

# BFL CANADA

---

## Town of Newmarket

### Trail Inspection

Robin McCleave, BFL CANADA, V.P. Public Sector, Risk Management Leader

John Quinn, Town of Newmarket, Claims & Risk Analyst

August 14 2020



# INSPECTION OF TRAIL SYSTEM

## Change in use:

With the population of Newmarket and the surrounding area expanding rapidly, more people are using the Town's trail systems for commuting, running, walking and just getting out and enjoying nature. In addition, now that the risk of COVID-19 greatly limits what the public can do the number of people using the trail system on a more consistent basis and families getting out for leisurely strolls has increased significantly.

On the day of the inspection many cyclists were riding at an unsafe speed and not taking into consideration others using the trails for different purposes. In general, cyclists did not appear to be overly cautious and in some cases rode in small groups taking over the entire trail.

## Painting a Centre Line:

At one point the trail did have a painted centre line. For the reasons advised above under "Change in use" we discussed having the centre lines repainted. This will create a better visual for users of the trail and in particular cyclists when riding their bicycles down hills or around corners.

It is our recommendation that the Town speak to their preferred legal counsel to get their thoughts.

If the Town moves forward with the painting of the centre lines, that policies be put in place on repainting the lines as required, the lines should not be allowed to fade to the point where they can no longer be seen.

## Sections of the trail that should be closed to the public:

There were two sections of the trail where this applied – the path that took you to the bridge that was no longer being used/maintained and then onto an island; and the path that led to a bench beside a storm water management pond.

In regards to the path to the bridge, the materials used were stone dust and gravel. The entrance to the path could easily be blocked by planting trees, small shrubs and tall grass. If Town staff need to continue to have access to the bridge, bollards could be used along with signage stating that the trail was closed.

In regards to the path to the path leading to the storm water pond the entrance to the path could easily be blocked by planting trees, small shrubs and tall grass. The bench would also need to be removed.

The intent is to discourage the public from using these paths because these pathways are not intended to be extensions of the main trail system. If these pathways are not addressed, and appear to remain fully open to the public the pathways should be maintained by staff and signage erected stating "no winter maintenance".

## Blocked Sight Lines:

Throughout the trail system sight lines were blocked by trees, overgrown shrubs and high grasses. It was discussed that if some of the trees and shrubs could be cleared, and the areas where the grass was cut widened, this would greatly increase pedestrians and cyclists ability to see each other as they were coming around corners and travelling up and down hills. For reference purposes please see the pictures on the following page.

## BAILEY ECOLOGICAL PARK

## DAVE KERWIN TRAIL

## PAUL SEMPLE



In particular there were two sections of the trail where the site lines were blocked by foliage as cyclists and pedestrians were coming around a steep hill. Please see the pictures directly below, and on the following page.

**Trail System @ South End, Looking towards Aurora:**

## TOP OF TRAIL BEFORE HILL



## Trail System @ South End, Looking North, Newmarket:

### TOP OF TRAIL BEFORE HILL



At one particularly busy intersection, site lines were blocked by a retaining wall built of large rocks. Our discussion centered on potentially leveling the ground area behind the top row and removing those rocks because they would no longer be needed. The Town's Risk & Claims Analyst will be speaking with engineering to see if this could be a solution.

#### Implementation:

Since the date of the inspection Town staff have been proactively clearing foliage as recommended in this report.

### Signage:

In general, signage is used to identify the topography that can be found on the trail system, potential hazards, what activities are allowed and educate users of the trail. For example:

- **Topography**
  - steep hills;
  - winding trails;
  - large curves; and
  - intersecting trails.
- **Potential hazards**
  - dangerous plants or wildlife
  - low underpasses
  - narrowing of the trail
  - trail ending at a busy sidewalk or roadway
  - limited sight lines
  - fast moving cyclists
- **Activities on trail system:**
  - Multiuse, clarify what activities are allowed on the trail system. For example:
    - Pedestrian use only
    - Pedestrians and cyclists only, not motorized vehicles

- Clarifying what type of vehicle allowed, for example:
  - Scooters
  - Ebikes
  - Motorized vehicles
- Identify the trail as a recreational trail
- **Educational**
  - Advise users to stay on the trail, area contains environmentally sensitive plant and animal life.
  - Advise users to not feed the animals, they are wild and can be dangerous.
  - Create a trail map of the area.
  - Directional signs with distance.
  - Where appropriate to advise cyclists to slow down, share the trail.
  - Poop and scoop after your dog.
  - Keep your dog on the leash.
- **General Rule of Thumb**
  - Never use “must” unless you are able to enforce that rule.
  - Needs to be properly maintained, for example:
    - not being blocked by foliage,
    - ensure directional signs are pointing in the right direction
    - if vandalized the sign is repaired in a timely manner.
  - Where appropriate use pictures rather than words.

## Town Signage

With respect to the signage currently on the Town’s trail system, it appeared to be inconsistent. In some sections of the trail it appeared to be the original signage, was faded, difficult to read.

Therefore our recommendation would be that the Town complete an inventory of their current signage taking into consideration the following points:

- Areas of the trail system where the topography can cause a hazard.
- Any incidents where having signage to warn the public would be a benefit.
- There were many fast moving cyclists on the trail, should speed limit signs be a consideration?
- Identifying environmentally sensitive areas.
- Better identifying distance points to the closet exit points. It will help users estimate how far they want, or can travel.
- Identify areas where the main section of a trail intersects with another trail system.
- Create consistency in your messaging. Of particular importance that the trail is a “recreational trail”.
- Consider educational signage focusing on:
  - respecting the environment,
  - keeping it clear of litter and debris,
  - clean up after pets e.g. poop and scoop
  - educates the public on the wildlife and plants that can be found. For example beside ponds/water systems. One pond in particular identified a pond area with turtles.

We also recommend that Town staff responsible for the signage, in conjunction with the Town’s Claim & Risk Analyst, speak with the Town’s preferred legal counsel on what would be considered standard verbiage for recreational trails systems; and where best to place your signs e.g. throughout the trail system and at entrances.



Please see the following below examples of signage that is currently being used throughout the trail system on the day of the inspection.

## DAVE KERWIN TRAIL



## SOUTH END TRAIL - AURORA



## SOUTH END TRAIL - NEWMARKET



## SOUTH END TRAIL - NEWMARKET



Examples of signs being used to warn users a steep hill and winding section of the trail is ahead.

Examples of Signage before Underpass@ Mulock Drive:

## MULOCK UNDERPASS



The pictures above show what pedestrians and cyclists see on each side when on the trail before going under the bridge. The first picture shows a single sign with an arrow on the top and bottom with verbiage indicating the height in the middle. The second picture does not have the same sign. What is consistent is the sign attached to the bridge showing the height.

In addition in the first picture the single sign depicting the height has foliage that could potentially be blocking the messaging.



## Trees posing potential hazards on day of visit:

**FAIRY LAKE**



**WESLEY BROOKS**



There were several trees that did not look very healthy with lots of dead branches on the day of the visit. In some cases the entire tree looked like it was dead. It is my understanding that the trees that were identified on the day of the visit have been removed.

**FAIRY LAKE**



**PAUL SEMPLE**



Low hanging foliage can reduce sight lines and cause injury when cyclists are moving through the trail system. The same could apply to pedestrians. Where necessary the foliage should be trimmed back.

## Trails ending at sidewalks onto roadways, or directly onto a roadway:

### SECTION OF TRAIL ENDING AT MULLOCK DRIVE



Using bollards to warn users that a section of the trail is ending directly onto a sidewalk or roadway, was not consistent throughout the trail system. This could place the Town in a difficult position if there was a loss and it was cited that the cyclist was expecting to see a bollard or a stop sign. Our recommendation would be speak with the Town's preferred legal counsel and ask if it would be in the Town's best interest to install bollards at all the sections of the trail where this would apply.

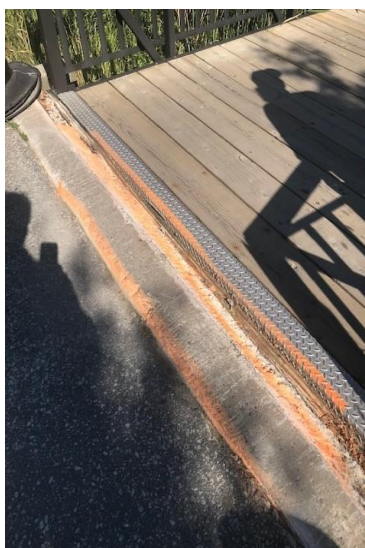
The same recommendation applies to signage.



## General Trail Hazards

### Trip Hazards:

#### WESLEY BROOKS



In the first right there was a bit of a drop between the trail and park land. When staff are following their policies on inspecting and maintaining the trail, consideration should be given to filling in the gaps with dirt or gravel.

In the second picture, there were several sections on the trail where trip ledges painted in orange. This posed a potential hazard for cyclists. Claims & Risk Analyst to see when repairs were potentially scheduled.

### Collision Hazards:

#### WESLEY BROOKS



On a clear day this object could be seen however at dusk or at night that may not be the case. It was recommended that consideration be given to painting the object with reflective paint and potentially planting around the bottom so that it could be better identified by cyclists.

## Intersections and Trail Systems

### DAVE KERWIN TRAIL



There were several areas throughout the trail systems where one trail would intersect with another. In many cases users of the trails had good sight lines, could see from a far distance. Therefore based on how good the sight lines are and how busy that section of the trail is, consideration could be given to installing stop signs or yielding signs where the least busy trail ends. To have a better understanding of what is the standard practice is, our recommendation would be speak with the Town's preferred legal counsel.

### Trail crossing at Water Street and Duncan Drive:

Overall while some improvements have been made to this intersection, but it is still a busy spot with lots of people and traffic coming and going. This is not about to change, especially during spring, summer and fall. Therefore we would suggest that consideration be given to building a full cross walk across that section of the road. It is our recommendation that this will be discussed with the Town's preferred legal counsel and with staff who would be responsible for erecting a crosswalk. My thought is staff would need to work with the MTO.

### WATER STREET + DOUG DUNCAN DRIVE



\* image obtained from Google Maps

## **THIS DOCUMENT WAS ISSUED BY:**

**BFL CANADA Risk and Insurance Services Inc.**

181 University Avenue, Suite 1700

Toronto, Ontario M5H 3M7

T. 1-416-599-5530

F. 416-599-5458