



# Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake

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**REPORT #:** OPS-25-029 **COMMITTEE DATE:** 2025-12-02  
**REPORT TO:** COTW-General **DUE IN COUNCIL:** 2025-12-09  
**SUBJECT:** Heritage Trail – Future Costs

## 1. RECOMMENDATION

It is respectfully recommended that:

- 1.1 Council **RECEIVE** the costs estimated related to the construction of the Heritage Trail in **Appendix II**;
- 1.2 Council **APPROVES** the total in-kind staffing costs related to the construction of the Heritage Trail (Phases 3 & 4) in the estimated amount of \$ 170,170.00;
- 1.3 Council **APPROVES** the in-kind staffing costs to proceed when the total amount fundraised is available to complete a section of trail.

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Project Overview

- The Heritage Trail project aims to establish a safe, accessible, all-season trail along the old Erie & Ontario Railway Line. It's a legacy project initiated by the Niagara-on-the-Lake Sesquicentennial Committee in 2017.
- The trail, spanning 10 kilometres, has faced challenges such as erosion and washout.

### Phased Construction Approach

- The project is broken into four phases:
  - Phases 1 and 2 completed (100% completion) and ongoing efforts on Phases 3 (5% completed) and 4 (0% completed).
- Innovative construction techniques include topsoil removal, the use of geotextile fabric, and recycled materials to contain costs and reduce environmental impact.

### Financial Implications

- Estimated costs for Phase 3 and Phase 4 construction total \$287,780 and \$155,380, respectively.
- Labour costs, to be approved as in-kind contributions, amount to \$170,170.
- Trail construction cost is estimated at \$58.00 per meter.

### Strategic and Environmental Impact

- The project aligns with the Town's Climate Change Adaptation Plan, promoting eco-friendly transportation and public health improvements.
- Construction techniques have been developed to minimize the environmental footprint, supporting sustainable community infrastructure.

### 3. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide additional information to Council regarding the costs associated with the construction of the Heritage Trail Phases 3 & 4.

### 4. BACKGROUND

In 2017, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Sesquicentennial Committee brought forward the idea of establishing a safe, accessible, all-season trail along the old Erie & Ontario Railway Line as a legacy project. This 10-kilometre trail corridor has been affected by erosion and washout, impeding its full use. The reconstruction of the trail is an opportunity to create a vibrant and inclusive space and promote a sense of belonging and collective identity.

In 2019, the Heritage Trail Committee was established. Their mission was to raise community awareness of the trail and the need for its rehabilitation, pursue funding opportunities, install signage to inform trail users, and plan events to engage community volunteers. In addition to the local leadership provided by the Heritage Committee, the Town has sought meaningful community engagement throughout this project. Participation has been generated through surveys, Open Houses and Committee involvement in project planning and development.

The Committee decided to break construction into Phases so that it was easier to fundraise and construct as resources permitted. The Phases are outlined in **Appendix 1 – Heritage Trail Map**. The phases and length of the trail are as follows:

| Phase | Location                      | Distance | Completion % |
|-------|-------------------------------|----------|--------------|
| 1     | John Street to East West Line | 1430 m   | 100 %        |
| 2     | East West Line to Line 3      | 2490 m   | 100 %        |
| 3     | Line 3 to Line 9              | 4985 m   | 5 %          |
| 4     | Line 9 to York Road           | 1365 m   | 0 %          |

### 5. DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS

Town staff have served as the project manager and general contractor for this project since its inception. The construction methods for the completed phases of the trail have varied due to excess soil regulations and tree root protection requirements. The construction team during Phase 2 construction developed an installation method where the topsoil would be removed (used later for shouldering), geotextile fabric installed to contain recycled concrete and limestone screening installed on top. While most of the trail is 3.0 m wide, the Charlotte to East-West Line section is narrower due to the existing tree canopy. Moving into future phases, staff look to keep the 3.0 m width trail whenever possible. This construction technique allowed us to install above the existing ground to be more efficient, eliminate soil removal and use recycled material. All of this experience in building out the trail has provided the Town with accurate information to estimate that the cost per metre of trail is \$58.00/m. The Roads division has confirmed that there is capacity annually to construct a section(s) of the trail when the resources are in place.

Due to the length of the trail, Town staff have broken down the construction of the trail into phases, but within those phases, we stop at natural breakpoints (intersections of the Lines with Concession 1). This allows the fundraising team to target a certain threshold for raising the necessary dollars. The construction of a new section of trail doesn't occur until it is fully funded.

For example, Phase 3’s total length is 5005 m and is separated as follows:

| Section of Trail | Distance (metres) |
|------------------|-------------------|
| Line 3 to Line 4 | 810 m             |
| Line 4 to Line 5 | 840 m             |
| Line 5 to Line 6 | 1110 m            |
| Line 6 to Line 7 | 565 m             |
| Line 7 to Line 8 | 920 m             |
| Line 8 to Line 9 | 760 m             |

The end of Phase 2 (Line 2 to Line 3) Council approved a motion (October 29, 2024), that the labour the Town staff provided be an in-kind contribution. This allowed the project to be completed within budget. Through the discussion of the motion, Council inquired about the total cost to construct and what the costs for the Town labour costs to construct to the end of the trail. The construction costs are in the Financial Implications of this report and attached as **Appendix II**.

**6. STRATEGIC PLAN**

The content of this report supports the following Strategic Plan initiatives:

- Pillar**  
3. Enrich Community Assets, Environment, & Infrastructure
- Priority**  
3.3 Infrastructure
- Action**  
3.3 a) Infrastructure Investment (Physical & Green)

**7. OPTIONS**

- 7.1 **Option 1:** Council approve the recommendations in this report (**Recommended**)
- 7.2 **Option 2:** Council not approve the recommendations. This would result in the Heritage Trail Committee continuing its efforts to construct the balance of the trail with fundraising (donations, events, and grant applications) only. (Not Recommended)

**8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

As mentioned earlier in the report, a new construction technique has allowed the project team to anticipate a cost per metre of \$58.00. The following table indicates the summary of the costs to construct Phase 3 and Phase 4 of the trail (detailed breakdown is attached as **Appendix II**):

Phase 3 – Line 3 to Line 9

|                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Distance             | 5005 m               |
| <b>Work Activity</b> | <b>Costs</b>         |
| Labour Costs         | \$ 110,110.00        |
| Material Costs       | \$ 177,670.00        |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>\$ 287,780.00</b> |

## Phase 4 – Line 9 to York Road

|                      |                        |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| Distance             | 1365 m                 |
| <b>Work Activity</b> | <b>Costs</b>           |
| Labour Costs         | \$ 60,060.00           |
| Material Costs       | \$ 95,320.00           |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>\$ 155,380.00 *</b> |

\* This is a high-level estimate for this section of the trail. There are many factors to consider in this section, as it has been affected by a washout, and in some areas, the width of the trail is narrow. Town staff will be engaging an outside engineering firm to complete the design for this section. Future costs will be brought back to Council when they are supported by design and cost estimates.

As this report is requesting Council approval for in-kind labour to construct the balance of the trail, the total estimated labour costs are as follows:

| <b>Phase</b>                               | <b>Cost (estimate)</b> |
|--|------------------------|
| Phase 3 – Line 3 to Line 9 – Labour Costs  | \$ 110,110.00          |
| Phase 4 – Line 9 to York Rd – Labour Costs | \$ 60,060.00           |
| <b>Total – Labour Costs</b>                | <b>\$ 170,170.00</b>   |

## 9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The project team has developed a construction technique that minimizes the impact on the environment and increases efficiency in the construction of the trail. The Heritage Trail Committee is rehabilitating this trail to foster environmental stewardship and cultural connection while promoting active transportation.

This project benefits the Town by promoting eco-friendly transportation alternatives, reducing car usage, and improving public health through increased physical activity. This project has alignment with the following goals of the Town's Climate Change Adaptation Plan:

- Incorporate climate change in design and construction
- Minimize health and safety risks to community members
- Support public awareness and education

## 10. COMMUNICATIONS

If Council approves all recommendations, staff will communicate the news through a coordinated approach that highlights the Town's continued commitment to enhancing local trails and recreation opportunities. A media release, website update, and social media posts will share the details of Council's decision, including the next steps for the Heritage Trail project and how community fundraising will support construction. Internal updates will also be provided to ensure all departments are aware of the project's progress and upcoming timelines.

## 11. CONCLUSION

The Heritage Trail project demonstrates a strategic investment in community infrastructure by advancing both sustainability and community engagement. Leveraging Council's in-kind staffing contributions can optimize fundraising efforts, potentially accelerating the trail's completion timeline.

## 12. PREVIOUS REPORTS

N/A

## 13. APPENDICES

- Appendix I – Heritage Trail Map – Phases and Distances
- Appendix II – Heritage Trail – Project Costing Breakdown

Respectfully submitted:

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