Service Announcement

Formal notice for Public Open House #2 event.



Social Media

3 posts on the Region's Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn accounts.



Stakeholders

Additional social media by municipalities, Durham Region Cycling Coalition, and other individuals and community groups.



Other

Regional newsletter articles (June 15 and July 13); news story published by Novae Res Urbis, GTHA edition newsletter (July 5).

Participant Input – Key Themes

Note: Participants provided a range of feedback. For example, some participants encouraged the use of lighting and others would rather minimize lighting to avoid impacts on wildlife and nearby homes.

Natural Environment

- Concern about impacts of trail or amenity areas on sensitive uses and wildlife.
- Ensure invasive plant species are not used and risks in their spread are minimized.
- Concern with providing trail connections from the waterfront to the Durham Meadoway in terms of potential impacts.

Things to do and see

- Consider how the multi-use path can be used at different times of day as well as for different seasons.
- Incorporate space for kid-friendly activities in Active Play topology areas.
- Opportunity to engage schools in planting or learning about natural areas along route.

Identity

- Create access to amenities such as vending machines, washrooms, water stations, etc.
- General support for amenity/topology areas (e.g., Active Play, Garden and Community, Nature Space).

Safety

- Consider Wi-Fi and good cellular coverage along the route.
- Ensure illumination and signage for better emergency response.
- Concerns regarding security and blocking off hydro tower access

Signage (Wayfinding and Education)

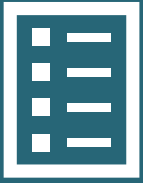
- Opportunity to educate on nature and human interaction.
- Access to connecting trails and cycling facilities from the Durham Meadoway route.
- Ensure connections and signage to connecting pedestrian and/or cycling routes.

Comfort and Accessibility

- Consider people with mobility issues, including safe access to parking.
- Design a space that is comfortable and maintained year-round.
- Provide moments of rest along the route.

Good neighbours

- Consider how to reduce the impact of potential amenity areas on surrounding property owners (e.g., Nature Space topology areas)
- Concern if homeowners need to care and maintain some of the adjacent green space.



Online Survey #2

307 visitors

13 contributors shared their comments on the preferred route for the Durham Meadowway (June 10 to July 17).

75 comments were received on the Online Interactive Map.

Have your say on the Durham Meadowway!
Visit the project page to view the proposed route and let us know what you think.

Learn more: yourvoice.durham.ca/durham-meadowway

Online Interactive Map survey categories

- Consider this when building the Durham Meadowway... **39** comments
- I have a concern about the proposed route... **17** comments
- I like the proposed route because... **19** comments

Durham Meadowway Visioning Study

Durham Meadowway Visioning Study

The Durham Meadowway is a proposed active transportation corridor and greenspace connecting Rou...

[View Project](#)

How was the survey promoted?



Newsletter

241 Your Voice Durham page subscribers reached by email, plus 2 newsletter articles.



Social Media

5 social media posts across Durham Region's Twitter and Facebook accounts.



Stakeholders

Additional social media by municipalities and Durham Region Cycling Coalition.

Online Survey #2 Input – Key Themes



Consider this when building the Durham Meadoway...

- Comments on connectivity to nearby cycling routes, trails or destinations:
 - Multi-Use Paths towards Pine Ridge Secondary School or City Centre along hydro corridor (Pickering).
 - Trails in Heber Down Conservation Area (Whitby) and Seaton Trail (Pickering).
 - Rouge National Urban Park, Beare Hill Park and Toronto Zoo.
 - Joseph Kolodzie trail along Oshawa Creek to Lake Ontario (Oshawa).
 - Transit, carpool and parking lot connections.
- Comments on the provision of signage:
 - Wayfinding signage to nearby destinations (e.g., Downtown Brooklin).
 - Emergency contact information.
 - Opportunity for educational signage at Cherrywood Transformer Station (Pickering).
- Comments on specific locations in terms of access/traffic:
 - Controlled intersection crossings that can accommodate cyclists and pedestrians.
 - Crossing Highway 412 for Durham Meadoway and connecting north-south routes to the Waterfront Trail.



I have a concern about the proposed route...

- Location-specific comments on the preferred route:
 - Provide safe access to Durham Meadoway; noted at several busy road intersections.
 - Suggestions for changes in route alignment; several sections noted as being in busy locations.
 - Ensure specific route sections are connected to urban areas and not secluded.
- Comments on vehicles using the Durham Meadoway:
 - Concerns about use of e-bikes and safety, as they do not generate much noise.
 - Concerns about potential for all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) using the route.



I like the proposed route because...

- Location-specific comments on the preferred route:
 - Offers great connection for active transportation, and alternative to using busy roads.
- Comments on natural environment and other amenities:
 - Opportunity to restore meadows and plant pollinators
 - Opportunity for interpretive signage to explain nearby features (e.g., Cherrywood Transformer Station, Duffins Creek natural environment, history of Windfields Farms, Greenbelt areas).



Council and Committee Presentations

2 presentations

During Phase 2 of the study, presentations were made to the following councils and committees at the request of area municipal staff:

Council or Committee	Date	Agenda Link
Town of Ajax Council	April 17, 2023	Town of Ajax Link
Town of Whitby Active Transportation and Safe Roads Advisory Committee	June 8, 2023	Town of Whitby Link