



2025 Budget Request

Request: Rail Trail Improvements

From: Niall Lobley, CAO

Department: Community and Environmental Services

Total Financial Ask: \$70,000

Type of Budget Request: *Capital*

This document and its attachments are public and available in an accessible format upon request.

Background and Strategic Priority

Increase Available Community, Recreational and Social Opportunities

The Township of Georgian Bluffs is committed to building community through investment in recreation and community centres, and flexible use of community centres and playgrounds.

Objectives: 4.1 Provide enhanced recreational opportunities for residents (c) Implement recommendations arising from Recreation Master Plan. (d) Continually improve public/open spaces to ensure accessibility and safety.

The Recreation and Trails Master Plan highlights the importance of the Georgian Bluffs Multi Use Rail Trail as a key asset within the recreational landscape of the Township and supports enhancements to accessibility, signage, and safety.

The Multi Year Accessibility Plan commits the Township to seeking to meet the needs of all community members through its provision of services.

Analysis

Report [CES2024BUDGET-C-05](#) was deferred as part of the 2024 budget discussion. A revised request reflecting a one year program is being proposed for 2025.



The Rail Trail is an almost 20km long multi use trail crossing through the centre of the Township support recreational, leisure and active transportation purposes. Used by cyclists, walkers, ATV riders and more, the trail is the single largest trail the Township operates.

Historically, including in 2024, the majority of trail maintenance and improvement work has been undertaken by volunteers of the South Bruce Peninsula ATV Club and by the District 9 Snowmobile Federation.

The trail runs over a former rail bed and is of a granular nature. The trail is between 2m and 3m wide along its length and, given its past design and use as a rail corridor, is engineered for consistent and as low a grade as possible slopes. It rises at an even and consistent grade out of Owen Sound to Ben Allen, and from Ben Allen to Parkhead is a relatively flat trail. The nature of the trail provides for excellent opportunities for accessibility, particularly on the more level sections. The link to Owen Sound provides an ideal opportunity for active transportation between Shallow Lake and Owen Sound for those which to move away from reliance on vehicles.

The historic nature of the trail means that it is based on an excellent foundation. However, over years of use, the surface of the trail is beginning to deteriorate. In places, the base ballast stone from the rail use of the corridor is becoming visible, which leads to a less ideal experience as this can be prone to covering users in dirt/dust. There are also sections where larger materials, used as a base for the trail, are becoming exposed leading to uncomfortable experiences. Lastly, the nature of use of the trail is leading to sections where surface materials are becoming loose, and the grade of the trail is less than ideal for accessibility.

It is anticipated that as part of this work, signage on the trail will be improved to enhance user experience, maximise economic benefit of the trail through trail related tourism, increase accessibility to the trail and promote positive trail behaviors.

Further, it is hoped to enhance trail entrances, trail head locations and implement trail surface improvements.

Over coming years, staff hope to grade and add new surfacing to much of the length of the Rail Trail. Staff will seek to explore and maximise the work able to be completed by looking for grants and matching funds, as well as volunteer support from stakeholder groups to maximise the works completed. Through this work the whole trail experience will be elevated and improved, and it is anticipated that sections of the trail will be deemed to be 'accessible' for all community members.



Financial Impact

\$70,000 in 2025. Staff will explore grants and opportunities to either expand the scope of works in 2025, or to offset the financial impact to the Township.