



Report: P-14-082

Region of Waterloo
Planning, Housing and Community Services
Transportation Planning
Community Planning

To: Chair Jim Wideman and Members of the Planning and Works Committee

Date: September 9, 2014 **File Code:** T13-50

Subject: Project Approval for the Waterloo Spur Line Trail

Recommendation:

That the Regional Municipality of Waterloo take the following actions regarding the Waterloo Spur Line Trail as described in Report P-14-082, dated September 9, 2014:

- a) Approve a capital project for the construction of the Waterloo Spur Line Trail and associated storm water infrastructure in the Region of Waterloo 10-year capital program in year 2015 in the amount of \$4.75 million gross, subject to negotiation of a funding agreement with Metrolinx for 1/3 funding, currently expected to be \$1.2 million, a funding commitment from the City of Waterloo for up to \$1.55 million for storm water infrastructure, with the balance of funding to be provided from the Region's Development Charges Reserve fund;
- b) Direct Regional staff to work with the Cities of Kitchener and Waterloo to formalize the financial and maintenance contributions that can be made to this initiative; and
- c) Authorize the Region's Commissioner of Transportation and Environmental Services to negotiate a funding agreement with Metrolinx in conjunction with the Cities of Waterloo and Kitchener for the construction of the Waterloo Spur Line Trail, in a form and content satisfactory to the Regional Solicitor.

Summary:

Metrolinx, an agency of the Government of Ontario, has launched a new active transportation fund to help construct pedestrian and cyclist connections to existing and future GO stations. In June 2014, Metrolinx contacted the Region of Waterloo about the

Waterloo Spur Line Trail as an eligible project within the Province's 2014/2015 financial year. Metrolinx is specifically interested in this trail because it would connect pedestrians and cyclists to the Kitchener GO Train Station and the future King-Victoria Transit Hub. Please see Attachment 1 for a map of the Waterloo Spur Line Trail.

The proposed Spur Line Trail would be the region's first rail-with-trail project, which means the railway and trail would share the same corridor. The Waterloo Spur Line is owned by the Region of Waterloo and safety is an important consideration in the final design. For instance, pedestrian level lighting would improve visibility between intersections and, removing thick undergrowth beside the trail, would improve visibility throughout the corridor. A landscaped buffer between the paved trail and the railway track is also recommended, instead of a fence. This would direct users away from the tracks while maintaining good visibility. Bollards and tactile warning strips would be used to warn users of road and railway intersections. The Region's existing contract with the rail operator, Canadian National (CN), also ensures that the railway operates outside of regular trail hours. Under the terms of the agreement, CN operates its trains between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. However, after ION construction, these operating hours will be reduced to between 12:00 and 5:00 a.m.

The total estimated cost of the project requiring Council's approval is \$4.75 million (trail and storm water infrastructure). Metrolinx has indicated its intent to contribute one-third of the full cost of the Waterloo Spur Line Trail, up to a maximum of \$1.2 million. Subject to negotiation of a funding agreement with Metrolinx, the Region and the City of Waterloo would provide the remaining capital for the project (up to \$2 million and \$1.55 million respectively).

The City of Kitchener and the City of Waterloo have storm water management infrastructure located in the Waterloo Spur Line corridor. At its September 8, 2014 Committee of the Whole meeting, the City of Waterloo is expected to consider a funding commitment of \$1.55 million for storm water improvements in its 2015, 2016, and 2017 capital budgets. This money would be paid to the Region in those years. The City of Kitchener completed \$600,000 in upgrades to its storm water infrastructure in 2008. Subject to Council approval, the remaining \$2 million would be funded from the Regional Development Charges Reserve fund. If approved by Council, the City of Waterloo and the City of Kitchener would be committed in principle to the full costs of maintaining the trail, similar to how they maintain the Regional sidewalk and multi-use trail network today.

An important requirement for Metrolinx is that the Waterloo Spur Line Trail would be ready for tender and construction within the first financial year of the provincial fund, ending March 31, 2015. Regional approval of the project and capital funding needs to be confirmed by the fall of 2014 to meet Metrolinx's timeframe.

In collaboration with the Cities of Kitchener and Waterloo, the Region completed the Waterloo Spur Line Multi-use Trail Feasibility and Design Study in January 2012, which

fulfilled the Environmental Assessment requirements for this project. The detailed design was completed in January 2014. At the two public consultation centres held in 2011, the Region received positive feedback from residents who use the existing informal trail beside the railway tracks and from neighbours, whose houses back onto the Waterloo Spur Line corridor (see Report P-12-015).

If approved by Regional Council, staff would continue to work with the City of Waterloo and the City of Kitchener toward a final funding and maintenance agreement with Metrolinx.

Report:

The Opportunity

Metrolinx, an agency of the Government of Ontario, was created to improve the coordination and integration of all modes of transportation in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. To support walking and cycling to GO stations, Metrolinx established a fund to improve active transportation connections to existing and future GO stations.

In June 2014, Metrolinx contacted the Region of Waterloo about the Waterloo Spur Line Trail as an eligible project within the Province's 2014/2015 financial year. Metrolinx is specifically interested in this trail because it would connect pedestrians and cyclists to the Kitchener GO Train Station and the future King-Victoria Transit Hub. An important consideration for Metrolinx is that the Spur Line Trail could be ready for tender and construction by March 31, 2015. It is also the only project of this scale ready for tendering.

Background

The Waterloo Spur Line Trail (Spur Line Trail) is proposed for the Waterloo Spur Line rail corridor, which is owned by the Region of Waterloo. It runs diagonally from Ahrens Street, in Kitchener, to King Street, in Uptown Waterloo (see Attachment 1, map of the Spur Line Trail). It would connect the Uptown Waterloo ION station, the Mary Allen neighbourhood, and the Breithaupt Park neighbourhood to the existing Kitchener GO Train Station, via a multi-use trail on Weber Street. The Weber Street multi-use trail is under construction as part of the Weber Street grade separation.

The Spur Line Trail would also connect residents east of King Street to the planned King-Victoria Transit Hub, via Breithaupt and Waterloo Streets. Preliminary designs for the King-Victoria Transit Hub include a pedestrian underpass at Waterloo Street, which would be closed to motor vehicles when the King-Victoria Transit Hub is constructed. The Iron Horse Trail provides an off-road walking and cycling route to downtown Kitchener for neighbourhoods west of King Street.

Today, the Waterloo Spur Line rail corridor is used by pedestrians and cyclists as a shortcut between downtown Kitchener and uptown Waterloo. A well-worn path runs beside the railway tracks and thick undergrowth and hedgerows line both sides of the corridor.

In collaboration with the Cities of Kitchener and Waterloo, the Region conducted the Waterloo Spur Line Multi-use Trail Feasibility and Design Study, which fulfilled the Environmental Assessment requirements for this project. Also, a detailed design of the Waterloo Spur Line Trail (Spur Line Trail) was completed in January 2014. Regional Council initiated this design process in 2012 to prepare for Provincial funding opportunities (see Report P-12-015). The Region is engaged in similar feasibility and design projects with the City of Cambridge to seek provincial funding for active transportation facilities through the Franklin Boulevard and Highway 401 interchange, as well as active transportation improvements close to the Hespeler Road and Highway 401 interchange. However, these projects are still in the detail design and feasibility stages respectively.

Residents are enthusiastic about the Region's plans for the Spur Line Trail. At the two public consultation centres held for this project, the Region received positive feedback and specific requests for lighting and benches from neighbours and current users of the informal trail.

If approved by Council, the project would be mostly ready to be tendered, with some additional permits required from Transport Canada and the Grand River Conservation Authority.

Analysis – Eligibility for Metrolinx Funding

Metrolinx established its active transportation fund to improve walking and cycling connections to existing and planned GO stations. The Spur Line Trail meets these objectives as it could provide a three-metre paved trail between the Kitchener GO Train Station, the Mary Allen and Breithaupt Park neighbourhoods, and Uptown Waterloo. As discussed above, the Spur Line Trail would also connect residents to the King-Victoria Transit Hub, via Breithaupt and Waterloo Streets. By providing a convenient active transportation connection between Downtown Kitchener and Uptown Waterloo, the Spur Line Trail may also help to manage vehicle congestion during ION construction by providing a new off-road walking and cycling option for commuters.

Metrolinx is willing to prioritize the Spur Line Trail because it can be tendered within the Province's 2014/2015 budget year, which ends March 31, 2015. The detailed design of the Spur Line Trail is almost complete and the project would be ready to tender in winter 2015, if approved by Council.

Metrolinx has indicated an initial preference for an ownership interest in the trail property through the establishment of an easement in favour of the Province as a condition of funding, as well as a commitment by the Region or Cities to the full cost of maintaining the trail. Regional staff prefer an agreement to use or license the trail in lieu of the establishment of an easement in this instance and are confident arrangements can be made through the negotiations with Metrolinx to address this issue to the Region's satisfaction. The City of Waterloo and the City of Kitchener are committed in principle to

the full cost of maintaining the trail and would continue to work with the Region and Metrolinx on a cost sharing formula for the funding agreement.

Analysis – Trail Design

The proposed Spur Line Trail is the region's first rail-with-trail project. The typical cross section includes the following elements:

- Three-metre paved multi-use trail
- Six-metre train envelope with a railway track and drainage swales (see Attachment 2 for the Cross Section Plan)

Good visibility is a key principle of safe trail design. Several design elements are included in the Spur Line Trail to improve the comfort and safety of trail users. These include:

1. Paving the trail with asphalt and installing a landscaped buffer between the railway tracks to guide trail users away from the railway tracks. This design is preferred over a fence, because it maintains an unobstructed view of the corridor.
2. Removing thick undergrowth and invasive species from hedgerows will improve visibility and passive monitoring from neighbouring properties. Trees that are removed will be replaced with native tree species.
3. Installing tactile warning strips and removable bollards at intersections will warn visually impaired trail users of conflict points.
4. Installing pedestrian level lighting to improve visibility between intersections. Lighting is especially important in winter when GO trains leave before sunrise and return after sunset. Benches are also included in the design to help ensure the trail is an accessible, four-season, walking, cycling, and recreational route for residents and commuters.

The Spur Line Trail is a unique opportunity to provide a new active transportation link in a Regionally-owned rail corridor. As the only project of this type in the Region, lighting and benches are included in the total cost of the Spur Line Trail. It is not the Region's practice to fund these amenities in other projects, but an exception is recommended for this project.

Through its agreement with CN, the Region has further reduced the potential for conflicts by ensuring the railway operates outside of normal trail hours. Under the terms of the agreement, CN operates its trains between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. today. However, after ION construction, CN has agreed to reduce its Waterloo Spur Line operating hours to between 12:00 and 5:00 a.m. This is when the fewest number of people will use the trail.

Proposed Next Steps

Metrolinx has agreed in principle to contribute one-third of the full cost of the Waterloo Spur Line Trail up to \$1.2 million. If approved by Regional Council, the next steps for this project are:

1. Finalize the cost sharing formula and long-term maintenance responsibilities of the Region of Waterloo, the City of Waterloo, and the City of Kitchener (September-October 2014)
2. Finalize a funding agreement between the Region of Waterloo, the City of Waterloo, and Metrolinx (September-October 2014)
3. Acquire the required permits from Transport Canada and the Grand River Conservation Authority to construct the trail (December 2014)
4. Tender the trail construction (January-February 2015)
5. Construct the trail and storm water infrastructure (April-August 2015)

Area Municipal Consultation/Concurrence

The City of Kitchener and the City of Waterloo are active partners in the design and implementation of the Spur Line Trail. The Cities have agreed in principle to the long-term maintenance of the trail and would continue to work with the Region of Waterloo and Metrolinx on a cost sharing formula for capital and maintenance expenses. A copy of this report has been distributed to all Area Municipalities as well.

Corporate Strategic Plan:

The Spur Line Trail supports the Region’s Strategic Focus Area 2 (Growth Management and Prosperity), that relates to developing, optimizing and maintaining infrastructure to meet current and projected needs. Strategic Focus Area 3 (Sustainable Transportation) is also supported by this project. This focus area relates to developing, promoting and integrating active forms of transportation (cycling and walking).

Financial Implications:

The total estimated cost of the project is \$4.75 million for both the trail and storm water management infrastructure. A summary of the project budget is included in Table 1 below.

Table 1 - Project Budget

Contributing Partner	Project Component	Contribution*
City of Waterloo	Storm Water Infrastructure	\$1.55
Metrolinx	Spur Line Trail	\$1.20
Region of Waterloo	Spur Line Trail	\$2.00
Total		\$4.75

*in millions

The City of Kitchener and the City of Waterloo have storm water management infrastructure located in the Waterloo Spur Line corridor. At its September 8, 2014 Committee of the Whole meeting, the City of Waterloo is expected to consider a funding commitment of \$1.55 million for storm water improvements in its 2015, 2016, and 2017 capital budgets. This money would be paid to the Region in those years with the Region

managing the cash flow in the interim. The City of Kitchener completed \$600,000 in upgrades to its storm water infrastructure in 2008. Subject to Council approval, the remaining \$2 million would be funded from the Regional Development Charge Fund.

Although walking and cycling infrastructure is eligible for 100 percent funding from Regional Development Charges, the Waterloo Spur Line Trail was not included in the approved 2014 Transportation Ten Year Capital Program. To meet Metrolinx's March 31, 2015 tender award timeline, staff recommends including the project in year 2015 the 10-year capital program in the amount of \$4.75 million, subject to negotiation of a funding agreement with Metrolinx for 1/3 funding, currently expected to be \$1.2 million, and a funding commitment from the City of Waterloo for up to \$1.55 million for storm water infrastructure (to be paid over 2015, 2016, and 2017). The Region would be responsible for the balance of costs estimated at \$2 million. Funding shares would be adjusted based on the final construction costs.

The City of Waterloo and the City of Kitchener would be responsible for the full costs of maintaining the trail, similar to how they maintain the Regional sidewalk and multi-use trail network today. Regional staff will work with the Cities and Metrolinx on the necessary maintenance and funding agreements.

Other Department Consultations/Concurrence:

Transportation and Environmental Services and Legal Services were consulted in the writing of this report and are in concurrence with its recommendations.

Attachments:

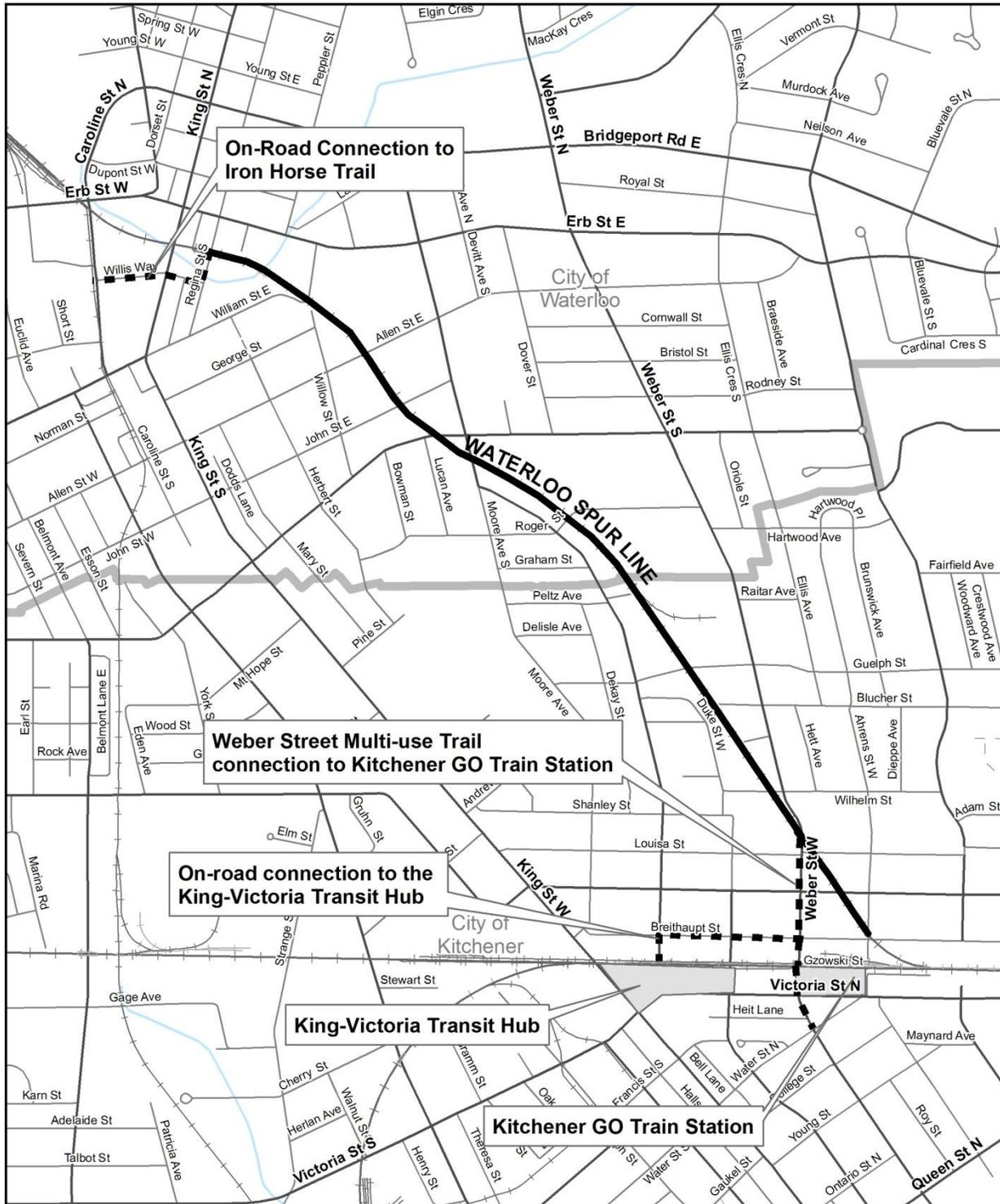
Attachment A – Waterloo Spur Line Trail map, Overall Alignment

Attachment B – Typical Cross Section Plan

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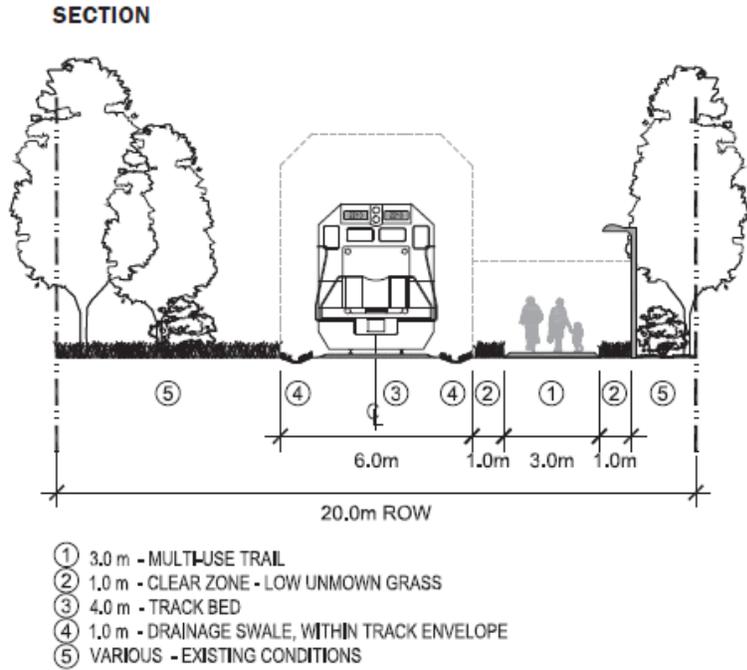
Attachment 1- Waterloo Spur Line Trail map, Overall Alignment



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Waterloo Spur Line

Attachment 2- Typical Section and Plan



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