



REPORT

Chief Administrative Officer

TO: Mayor and Members of Council

FROM: Kristi Honey, CAO

DATE: January 13, 2024

REPORT: CAO-02/25 **FILE NO.**

SUBJECT: Township of Uxbridge comments on Preliminary Draft Management Plan for Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park (Environmental Registry of Ontario Posting #019-9209)

BACKGROUND:

On November 27th, 2024, a proposal requesting review and comment on the preliminary management plan for Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park was posted for comment on the Environmental Registry of Ontario.

Staff have prepared a response for the Province on a variety of topics pertaining to Township operations and concerns. Staff recommend Council review and endorse staff feedback and comments on the proposed Preliminary Management Plan. Once approved, they will be posted on Environmental Registry of Ontario Posting #019-9209. The closing date for comments is Jan. 26th, 2025.

DISCUSSION:

Staff recommend the following comments be shared with the Province. All comments relate to information in the proposed Preliminary Management Plan which is available for review at <https://ero.ontario.ca/index.php/notice/019-9209>.

1. *Potential Reclassification of Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park*

The Township is very interested in actively participating in discussions to define and amend the classification of the park. We request that Township representatives be included in any future discussions.

2. Purpose, Vision and Objectives

The Township shares the vision for Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park and is especially interested in the connection of the park trails with our urban area. We view the park as an outstanding economic development opportunity for the greater community and as such are advocating for built infrastructure to be located as close to the urban centre as possible. Although contributing to economic opportunities is not a stated objective under the PPRCA (but is a recreational objective) we request that this be a consideration when siting entrances, facilities and major trail connections. We are pleased that Development Zone D1 is adjacent to the edge of our urban area and would like to see that area developed as a key activity hub. We request you consider adding access zones trails or infrastructure that connect into our existing trail networks and parking lots within urban Uxbridge to further encourage visitor connections into our community.

Siting access points along GO Bus and Durham Region Transit routes is also recommended to enable public transportation to the park.

3. Fostering Ties to Local Business Districts and Tourism Programs

In keeping with the Township objective to grow our tourism economy, the Township and our partner agencies including the BIA, Chamber of Commerce, Central Counties Tourism and Durham Tourism wishes to collaborate with Parks staff on tourism initiatives, information dissemination and programs that encourage day visitors to the park to visit local attractions, businesses and eateries.

Ontario Parks in partnership with the Region of Durham and the Township of Uxbridge should investigate trail and cycling connections between the CN Trail, Regional trails (ORTA, The TransCanada Trail), cycling routes, active transportation routes, downtown Uxbridge, Rouge National Park and the wider region to support and strengthen tourism and active transportation initiatives. Initiatives and amenities to support distance trail riding or hiking should also be considered.

4. Appreciating Natural and Cultural Heritage Values

The diversity and extent of natural heritage and cultural heritage assets in the park provides an opportunity to educate park users and our local community about these values. Education will help grow pride of place and will attract visitors and develop a sense of stewardship of Park lands. The Township supports preservation of Indigenous and settler cultural heritage and requests that Municipal Museum, community historical resources and local Indigenous groups have an opportunity to participate in efforts to program, document, educate about or celebrate these values.

The Township is thrilled with the diversity of life science and earth science values found in the Park. The Township fully supports and encourages Ontario Parks to develop robust educational material and programs (including situational educational signage) to support community and user appreciation of our natural heritage values.

5. *Accessible Recreation*

The fact that almost 2kms of pathways in D1 development zone offer accessible access is an opportunity unique to most 'wild' outdoor recreation areas. The Township encourages the Park to develop this opportunity into a fully accessible trail loop with supporting information and services to enable users to confidently plan a visit and enjoy the site. An accessible trail loop and amenities will help make this park a destination location. Local accessibility advocates are available for supportive consultation if desired.

6. *Access Zones*

We welcome the addition of new trails in the Provincial Park. Until parking areas can be built at or connected to 4400 Conc. Rd. 7, Conc. 6 north of Wagg Rd., and at the Nesbitt Property (Conc. 6) trail users have no options but to park on shoulders of Municipal roads. The Township will be monitoring these and other locations to ensure road and traffic safety is maintained. Should traffic studies, road crossings, parking controls or infrastructure improvements be required to maintain safety the Township will work with Ontario Parks to develop and implement solutions. The Township expects that any costs related to signage or parking controls/improvements related to trail access locations will be borne by Ontario Parks.

The Township would like to participate in the design and siting of future road access locations and parking areas. Access by emergency services, road and traffic safety considerations, snow removal and plowing are some examples of areas of concern for the Township. Analysis of traffic volumes and sight-line studies plus alignment with Township and Regional plans for future road infrastructure and active transportation connectivity may need to be considered before sites can be finalized.

The Township also requests that contact information be shared between Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park about contracted service providers to enable effective communication related to snow removal, grading, parking lot management etc. at locations that intersect with Municipal roads.

7. *Capital Project Planning*

The Township recognizes that increased visitation may require future Township infrastructure improvement such as turning lanes, parking areas, signage, speed-limit changes, pedestrian crossings, and intersection enhancements etc. to maintain road safety. The Township plans capital projects on a 3-10 year cycle. Engaging in long-range planning with the Township and sharing visitor and traffic count information will support our combined efforts to ensure our capital budgets can be managed and our infrastructure improved to ensure traffic and visitor safety.

8. *Alignment with Trail Wayfinding System Used on Adjacent Lands*

The Township advocates for alignment of AODA-compliant trail signage inside and outside the park in the matter of trail markers, mapping and signage. Having a consistent wayfinding and location identification system across the entire

regional trail network is imperative for efficient and effective communications, trail rescue operations, accessibility and management of emergency situations.

9. *Road Wayfinding Signage*

The Township encourages Park staff to invest in clear and consistent directional road signs pointing visitors to Park access points using preferred travel routes. The Township has a current system of tourism wayfinding signage which can help support this initiative. Signage at parking areas may also be required to ensure parking does not impede road use. All signage should be AODA compliant.

Our regional tourism partners are also interested in supporting efforts to install effective signage.

10. *Mechanized and Motorized Vehicle Use*

The Township supports the prohibition of motorized vehicles on recreational trails. This aligns with Township policies and practices. The Township is working with our regional trail partners to identify a classification of pedal-assist bicycles that may be used on trails to support accessible recreation. We invite Parks staff to participate in those discussions to ensure a Regional consistency in messaging, signage and enforcement practices.

11. *Trail Maintenance and Park Stewardship*

The local area is fortunate to have a very active and capable group of volunteers to support trail maintenance, grooming and upkeep as well as trail building, wayfinding and land stewardship. We strongly urge you to consider establishing MOUs as soon as possible with local organizations and volunteers to support operational needs for trails and access points. This will help ensure the consistency and quality of trail experiences across the entire trail network and will help managing invasive plant species and restoration work. Encouraging our community to become involved in the stewardship of Park lands will also help build pride of place and commitment to Park goals and objectives.

We suggest Ontario Parks establish a Trail Advisory Committee to take advantage of the depth of local knowledge about topography, trail use and trail building and to enable the local community to participate in the stewardship of the park lands.

12. *Emergency Rescue and Support*

The current practice in place on Township trails for trail rescues, medical responses and other emergency situations is a coordinated response from Durham EMS, Uxbridge Fire and, as necessary, DRPS. It is the Township's understanding that costs incurred within the Provincial Park boundary by Uxbridge Fire would be borne by the Province.

13. *Alignment of Management Practices and Enforcement*

Effective implementation of the management plan may require collaboration between Ontario Parks, the Township of Uxbridge, and municipal law enforcement to align by-laws with park objectives. Municipal input during

planning, particularly on traffic, zoning, animal, and public behavior, will ensure the park's goals are integrated with local governance frameworks.

The Township is looking forward to our continued collaboration with the province as the park management planning and development process continues. If you have any questions about these comments, please contact Colleen Baskin, Project Manager-Provincial Park Project at cbaskin@uxbridge.ca.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

2.2.2 Identify tourism-related opportunities to establish Uxbridge as a 'Tourism Destination'.

3.1.1 Continue to strengthen existing partnerships with government at all levels, as well as business/industry, community organizations and volunteers.

5.1.1 Collaborate with partners to protect our natural capital (ecological systems).

5.5.3 Nurture improved social relationships to build community cohesion, resiliency, reciprocity and trust.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Report CA0 02/25 of Kristi Honey, CAO be received for information;

AND THAT Council support the recommendations herein and approve the release of the comments on ERO #019-9209.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Kristi Honey
CAO