



ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

REPORT | NOVEMBER 2018

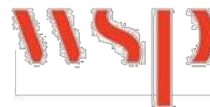


TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1.0 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 A VISION FOR TRAILS IN ELGIN COUNTY	3
1.2 TRAILS STUDY PROCESS	4
1.3 REPORT OVERVIEW	5
CHAPTER 2.0 SUPPORT FOR TRAILS	6
2.1 PROVINCIAL & LOCAL POLICY	6
2.2 BENEFITS OF TRAILS	7
2.3 WHAT WE HEARD FROM RESIDENTS & STAKEHOLDERS	10
2.3.1 THE APPROACH	10
2.3.2 KEY THEMES	11
CHAPTER 3.0 THE TRAIL NETWORK	12
3.1 WHO ARE WE DESIGNING TRAILS FOR?	13
3.2 TRAIL ROUTE SELECTION PRINCIPLES	14
3.3 TRAIL NETWORK DEVELOPMENT PROCESS	16
3.4 EXISTING CONDITIONS	18
3.4.1 OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES	18
3.5 THE RECOMMENDED TRAIL NETWORK	19
3.5.1 THE TRAILS NETWORK	19
3.5.3 UNDERSTANDING THE TRAILS NETWORK	20
3.6 PLANNING FOR TRAILS	25
3.6.1 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & TRAILS	25
3.6.2 TRAILS & ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT	29
3.6.3 TRAILS IN NATURAL AREAS	30
3.6.4 TRAILS AND LINEAR CORRIDORS	32
3.6.5 SECURING ACCESS FOR TRAILS	36

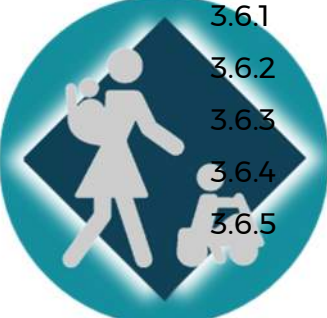




TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3.7 DESIGNING TRAILS.....37
 - 3.7.1 TRAIL TYPES 38
 - 3.7.2 TRAIL SLOPE.....41
 - 3.7.3 ROAD CROSSINGS.....42
 - 3.7.4 STAGING AREAS.....46
 - 3.7.5 ACCESSIBILITY.....48
 - 3.7.6 ACCESS BARRIERS AND GATES50
 - 3.7.7 SIGNAGE & INFORMATION 52
 - 3.7.8 BRIDGES AND BOARDWALKS 56
 - 3.7.9 TRAIL AMENITIES..... 57
 - 3.7.10 TRAIL LIGHTING 58
- 3.8 TRAIL MAINTENANCE..... 59
 - 3.8.1 RISK MANAGEMENT & LIABILITY..... 59
 - 3.8.2 TRAIL MAINTENANCE STRATEGIES..... 61

CHAPTER 4.0 | IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES.....64

- 4.1 PRIORITIES FOR TRAIL DEVELOPMENT 65
 - 4.1.1 COUNTY-WIDE..... 65
 - 4.1.2 AYLMER 65
 - 4.1.3 BAYHAM..... 66
 - 4.1.4 CENTRAL ELGIN..... 67
 - 4.1.5 DUTTON-DUNWICH..... 68
 - 4.1.6 MALAHIDE 69
 - 4.1.7 WEST ELGIN..... 69
 - 4.1.8 SOUTHWOLD..... 70
 - 4.1.9 ST. THOMAS..... 71
 - 4.1.10 UPDATING THE NETWORK..... 72
- 4.2 NETWORK MANAGEMENT 73
- 4.3 FUNDING..... 74
 - 4.3.1 TRAIL CONSTRUCTION COSTS 74
 - 4.3.2 POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES 75
- 4.4 PARTNERSHIPS..... 80
 - 4.4.1 PARTNERS..... 80



TABLE OF CONTENTS

4.5

PROMOTION & OUTREACH.....85

CHAPTER 5.0 | CONCLUSION.....87



LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Summary of Elgin County Trail Route Selection Criteria	14
Table 2 Trail Network Statistics.....	19
Table 3 Longitudinal and Cross Slope.....	41
Table 4 Trail Maintenance Strategies	61
Table 5 Estimated Trail Construction Cost by Municipality.....	75
Table 6 Potential External Funding Sources.....	76

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Primary Multi-use Trail	38
Figure 2 Secondary Trail & Secondary Trail in a Woodlot.....	39
Figure 3 Tertiary Trail.....	40
Figure 4 Controlled Crossing (upper), Uncontrolled Crossing (lower)	45
Figure 5 Rural Trail Crossing.....	46
Figure 6 Typical Staging Area	47
Figure 7 Heavy Duty Access Control Gate for Rural Locations.....	50
Figure 8 Information Signing on Rural Trail Access Gates in New Tecumseth, ON (WSP).....	51
Figure 9 Trailhead Sign Examples Clockwise from Upper Left Rondeau Provincial Park, ON; Centre Wellington Township, ON; St Catharines, ON; Guelph ON (source WSP).....	53
Figure 10 Trailhead Sign – Schematic Concept.....	53
Figure 11 Trail directional sign examples – clockwise from upper left Montague, PEI; Peterborough, ON; Waterloo, ON; St. Thomas, ON (source WSP).....	54
Figure 12 Interpretive sign examples – clockwise from upper left Collingwood, ON; Guelph, ON; Sauble Beach, ON; Tobermory, ON (source WSP).....	55
Figure 13 : Regulatory sign examples.....	56

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Trails have been a part of the fabric of Elgin -St. Thomas for several decades. Local municipalities, conservation authorities and agencies such as Ontario Parks have been building and maintaining trails on lands they own and manage. Some have developed local master plans and have been moving forward with implementation as opportunities and funds become available. Local trail groups have also taken the initiative to imagine and implement trails on lands they have secured access to, and in some cases acquired. Regional trail routes such as the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail and the Great Trail (Trans Canada Trail) have been designated through the County and widely promoted.

Elgin County has a unique quality of place with rural landscapes, waterfronts, waterfront living and recreation. Recently, the County and its local municipal partners have been investing in, and strengthening the tourism sector. Attracting new residents to Elgin, including retirees and talented young workers who are leaving the large cities and seeking a more affordable and enjoyable lifestyle is one of the pillars of County's tourism and economic development strategy.

A County-wide trail strategy presents a significant opportunity to work in a comprehensive, collaborative and coordinated manner to build upon all the hard work that has been previously completed, and to leverage the experience and expertise of all who have contributed to these efforts. The Elgin County Trail Study is intended to be a guide for future development, to build on the trail work and initiatives that have already taken place and to enable those responsible for the design, development and implementation of trails to use a consistent guideline and resource to enhance trail infrastructure,





improve overall route connectivity, overcome barriers while highlighting and preserving areas of natural and cultural significance.

Seven local municipalities comprise Elgin County, specifically the:

- ▶ Town of Aylmer;
- ▶ Municipality of Bayham;
- ▶ Municipality of Central Elgin;
- ▶ Municipality of Dutton/Dunwich;
- ▶ Township of Malahide;
- ▶ Municipality of Southwold;
- ▶ Municipality of West Elgin; and
- ▶ The City of St. Thomas, which is geographically located in Elgin County but is a separated City.

The following report summarizes the approach used to develop the Elgin County Trails Strategy as well as guiding resources and references to help with future trail planning, design and implementation initiatives undertaken by Elgin County and its partners.



Steen Conservation Area | Aylmer | Source: WSP, 2018



1.1 A VISION FOR TRAILS IN ELGIN COUNTY

The vision for trails and supportive objectives and recommendations contained in the Trails Study are intended to form the blueprint for the future trail network. They are intended to illustrate long-term objectives supported by initiatives on how to achieve them.

The vision for trails in Elgin County is:

“TRAILS ARE A VALUED ASSET IN ELGIN COUNTY. THEY PROVIDE RESIDENTS AND VISITORS OF ALL AGES AND ABILITIES THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENJOY NATURAL BEAUTY, RICH HISTORY AND UNIQUE QUALITY OF LIFE. WITH MANY PARTNERS WORKING TOGETHER, WE CREATE A DIVERSE NETWORK OF TRAILS FROM RECREATION AND TRANSPORTATION ROUTES IN URBAN CENTRES TO SPECTACULAR DESTINATION TRAILS THE RURAL COUNTRYSIDE”.

The vision is supported by a set of objectives. Objectives provide more clear direction on what is intended to be achieved and how it will be achieved. The following are the objectives for the Elgin Study which were defined by the County and its partners:

- 1 UNDERSTAND THE CURRENT STATE OF TRAILS THROUGHOUT ELGIN COUNTY
- 2 REVIEW LOCAL POLICIES AND PLANS INFLUENCING TRAIL DEVELOPMENT
- 3 CONSULT WITH THE PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDERS
- 4 RECOMMEND A COUNTY-WIDE TRAIL NETWORK
- 5 DEVELOP GOALS, PRIORITIES, COSTS AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING EXISTING & EXPANDING TRAILS
- 6 REVIEW SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNDING SOURCES

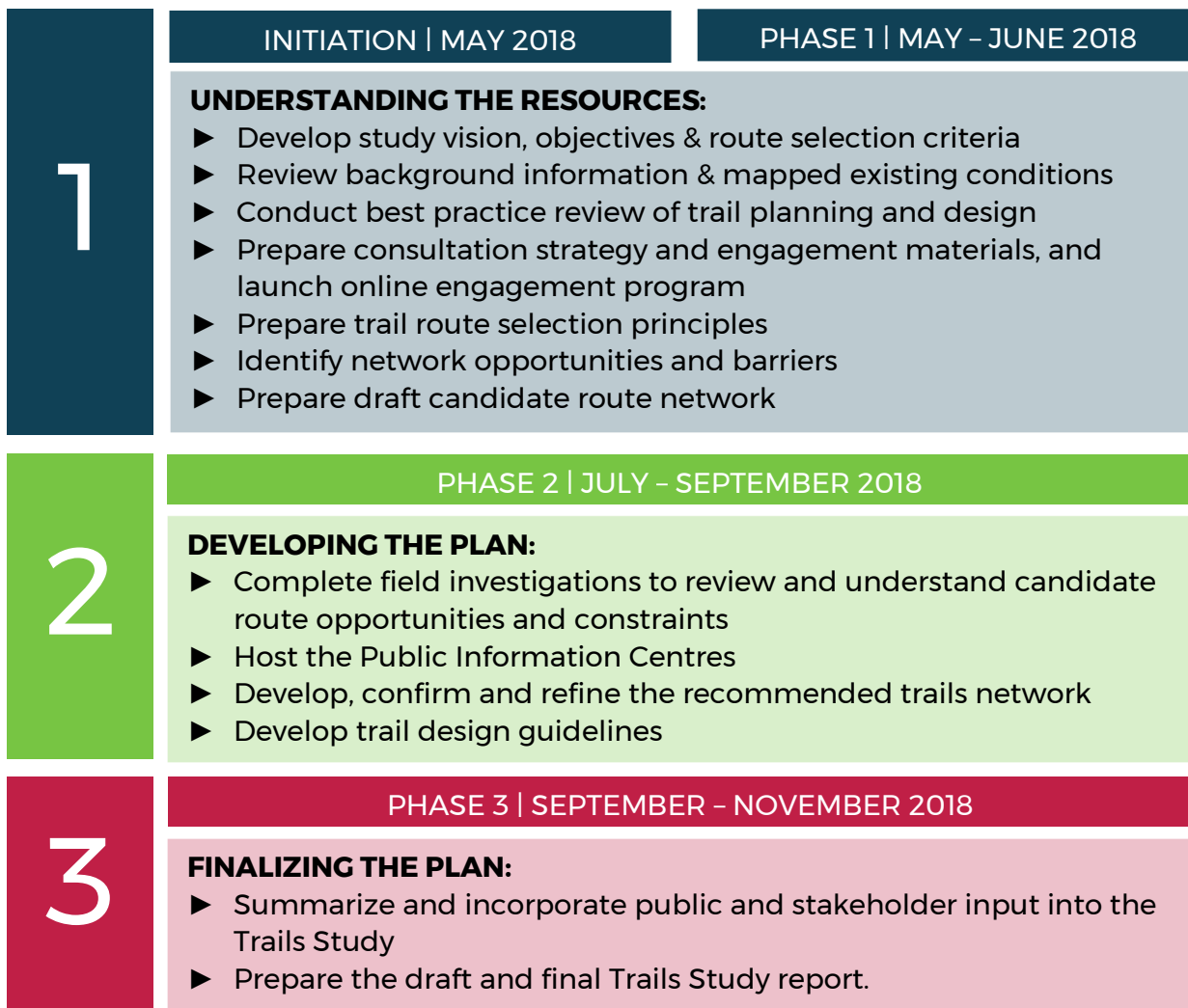


1.2 TRAILS STUDY PROCESS

Through the Healthy Communities Partnership, Southwestern Public Health received funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada to develop the Elgin County Trails Study.

A study team consisting of trail specialists from WSP Canada Group Limited, land securement specialists at Orland Conservation, and the strategic planning firm DeLoyde Development Solutions were retained to complete the study. The study was initiated in May 2018 and involved the 3 phases and key tasks described on the following page.

The study team was guided by a Technical Advisory Committee consisting of staff representatives from the County, the Local Municipalities and Southwestern Public Health. The study team met with the Technical Advisory Committee at key points during the development of the study to review findings and recommendations.





1.3 REPORT OVERVIEW

The intent of the Elgin County Trails Report is to provide staff and partners with a resource to support future decision making, planning and design as well as preliminary resource allocation. The content of the report has been developed based on input provided by staff and stakeholders and provides tools, strategies and guidance based on best practices and lessons learned from comparable municipalities. The following is an overview of the information contained within the report.

CHAPTER 1.0

An overview of the key principles of the Trails Study and the development / project process used to develop the report and trails network.

CHAPTER 2.0

Support for Trails; which summarizes key local and provincial policy that supports trail development and promotion.

CHAPTER 3.0

The Trail Network; which includes the recommended trail network, and trail planning and design guidelines, and trail maintenance strategies.

CHAPTER 4.0

Implementation Strategies; which includes recommendations regarding trail implementation priorities, funding and partnership opportunities.

CHAPTER 5.0

Conclusion, which includes a consolidation of key report recommendations.

2.0

SUPPORT FOR TRAILS

Chapter 2.0 provides the context from which the trails study was developed. More specifically, it outlines the existing support from a policy level, some of the benefits that can be realized with an increased focus and investment in trails and input that was generated through the consultation program which informed the study.

2.1 PROVINCIAL & LOCAL POLICY

Trail development and promotion is supported by policy and plans at the Provincial and Local level of government. As part of the development of the Trails Study, it was important to develop an understanding of the policies and plans that exist and their influence on the development of the trail network, promotion and marketing initiatives. A detailed summary of the policies reviewed is found in **Appendix | A**. The following are recommendations established from the policy review.

R1.

Consideration should be given to including County and local municipal policies and/or schedules necessary to support trail development as part of an integrated approach to promoting healthy communities, tourism and local economic development.





2.2 BENEFITS OF TRAILS

There are many benefits which can be realized from developing and implementing trails. Benefits are experienced at a very individual level as well as at a wider County-wide level. Trail benefits will be unique to each community, however, some of the common potential outcomes have been identified below.

1. HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

the following are a few basic facts borrowed from the Public Health Agency of Canada website. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html>.

- ▶ For children (5-11 yrs.) and youth (12-17 yrs.) physical activity is essential for healthy growth and development. Regular physical activity during childhood and youth years helps to develop cardiovascular fitness, strength and bone density and prevent chronic diseases such as some types of cancer, Type 2 diabetes and heart disease later in life.
- ▶ For adults (18-64 yrs.) physical activity has been shown to reduce the risk of over 25 chronic conditions, including coronary heart disease, stroke, hypertension, breast cancer, colon cancer, Type 2 diabetes and osteoporosis. Regular physical activity and higher levels of fitness allow daily tasks to be accomplished with greater ease and comfort and with less fatigue. Research shows that as much as half the functional decline between the ages of 30 and 70 is due not to aging itself but inactive lifestyle.
- ▶ For older adults (65 yrs. and older) weight-bearing physical activity reduces the rate of bone loss associated with osteoporosis, and regular physical activity maintains strength and flexibility, balance and coordination, and can help reduce the risk of falls.
- ▶ There is also a growing body of research linking community design, walkability, opportunities for physical activity such as hiking and cycling, and commuting to work using active transportation modes with mental and physical health. With growing urban areas, cost of real estate, increasing traffic congestion and ever-improving technology for remote and 'virtual' offices, people are making decisions about where they want to live based on quality of amenities nearby. A linked system of trails is just one of those amenities that factor into a decision about where one wants to live.



2. ENVIRONMENT

Trails provide public access to Elgin County's natural and rural environments. Trails allow people to observe and enjoy wildlife such as migrating Tundra Swans as well as forests and wetlands. Sensitively constructed trails give residents and visitors an appreciation for Elgin County's natural areas and waterfronts throughout the seasons which in turn, helps promote a sustainability ethic.

3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Trails across North America have created numerous economic benefits and opportunities for the communities that they pass through. Communities benefit from trail development through increases in business activity and by providing services to an increasing number of trail users. Trails provide benefits to the local economy first during construction, through the design, supply and installation of materials, then following construction, benefits emerge in the form of expenditures by trail users.

Elgin County provides a unique and special place where residents live, work, and play. The County provides a wide range of local settings including small city, small town, rural and waterfront communities. Each setting provides residents with a unique lifestyles and economic opportunities. Contemporary Elgin County is more than the sum of its parts that include: its natural environment, built heritage, pastoral countryside, beach communities, cultural amenities, culinary assets, festivals and events, retail and support services.

The County of Elgin recognizes the importance of tourism to community prosperity and economic development. Emerging demographic and economic trends dictate that the County must evolve with the changing times and economy. Tourism is a proven economic development tool that promotes new business opportunities and new revenues in the local economy.



Tourism generates jobs beyond the base employment levels needed to support the local community. Tourism helps local accommodation, retailers, and food and beverage companies thrive and grow year-round. Elgin County's beauty and other community assets will attract both investors and future residents.

Elgin County is attracting new residents and attention from other population centres such as the nearby Greater Golden Horseshoe that is one of the fastest growing places in North America. These demographic and economic shifts allow Elgin County to leverage its trails, cultural, artistic, culinary, agribusiness, heritage, arts and other assets. In turn, such leverage generates new investment and revenues for local municipalities, businesses and entrepreneurs.

Trails connect people to destination amenities and businesses in Elgin County. Cycling tourism is growing and Elgin County's landscape, communities and amenities is ideally suited for attracting cycling tourists. Bird watching and hiking are also increasingly popular leisure time activities for residents and visitors alike. Elgin County is in a strong position to market trails related tourism opportunities thus contributing to strengthening its local economy.



SAUGEEN TRAIL | NEAR PORT ELGIN





2.3 WHAT WE HEARD FROM RESIDENTS & STAKEHOLDERS

Consultation and engagement is a critical and required component of any planning study. It enabled the study team to understand the public's needs and priorities with respect to the issue that is being addressed. A multi-faceted engagement program was developed as part of the Elgin County Trails Study. The following is a summary of the consultation tactics and were used and key themes that emerged. A more detailed summary is provided in **Appendix | B**.

2.3.1 THE APPROACH

A number of different consultation approaches were undertaken as a means of soliciting input from a variety of user groups. A total of three (3) engagement tactics were used to inform the development of the trails study. They are described in further detail below.

<p>1</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ONLINE 'SURVEY': METROQUEST</p> <p>DESCRIPTION & PURPOSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ An online interactive tool hosted on the Active Elgin website▶ Hosted between May 2018 and mid-July 2018▶ Three activities were used to gather input including an interactive map, a visioning tool and the selection of design preferences 
<p>2</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">IN-PERSON: POP-UP DISPLAYS</p> <p>DESCRIPTION & PURPOSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Interactive display boards and comment forms made available at public libraries to review key project information▶ Belmont Library (Belmont), the John Kenneth Reference Library (Dutton), the Southwold Township Library (Shedden), the Straffordville Library (Straffordville), and the Malahide Community Place (Springfield) 



3

IN-PERSON: EVENT ATTENDANCE

DESCRIPTION & PURPOSE:

- ▶ At the events, the public was asked to provide input on the interactive displays and answer key project questions. The displays were the same as those used for the pop-ups. The events were used to gain greater exposure for the project.
- ▶ The team attended the Rosy Rhubarb Festival in Shedden (June 9th) and Springfield Family Day in Springfield (June 16th).

2.3.2 KEY THEMES

Some unique and very informative input was gathered. The information was reviewed and key themes and common trends emerged including:



The key themes allowed the project team to understand shortfalls of the existing trails network and focus on the elements that were identified as key priorities. The key themes also aided the project team in the development of network priorities, allowing for the prioritization of trails that addresses the public feedback. In addition, detailed comments were reviewed in the context of the trail network opportunities and constraints, the proposed trail network routes and trail promotion.

3.0

THE TRAIL NETWORK

Chapter 3.0 documents the network development approach that was used to identify the proposed trail network for Elgin County. The process that was used is an iterative step by step process that is based on best practices and lessons learned throughout Ontario. The chapter also provides an overview of some of the key assumptions and consideration that were used to inform the network development process including the types of trail users that were considered and the criteria / principles used to identify route preferences.





3.1 WHO ARE WE DESIGNING TRAILS FOR?

Trail users vary in age, level of physical ability and type of activity they are engaging in. They each have their vision of a good trail experience which depends on personal preference as well as the user group they identify with. Trail users can be generally grouped into one of the following five groups.



WALKERS: Have a wide range of interests and motivations for walking, including leisure, relaxation, socializing, exploring, connecting with nature, fitness, and dog walking. Walkers can be defined by their trip type including recreational or utilitarian. Utilitarian walkers are focused on urban areas and most often make walking trips to work, school and to run errands such as shopping. Utilitarian walkers will use trails in urban areas where they provide a convenient “short cut” as compared to nearby sidewalks.



HIKERS: are often considered the elite of the recreational walking group and may challenge themselves to cover long distances and be willing to walk on sections of a rural roadway shoulder considered less safe or less interesting by occasional leisure walkers. Trip length can range between 5 and 30 km in length. This group may be more keenly interested in connecting with nature and natural heritage conservation. They are often more experienced at map reading, are more self-sufficient than leisure walkers. Therefore, they may expect fewer amenities and are often attracted to challenging terrain and rural areas. This group can include cross-country skiers / snowshoers when there is sufficient snow during winter months.



RUNNERS: Although the primary motivation for joggers and runners may be fitness, they may share more in terms of profile characteristics with distance hikers than they do with leisure walkers. This group typically is accomplishment oriented, enjoy travelling on trails at higher speeds for distances from 3 to 15 km or more, often avoiding hard surfaces such as asphalt and concrete. Many prefer to run on granular, natural (earth) and turf surfaces which can provide a more cushioning effect on their joints.



CYCLISTS: The average travel speed for a cyclist on a trail is in the range of 15-20 km/h, though they may reach speeds in excess of 30 km/h traveling downhill on some trails. Some bicycles are designed to travel easily over stonedust and gravel surfaces (e.g. all-terrain, hybrid or mountain bikes), whereas, narrow-tired touring and racing bicycles require very compacted granular surfaces or hard surface pavements such as asphalt.



OTHER WHEELED USERS: This group includes in-line skaters, skateboarders and other trail users with small-wheeled devices. They have characteristics of both the pedestrian group as they are sometimes traveling at a walking pace, yet sometimes traveling at higher speeds. They use trails for recreation, exercise and transportation purposes. A key requirement of this group is the need for hard-surfaced trails.

3.2 TRAIL ROUTE SELECTION PRINCIPLES

A key foundation of any network development process is the identification of a set of route selection principles which are used to “assess” various trail candidates. The principles were identified based on project objectives and community priorities. The Trail Route Selection Principles outlined in **Table 1** were identified and used for the Elgin County Trails Study.

Table 1 | Summary of Elgin County Trail Route Selection Criteria

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION
CONNECTED / LINKED	Trails should provide residents and visitors with connections to key destinations. The trail should also connect to the County’s overall active transportation network.
EASY TO ACCESS	trails should be easy to find and accessible from various locations throughout the County, specifically major destinations and residential areas.
COST EFFECTIVE	the cost to implement and maintain a trail should be affordable and appropriate in scale and coordinated with other infrastructure opportunities where applicable.



CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION
SUSTAINABLE	sustainability is an important consideration for trail location, alignment and design, materials, operation and maintenance.
COMFORT & SAFETY	reducing risk to users and providing routes and facilities that make people feel comfortable based on user interests and preferences must be considered with new trail link proposals/opportunities.
VISIBLE	trails should be a visible component of the County and local municipal transportation systems.
CONTEXT SENSITIVE	trails will be designed to be consistent with best practices but may be adjusted for locations with unique features or site-specific constraints.
DIVERSE	trails should appeal to a range of users with varying abilities and interests, therefore, the trail network should be comprised of a variety of trail types and locations.
ACCESSIBLE	recreational trails will be designed to be accessible and meet the requirements of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act and local municipal trail accessibility standards where they exist.
ATTRACTIVE & INTERESTING	trails should take advantage of attractive and scenic areas, views and vistas. They should encourage participation in local tourism and highlight significant destinations.

Following the completion of the study, the principles should be referred to when trail routes are being refined during the detailed feasibility stage, when changes to the trail network are being considered, or when new trail link opportunities arise.

R2.

Use the Route Selection Principles when undertaking detailed route feasibility assessments for trail linkages identified as part of the trails network or when network routing changes are being considered.



3.3 TRAIL NETWORK DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Four steps were followed in developing the recommended trail network presented later in section 3. The following tables describes each of the steps.

STEP 1:

COLLECT & ASSEMBLE BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- ▶ Using base information provided by the municipalities, partners and stakeholders, the study team consolidated and digitally mapped existing previously planned trail facilities, and trails planned in association with new development areas around several of the urban areas.
- ▶ A set of qualitative route selection principles were developed to guide the selection of trail routes. The principles were reviewed with the study team, technical advisory committee as well as stakeholders and the public through the online and in-person public engagement. (refer to section 3.2).

STEP 2:

SELECT CANDIDATE ROUTES / ROUTE ALIGNMENT

- ▶ Candidate routes were identified and mapped by the study team. Once presented and reviewed the routes were refined based on the following information:
 - ▶ Consolidated base mapping;
 - ▶ Route Selection Principles;
 - ▶ Consultation with the technical advisory committee;
 - ▶ Expertise of the study team;
 - ▶ consultation with stakeholders and the public; and
 - ▶ Desktop analysis using the GIS database and aerial imagery provided by the technical advisory committee.



STEP 3:

FIELD INVESTIGATION & DEVELOP TRAIL ROUTING

- ▶ The study team examined candidate routes in the field and collected additional information including photographs that helped to inform the development of the trails network concept. Due to the size of the County some additional field investigation was also conducted to verify a number of routes and opportunities.
- ▶ The route network concept was further refined using the Route Selection Principles and information collected in the field. The mapping was also refined based on the technical expertise of the study team as well as input from the public, stakeholders and technical advisory committee.
- ▶ Potential connections on privately owned lands were not investigated in the field as part of the study. Should the opportunity arise in the future, routes on private lands should be investigated further through discussions between the County / local municipality and the land owner, with the goal to engage in an access agreement with the landowner.

STEP 4:

RECOMMEND TRAIL IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

- ▶ The Implementation Plan was developed to respond to priorities identified by the study team, technical advisory committee, stakeholders and the public.
- ▶ Note that as part of the implementation of individual routes in the future, a more detailed assessment will be needed to confirm the route alignment at the appropriate time. This would include the preparation of a cost estimate to inform capital budgets, seek external funding opportunities and approval by the appropriate municipal Council. Unit costs presented in **Appendix | C** can be used to assist in the development of estimated implementation costs for individual routes.



3.4 EXISTING CONDITIONS

Due to the extensive work that Elgin County and its partners have done in the recent years, there is an comprehensive network of existing as well as previously proposed trails from which this trails study is building upon. In addition, there are also challenges and opportunities which need to be addressed. The following sections provide an overview of these elements.

3.4.1 OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

The development of the trails network in Elgin County presents a number of opportunities and challenges, including the following:

OPPORTUNITIES

- 1. DESIRED CONNECTIONS:** Beaten paths, foot trails, and abandoned trail corridors found throughout the settlement areas and natural areas of the County.
- 2. COMMUNITY SUPPORT:** There is a desire on the part of residents for the County to improve and expand the trail network currently in place.

CHALLENGES

- 1. RESOURCES:** Implementation takes time and budget. It is challenging to balance additional budget and budget for existing services.
- 2. COORDINATION:** Integrating a new planning process requires coordination which will require clarity on expectations and roles.
- 3. GEOGRAPHY:** The county is a large area with different landscapes and land uses. These require a tailored solution for unique constraints.
- 4. POLICY:** Current policies are high-level which require amendments to consider trails planning and design at the day to day level.
- 5. GUIDELINES:** Common design guidelines are lacking which result in inconsistency in trail design and application.



3.5 THE RECOMMENDED TRAIL NETWORK

The trail network in Elgin County is an amalgamation of many trail types and partners. It is a combination of: Trail routes, loops and networks in a number of the urban areas including St. Thomas, Alymer, Belmont and Port Stanley, Destination trails in the rural areas, including those in Conservation Areas, Provincial Parks and on Crown lands, Regional trails that travel through the County and connect with trails in neighbouring counties and municipalities, and Trail opportunities, some of which have the potential to form trail spines and regional trails in the County-wide network.

3.5.1 THE TRAILS NETWORK

The proposed Elgin County trails network is illustrated on **Maps 3.0 to 3.8. Table 2** provides a summary of existing and proposed trail network.

Table 2 | Trail Network Statistics

MUNICIPALITY	EXISTING (KM) ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾	PROPOSED (KM) ⁽³⁾	TOTAL (KM)
Aylmer	4	3.7	7.7
Bayham	64.0	17.0	80.8
Central Elgin	57.8	20.3	78.1
Dutton/Dunwich	49.2	17.0	66.2
Malahide	46.8	2.1	48.9
Southwold	67.5	27.9	95.3
St. Thomas	43.3	11.0	54.3
West Elgin	38.9	20.5	59.5
Total	371.5	119.4	490.8

Notes:

1. Includes existing trails on lands owned by municipalities and public agencies (e.g. Conservation Authorities, the Provincial and Federal government. Also includes existing trails located on private property that have been established through agreements with individual landowners (i.e. applies to the Elgin Hiking Trail and some sections of the designated Great Trail / Trans Canada Trail)
2. Includes the (a) designated Great Trail / Trans Canada Trail route, (b) Great Lakes Waterfront Trail and (c) Elgin Hiking Trail. Portions of (a) and (b) are on-road, and some portions of (a) may not have been implemented. The Elgin Hiking Trail (c) is mapped based on information provided by stakeholders, and the entire route of the Elgin Hiking Trail could not be verified in the field.
3. Includes proposed routes identified during the development of the Elgin County Trail Study and proposed routes identified in previously approved local master plans such as the St. Thomas Trail Master Plan and Central Elgin Trails Master Plan.

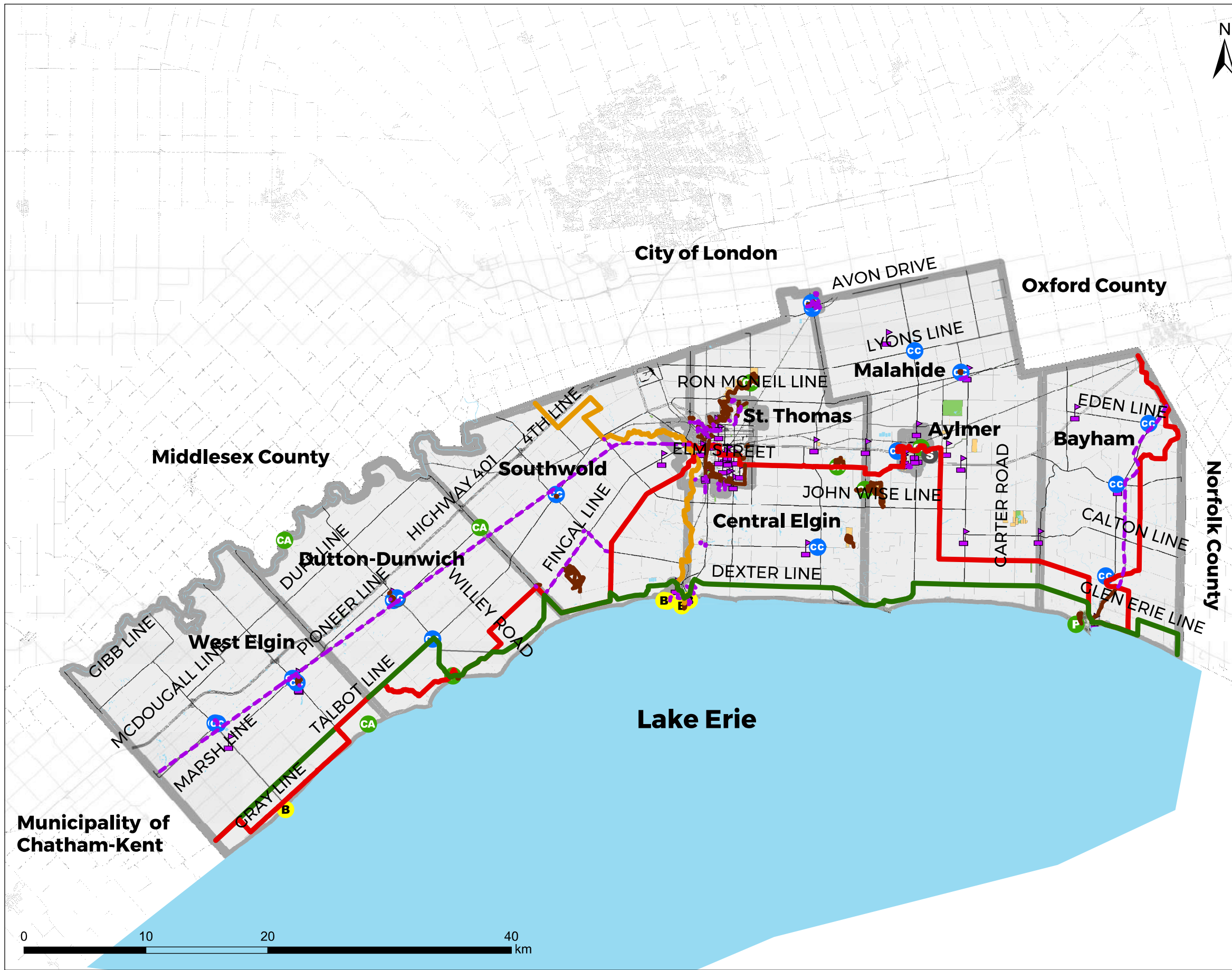
Elgin County Trails Study



Map 3-0 Proposed Trail Network Elgin County

Legend

- Trails**
- Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Great Lakes Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area
 - Trails
 - Proposed Trails¹
- Destination Areas**
- Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
 - Lakes and Watercourses
 - B Beach
 - CC Community Centre
 - CA Conservation Area
 - P Provincial Park
 - S Seniors' Centre
 - ▲ School
 - Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)



¹ Proposed Trails include previously proposed trails from other approved municipal master plans and trails proposed as part of the Elgin County Trails Study.

Projection: UTM Zone 17 N. Datum: NAD 1983.
 Map Created in November 2018 by WSP Canada Group Limited.
 Spatial data provided by Elgin County, 2017.
 All rights reserved. Not a plan of survey.
 All Rights Reserved. Additional data from the City of St. Thomas, 2017.
 Note: Map is not intended for navigation.



Elgin County Trails Study



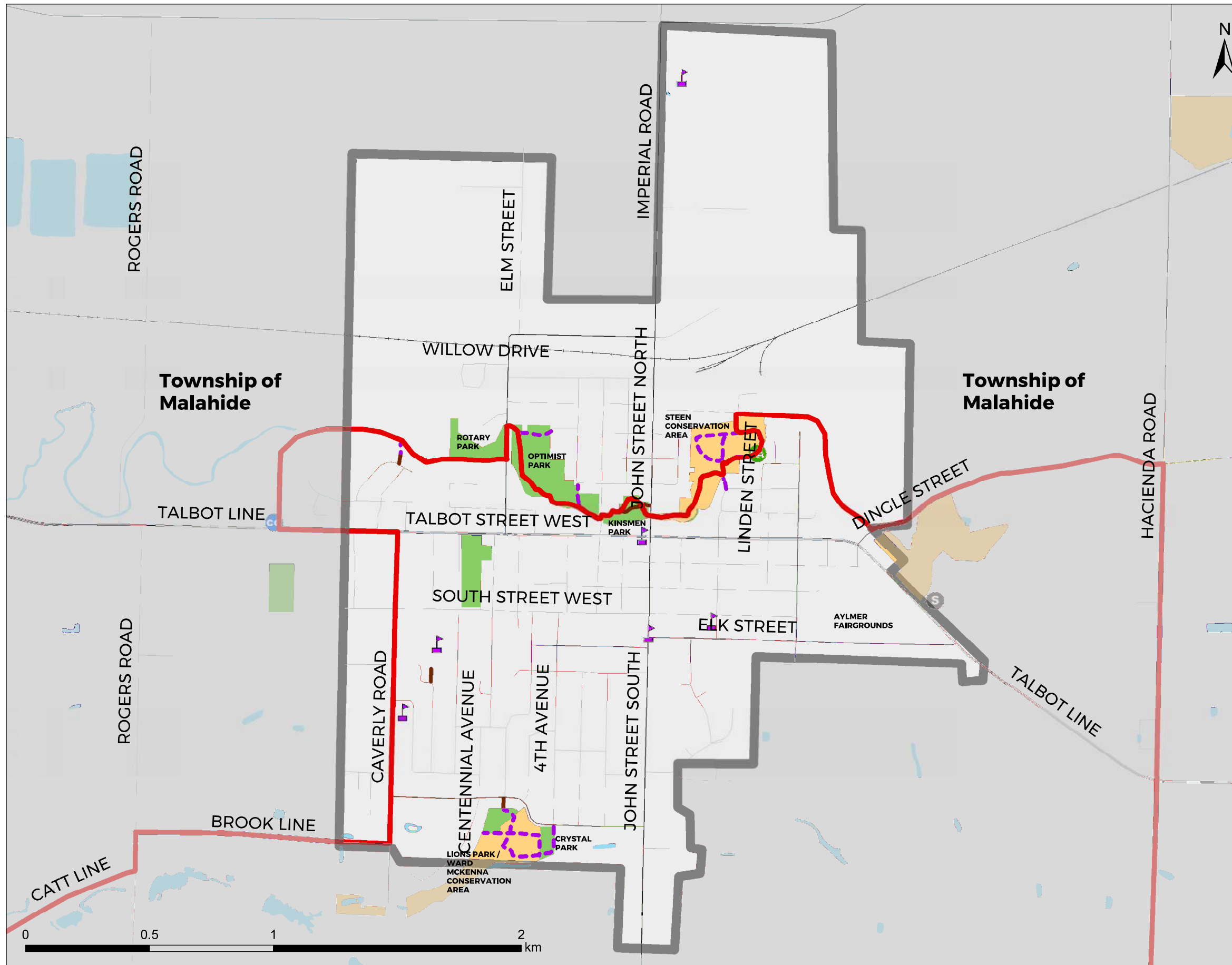
Map 3-1 Proposed Trail Network Town of Aylmer

Legend

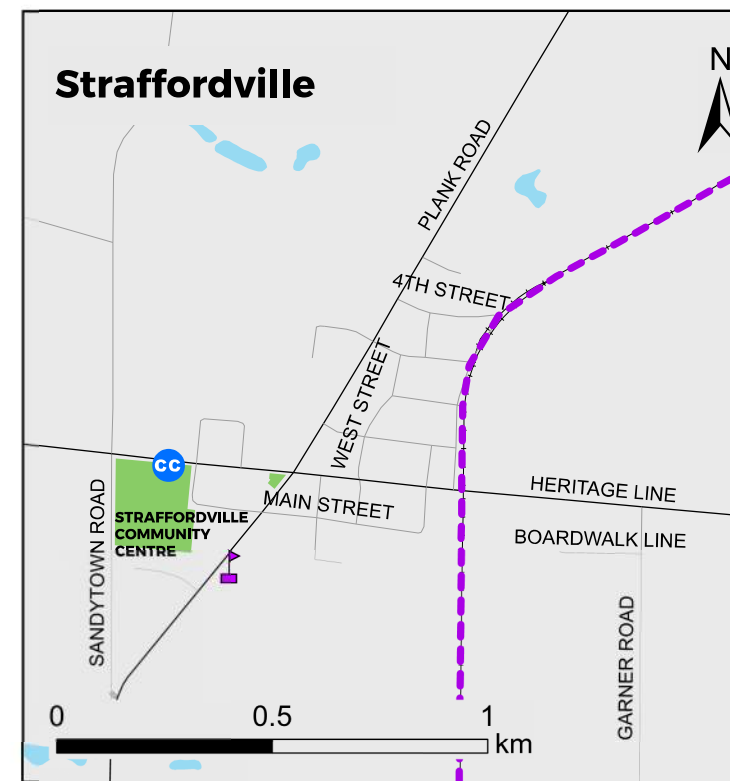
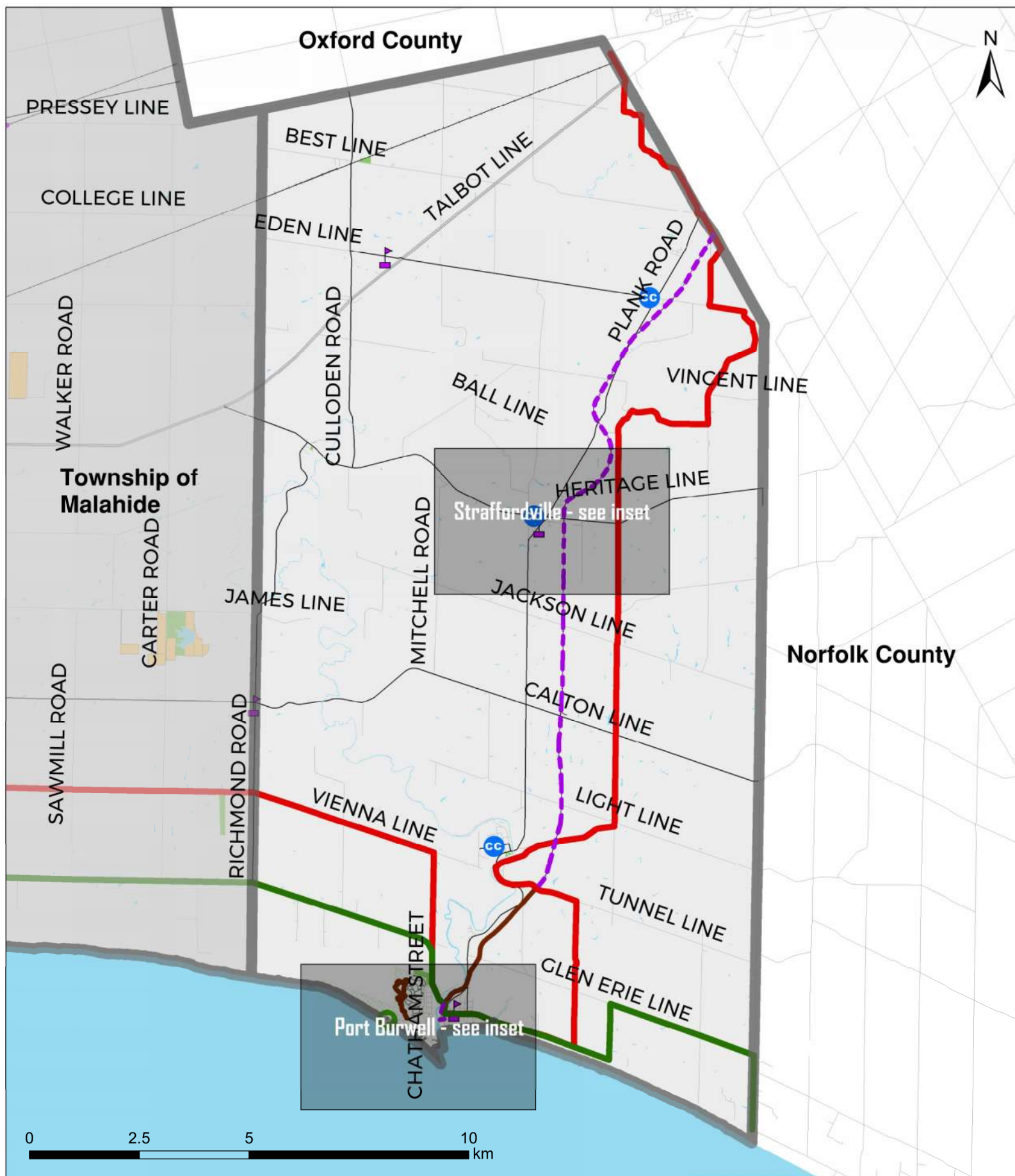
- Trails**
- Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Great Lakes Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area Trails
 - Proposed Trails¹
- Destination Areas**
- Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
 - Lakes and Watercourses
 - Beach
 - Community Centre
 - Conservation Area
 - Provincial Park
 - Seniors' Centre
 - School
 - Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)

1. Proposed Trails include previously proposed trails from other approved municipal master plans and trails proposed as part of the Elgin County Trails Study.

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Elgin County Trails Study



Map 3-2
Proposed Trail Network
 Municipality of Bayham

Legend

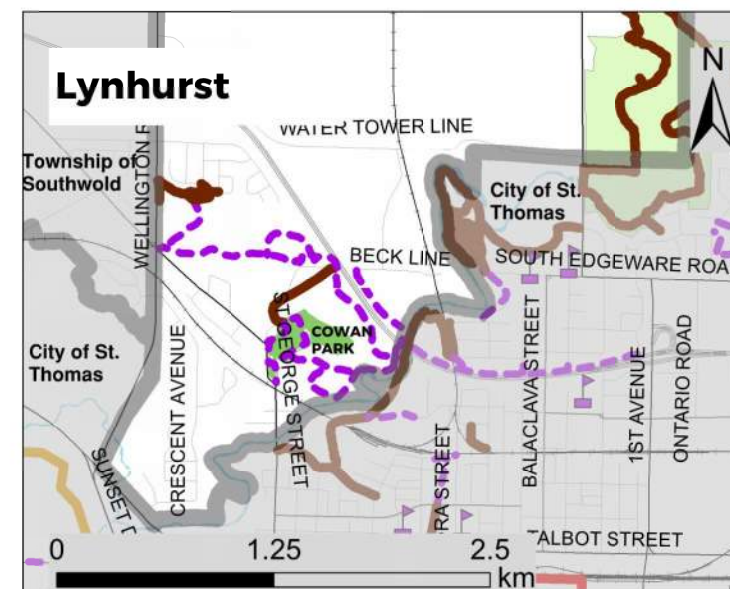
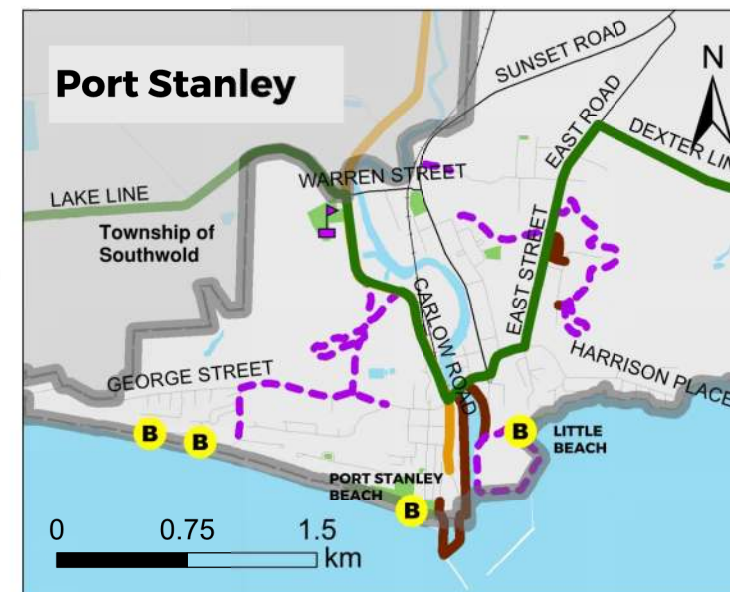
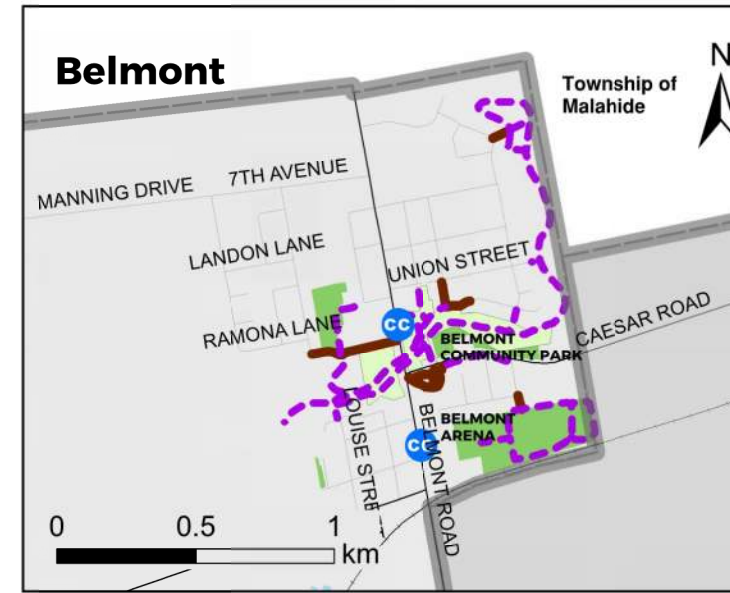
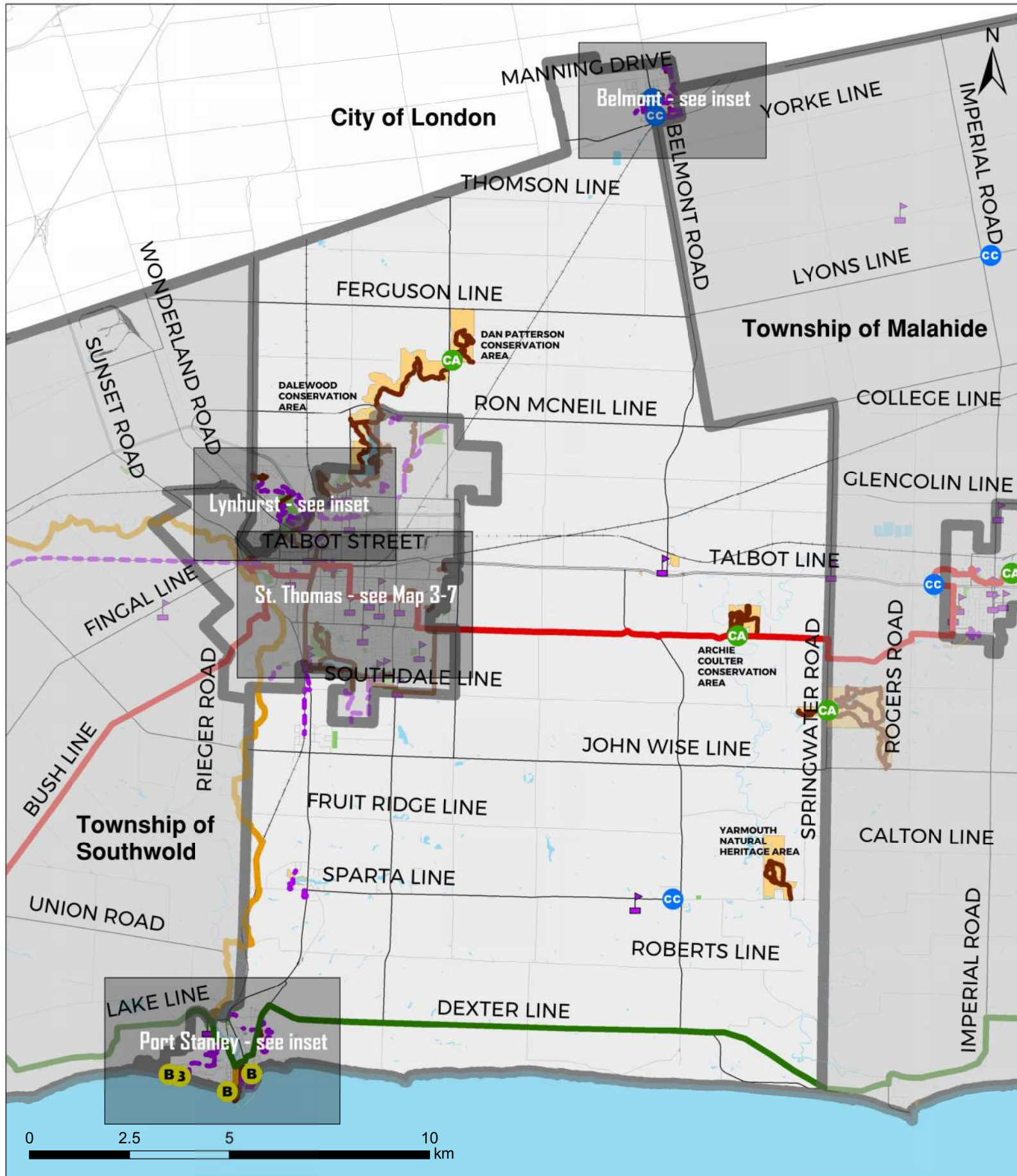
- Trails
- Elgin Hiking Trail
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 - Great Lakes Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area Trails
 - - - Proposed Trails¹
- Destination Areas
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Elgin County Trails Study



Map 3-3
Proposed Trail Network
 Municipality of Central Elgin

Legend

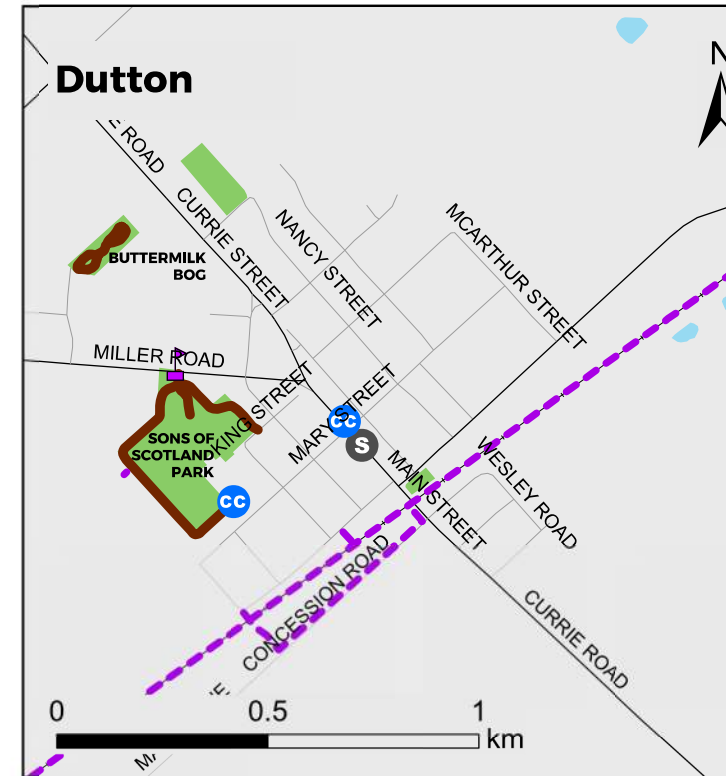
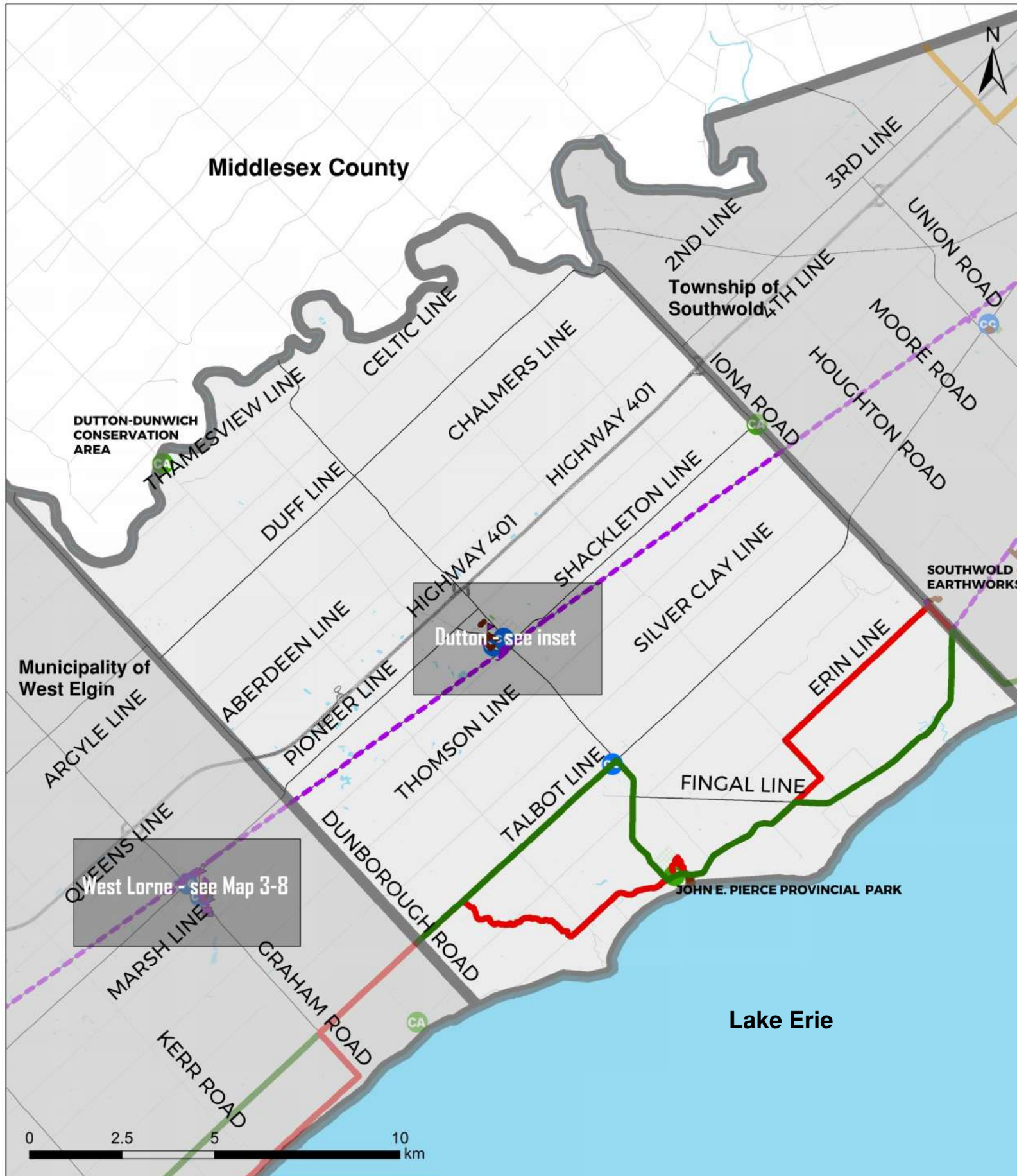
- Trails**
- Elgin Hiking Trail
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 - Municipal and Conservation Area
 - Trails
 - Proposed Trails¹
- Destination Areas**
- Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
 - Lakes and Watercourses
 - B Beach
 - CC Community Centre
 - CA Conservation Area
 - P Provincial Park
 - S Seniors' Centre
 - ✎ School
 - +— Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)

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Elgin County Trails Study



Map 3-4
Proposed Trail Network
 Municipality of Dutton-Dunwich

Legend

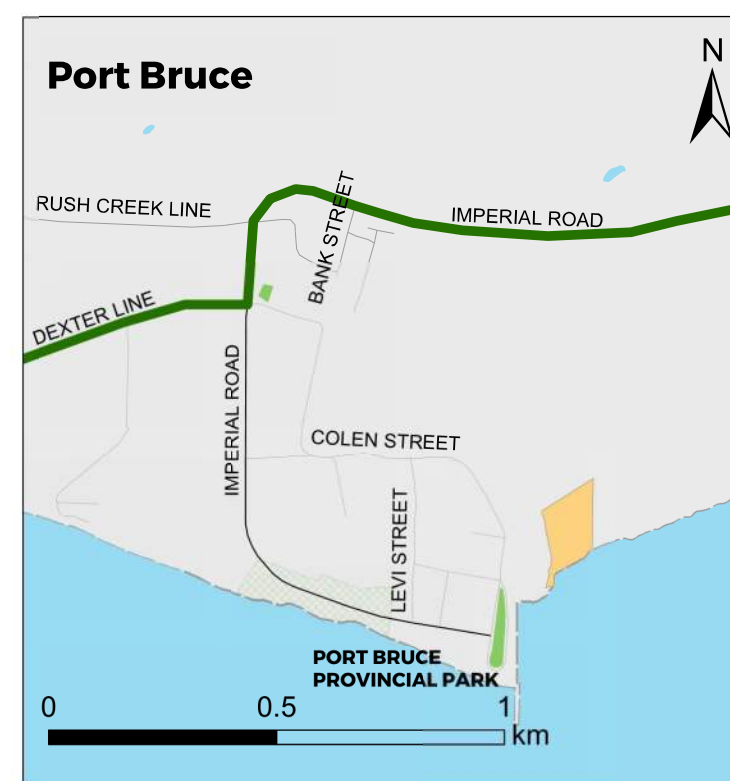
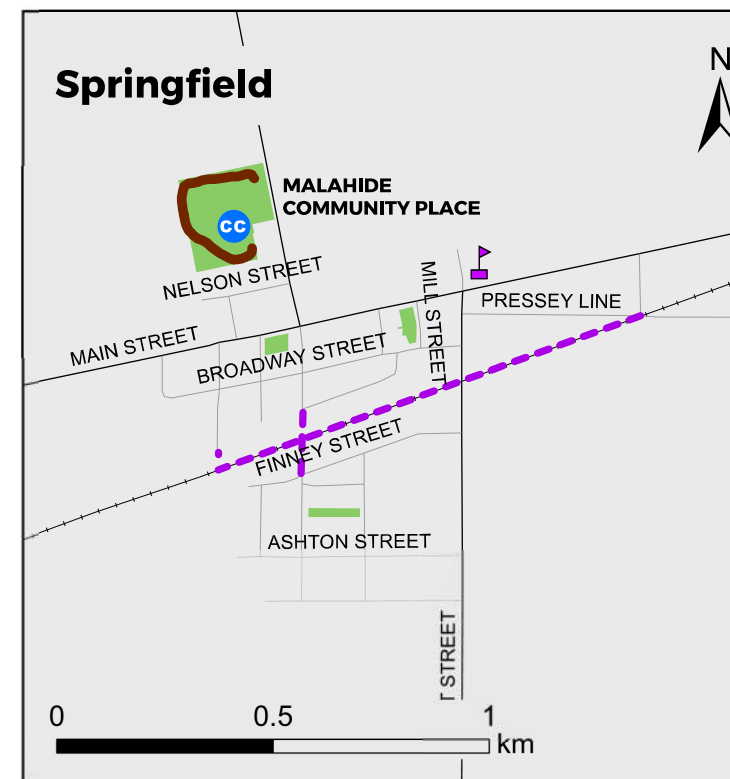
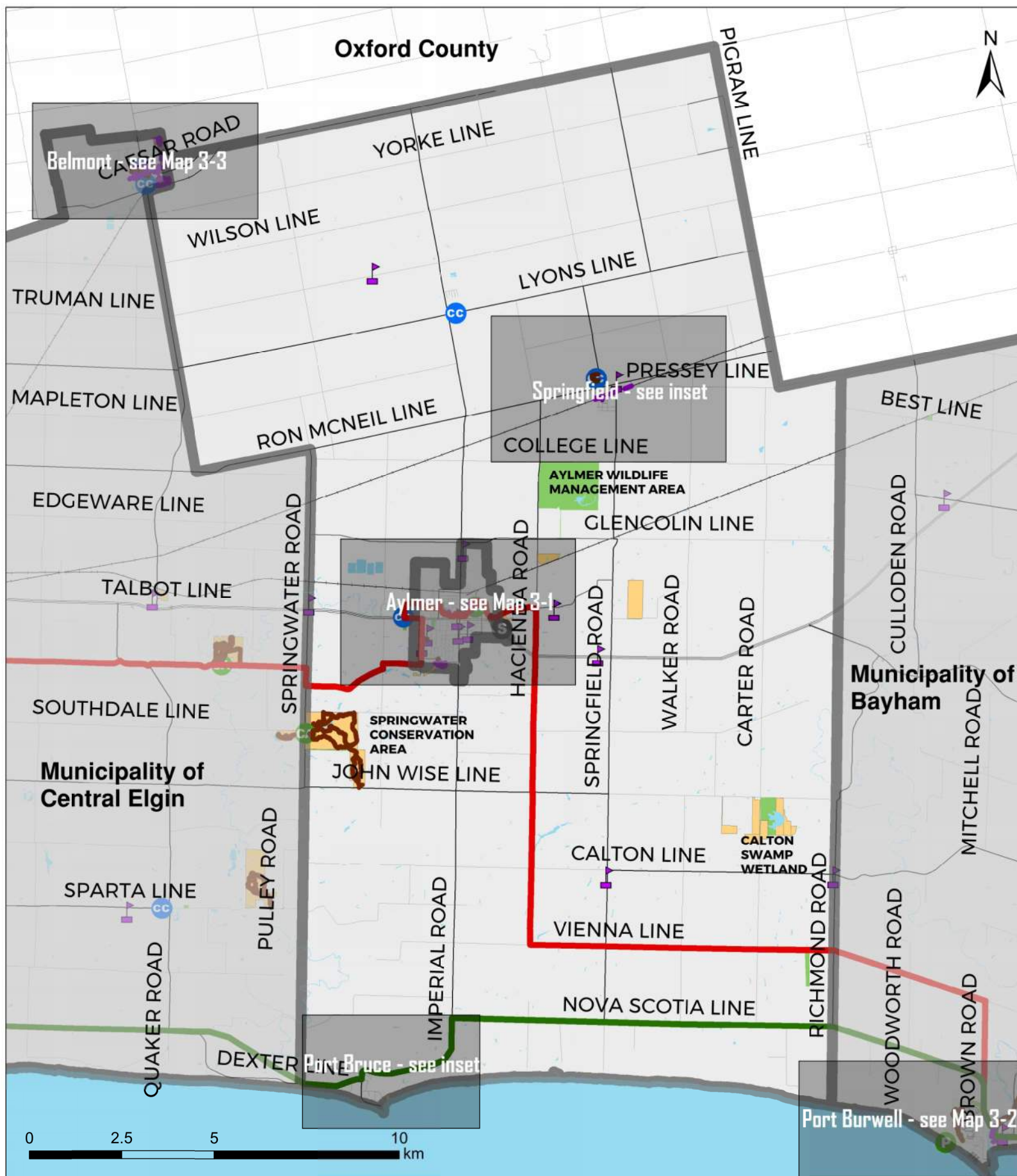
- Trails
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 - Proposed Trails¹
- Destination Areas
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Elgin County Trails Study



Map 3-5
Proposed Trail Network
Township of Malahide

Legend

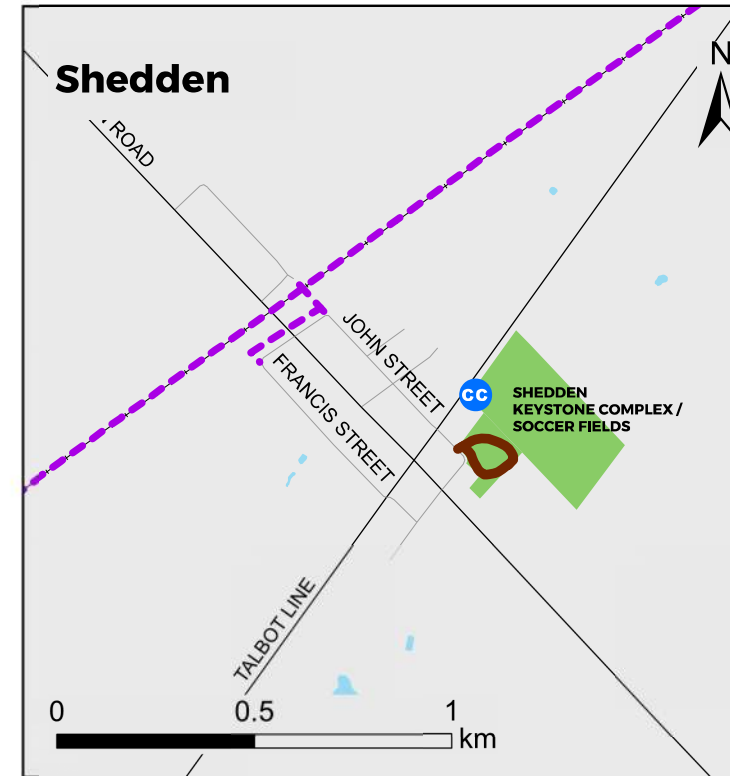
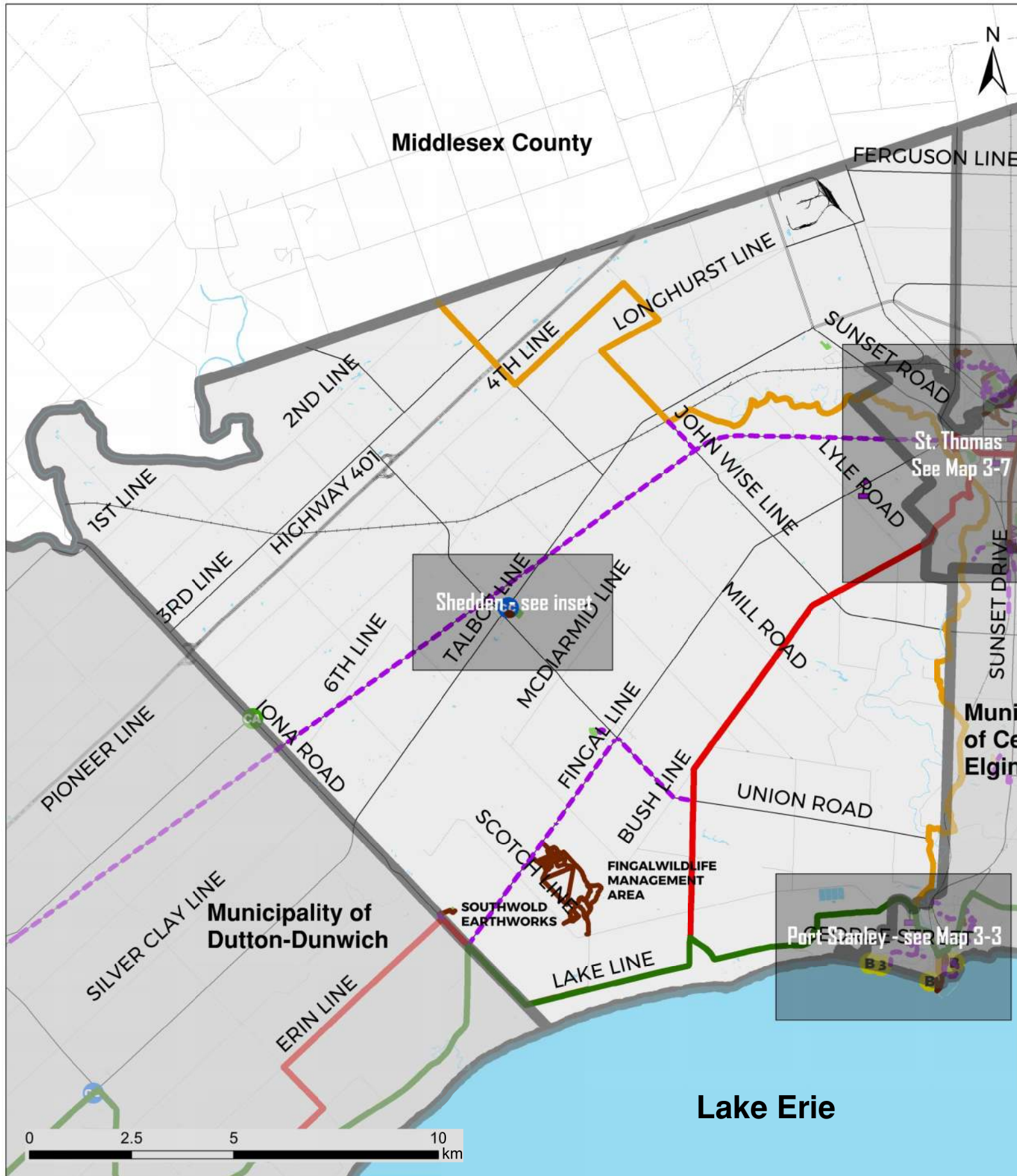
- Trails**
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 - Great Lakes Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area
 - - - Trails
 - - - Proposed Trails¹
- Destination Areas**
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Elgin County Trails Study



Map 3-6
Proposed Trail Network
 Township of Southwold

Legend

- Trails**
- Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Great Lakes Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area Trails
 - Proposed Trails¹
- Destination Areas**
- Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
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 - Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)

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Elgin County Trails Study



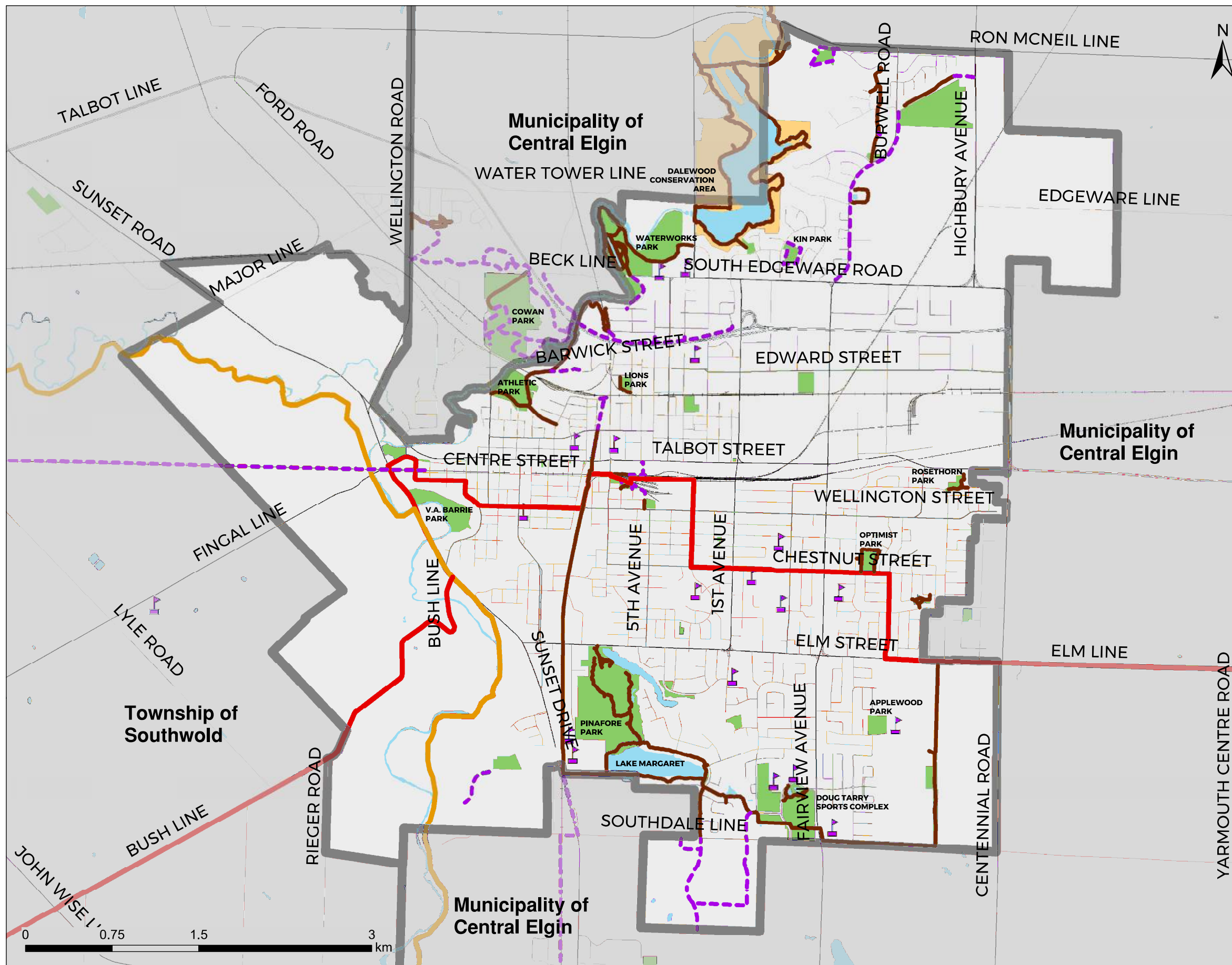
**Map 3-7
Proposed Trail Network
City of St. Thomas**

Legend

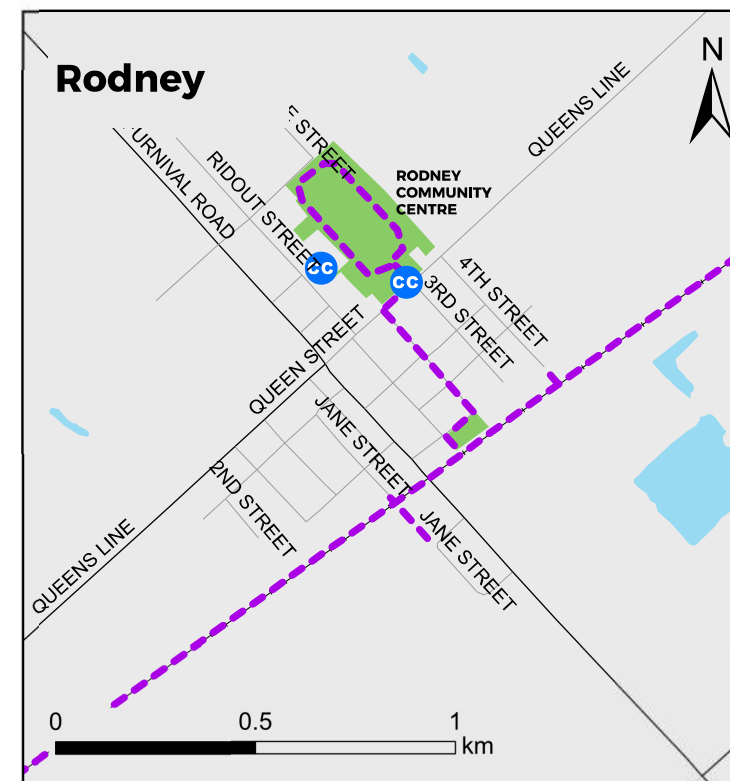
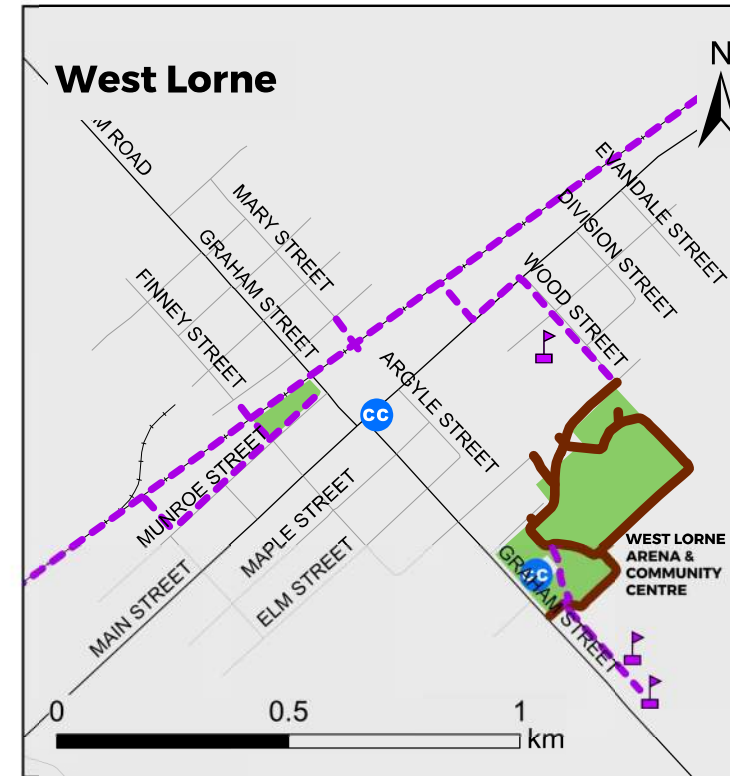
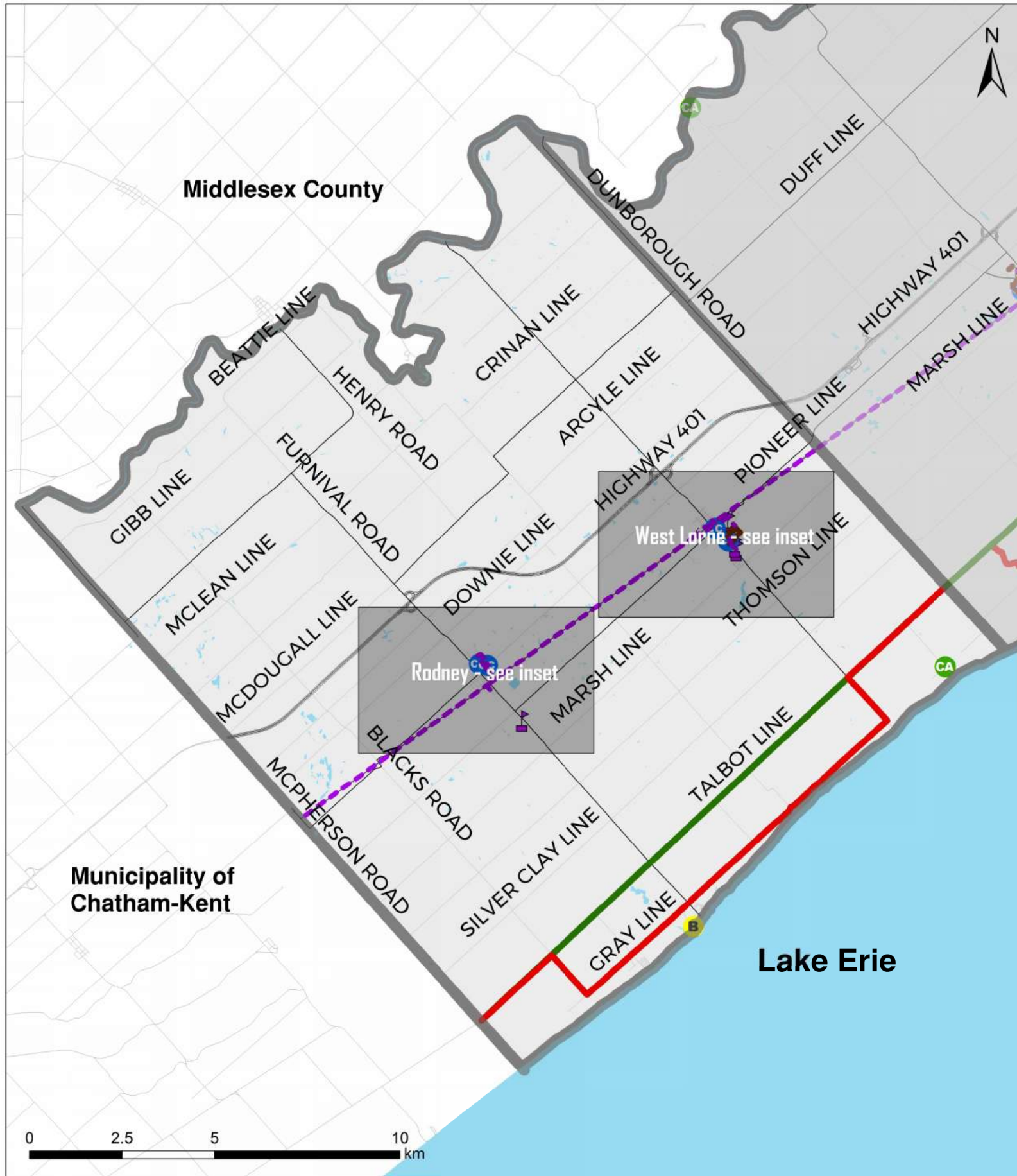
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Elgin County Trails Study



Map 3-8 Proposed Trail Network Municipality of West Elgin

Legend

- Trails
- Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Great Lakes Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area
 - Trails
 - Proposed Trails¹
- Destination Areas
- Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
 - Lakes and Watercourses
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R3.

The proposed trail network in the Elgin County Trails Study should be used as a blueprint for future network development and to inform next steps and trail priorities at the local municipal level.

3.5.3 UNDERSTANDING THE TRAILS NETWORK

As the trail network is explained in more detail it is important to acknowledge that a “strict” trails plan inevitably will have issues related to connectivity and continuity. Due to the location and design of trail facilities i.e. off-road connections through natural areas, etc. it is likely impossible that a fully connected network of trails can be achieved. As such, the consultant team has relied on other trail and active transportation systems at the provincial, county local municipal and partner level to achieve overall connectivity throughout Elgin.

The following is an overview of the different systems that make up the Elgin County Trails network to establish a greater understanding of the various layers.

1. CYCLING MASTER PLAN

Given the rural nature of the majority of Elgin County it is recognized that creating a fully linked network of off-road trails is not likely possible. Cycling network routes identified in the Elgin County Cycling Master Plan and any future updates to that plan will be relied on for cyclists to get to destination trails. Although pedestrians may walk along road shoulders to get to a select number of destination trails, specifically those located near urban centres, it is assumed that they will arrive at destination trails via automobile. Therefore, staging areas with adequate parking and high-quality orientation mapping at each of the sites are important to creating a quality trail product.

2. REGIONAL TRAILS

Regional trails have key role in the network, not only as an attractor themselves, but also as spines which link communities and provide connectors to smaller local trails in the urban areas. There are three existing regional trails within the County.



ELGIN HIKING TRAIL which generally follows Kettle Creek from Port Stanley to St. Thomas and then heads west along Dodds Creek to Paynes Mills, ultimately linking with the Thames Valley Trail near Southwold. The Elgin Hiking Trail was established by the Elgin Hiking Trail Club, and the route has been developed through access agreements with owners of the private lands through which the trail passes.

GREAT TRAIL (formerly known as the Trans Canada Trail), which enters Elgin County south of Tillsonburg, travels south to Port Burwell, then west to Alymer, primarily along quieter municipal roads and some County roads. Through Alymer the route utilizes the Town's park and open space system associated with Catfish Creek. Heading west into St. Thomas via the road network, the trail links the downtown core of the City before heading southwest to generally follow the Lake Erie shoreline by way of Municipal and County roads, and some links along privately-owned lands in Dutton-Dunwich based on agreements with individual landowners.

GREAT LAKES WATERFRONT TRAIL which generally traces the Lake Erie shoreline, entering Elgin County along Glen Erie Line from neighbouring Norfolk County and exiting the county along Talbot Line west of Port Glasgow. The route passes through Port Burwell, Port Bruce and Port Stanley.

In addition to these regional trails there are also several corridors that offer future potential regional trail opportunities. These opportunities are described in further detail on the following pages.

CASO / MCR BRIDGE OVER KETTLE CREEK VALLEY (SOURCE: TODD ROWLEY)





CANADA SOUTHERN RAILWAY (CASO) Originally opened in 1873 this former railway corridor stretched from Fort Erie to Amherstburg. East of St. Thomas the corridor is no longer intact, with many portions having been severed and sold. West of St. Thomas the corridor is intact, and currently under the ownership of a single utility company. There have been recent discussions between the County and owner of the corridor to explore the potential for its use as a trail, through a partnership or other formal arrangement.

On the west side of St. Thomas the former CASO line crosses the Kettle Creek Valley with a massive trestle, approximately 28m high and 420m long. The railway trestle and a portion of the former railway corridor was purchased by On Track a not-for-profit group with a vision to preserve the massive trestle structure and re-purpose it into the St. Thomas Elevated Park. Once developed it could become a national and international destination for rail, trail and cycling enthusiasts.

The corridor crosses into Chatham-Kent, passing just north of Ridgetown, then through Tilbury where it enters Essex County. Within Chatham-Kent, plans are in place to develop a recreational trail in the corridor. In Essex County a trail has already been developed for most of the section west of the urban area of the town of Essex to Amherstburg.



(LEFT) CASO CORRIDOR FROM WEST LORNE (WSP, 2018) (RIGHT) INTERPRETIVE PLAQUE NEAR ENTRY TO ELEVATED PARK (WSP, 2018)



LAKE ERIE & PACIFIC RAILWAY

opened in 1902 and operated between Port Burwell to Tillsonburg until 1987, after which it was abandoned by the railway and acquired by the Town of Tillsonburg. It currently hosts the hydro transmission line for the Erie Shores Wind Farm. The corridor is recognized by Bayham as a trail from Port Burwell to Tunnel Line, and offers the potential to continue a recreational trail northward to Tillsonburg. An extension of the trail north of Tunnel Line would also link Port Burwell to the communities of Vienna, Straffordville and Eden.



FORMER LAKE ERIE & PACIFIC RAILWAY, PORT BURWELL (WSP)

CANADA AIRLINE

which began railway operations from Glencoe to Fort Erie in 1873. West of St. Thomas the corridor heads from Lynhurst, through Frome and Lawrence Station before entering Middlesex County. It is currently known as the CN Paynes subdivision and the tracks have been removed west of John Wise Line. A portion of the corridor in the northern part of Elgin County is owned by a corporation interested in developing a solar power farm. In Middlesex County the potential use of the corridor for trail/active transportation was identified in the recently completed Middlesex County Cycling Strategy.



CANADA AIR LINE WEST OF LYNHURST (WSP, 2018)

LONDON AND PORT STANLEY RAILWAY

which originally opened in 1856. It is currently owned by Port Stanley Terminal Rail; an operating tourist railway. Information received during the development of the Elgin County Trails Study indicated that Port Stanley Terminal Rail is not interested in a recreational trail within their corridor. Should circumstances change in the future this corridor may present an opportunity for a recreational trail.



3. DESTINATION TRAILS

Kettle Creek, Catfish Creek, Long Point, Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authorities, Ontario Parks and Ministry of Natural Resources are owners of significant tracts of natural heritage lands in the rural part of the municipality. Some of these lands contain very popular trail networks, including the following:

- ▶ Yarmouth Natural Heritage Area
- ▶ Springwater Forest Conservation Area
- ▶ Archie Coulter Conservation Area
- ▶ Dalewood Conservation Area
- ▶ Dan Patterson Conservation Area
- ▶ E.M Warwick Conservation Area
- ▶ John E. Pearce Provincial Park, including Backus Page House Museum and the Spicer Trail - owned and managed by Ontario Parks
- ▶ Fingal Wildlife Management Area, which is a Crown-owned property, and co-managed through a partnership agreement between the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Elgin Stewardship Council.

Planning, design, implementation and management of trails on these lands takes place according to strategies, plans and guidelines of the owning agency and its partners (where applicable). The County / local Municipalities can also have a partnership role by working cooperatively with these agencies to promote and market the destination trails, and by developing connections to municipal trails where the destinations are close to urban centres.

In addition to those that contain formalized trails there are some destinations with few or no trails based on information gathered and field investigations by the study team. Two examples include:

- ▶ Hawk Cliff
- ▶ Dutton-Dunwich Conservation Area.



FINGAL MANAGEMENT
WILDLIFE AREA (WSP, 2018)



3.6 PLANNING FOR TRAILS

The future implementation of trail infrastructure and programs will require support from planning policy and process. There are also supportive land-uses and approaches that can be considered when planning around trails depending on the context in which they are being discussed. The following sections provide an overview of planning considerations for the Elgin Trails network as the County and its partners move forward with implementation.

3.6.1 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & TRAILS

1. TRAILS AND NEW DEVELOPMENT

Integrating trails into the community as urban centres grow is very relevant in Elgin County. Urban centres such as St. Thomas, Alymer, Belmont, Lynhurst, Port Stanley and Dutton are experiencing growth and this trend is expected to continue. New development provides an opportunity to incorporate new trail linkages at the time of initial construction rather than at some future time when it can be more challenging.

Trails are an integral part of the community fabric and an important part of the land development process. Many land developers recognize the value that trails bring to their projects and market their products accordingly. Providing the development industry with information about the proposed trail network at both the broader scale and in the context of their development will help to improve communication among all parties involved. Trail routes proposed in development applications be designed to overcome physical barriers, make appropriate connections to important destinations and enhance connectivity with the existing and planned trail system.

Trails should be constructed concurrently with the construction of other infrastructure and homes. When trail implementation is deferred until homes are built there can be conflict when residents adjacent to planned trail corridors claim they were unaware of trail plans. Developers are encouraged to proactively engage potential buyers regarding the location of trails planned for their neighbourhood at the time of sale. Providing information at sales offices, including information in sales packages and erecting signs in locations where trails are to be constructed will help to alleviate challenges at a later date.



TRAIL WITH NEW DEVELOPMENT IN LYNHURST (WSP, 2018)



R4.

Developers should be expected to work through an iterative process with municipal staff, beginning early in the planning stages to create an appropriate trail network within their development area with links to external trails where appropriate.

2. TRAILS IN ESTABLISHED NEIGHBOURHOODS

Implementing new trails in established neighbourhoods can be challenging even if the intent to do so has been clearly documented in strategic plans, especially where new trails are located close to existing homes.

Even with extensive consultation efforts at the master plan stage it can be difficult to obtain public opinion related to specific trail segments until a project reaches the implementation stage. It can be at this stage where adjacent landowners who perceive themselves as being directly affected become more concerned and involved. Real and perceived concerns over increased pedestrian traffic, access to rear yards, invasion of privacy, and a perception that there may be an increased potential for vandalism and theft are often cited as key concerns.

It is important to engage adjacent residents in an open, public consultation process at the earliest possible stages of the project. Genuine and effective communication can help to alleviate concerns and build support for the trail link.



Some keys to success include:

- ▶ Notifying adjacent landowners early in the process and taking the time to understand and respond to their concerns;
- ▶ Encouraging their participation in the design process through events such as local design workshops to determine trail layout, design, materials and privacy features, as well as site meetings to examine and refine proposed layouts;
- ▶ Emphasizing the benefits of trails for their neighbourhood and community, including themselves and their children;
- ▶ Demonstrating how the local trail link being proposed fits within the greater trail network in the short and long term;
- ▶ Emphasizing successful examples and effective solutions where similar problems were overcome.

Different types of engagement may be required to advance a project through the detail design and implementation stages.

The type of engagement and desired outcome varies depending on the project location, design approvals, scope and complexity of the project. The following are some different examples of how engagement can be designed to fit the project extent and complexity.

STEP 1: NOTIFICATION

NOTIFICATION OF CONSTRUCTION:

Trail projects that:

- ▶ Are located entirely on public land (e.g. Municipal or County);
- ▶ Do not abut residential or commercial properties;
- ▶ Have all necessary planning and design approvals in place; and
- ▶ Have been tendered for construction;

are good candidates for public notification by the municipality, indicating that it intends to proceed with construction. Notification should be published on the municipal website and other appropriate media such as the local newspaper. The notice should briefly explain the project; note that the project was previously approved, identify the expected construction start and end dates and provide a contact name and number for questions. It is suggested that the municipality wait for a specified period (e.g. 30 days) before commencing construction in case questions arise, giving the municipal project manager an opportunity to respond with the appropriate information.



STEP 2: MEETING

LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD MEETING:

A Local Councillor or municipal staff may select to host a neighbourhood information meeting at the design stage for an upcoming trail project that has been identified in the Trail Study or other local policy plan. If the Councillor or Municipal staff believe additional consultation with the public is needed to address comments, a neighbourhood meeting could be convened to present the draft trail alignment and design details. This meeting may also serve to present proposed changes or solutions to the alignment or design from that was previously presented to area residents.

STEP 3: CONSULTATION

FOCUSED CONSULTATION AS PART OF DESIGN PROCESS:

One outcome of the neighbourhood meeting may be significant revisions to the trail design. In this situation the municipality may select to undertake this work internally or secure the assistance of outside consultants, and may involve working meeting(s) with neighbourhood residents and stakeholders to identify, review and refine design changes. If there is consensus to proceed, then the design should be finalized, any approvals secured, project tendered, notification of construction issued and then the project constructed. If consensus is not apparent, staff should be asked to report back to Council with a recommended course of action and request direction.

STEP 4: CLASS EA

BROAD CONSULTATION AS PART OF A CLASS ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OR SIMILAR STUDY PROCESS:

The development of trails does not normally require a Class Environmental Assessment (EA), however there may be situations where the County / Local Municipality selects to conduct an Environmental Assessment.

R5.

Municipalities should review the suggested approaches for ongoing public participation for trails proposed in established neighbourhoods and determine an appropriate approach on a project-by-project basis.



3.6.2 TRAILS & ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The Municipal Engineers Association (MEA) Class Environmental Assessment Document (October 2000 as amended 2007) applies to municipal infrastructure projects. Recognizing that the environmental impact of projects varies due to a variety of factors the Environmental Assessment process classifies projects according to their relative environmental impact. The classification assists proponents of a project determine an appropriate assessment process by selecting an appropriate EA schedule.

1. SCHEDULE A OR A+

- ▶ Generally, includes normal or emergency agency operational and maintenance activities; and
- ▶ The environmental effects of these activities are usually minimal and, therefore, these projects are pre-approved.

2. SCHEDULE B

- ▶ Generally, includes improvements and minor expansions to existing facilities; and
- ▶ There is the potential for some adverse environmental impacts and therefore the proponent is required to proceed through a screening process including consultation with those who may be affected.

3. SCHEDULE C

- ▶ Generally, includes the construction of new facilities and major expansions to existing facilities; and
- ▶ These projects proceed through the environmental assessment planning process outlined in the Class EA.

In October 2015 amendments to the MCEA were approved by the provincial government, which included amendments to, and clarifications regarding the EA Schedules. Previous editions of the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment did not provide direction regarding multi-purpose pathways.



Clarity is now provided in “Appendix 1-Cycling Changes to Project Schedules in the March 2015 Proposed Amendments”.

<http://www.municipalclassea.ca/files/Amendments/2015-10-20%20Final%20MEA%20Amendments.pdf>

Of the amendments to the schedule, the following are relevant to trails.

- ▶ Normal or emergency operation and maintenance of linear facilities now includes cycling lanes/ multi-use pathways, sidewalks and parking and related facilities located within or outside of road rights-of-way. These are considered pre-approved Schedule A
- ▶ Construction or removal of sidewalks or multi-purpose pathways or cycling facilities within existing or protected rights-of-way. These are considered pre-approved Schedule A
- ▶ Construction or removal of sidewalks, multi-purpose pathways or cycling facilities including water crossings outside existing rights-of-way. Projects valued between \$3.5 and \$9.5M should adhere to Schedule B, and over \$9.5M should adhere to Schedule C. Smaller projects are to follow a well-accepted and proven process.

Schedule A and A+ projects are considered pre-approved and do not require a Class EA but require formal public notification at the commencement of the project.

3.6.3 TRAILS IN NATURAL AREAS

Natural areas provide opportunities to enjoy and interpret nature, and participate in activities trail activities that may not be possible in more traditional parks. Striking the balance between providing public access and the need to conserve and/or protect the resource itself can be a difficult goal, especially in situations where there is an established urban area nearby or surrounding the feature.

Where this is the case, this increases the pressure on the very resource that users seek and enjoy. Where trails are in natural areas it is important that they be properly aligned and designed, and the area is monitored for the effects of inappropriate use and/or overuse. Regular monitoring will alert trail managers to locations where users may be straying off the trail or taking short cuts so that mitigation strategies can be developed before significant damage to soils and vegetation occurs. If trails are not carefully planned, designed, constructed and maintained in these areas users will create their own desire line foot trails, sometimes in sensitive locations where it would be preferable not to have trails at all.



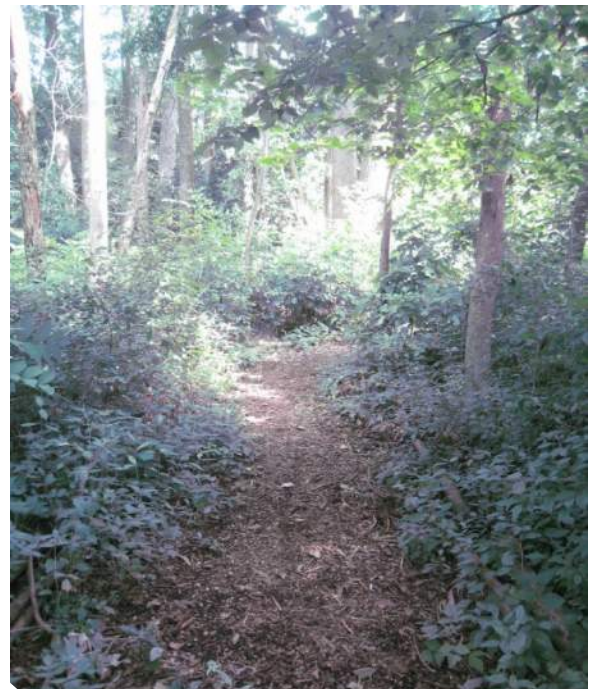
Proper planning, design and construction of trails, coupled with public education can assist with creating the balance between use and protection.

In some cases, trails and people should not be in sensitive natural areas. Vegetation communities that are highly sensitive to disturbance and narrow, constrained wildlife corridors are two examples where trails may not be appropriate. In these cases, it is advisable to provide alternative trail routes and information (e.g. signing, public information campaigns, etc.) explaining the management decision to exclude trails from the area. When designing trails through sensitive natural heritage features the following general considerations should include:

- ▶ Route or reroute to avoid the most sensitive and/or critical habitats
- ▶ Interpret sensitive species away from their location
- ▶ Consider and evaluate alternative routes and design treatments
- ▶ Use previously disturbed areas where possible and appropriate
- ▶ Maintain natural processes
- ▶ Incorporate habitat enhancements
- ▶ Complement and highlight natural features through interpretation.

Where proposed trail routes pass through sensitive natural areas an Environmental Impact Study should be completed to assess the potential impact of the trail, identify mitigation strategies and design and construction requirements prior to approval.

Planning for trails early in the development process ensures that linkages are in the best locations and that they are implemented outside of the most sensitive and protected environmental features. One solution to the challenge of placing trails within environmental buffers is to dedicate linear trail blocks parallel to environmental buffers during the subdivision planning process. This enables construction of the trail as part of the development of the neighbourhood when area grading is taking place. Dedicated blocks also allow homebuyers to clearly see planned trail locations and think about implications the trail may have on the use/enjoyment of their property prior to making a purchase.



BUTTERMILK BOG TRAIL,
DUTTON (WSP, 2018)



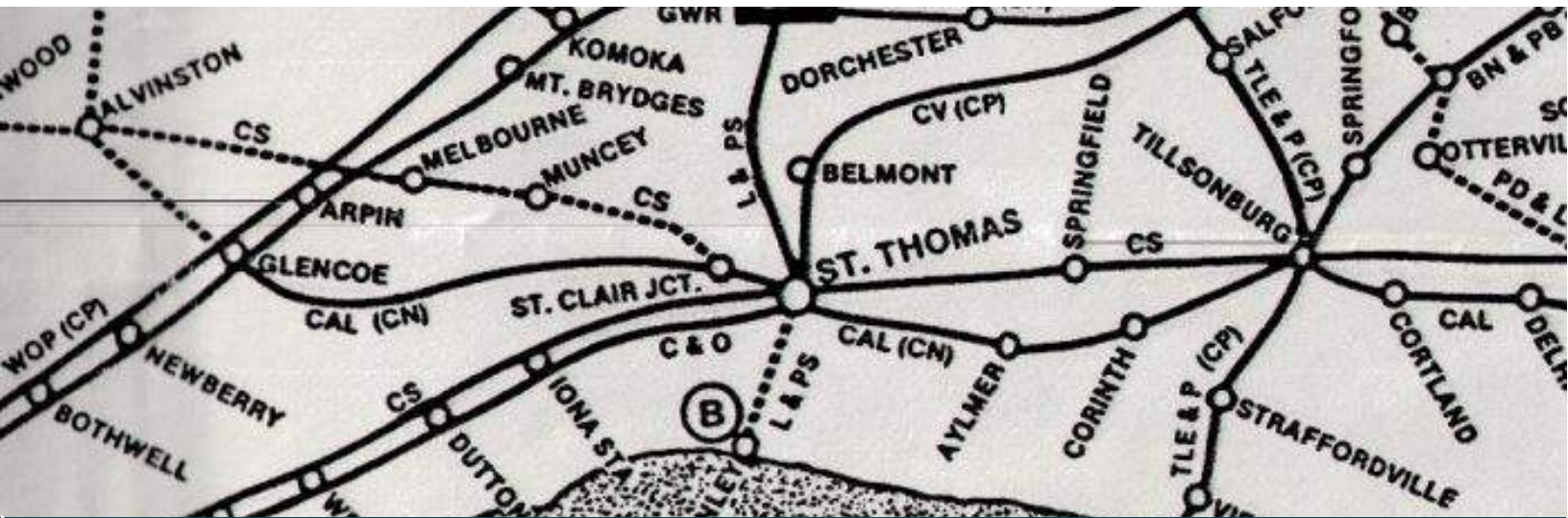
3.6.4 TRAILS AND LINEAR CORRIDORS

Linear corridors offer potential to contribute to the future trail network in the County. Abandoned railway lines, unopened road allowances and utility corridors are primary examples of linear corridors that offer great potential for trails.

1. ABANDONED RAILWAY LINES

Railways are a significant part of Canada's transportation heritage, and they played a major role in shaping the communities that exist today. From approximately 1860 to the 1920's / 1930's railway development flourished across the country. Villages, towns and cities grew up around railway lines as they were the main transportation arteries of the time. However, with advent and popularity of the automobile and the growing network of improved highways the economic vitality of railways gradually.

Consolidation in the railway industry led to a decline in viability and use of some rail lines, and railway operators gradually disposed of rail corridors that were unprofitable. Many corridors were sold in pieces to adjacent landowners, while some remained intact. Intact corridors provide a significant opportunity for recreational trails and many other important infrastructure possibilities including future roadway, new / revitalized railways, public and private utilities such as hydro, water/wastewater and communication lines.



EXCERPTED MAP FROM "A COMPENDIUM OF SOUTHERN ONTARIO RAIL LINE 1850 - 1984" RIDEAU GRAPHICS



Assembling land for a lengthy linear corridor in today’s environment would be extremely challenging, time consuming and very expensive. Apart from the cost to acquire lands once identified, the time and expense associated with route identification, evaluation and selection as part of an Environmental Assessment (i.e. Individual EA) for assembly of a corridor in a greenfield condition would require a lengthy process and a significant amount of public engagement with no guarantee of a successful outcome.



FORT ERIE FREISNDHIP TRAIL, RIDGEWAY, ON (WSP, 2017)

There are numerous examples across North America where local and regional governments and public agencies have taken over ownership of former railway corridors and re-purposed them into successful recreational trails and/or protected them for other future infrastructure possibilities. In Elgin County there are a few remaining intact railway corridors and access to these should be retained for the public benefit, whether this be through acquisition or partnership.

R6.

Priority should be given to seizing opportunities to acquire former rail corridors for future linear trail development to maximize the creation of off-road trail networks and interconnect communities and tourist destinations.

2. UNOPENED ROAD ALLOWANCES

Similar in some ways to former railway corridors, unopened road allowances are a legacy of original township surveys dating back to the 1800’s. In some cases, roads were never developed on these rights-of-way due to challenges such as topography, swamps, wide valleys and extensive watercourse crossings.

In other locations seasonal roads were initially developed and later abandoned and never improved for vehicular travel. Some unopened allowances cross between one concession, whereas others are more extensive and cross several concessions.



In some parts of the County unopened road allowances may offer some potential to provide additional connections in the trail network. Partnerships with adjacent landowners and groups such as the Elgin Stewardship Council may help realize some of these potential opportunities.

R7.

Unopened road allowances are part of our Ontario heritage and should be retained in public ownership in perpetuity for potential trails development.

3. UTILITY CORRIDORS

Water, sewer, gas pipeline and hydro corridors through urban areas and new neighbourhoods as they are planned and developed are examples of linear corridors that provide excellent opportunities for trail development. In urban areas utility corridors are often used as informal trail routes as evidenced by footpaths that evolve over time from continued use. These corridors often provide direct connections to destinations and cover long distances with few interruptions. An excellent recent example is the Orchard Park Trail in St. Thomas which now provides a 1.6 km long spine trail between Elm Street and Southdale Line in the east part of St. Thomas.



ORCHARD PARK TRAIL FROM
ELM STREET (WSP, 2018)

Trails within hydro corridors trails are subject to approval by the owner / authority which in many cases is Hydro One Networks Inc. Similarly, where trails are proposed within or crossing natural gas pipeline corridors approval is required.

R8.

Consider opportunities that linear corridors such as unopened road allowances, utility corridors and abandoned railway corridors create for trails. Develop a business case regarding the use of such corridors as part of the trail network before declaring no interest in them for trail use.



4. RAILS WITH TRAILS

A portion of the active L&PS rail corridor has been developed into the Whistlestop Trail in St. Thomas. It is extremely popular with residents as it provides a recreational and commuter primary trail on the west side of the City. Though not common, there are several other successful examples of “Rails with Trails” in Ontario and across the country.

Depending on surrounding topography, railway volume and speed rail corridors can be configured to safely accommodate a multi-use trail beside the rail line, with appropriate setbacks and separation techniques. The potential to develop “Rails with Trails” in Elgin County should continue to be explored in the future as opportunities arise and more “Rail with Trail” precedents are implemented.

(LEFT) GREAT TRAIL / TRANS CANADA TRAIL, GUELPH JUNCTION RAILWAY (WSP, 2014) | (RIGHT) WHISTLESTOP TRAIL (WSP, 2018)



R9.

Continue to explore potential opportunities for trails with rails in Elgin County on a case-by-case basis.



3.6.5 SECURING ACCESS FOR TRAILS

By 2036, the projected population growth in the St. Thomas area requires between 3,600 and 4,500 new dwellings with 71% – 76% of them to be detached houses. With the increase in population and consequential rise in demand for trail use, there will also be potential challenges in acquiring the most ideal lands for optimum trail routes. Such housing construction will consume countryside and unless trail routes are stabled beforehand, opportunities could be lost.

Land securement is the acquisition of land, land use rights, or an interest in land with the purpose of ensuring long term environmental protection and stewardship. Land securement takes the form of ownership, a lease or other type of conservation agreement and is delivered through a wide variety of mechanisms such as donation, purchase, transfer and any combination thereof. Differing from land procurement, land securement is to be undertaken with the ultimate purpose of the establishment of trails in perpetuity.

A detailed description of the tools and techniques available can be found in **Appendix | D**.

R10.

The County and Local Municipalities should explore a securement strategy for trail routes on lands not in public ownership.



TRAIL BRIDGE OVER LILLY POND, WATERWORKS PARK, ST. THOMAS, ON



3.7 DESIGNING TRAILS

A well-designed and properly maintained trail system is a critical part of the users' experience and enjoyment. For some users, the way a facility has been designed and maintained will significantly influence their decision to return and use the trail again. Trails that have been sustainably designed and constructed also perform better over their lifespan, result in minimal impacts to the surrounding environment, are easier to maintain and may result in fewer concerns or issues of liability. The better the quality of the design and construction, the more attractive it will be to users, the more it will be used, and the longer it will be before upgrades are required.

The guidelines prepared for the Elgin County Trails Study should be used as a reference for the development and construction of the trail. The purpose of these guidelines is to assist County and local municipal staff in making informed decisions about off-road trail design. Although they are meant to provide guidance for the range of conditions typically encountered in a municipal-wide network, they are not intended to address every condition encountered.

In some cases, an interim solution may be appropriate where the desired long-term solution cannot be achieved in the short or mid-term, provided that the interim solution meets users' needs and safety considerations.

A "one size fits all" design approach does not apply to trail design, and it is important to try and match the trail type and design with the type of experience that is desired. A recognizable and consistent high-quality design will create a community asset where user experience, enjoyment and safety are maximized.

R11.

The County and Local Municipalities should use the trail design guidelines in the Elgin County Trail Study as the basis for trail design.



3.7.1 TRAIL TYPES

To respond to the variety of locations, anticipated user mix and volume, and level of maintenance a hierarchy of trail types is proposed. It consists of Primary, Secondary and Tertiary trails. Each of the trail types is described and illustrated below.

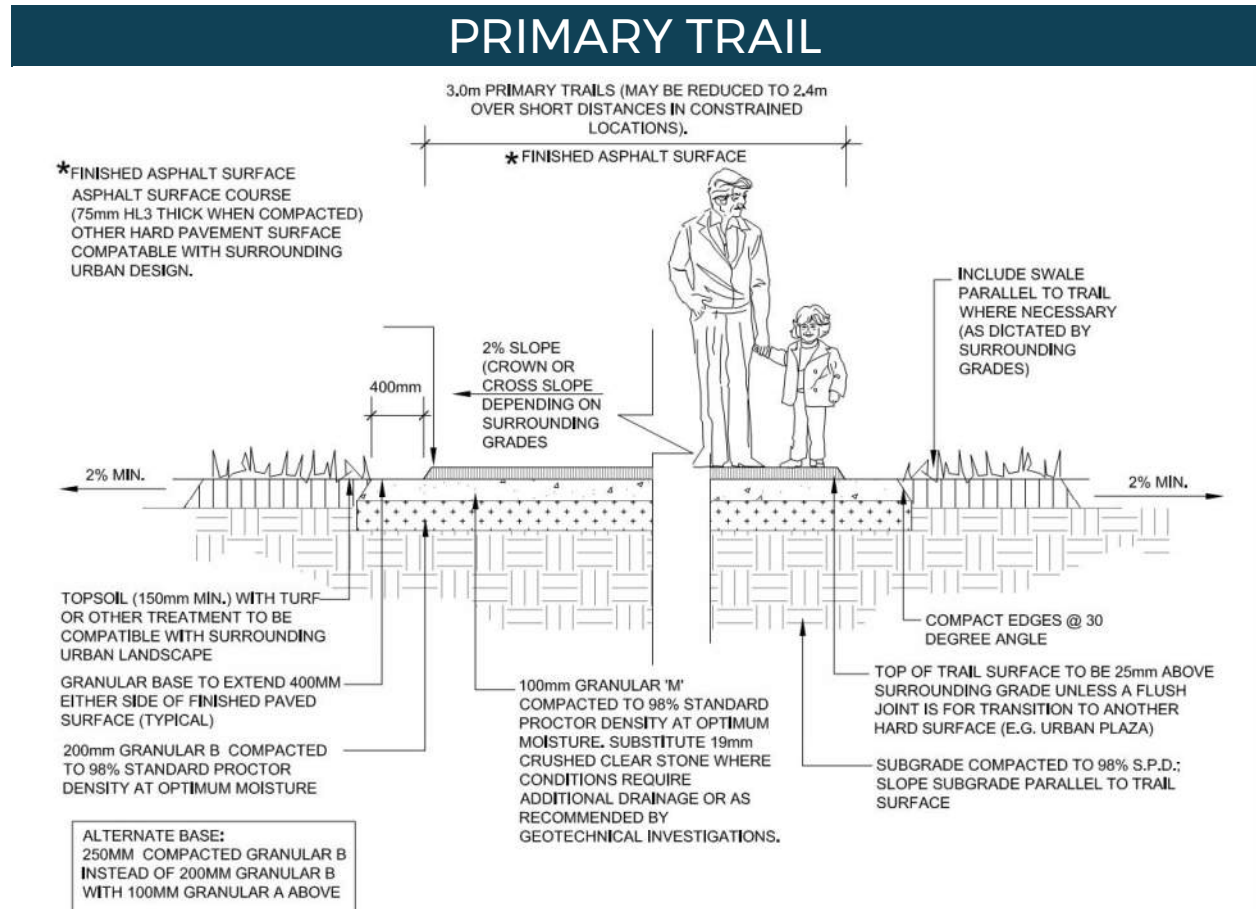


Figure 1 | Primary Multi-use Trail

CHARACTERISTICS:

- ▶ Main trail inks, provides access to key destinations, main routes or loops in a park, and may include destination trail loops
- ▶ 3.0m preferred; 2.4m minimum
- ▶ Typically hard surface (asphalt, concrete, or other accessible surface)
- ▶ Easy trail rating, suitable for a broad spectrum of users
- ▶ Highest density of trail amenities
- ▶ Anticipated high level of use and maintenance
- ▶ Designed to meet or exceed minimum accessibility requirements
- ▶ Lighting may be considered
- ▶ 5% maximum longitudinal slope



SECONDARY TRAIL

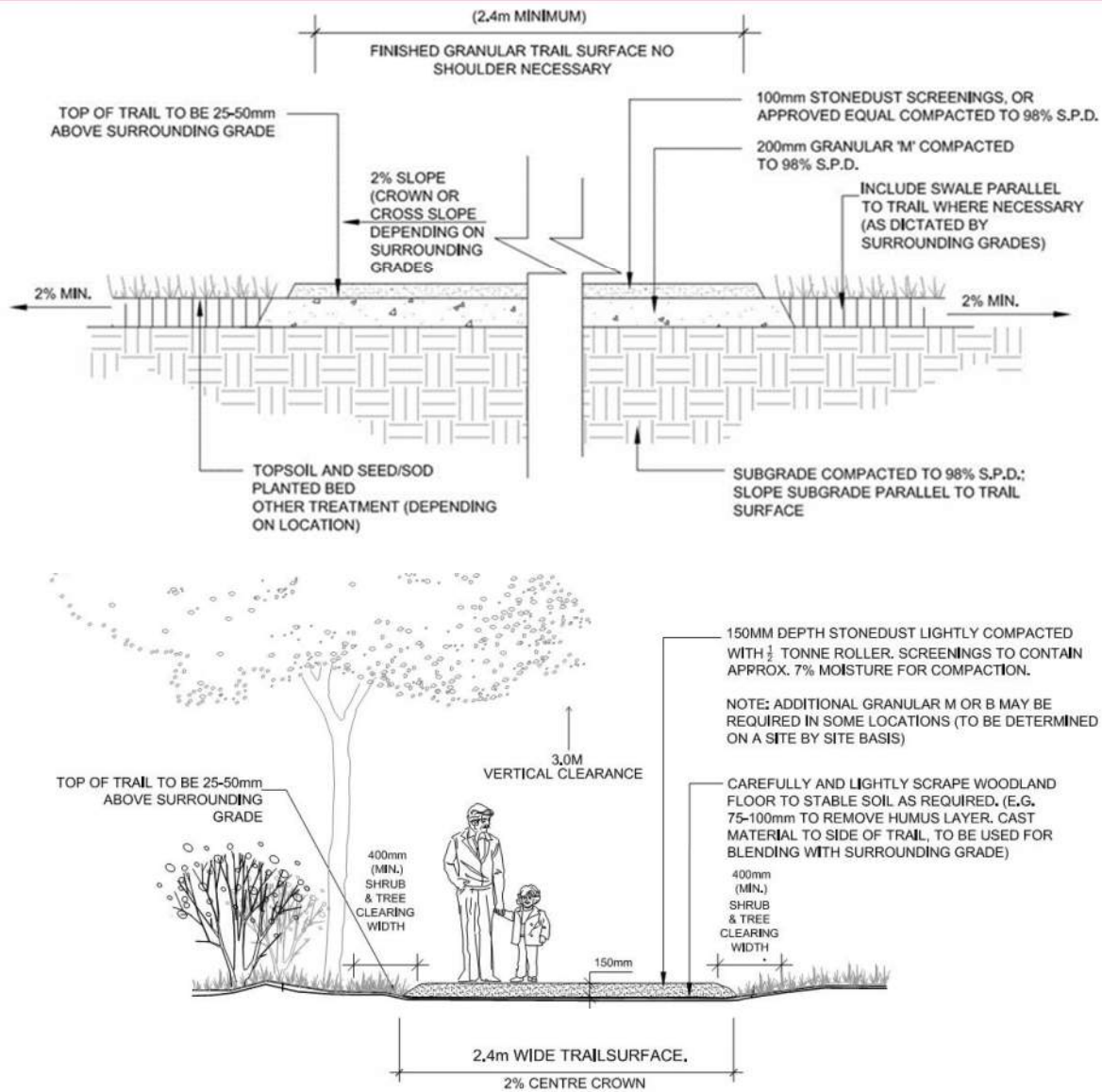


Figure 2 | Secondary Trail & Secondary Trail in a Woodlot

CHARACTERISTICS:

- ▶ Generally granular surfaced (compacted stone dust)
- ▶ Moderate trail rating
- ▶ Moderate density of trail amenities
- ▶ Moderate level of use and level of maintenance are anticipated
- ▶ Provides additional connections to neighbourhoods, parks, community facilities, natural areas, schools, etc. from Primary Trails
- ▶ Designed to meet minimum accessibility requirements, where feasible
- ▶ Longitudinal slope may exceed 5% depending on location/context. Maximum slope 12% over short distances



TERTIARY TRAIL

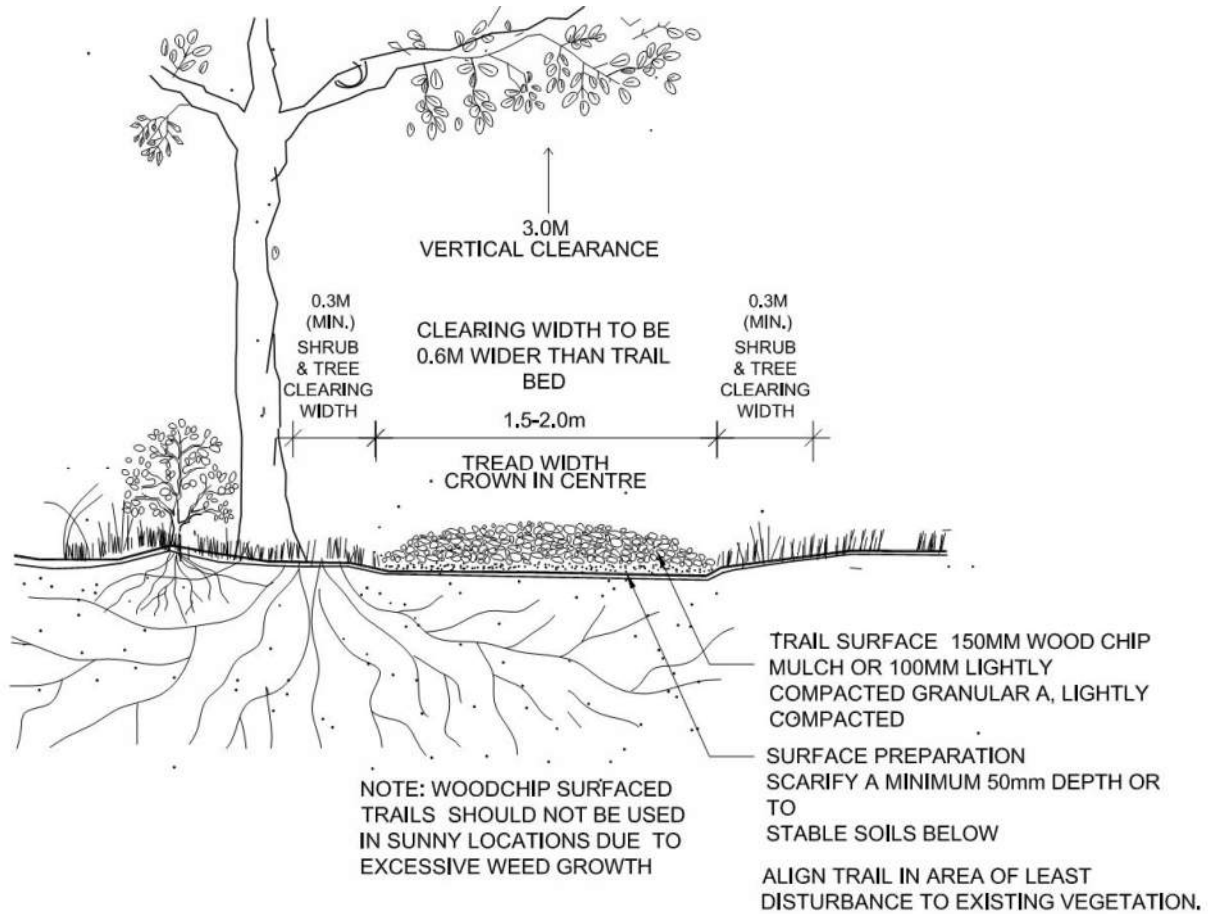


Figure 3 | Tertiary Trail

CHARACTERISTICS:

- ▶ Backcountry / wilderness” style trails; with a more challenging trail rating
- ▶ Connects to secondary trails, may be destination trails in sensitive natural areas
- ▶ 1.5 - 2.0m preferred; 0.75m minimum
- ▶ Generally natural or woodchip surface with compacted granular in select locations
- ▶ Suitable for a narrower range of users
- ▶ Trail structures may be necessary
- ▶ Moderate - low density of amenities and maintenance



3.7.2 TRAIL SLOPE

Slope refers to both the measured fall over a given distance along the centerline (referred to as longitudinal slope) and perpendicular to the centerline (referred to as cross slope). Cross slope can be configured so that all runoff is directed to one side of the trail, or so that there is centre crown and runoff is shed to either side of the trail. **Table 3** provides guidance regarding longitudinal and cross slope.

Table 3 | Longitudinal and Cross Slope

LONGITUDINAL GRADE OR SLOPE	
1% - 5%	▶ Preferred
5% - 10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Introduce level rest areas every 100 to 150m of horizontal distance ▶ Consider design strategies such as switchbacks when slopes approach 10% ▶ Install signing to alert users of upcoming steep grades ▶ Where steeper slopes are necessary “trail hardening” should be considered
10% - 15%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Consider the use of structures such as steps, step and ramp combinations, or stairways ▶ Consider locating the trail elsewhere
Greater than 15%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 12-15% represents the maximum possible longitudinal slope for a sustainable trail surface. Where slopes approach or exceed 15% significant washouts become an ongoing issue. ▶ Structures such as switchbacks, steps, step and ramp combinations and stairways should be employed. Otherwise, an alternative location for the pathway should be sought.
CROSS SLOPE	
2%	▶ Minimal, acceptable on hard surfaced trails, may not provide adequate drainage on granular surfaced trails
2% - 4%	▶ Preferred range for both hard and granular surfaced trails
Greater than 5%	▶ Avoid if possible because excessive cross slopes can be difficult and potentially dangerous for some levels of physical ability and certain user groups as they can result in difficulty maintaining balance, especially among user groups with a high centre of gravity



3.7.3 ROAD CROSSINGS

The crossing treatment selected generally depends on the type of road being crossed (e.g., low volume local street vs. urban arterial); number of lanes being crossed (e.g., 2-lane vs. multi-lane); traffic volume and vehicle operating speeds; sight lines (e.g., horizontal and vertical road alignment); and the anticipated volume of trail users. More significant improvements are recommended for crossings of with multiple lanes, higher traffic volumes and higher operating speeds. The following text outlines a range of at grade crossing types that correspond with roadway classification and character, and includes typical considerations for their application. They are arranged in order from crossings of low volume rural roads to high volume multi-lane urban roads. The following are four examples of road crossing approaches for consideration by the County as they implement the trails network.

ADVANCED WARNING SIGN

- ▶ 2-lane road cross-section
- ▶ Good sight lines (no horizontal or vertical curves in road that obstruct visibility of trail users or oncoming vehicles)
- ▶ Low motor vehicle traffic volume
- ▶ Low to moderate pedestrian volume (consider existing conditions and potential future demand)
- ▶ Rural setting, or residential neighbourhood in urban setting



MEDIAN REFUGE

- ▶ Multi-lane cross-section
- ▶ Good sight lines (no horizontal or vertical curves in road that obstruct visibility of trail users or oncoming vehicles)
- ▶ Moderate motor vehicle traffic volume and Low to moderate pedestrian volume (consider existing conditions and potential future demand)
- ▶ Rural, urban fringe or urban setting (e.g., collector or minor arterial road in urban setting)





PEDESTRIAN CROSSOVER

- ▶ 2-lane or multi-lane cross-section
- ▶ Type 'A', 'B' or 'C' as per Ontario Traffic Manual Book 15
- ▶ Good sight lines (no horizontal or vertical curves in road that obstruct visibility of trail users or oncoming vehicles)
- ▶ Moderate motor vehicle traffic volume
- ▶ Low to moderate pedestrian volume (consider existing conditions and potential future demand)
- ▶ Rural, urban fringe or urban setting (e.g., collector or minor arterial road in urban setting)



MID-BLOCK PEDESTRIAN SIGNAL

- ▶ 2-lane or multi-lane cross-section
- ▶ Applied in areas with good sight lines or compromised sight lines (other factors have greater influence on decision than sight lines)
- ▶ Moderate to high motor vehicle traffic, pedestrian and cyclist volume (consider existing conditions and potential future demand)
- ▶ Rural, urban fringe or urban setting (e.g., arterial road in urban setting)
- ▶ No signal-controlled intersection nearby (e.g. within 200 m of trail crossing point)
- ▶ Includes bicycle crossing signal head





The following are some considerations for the design of trail crossings:

- ▶ Provide an open sight triangle at the crossing point to allow trail users to see approaching vehicles and for vehicles to see approaching trail users.
- ▶ Provide gates or barriers at off-road trail access points outside of the road right-of-way to prevent unauthorized users (e.g. vehicles) from entering the trail and to act as a visual cue to trail users that they are approaching an intersection with a road.
- ▶ Place caution signs along the roadway in advance of the crossing point in both directions to warn approaching vehicles of the upcoming crossing and along the trail to advise the trail users of the upcoming crossing.
- ▶ Align crossing points on both sides of a roadway or natural feature to achieve a perpendicular crossing and a shorter crossing distance.
- ▶ Where barrier curbs are present, provide curb ramps on both sides of the crossing for accessibility.
- ▶ In urban locations provide a concrete apron immediately behind the curb and include detectable warning plates.
- ▶ Consider the application of Crossrides in urban locations. Details for Crossrides can be found in Ontario Traffic Manual Book 18- Cycling Facilities.
- ▶ Provide pavement markings at controlled crossings such as stop signs and traffic signals. Pavement markings should not be used at crossings that are not controlled – this may give trail users the false impression that they have the right of way, and they may begin to cross without waiting for a gap in traffic.
- ▶ “Stop ahead” signs along the trail in advance of the crossing point and stop signs at the crossing point.

Figure 4 illustrates the key design principles for road crossings in urban areas, and **Figure 5** applies to rural areas.

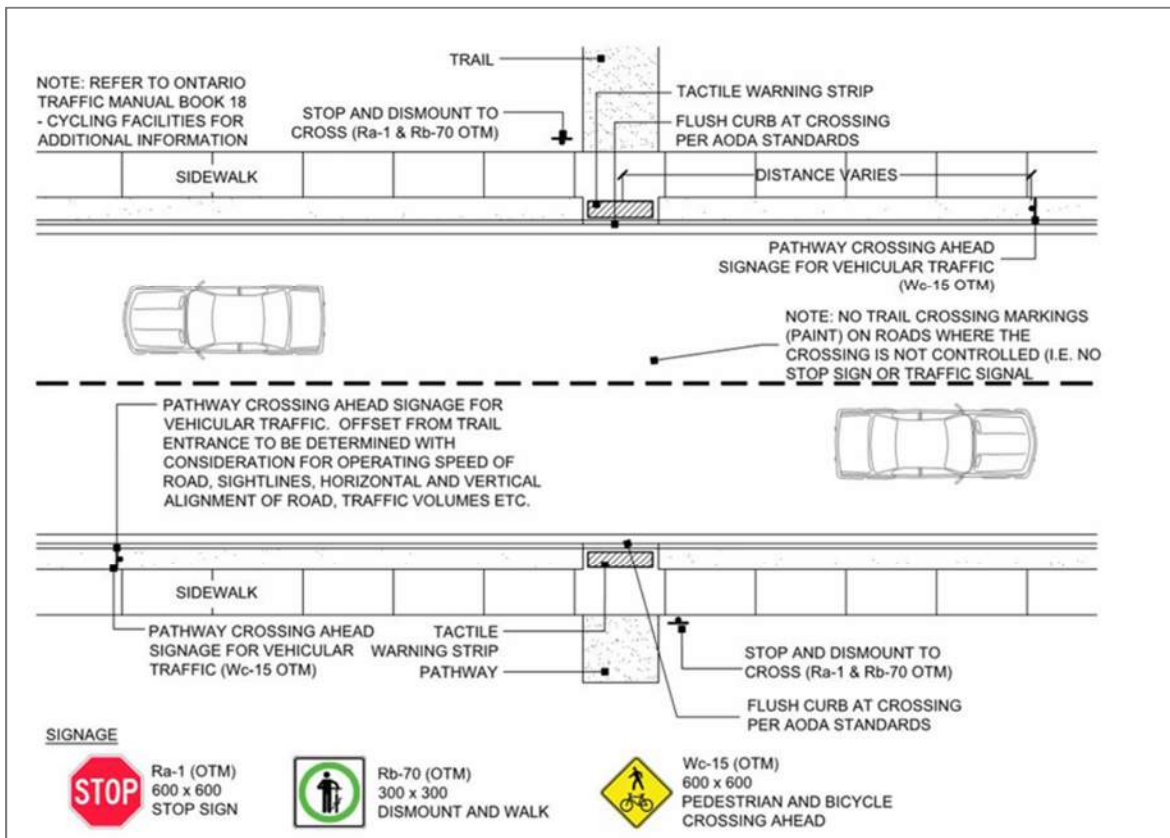
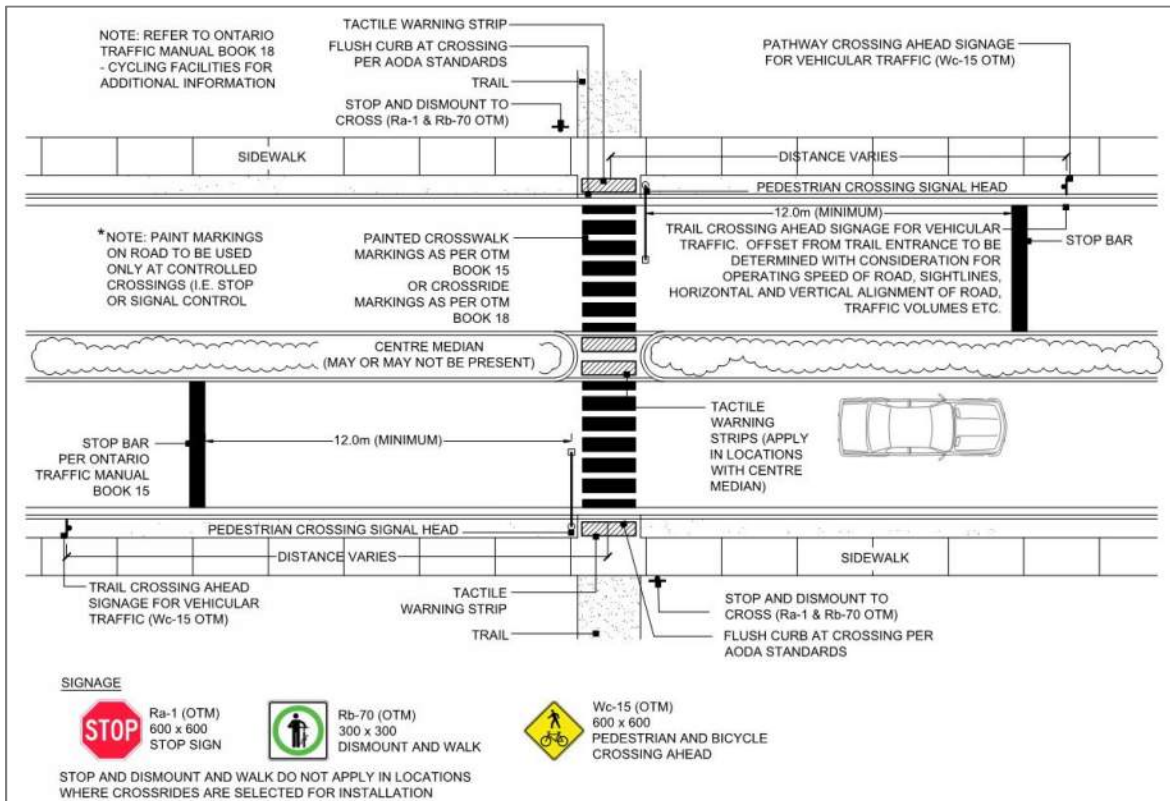


Figure 4 | Controlled Crossing (upper), Uncontrolled Crossing (lower)

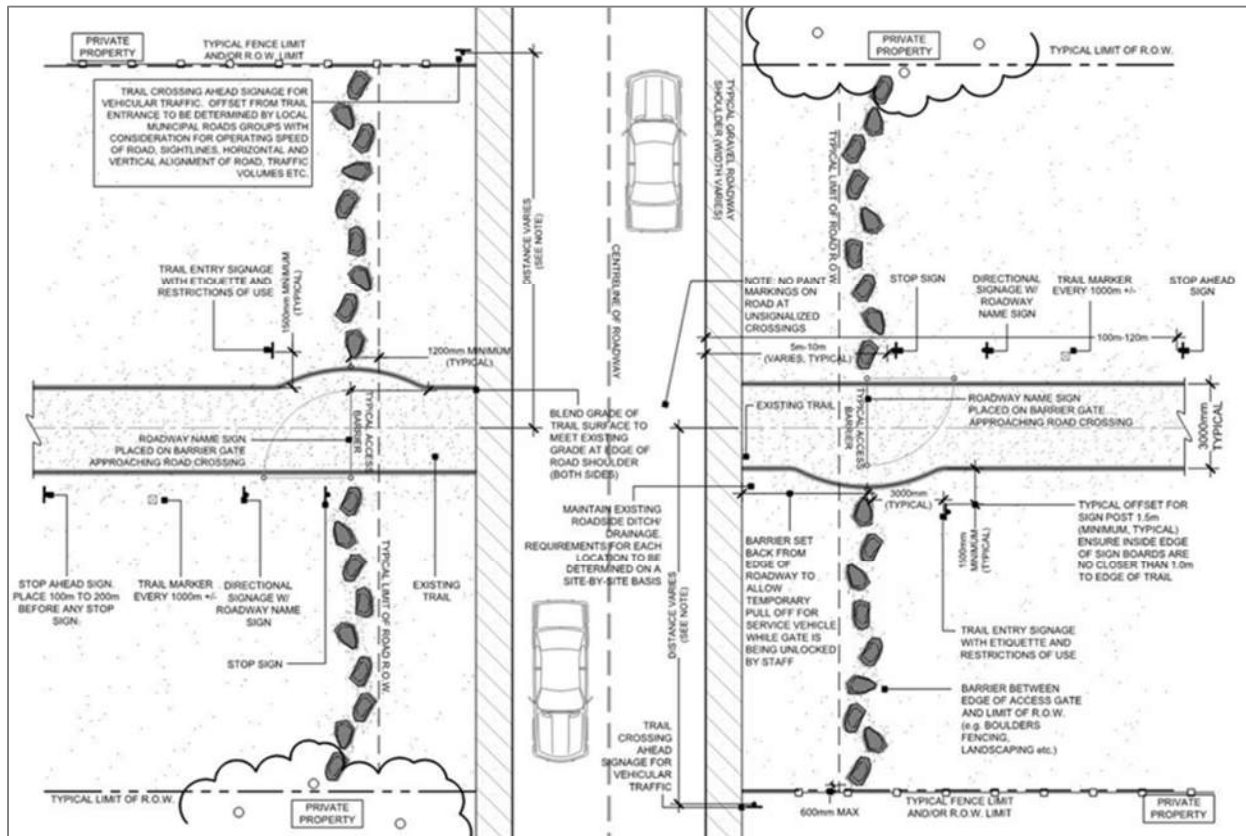


Figure 5 | Rural Trail Crossing

3.7.4 STAGING AREAS

Staging areas are generally proposed for important community destinations such as community centres. Because of their high visibility and proximity to other recreation facilities, they help to raise the profile of the trail network, and some of the necessary facilities and amenities may already be present or located nearby. In some locations it may be possible to share parking and washrooms with other community facilities or other partners (e.g. School Boards for parking, Conservation Authorities for parking and washroom facilities). A well-designed trail staging area typically incorporates the following elements:

- ▶ Parking for an appropriate number of vehicles (including accessible spaces) based on actual or anticipated level of use, with potential area for future expansion. Parking for 8-10 vehicles is often appropriate for small trailheads in rural areas, with 20-30 being more reasonable for very popular trails. of the nearby pathway. A minimum of 15 spaces should be considered for urban areas
- ▶ Orientation and wayfinding signage (e.g. trailhead sign and directional signs)



- ▶ Trail access barriers;
- ▶ A drop off area to unload maintenance equipment, and possibly buses at popular locations (e.g. school bus);
- ▶ Bicycle parking
- ▶ Waste receptacles (located so they are easily accessible by maintenance crews);
- ▶ Seating and or picnic/informal activity space.
- ▶ Lighting (optional)
- ▶ Washrooms (optional) - depending on location, context and local municipal practices. Note that portable washrooms should be considered for trailheads / staging areas in rural locations during peak trail use season.

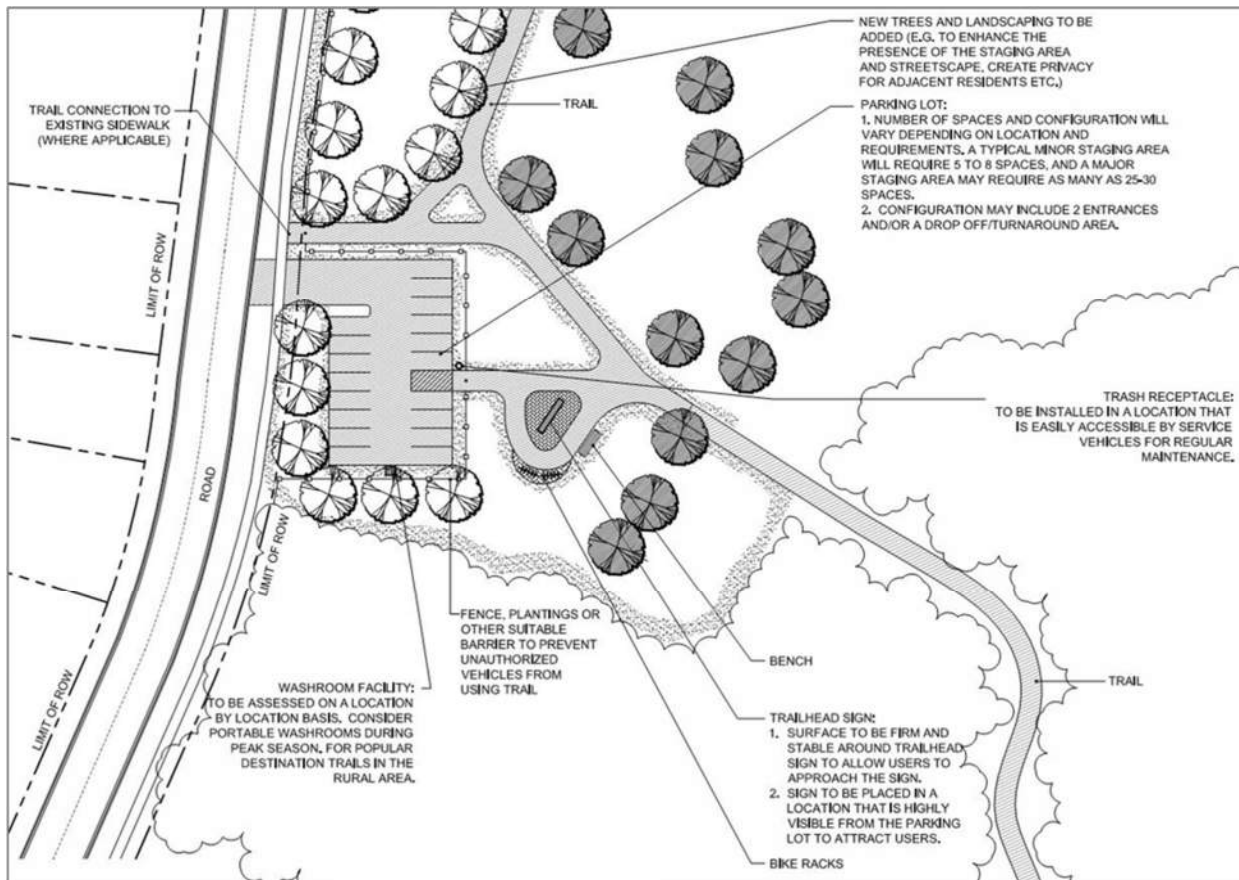


Figure 6 | Typical Staging Area



3.7.5 ACCESSIBILITY

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, (AODA, 2005) includes the goal to make Ontario accessible for people with disabilities by 2025. Ontario Regulation 413/12 (O.Reg 413/12) made under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 includes guidelines and standards that apply to new construction and extensive renovation of exterior pedestrian facilities, including Recreational trails.

Key technical requirements for Recreational Trails include:

- ▶ A minimum 1.0m wide trail tread free from obstructions.
- ▶ A minimum of 2.1m clear head room above trail.
- ▶ Trail surfaces that are firm and stable.
- ▶ Openings in the trail surface must not allow passage of an object with a diameter of greater than 20mm, and elongated openings must be oriented perpendicular to the direction of travel.
- ▶ Where trails are constructed adjacent to water or a drop-off the trail must have edge protection that prevents users from slipping over the edge. The top of the edge protection must be at least 50mm above the trail surface and it must be designed to not impede the drainage of the trail surface. Edge protection adjacent to water or a drop-off is not required where there is a protective barrier / railing that runs along the edge of the trail.
- ▶ Any gates / barriers at trail entrances must have an opening of between 850 mm and 1000mm.
- ▶ Trailhead signage must indicate the length of the trail; type of surface; average and minimum trail width; average maximum running/longitudinal and cross slope; and the location of amenities (where provided). Signage must have text that has a high tonal contrast with background colours to facilitate visual recognition, and text must use a sans serif font.
- ▶ Brochures and media used to describe the trail must convey the same information in the same manner as required for trailhead signs.
- ▶ Signs and brochures must contain information about the trail (e.g. maximum slope, minimum width etc.) rather than subjective information (e.g. level of difficulty rating), which allows the user to make an informed personal decision if to use the trail before they set out.



O.Reg. 413/12 also recognizes exceptions where accessibility requirements can be waived. The exceptions generally relate to locations where:

- ▶ The impact of trail construction would adversely affect protected natural or cultural heritage resources, and these effects cannot be reasonably mitigated.
- ▶ It is not practicable to comply with the requirements, or some of them, because existing physical or site constraints prohibit modification or addition of elements, spaces or features that would be required to meet accessibility requirements.

DUTY TO CONSULT

The legislation also requires the County / local municipalities to consult with the accessibility community as part of the design / development process for the construction of new trails and significant redevelopment of existing trails. The local accessibility community / Accessibility Advisory committees provide vision and direction to staff and Council regarding accessibility, and engaging the committee early in the design process is an effective method of sharing information and receiving feedback to inform the design. Consultations typically would focus on elements of the design feasibility to meet accessibility requirements in the design of a new trail or trail improvement, and where requirements can be practicably met, consulting on design criteria such as

- ▶ Trail slope, the need for and location of ramps on the trail.
- ▶ The location and design of rest areas, passing areas, viewing areas, amenities along the trail and other pertinent trail features.
- ▶ Information related to accessibility that will be included on signage.



ELGIN HIKING TRAIL | ONTARIO, CANADA



3.7.6 ACCESS BARRIERS AND GATES

Access barriers are intended to allow free flowing passage by permitted user groups, and prohibit access by others. Barriers typically require some mechanism to allow access by service and emergency vehicles. Depending on site conditions, it may also be necessary to provide additional treatments between the ends of the access barrier and limit of the multi-use pathway right of way to prevent bypassing of the barrier altogether. Each access point should be evaluated to determine if additional treatments are necessary. Additional treatments can consist of plantings, boulders, fencing or extension of the barrier treatment.

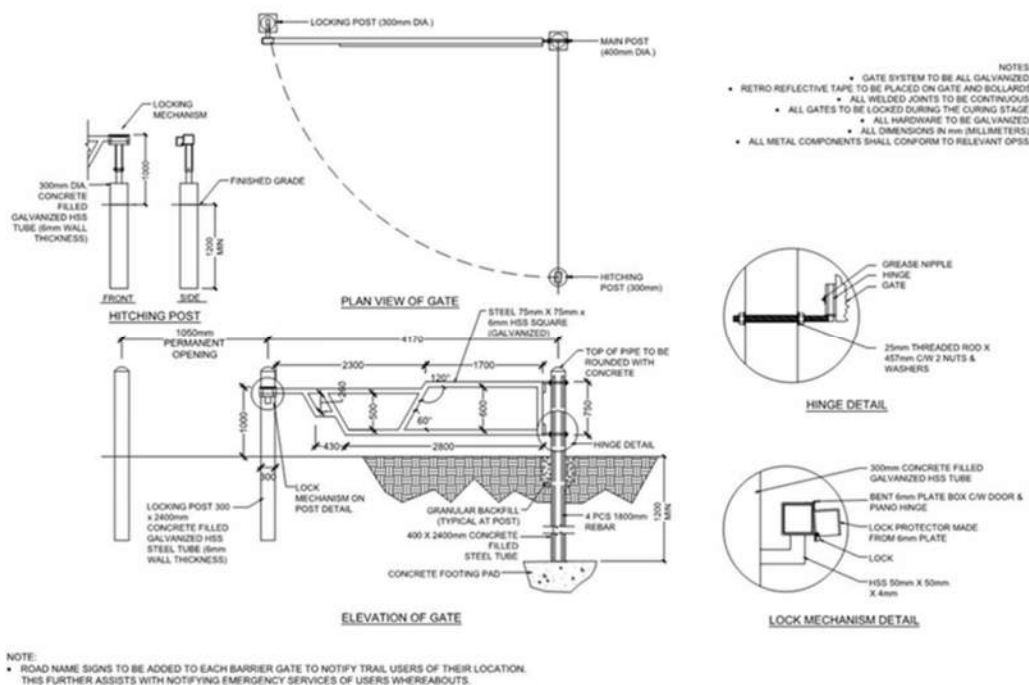


Figure 7 | Heavy Duty Access Control Gate for Rural Locations

Figure 7 illustrates a robust single swing gate that is modelled after those used on many rural rail trails in Ontario.

The single swing gate combines the ease of opening for service vehicle access, with the ease of passage of the bollard. Gates also provide a surface/support for mounting signage. The swing gate must provide a permanent opening to allow permitted users to flow freely through the barrier.



The width of the permanent opening must be carefully considered so that it will allow free passage by wheelchairs, wide jogging and double strollers and bicycle trailers and electric scooters, yet not allow passage by unauthorized vehicles.

Retro-reflective tape or plates on the barrier will aid in visibility after sunset. Signage fixed to the gate provides emergency contact information, reminds users of permitted uses and can help orient users by identifying the name of the road being crossed (refer to **Figure 8**).

In urban areas trail access barriers may be less substantial, such as single bollards or P-gates. In some locations access barriers may not be necessary.



Figure 8 | Information Signing on Rural Trail Access Gates in New Tecumseth, ON (WSP)



3.7.7 SIGNAGE & INFORMATION

The design and implementation of trail signage plays a significant role in enhancing the safety and comfort of users. Trail sign types typically include trailhead / etiquette signs, regulatory signs, gateway signs, and directional / interpretive / informational signs.

The following are some of the trail signage considerations for trail signage

- ▶ Trails require clear information about how to navigate the route, how to use the trail infrastructure, and how to observe proper trail etiquette.
- ▶ Trail design should incorporate a “family” of signs with different purposes and messages. Wayfinding signs should be designed with a unified theme for ease of navigation.
- ▶ All trail signs should be clearly visible and follow a consistent visual theme to give the user a sense of connectivity and assist with wayfinding.
- ▶ Other types of signs or sign elements to consider include warning signs to provide information (e.g. narrow paths, accessibility conflicts).
- ▶ Allowing advertisements or company sponsorships may be useful to offset costs of trail maintenance and improvement.

1. FAMILY OF SIGNS

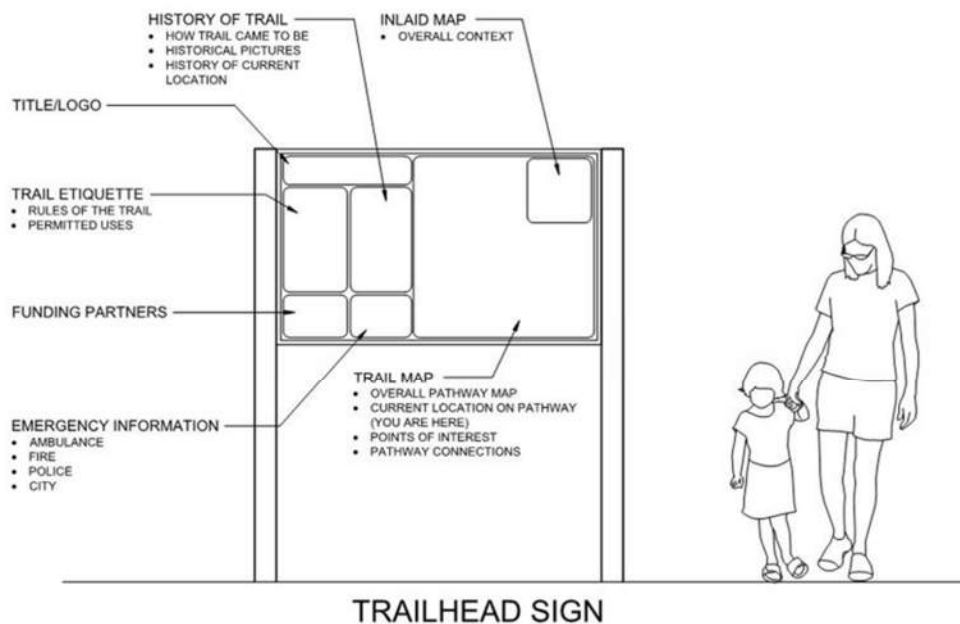
Trailhead signs (**Figure 9** and **Figure 10**) are typically placed at key destinations to orient users upon arrival. These orient users to the network through mapping and other trail information, including trail etiquette.

The also serve the important function of communicating trail characteristics such as width, surface type, slope and rest stops as required under the AODA.

Trailhead signs should be placed so they are clearly visible and provide landmarks for trail users, and where visible from nearby roadways they also serve as a form of branding for the trail.



Figure 9 | Trailhead Sign Examples | left to right Centre Wellington Township, ON. Rondeau Provincial Park, ON. St. Catharines, ON; (source WSP)



FUNCTION:

- PROVIDES ORIENTATION TO OVERALL TRAIL SYSTEM BY WAY OF MAPPING AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION.
- LISTS THE PERMITTED USES OF THE TRAIL AND EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION.
- MAY ALSO PROVIDE THE HISTORY BEHIND THE TRAIL OR REGION.
- SIZE AND CAN ALSO ACT AS AN IDENTIFIER TO PASSING PEDESTRIANS AND VEHICLES.

TYPICAL LOCATION:

- TYPICALLY LOCATED AT STAGING AREAS.
- IN CASES WHERE IT IS ASSOCIATED WITH A PARKING AREA THE TRAILHEAD SIGN IS USUALLY IN THE TRANSITION AREA BETWEEN THE PARKING LOT AND TRAIL.

TYPICAL SIGN ELEMENTS:

- MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE A ROOF STRUCTURE.
- TRAIL ETIQUETTE DENOTING GUIDELINES FOR TRAIL USERS.
- EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION (IE. 911 OR MAINTENANCE ISSUES).
- IMAGERY OF DESTINATION POINTS ALONG TRAIL.
- QUICK RESPONSE CODES CAN BE SCANNED BY MOBILE PHONE DEVICES THAT WILL PROVIDE INSTANT ACCESS TO A DESIGNATED WEBSITE. WEBSITES CAN BE EASILY MODIFIED SO THAT INFORMATION (MAPPING, EVENTS, PROGRAMS, ETC.) ARE CURRENT.

IMPORTANT NOTES FOR AODA COMPLIANCE:

- CHARACTERS THAT USE A SANS SERIF FONT
- HIGH CONTRAST BETWEEN BACKGROUND AND TEXT FOR EASY READABILITY. A MINIMUM LIGHT REFLECTIVE VALUE OF 70% IS RECOMMENDED TO MEET AODA REQUIREMENTS.
- SIGN TO BE PLACED ON AN ACCESSIBLE SURFACE.

KEY TYPICAL INFORMATION

- TOTAL LENGTH OF TRAIL (APPLIES TO LINEAR TRAILS OR TRAIL LOOPS)
- AVERAGE AND MAXIMUM LONGITUDINAL SLOPE
- AVERAGE AND MAXIMUM CROSS SLOPE
- TRAIL WIDTH, AND LOCATION AND WIDTH FOR ANY NARROW "PINCH" POINTS
- TRAIL SURFACE MATERIAL
- LOCATION OF AMENITIES (E.G. REST AREAS, WASHROOMS, ETC.)

Figure 10 | Trailhead Sign – Schematic Concept



Directional signs (**Figure 11**) should be used throughout the trail at regular intervals of uninterrupted segments and at pathway intersections.

Directional signs provide users with reassurance that they are following the designated trail network.

Interpretive or informational signs can be used in combination with directional signs or on their own to educate users of points of interest along the trail, such as natural and cultural heritage features.



R12.

A consistent trail wayfinding identifier / brand should be used throughout the County. Consider using the template established by the City of St. Thomas as the basis for the wayfinding identifier, with subtle variation to reflect individual municipalities within the County .



Figure 11 | Trail directional sign examples – left to right St. Thomas, ON. Waterloo, ON. Peterborough ON, Montague, PEI; Peterborough (source WSP).



Interpretive signs (**Figure 12**) provide specific educational information about points of ecological, historical and general interest, as well as current land uses along the corridor depending on the interpretive program and complexity of information to be communicated.



Figure 12 | Interpretive sign examples – clockwise from upper left Sauble Beach, ON. Guelph, ON. Collingwood, ON (source WSP).

Regulatory signs (**Figure 13**) are intended to restrict aspects of travel and use along the trail. Signage restricting or requiring specific behavior is not legally enforceable unless it is associated with a provincial law or municipal by-law, etc. Where applicable, it is recommended that authorities discreetly include the municipal by-law number on signs to reinforce their regulatory function.



Standard regulatory signs are aluminum plate blanks of varying dimensional size with a painted or reflective sheeting surface. Regulatory signs call attention to a traffic regulation concerning a time or place on a route and are installed in an optimal location most visible to trail users. Generally, these signs are rectangular shape except for stop and yield signs. For most trail applications the size can be reduced from the specified size for signs used along roads (i.e. 50% smaller). Typically, they are individually mounted on a metal post or custom wood post; grouped on a metal post or custom wood post; or grouped on a custom sign board, so long as the sign message is clearly visible.

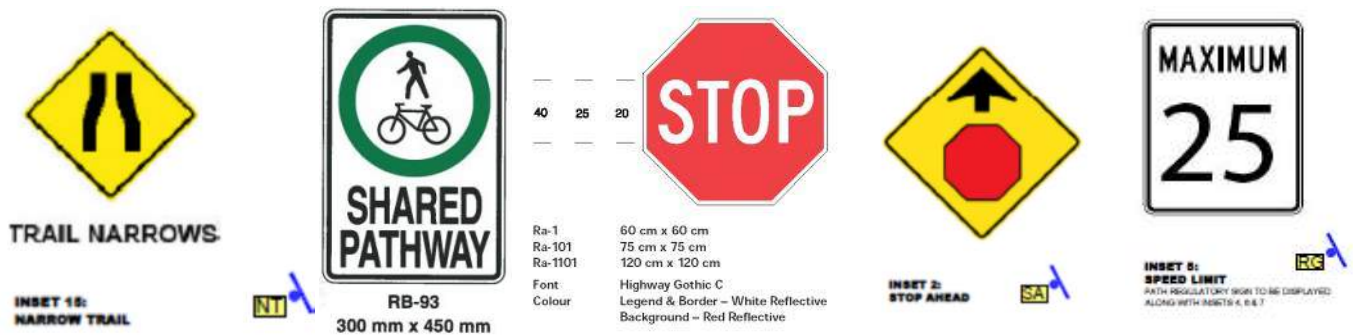


Figure 13 | Regulatory sign examples

3.7.8 BRIDGES AND BOARDWALKS

Where possible, the trail network should make use of existing bridges, including pedestrian bridges, vehicular bridges and abandoned railway bridges in appropriate locations. In cases where this is not possible a new structure will be needed and the type and design of a structure needs to be assessed on an individual basis. The following are some general considerations:

- ▶ In most situations the prefabricated steel truss bridge is a practical, cost effective solution;
- ▶ In locations where crossing distances are short, a wooden structure constructed on site may be suitable;
- ▶ Railings should be considered if the height of the bridge deck exceeds 60cm above the surrounding grade, and should be designed with a “rub rail” to prevent bicycle pedals and handlebars from becoming entangled in the pickets;
- ▶ When considering barrier free access to bridges, an appropriate hardened surface should be employed on the trail approaches and bridge decking should be spaced sufficiently close to allow easy passage by a person using a mobility-assisted device;



- ▶ Decking running perpendicular to the path of travel is preferred over decking running parallel, as the latter is more difficult for use by wheelchairs, strollers, in-line skates and narrow tired bicycles;
- ▶ Maintenance considerations; and
- ▶ Accessibility.

3.7.9 TRAIL AMENITIES

Trail amenities can help to enhance trail continuity and connectivity, but primarily have an influence on the overall experience. These enhancements help to make the route comfortable and meet a variety of accessibility needs. There are a number of trail amenities which could be incorporated into the overall design of the trail. The following are some examples of different types of trail amenities and best practice considerations for selecting trail amenities:

- ▶ Provide trail amenities in strategic locations along the trail route (e.g. break up long distances between destinations with rest areas, interpretive nodes)
- ▶ Cluster trail amenities around key destinations to enhance comfort and enjoyment at trip generators (e.g. around trailheads and staging areas)
- ▶ Consider maintenance requirements for amenities, including whether or not seasonal or year-round use is planned
- ▶ Where consultation and coordination is required with other parties or agencies prior to the installation of amenities, ensure that consultation occurs early in the process to ensure agreement over amenity location and design.

Seating provides the opportunity to pause along the trail at points of interest or just to rest. Young children, older adults and those with disabilities will need to rest more frequently than others. Benches are the most common form of seating, but walls of appropriate height and width, large flat boulders, and sawn logs are some alternatives depending on the trail setting. The design of seating areas and lookouts should include a level area beside the bench with a curb or other appropriate wheel stop for mobility-assisted devices. For heavily used routes it is reasonable to provide some form of seating every 250 – 500m.



3.7.10 TRAIL LIGHTING

Lighting of the trail system must be carefully considered. Very few municipalities make the decision to light their entire trail system for a variety of reasons, including:

- ▶ The cost of initial installation can be prohibitive. General budget figures range from \$150 to \$180/m;
- ▶ Staff time and material cost to properly monitor, maintain lamp fixtures and replace broken and burned out bulbs on an ongoing basis. This can be exacerbated as lights on trails may be targets for vandalism, especially in locations where undesirable activities are known to take place;
- ▶ Energy consumption and light pollution, especially in residential rear yards and adjacent to natural areas, though high efficiency LED lighting reduces power usage and light spillage can be mitigated with shielding;
- ▶ Detrimental effects on wildlife in natural areas
- ▶ The potentially false sense of personal security created by lighting in the nighttime environment

Although lighting of trails is generally not recommended there may be some locations where it is appropriate including:

- ▶ Main connections to important attractions such as major parks;
- ▶ Celebratory spaces and waterfront promenades that have regular activity after dusk
- ▶ Trails in urban areas that are important commuter and school routes, where lighting may be needed to provide guidance during periods of low light (e.g. fall and winter when days are shorter).



ST. THOMAS TRAIL | SOURCE: ACTIVE ELGIN



3.8 TRAIL MAINTENANCE

The trail “conversation” does not end at the point of implementation and construction. There is significant work that will need to be done following implementation to ensure that the trail and associated facilities are monitored and maintained to a level that is considered suitable for those managing the trail and effectively communicated to those using the trail. The following sections provide some suggested maintenance practices for consideration by the County and its partners related to trails.

3.8.1 RISK MANAGEMENT & LIABILITY

Liability concerns are becoming a key consideration due to the potential for lawsuits. Adhering to widely accepted design, construction and maintenance are one of a number of strategies to manage risk. Aside from proper design, signage and operation of on and off-road active transportation and recreation facilities steps should be taken to address potential hazards including accidents, theft, vandalism, and other problems.

Some general strategies which could be used to reduce risk and to help minimize the liability associated with providing designated trail facilities are listed below:

- ▶ Improve the physical environment, increase public awareness of the right and obligations of users and improve access to educational programs.
- ▶ Maintenance operations should conform to accepted / best practice standards, and a maintenance program that is achievable for the municipality should be developed, documented and acted on.
- ▶ If hazards cannot be immediately removed, they should be isolated with a barrier or identified with warning signs.
- ▶ Monitor trails on a regular basis to document the physical conditions and operations of the route. All reports of hazardous conditions received should be promptly and thoroughly investigated.
- ▶ Written records of all monitoring and maintenance activities should be documented and maintained.
- ▶ Avoid using descriptions such as “safe” or “safer” when describing trails when promoting their use. Identify practices that enable users to assess their own capabilities or level of comfort and make their choices accordingly.



- ▶ Ensure signage, mapping and promotional materials associate the term 'Recreational' with trails and the trail network.
- ▶ Maintain proper insurance coverage as a safeguard against having to draw payments for damages from the public treasury.

Through the Ontario Trails Act, there were amendments to various Acts that have a bearing on recreation trails, including the Occupiers Liability Act, Public Lands Act and Trespass to Property Act which help to protect owners of properties that contain public trails as well as adjacent land owners, and also provide stiffer penalties for those that trespass on private property (i.e. go off trail property onto private lands), vandalize or cause damage.

- ▶ The Occupiers' Liability Act has been amended to clarify that the lower standard of care (responsibility) applies to occupiers of trail property which are not-for-profit or public-sector organizations, even if there is an incidental fee related to access onto or use of the land, such as for parking; or if a public benefit or payment is given to a not-for-profit trail manager.
- ▶ The Public Lands Act has been amended to
 - Make damage to Crown land and property an offence
 - Enable a court to order a person, who has been convicted of this offence, to stop the activity and/or rehabilitate lands and repair any damage to property.
 - Provide the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry with new enforcement tools to stop vehicles, inspect documents, and arrest persons suspected or caught violating the act.
 - Increase the maximum penalties for offenders and the length of time to initiate charges
- ▶ The Trespass to Property Act has been amended to raise the maximum fine for trespassing from \$2,000 to \$10,000 and remove the limit on the amount of damages that could be recovered in a prosecution.

Insurance coverage is often added to the liability insurance
Municipalities already carry for their other public parks and open space.

R13.

The risk management and liability prevention strategies should be reviewed and incorporated into day-to-day decision-making processes where applicable when planning, designing and operating trails in Elgin County.



3.8.2 TRAIL MAINTENANCE STRATEGIES

A trail maintenance log should be used to document maintenance activities. The log should be updated when features are repaired, modified, replaced, removed, or when new features are added. Accurate trail logs also become a useful resource for determining maintenance budgets for individual items and tasks, and in determining total maintenance costs for the entire trail. In addition, they are a useful source of information during the preparation of tender documents for trail contracts, and to show the location of structures and other features that require maintenance.

Table 4 | Trail Maintenance Strategies

FREQUENCY	TASK
<p>IMMEDIATE (within 24 hours of becoming aware of the situation through a “hotline”, email, other notification or observation)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ As a minimum, mark, barricade and sign the subject area to warn trail users, or close the trail completely until the problem can be corrected. ▶ Remove vegetation and/or windfalls, downed branches etc., where traffic flow on the trail is being impaired or the obstruction is resulting in a sight line issue. Remove hazard trees that have been identified. ▶ Repair or replace items that have been vandalized or stolen/removed. This is especially important for regulatory signs that provide important information about trail hazards such as road crossings, steep grades, and sharp curves. ▶ Removal of trash in overflowing containers or material that has been illegally dumped. ▶ Repair of obstructed drainage systems causing flooding that poses a hazard to trail users or that is resulting in deterioration that poses an immediate safety hazard. ▶ Monitor trail areas and structures that are prone to erosion after severe summer storms and repair as required. ▶ Repairs to structural elements on bridges such as beams, railings, access barriers and signs.
<p>REGULARLY (weekly / biweekly / monthly)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Trail patrols/inspections should review the trail conditions (as often as weekly in high-use areas), to assess conditions and prioritize maintenance tasks and monitor known problem areas. ▶ Mow grass along edges of trails (in open settings only). Depending on trail location this may be done weekly, biweekly or monthly and the width can vary according to the location (typically 0.5 to 1.0m). This helps to keep the clear zone open and can slow the invasion of weeds into granular trail surfaces. Not all trails will have mown edges. In woodland and wetland areas, pruning and brushing is typically the only vegetation maintenance to be undertaken.



FREQUENCY	TASK
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Regular garbage pickup (10 day cycle or more frequent for heavily used areas). ▶ Repair within 30 days or less, partially obstructed drainage systems causing intermittent water backups that do not pose an immediate safety hazard, but that if left unchecked over time will adversely affect the integrity of the trail and/or any other trail infrastructure or the surrounding area.
<p>COST EFFECTIVE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Patching/minor regarding of trail surfaces and removal of loose rocks from the trailbed. ▶ Culvert cleanout where required. ▶ Top up granular trail surfaces at approaches to bridges. ▶ Planting, landscape rehabilitation, pruning/beautification. ▶ Installation/removal of seasonal signage.
<p>ANNUALLY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Conduct an annual safety audit. This task can be efficiently included with general annual safety audits for parks and other recreation facilities. ▶ Evaluate support facilities/trailside amenities to determine repair and/or replacement needs. ▶ Examine trail surface to determine the need for patching and grading. ▶ Grading/grooming the surface of granular trails, and topping up of wood chip trails. ▶ Pruning/vegetation management for straight sections of trail and areas where branches may be encroaching into the clear zone. This task is more of a preventative maintenance procedure. Cuttings may be chipped on site and placed appropriately or used as mulch for new plantings. Remove branches from the site unless they can be used for habitat (i.e. brush piles in a woodlot setting), or used as part of the rehabilitation of closed trails. Where invasive species are being pruned and/or removed, branches and cuttings should be disposed of in an appropriate manner. ▶ Inspect and secure all loose side rails, bridge supports, decking (ensure any structural repairs meet the original structural design criteria).
<p>EVERY 3 TO 5 YEARS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Cleaning and refurbishment of signs, benches and other trailside amenities.
<p>EVERY 10 TO 20 YEARS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Resurface asphalt trails (assume approximately every 15 years). ▶ Major renovation or replacement of large items such as bridges, kiosks, gates, parking lots, benches etc.



R14.

Using the maintenance strategies outlined in Trails Study and current Local Municipal trail maintenance practices as a starting point, Local municipalities should develop appropriate trail maintenance plans and budgets.

R15.

Annual maintenance budgets should be refined to accommodate the maintenance of trail facilities. Budgets should increase over time to correspond with the increase in the number / length of trail facilities that have been implemented.

4.0

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The Elgin County Trails Study has been designed as the starting point of a larger county-wide trails strategy geared at improving access, consistently designing, increasing awareness and encouraging residents and visitors to utilize trails. Once the trails study is completed there will be a significant amount of work that will need to be done to move forward with implementation.

The following chapter outlines suggested approaches and tools to support these next steps and forms a proposed implementation strategy for County staff and their partners. The implementation strategy is not linked to a specific phase and / or costing for proposed trail connections. It has been designed as a guide to help future decision making as it relates to trail investments.





4.1 PRIORITIES FOR TRAIL DEVELOPMENT

This section outlines some of potential priorities with respect to implementing the trail network across the County. The priorities for network implementation have been organized municipality. Potential priorities are illustrated on **Maps 4.0 to 4.8**.

4.1.1 COUNTY-WIDE

On a County-wide level, it is recommended that the County continue to explore with Southwold, Dutton-Dunwich and West Elgin, their level of interest / support for the potential to develop a trail along the former CASO railway line, and engage in discussions with Entegrus (the owner of the line) regarding a long-term agreement / partnership arrangement with Entegrus for the same. Many of the trail priorities in these municipalities leverage the opportunity presented through the development of the former CASO railway line, given that it intersects many of the settlement areas in those municipalities.



FORMER CASO RAILWAY CORRIDOR (WSP, 2018)

4.1.2 AYLMER

Recommended priorities for trail development in the Town of Aylmer include the following:

- ▶ Introducing a formal trail through Lions Park and Crystal Park; and
- ▶ Developing a trail loop through Steen Park.

The County, in partnership with the Town of Aylmer, is recommended to introduce a formal trail through Lions Park and Crystal Park. The two parks do not currently have any formal trails, and the introduction of one would provide park users with an additional park amenity. The County and Town are also encouraged to pursue to development of a trail loop, through the western segment of Steen Park. Developing a trail loop would give park users a formalized trail around the existing baseball diamond and would serve as a perimeter route around the park.



CONCEPTUAL ROUTE FOR GREAT TRAIL (WSP, 2018)

Elgin County Trails Study



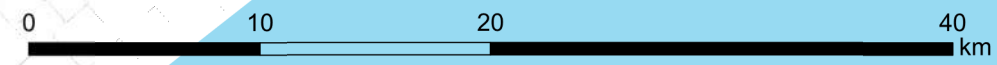
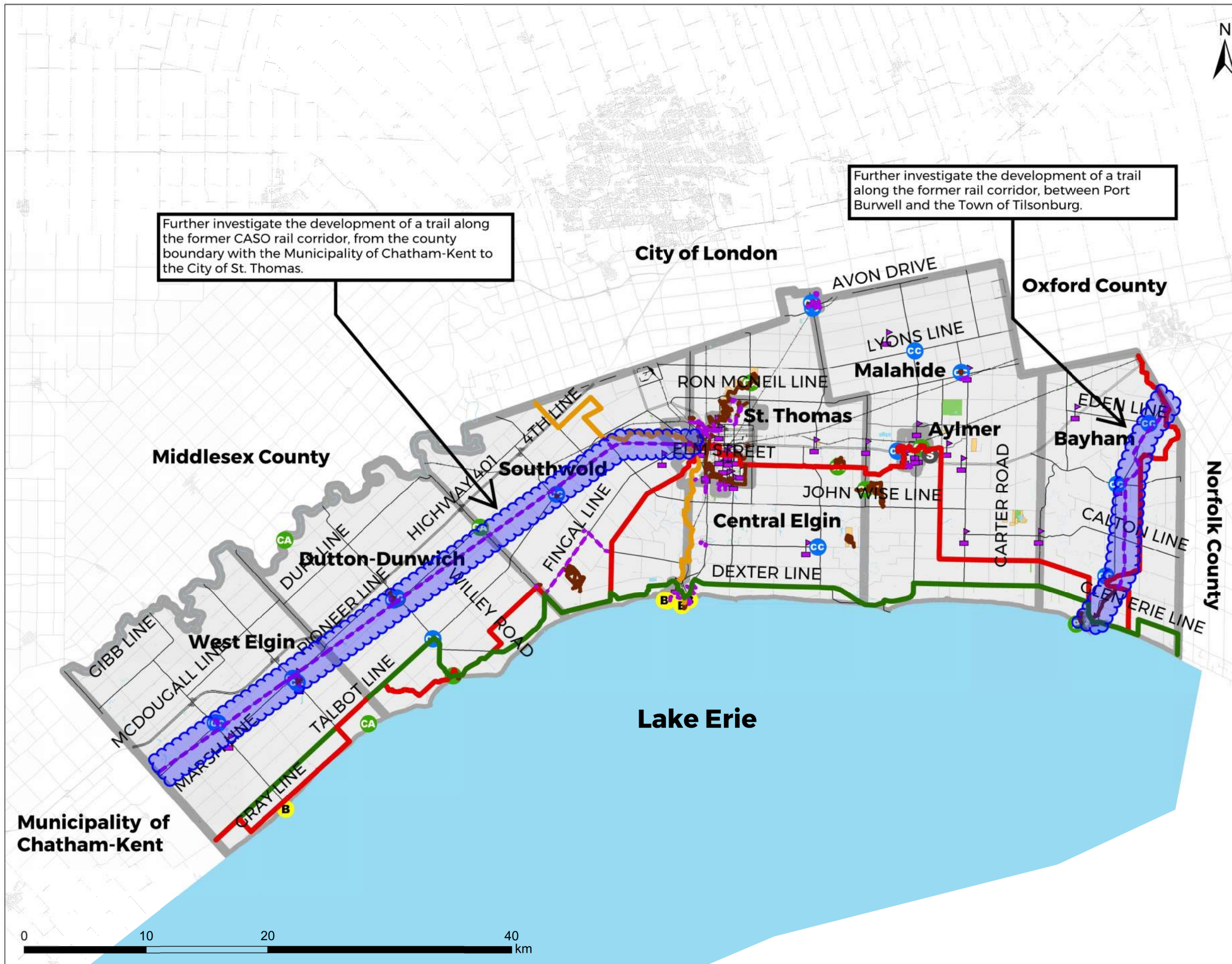
Map 4-0: Priorities Proposed Trail Network Elgin County

Legend

- Trails**
- Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Great Lakes Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area Trails
 - - - Proposed Trails¹
- Destination Areas**
- Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
 - Lakes and Watercourses
 - Beach
 - Community Centre
 - Conservation Area
 - Provincial Park
 - Seniors' Centre
 - ▲ School
- Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)**
- Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)

¹ Proposed Trails include previously proposed trails from other approved municipal master plans and trails proposed as part of the Elgin County Trails Study.

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Elgin County Trails Study



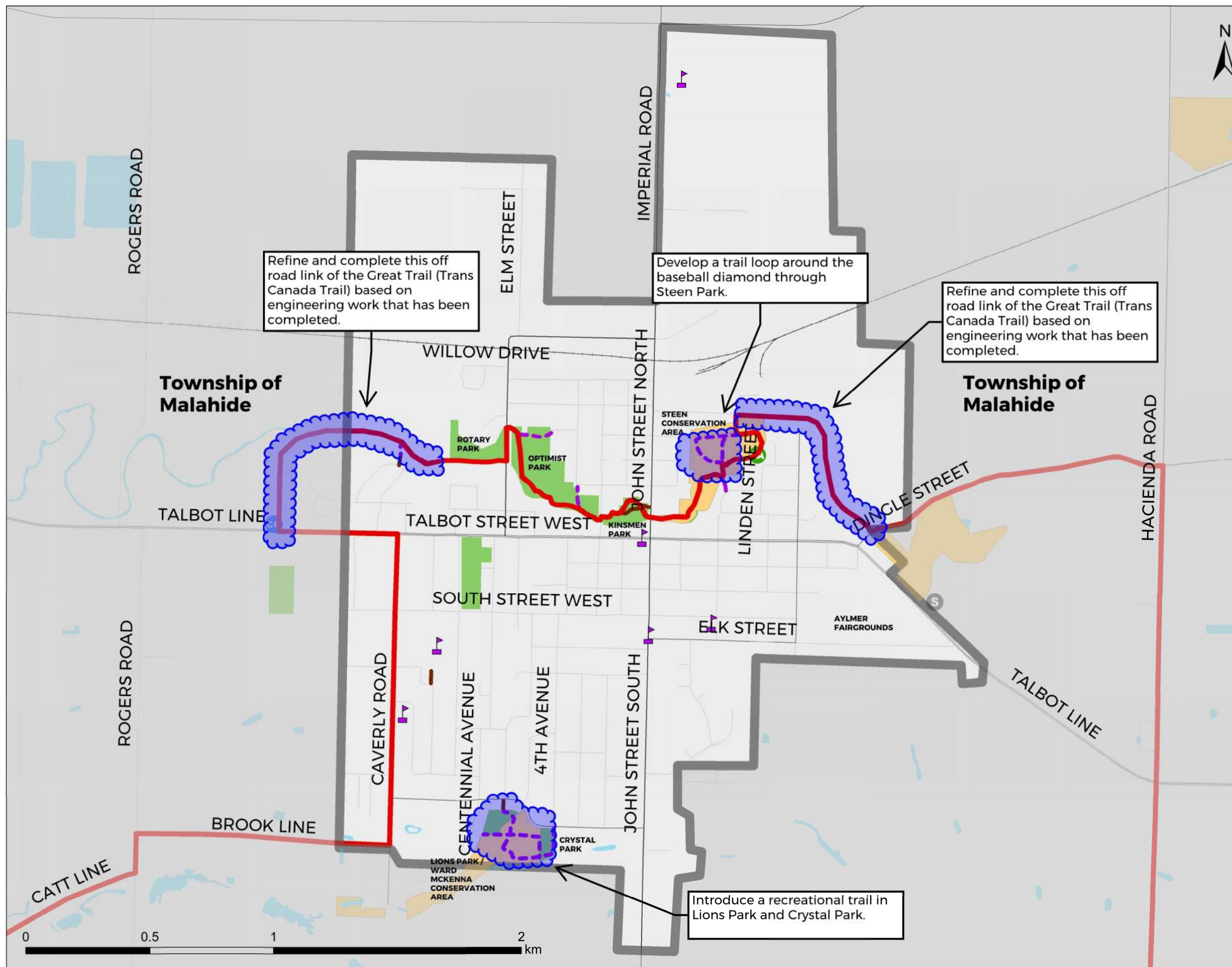
Map 4-1: Priorities Proposed Trail Network Town of Aylmer

Legend

- Trails**
- Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Great Lakes Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area Trails
 - - - Proposed Trails¹
- Destination Areas**
- Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
 - Lakes and Watercourses
 - Beach
 - Community Centre
 - Conservation Area
 - Provincial Park
 - Seniors' Centre
 - School
- Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)**

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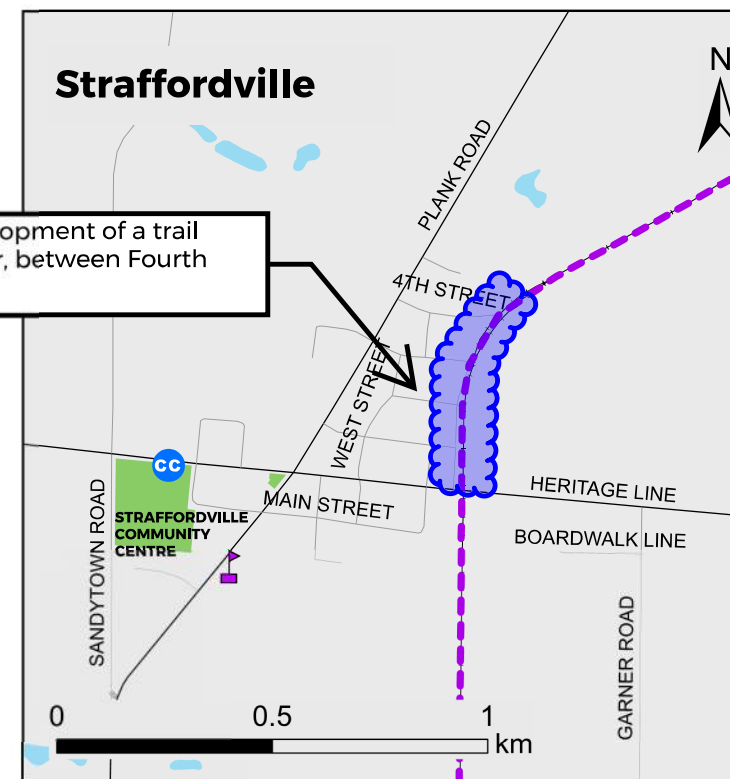
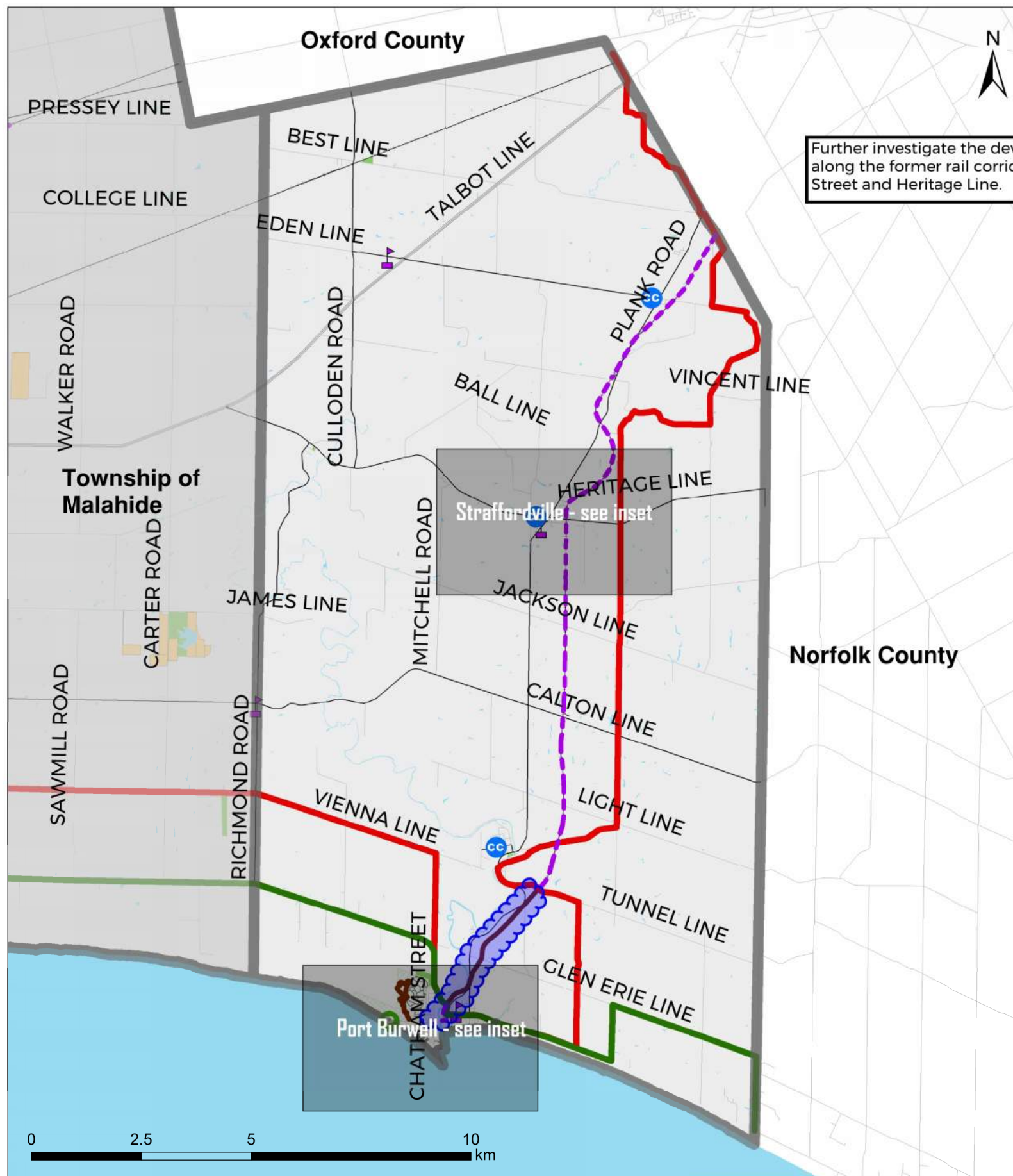
Map 4-2: Priorities Proposed Trail Network Municipality of Bayham

Legend

- Trails**
- Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Great Lakes Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area
 - Trails
 - Proposed Trails¹
- Destination Areas**
- Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
 - Lakes and Watercourses
 - Beach
 - Community Centre
 - Conservation Area
 - Provincial Park
 - Seniors' Centre
 - School
 - Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)

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Further investigate the development of a trail along the former rail corridor, between Fourth Street and Heritage Line.

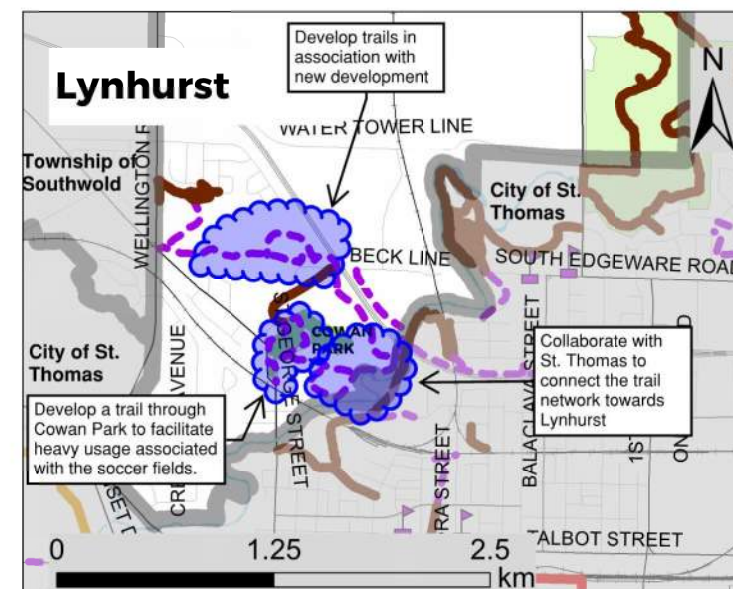
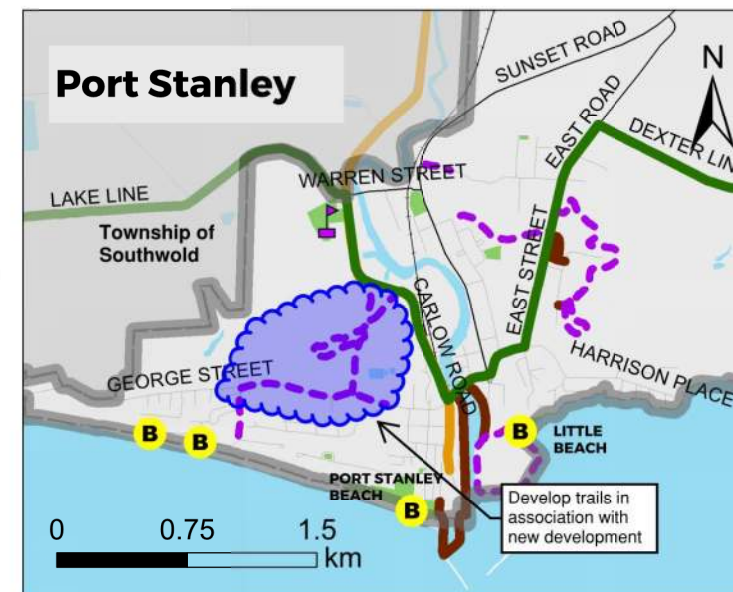
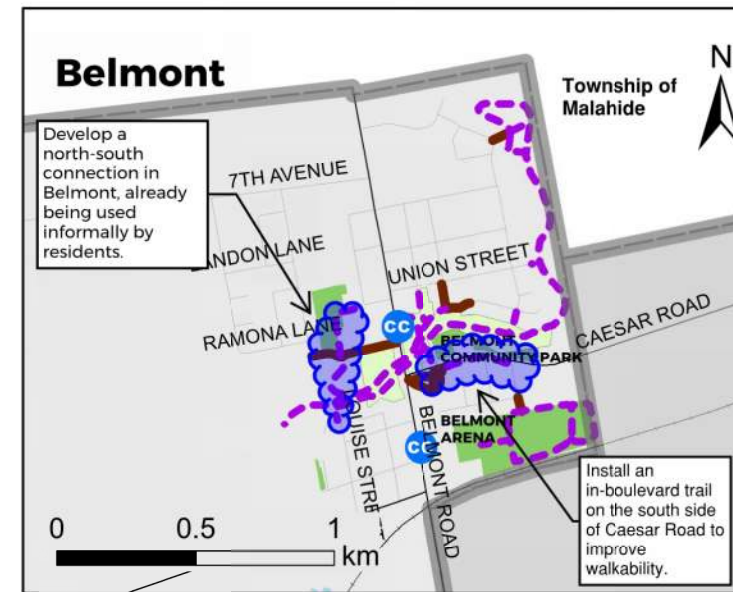
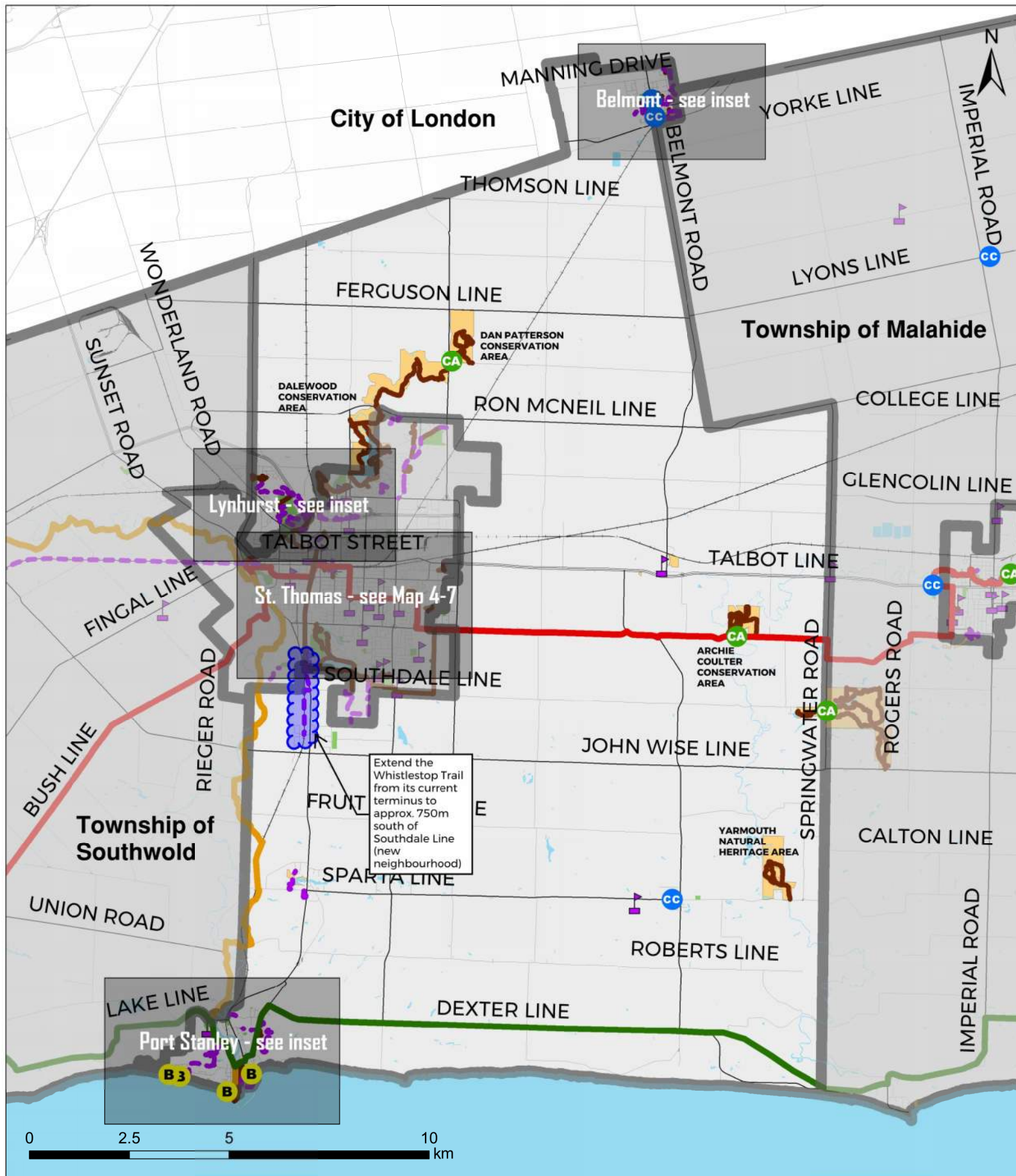
Formalize the trail along the former rail corridor, between Bridge Street in Port Burwell and Tunnel Line. Additionally, extend trail along former rail corridor from Bridge Street in Port Burwell to Pitt Street. Further investigate the opportunity to develop the trail between Port Burwell and Tilsonburg.



Elgin County Trails Study



Map 4-3: Priorities Proposed Trail Network Municipality of Central Elgin



Legend

- Trails**
- Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Great Lakes Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area Trails
 - - - Proposed Trails¹
- Destination Areas**
- Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
 - Lakes and Watercourses
 - B Beach
 - CC Community Centre
 - CA Conservation Area
 - P Provincial Park
 - S Seniors' Centre
 - ✎ School
 - +— Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)

¹ Proposed Trails include previously proposed trails from other approved municipal master plans and trails proposed as part of the Elgin County Trails Study.

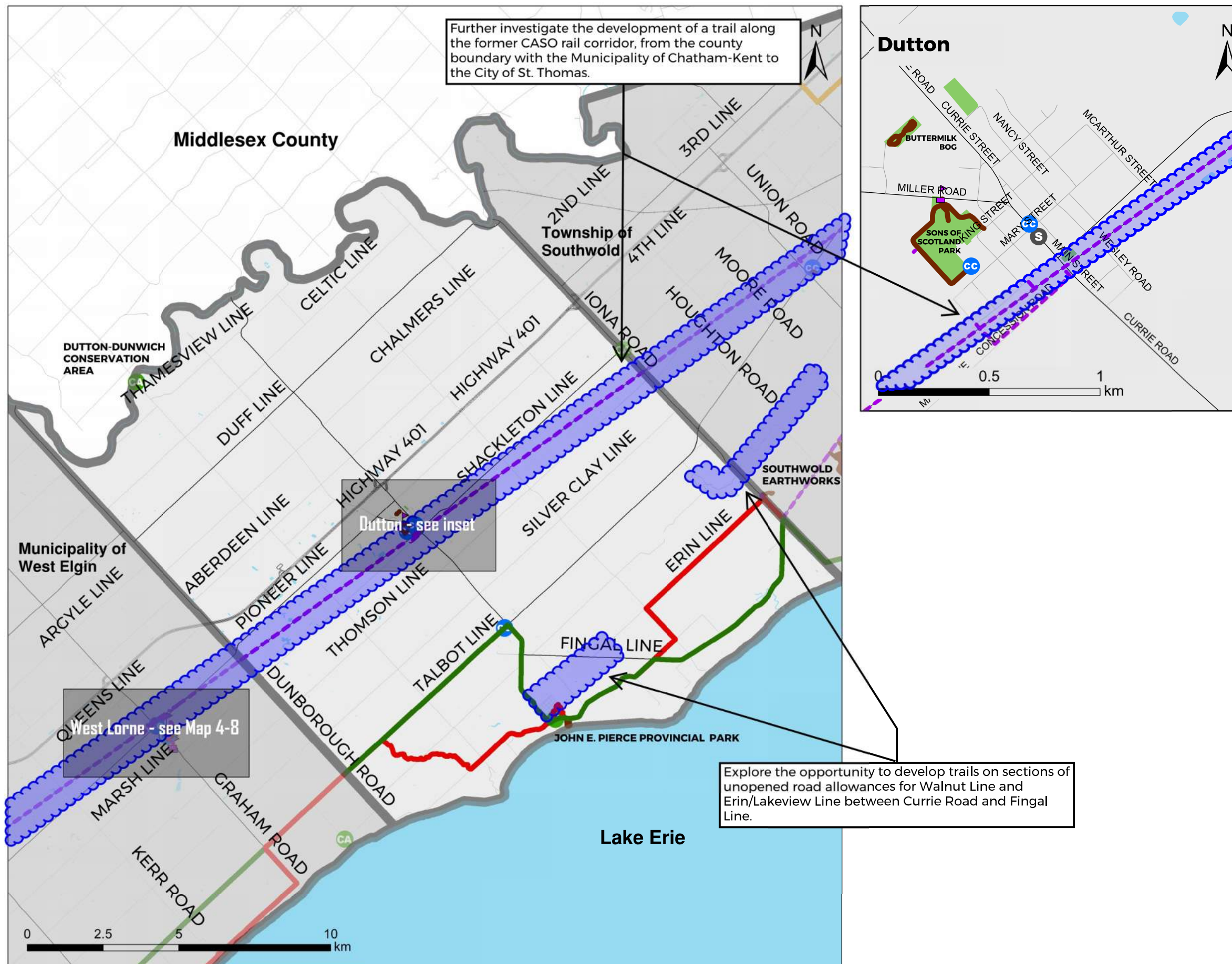
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Elgin County Trails Study



Map 4-4: Priorities Proposed Trail Network
Municipality of Dutton-Dunwich



Legend

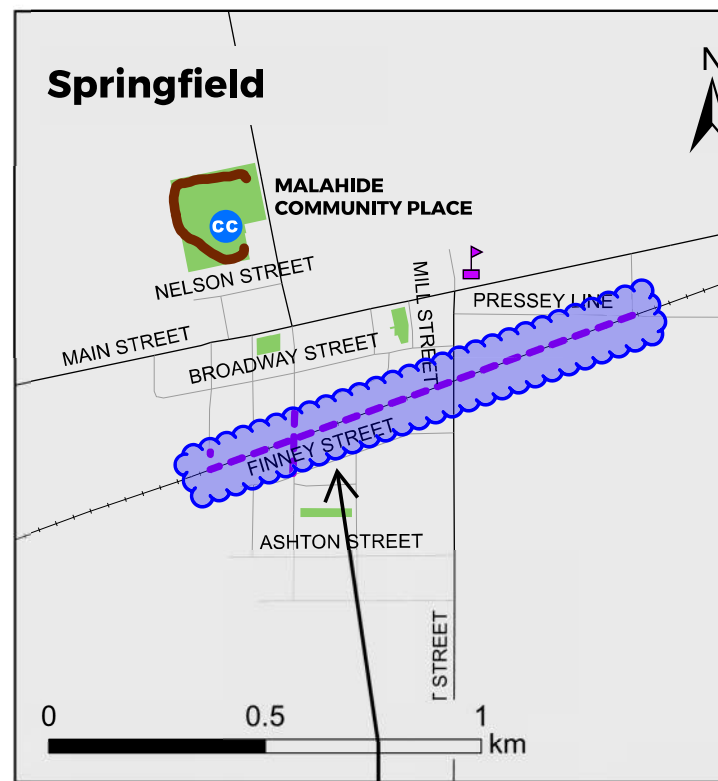
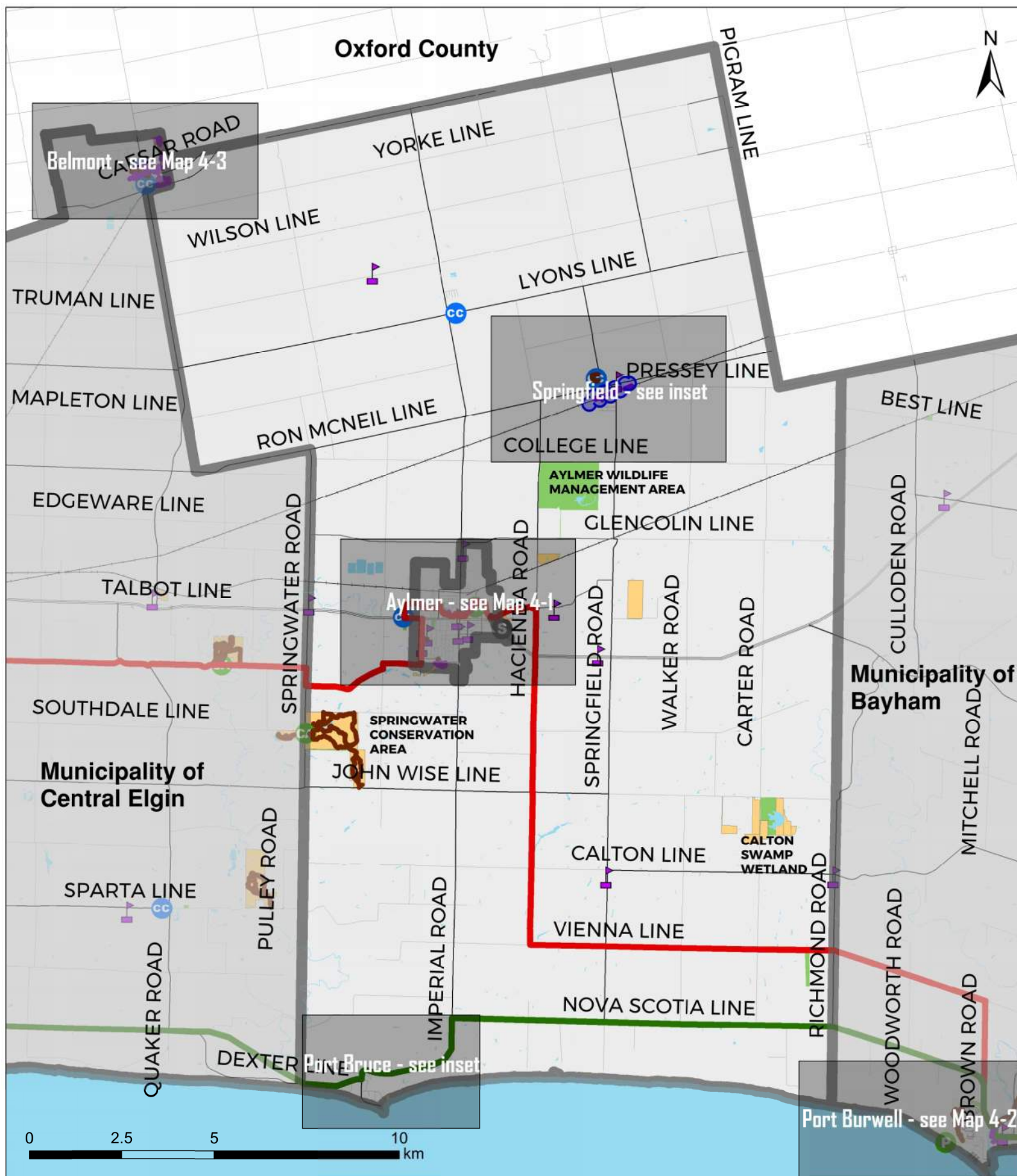
- Trails
- Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Great Lakes Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area
 - Trails
 - Proposed Trails¹
- Destination Areas
- Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
 - Lakes and Watercourses
 - Beach
 - Community Centre
 - Conservation Area
 - Provincial Park
 - Seniors' Centre
 - ✎ School
 - Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)

1. Proposed Trails include previously proposed trails from other approved municipal master plans and trails proposed as part of the Elgin County Trails Study.

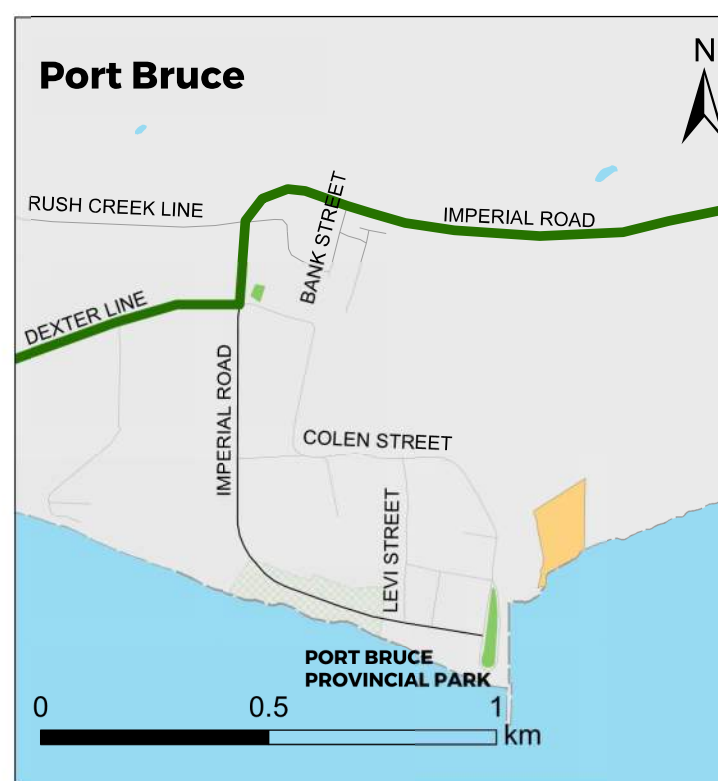
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Elgin County Trails Study



Further investigate the development of a trail along the former rail corridor, between Inverness Street and Pressy Line. Proposed north-south linkage, from Finney St./Superior Street to Broadway St./Whittaker Street connects with the existing sidewalk, allowing for a connection to Malahide Community Place.



Map 4-5: Priorities Proposed Trail Network Township of Malahide

Legend

- Trails
- Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Great Lakes Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area
 - Trails
 - - - Proposed Trails¹
- Destination Areas
- Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
 - Lakes and Watercourses
 - Beach
 - Community Centre
 - Conservation Area
 - Provincial Park
 - Seniors' Centre
 - School
 - Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)

¹ Proposed Trails include previously proposed trails from other approved municipal master plans and trails proposed as part of the Elgin County Trails Study.

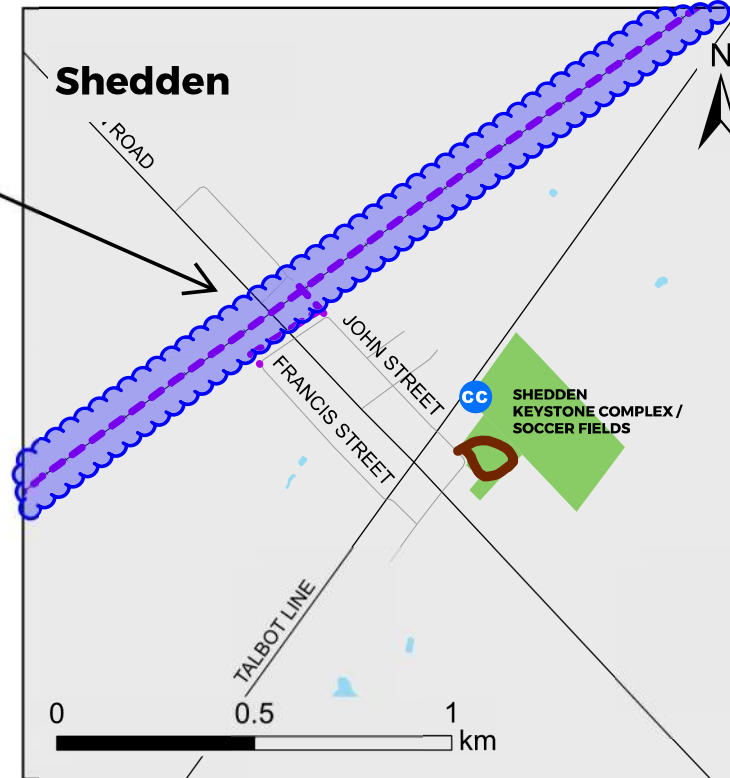
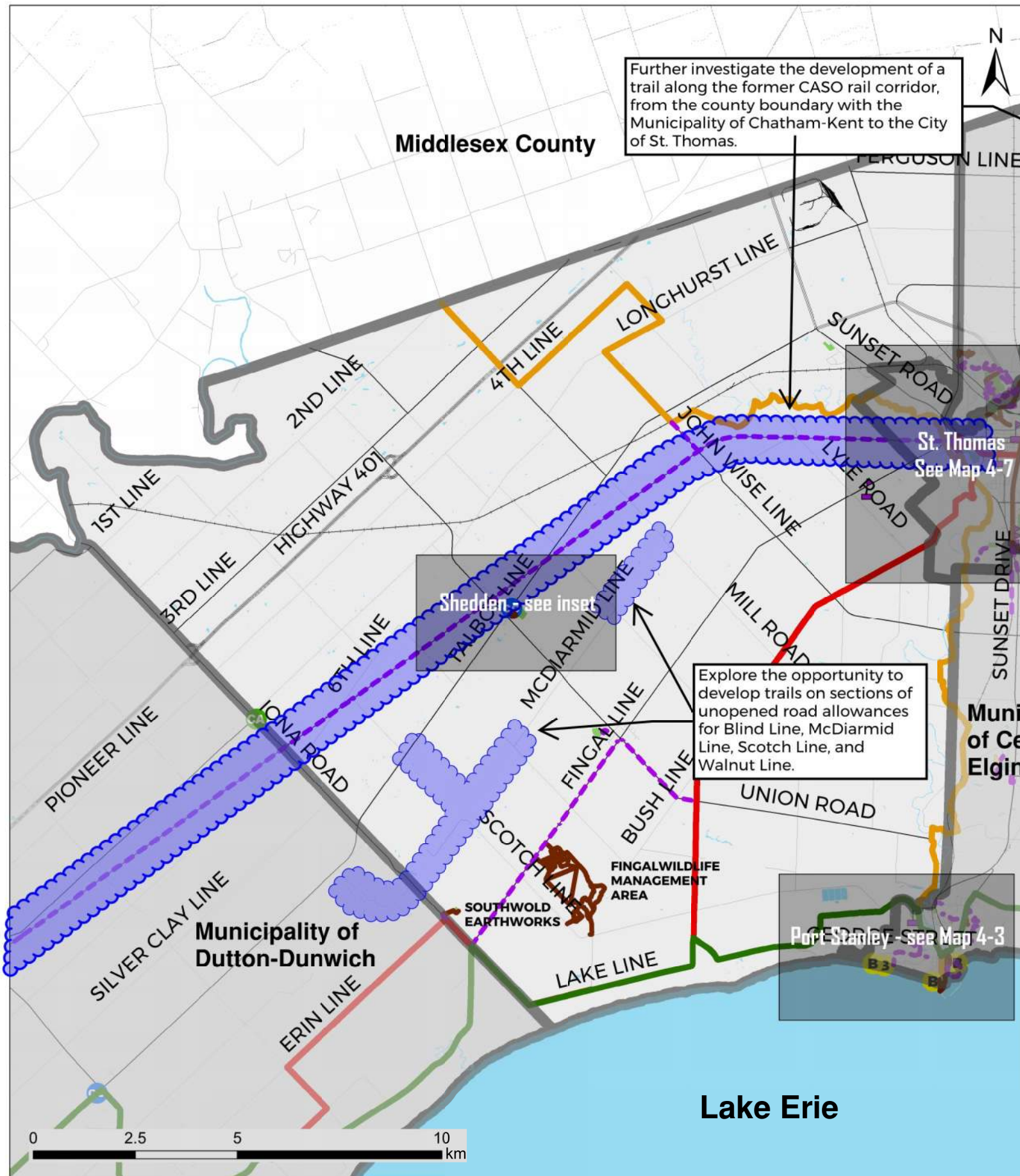
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Elgin County Trails Study



Map 4-6: Priorities Proposed Trail Network Township of Southwold



Legend

- Trails**
- Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Great Lakes Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area
 - Trails
 - Proposed Trails¹
- Destination Areas**
- Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
 - Lakes and Watercourses
 - Beach
 - Community Centre
 - Conservation Area
 - Provincial Park
 - Seniors' Centre
 - ✎ School
 - Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)

¹ Proposed Trails include previously proposed trails from other approved municipal master plans and trails proposed as part of the Elgin County Trails Study.

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Elgin County Trails Study



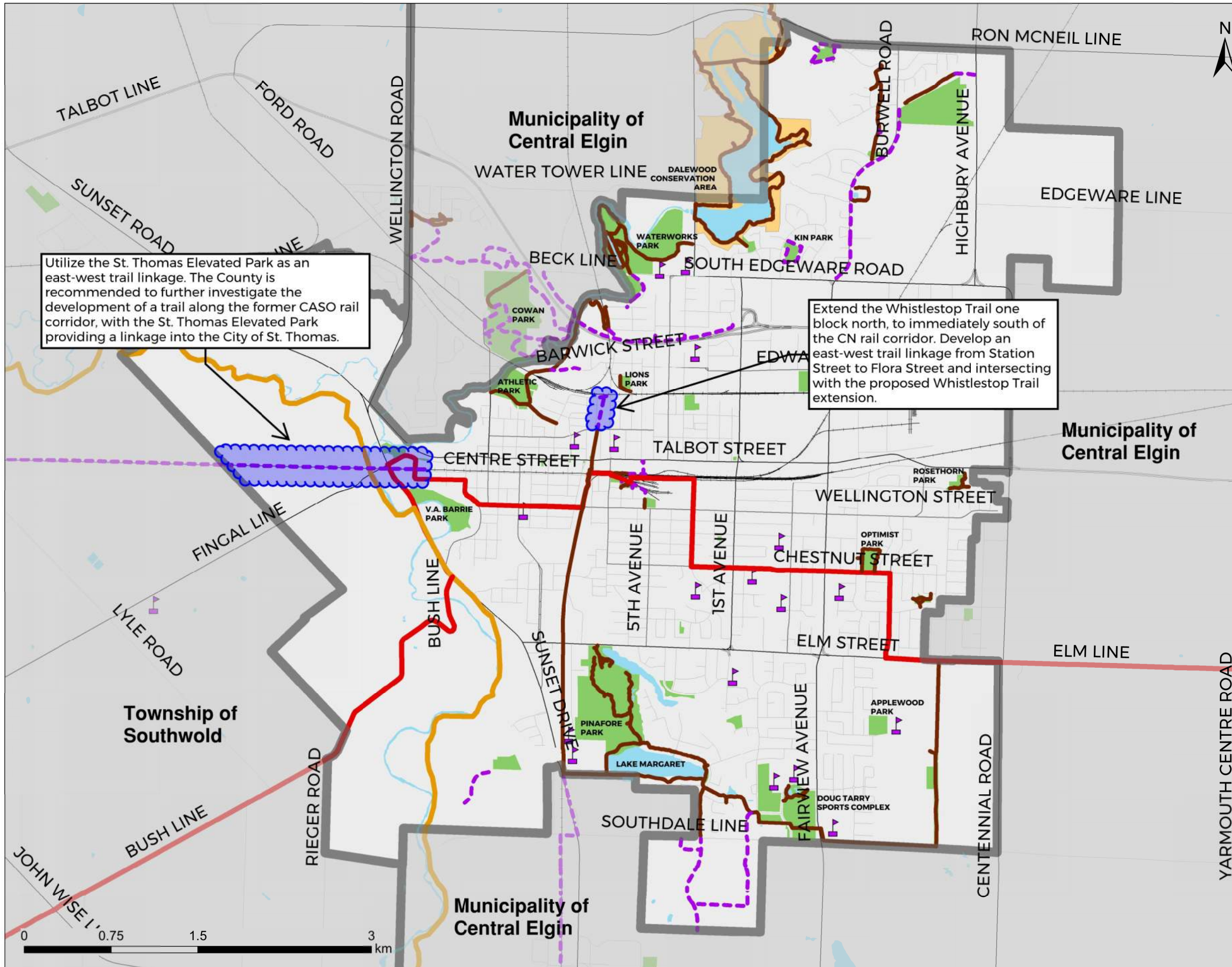
Map 4-7: Priorities Proposed Trail Network City of St. Thomas

Legend

- Trails
- Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Great Lakes Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area Trails
 - Proposed Trails¹
- Destination Areas
- Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
 - Lakes and Watercourses
 - Beach
 - Community Centre
 - Conservation Area
 - Provincial Park
 - Seniors' Centre
 - ▲ School
- Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)

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Utilize the St. Thomas Elevated Park as an east-west trail linkage. The County is recommended to further investigate the development of a trail along the former CASO rail corridor, with the St. Thomas Elevated Park providing a linkage into the City of St. Thomas.

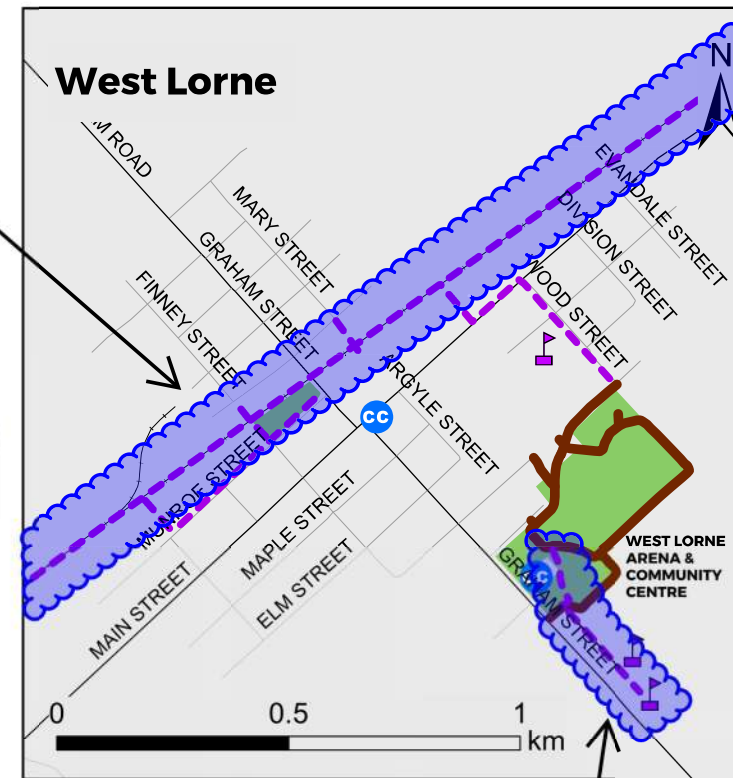
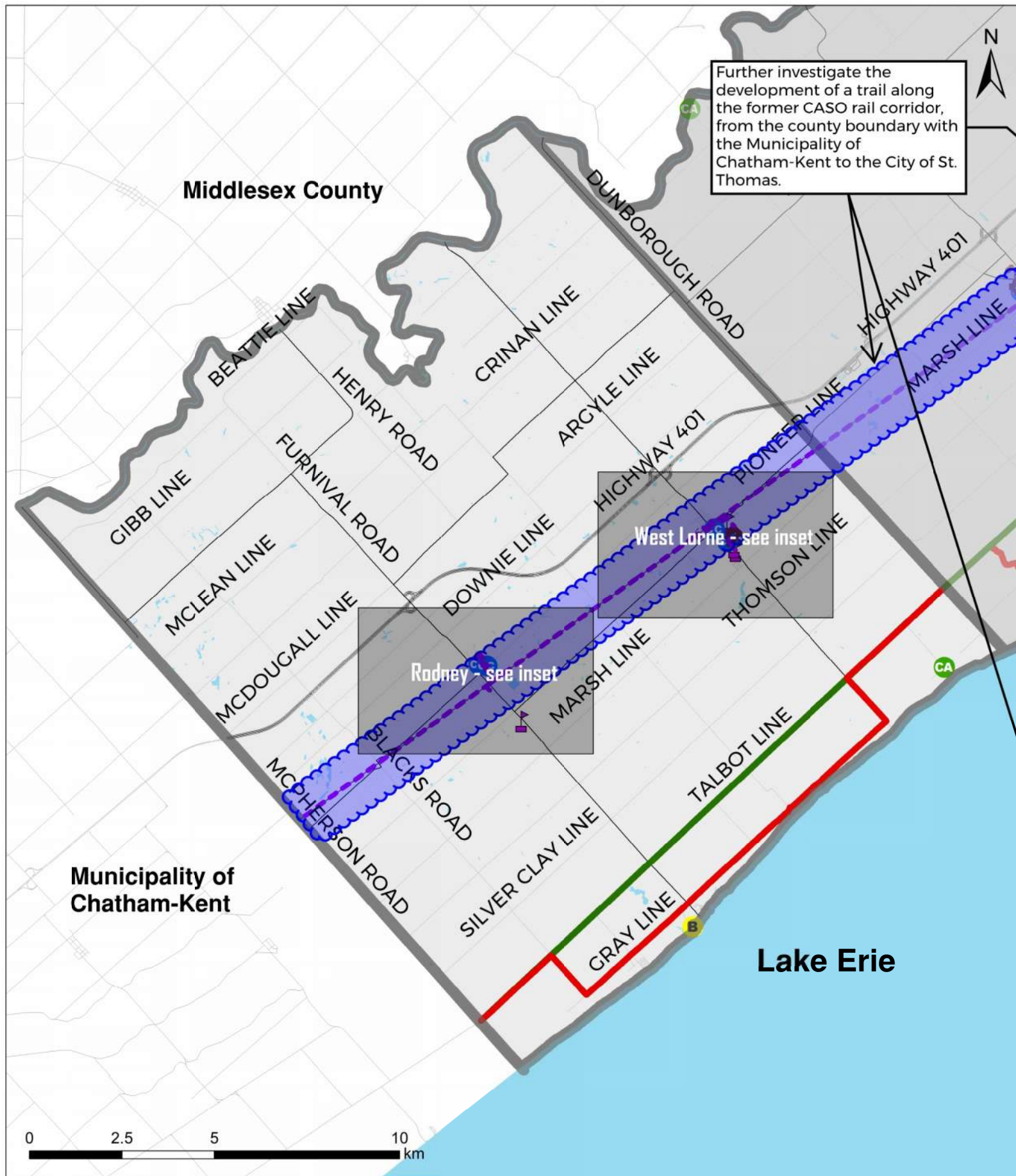
Extend the Whistlestop Trail one block north, to immediately south of the CN rail corridor. Develop an east-west trail linkage from Station Street to Flora Street and intersecting with the proposed Whistlestop Trail extension.



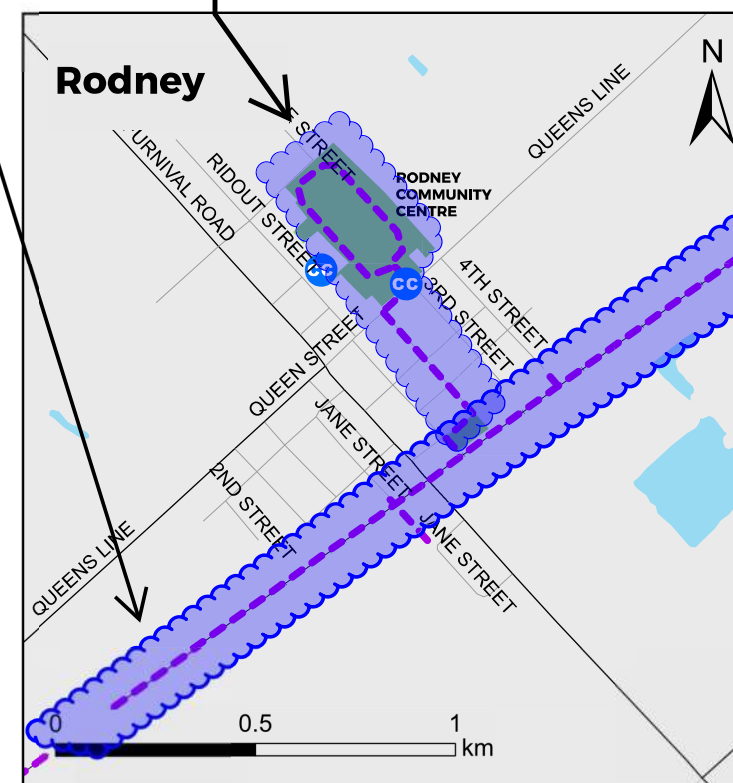
Elgin County Trails Study



Map 4-8: Priorities Proposed Trail Network Municipality of West Elgin



Establish a trail connection along Monroe Street, between the Rodney Community Centre and the former CASO rail corridor. Introduce a formal trail at the Rodney Community Centre.



Legend

- Trails**
- Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Great Lakes Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area
 - Trails
 - Proposed Trails¹
- Destination Areas**
- Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
 - Lakes and Watercourses
 - Beach
 - Community Centre
 - Conservation Area
 - Provincial Park
 - Seniors' Centre
 - ▲ School
- Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)**

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 Note: Map is not intended for navigation.





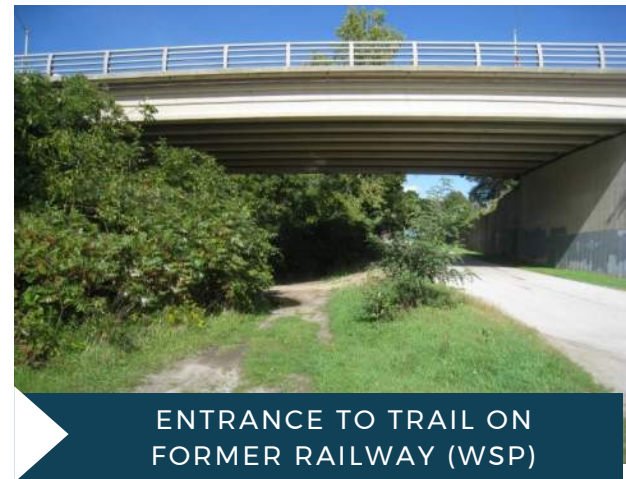
It is recommended that the County work with The Great Trail to confirm and formalize the trail routing through the Town. Existing conditions along segments of The Great Trail through the Town of Aylmer, as referenced from The Great Trail mapping, suggest that an opportunity exists to formalize the trail. The end result would be a trail that is clearly distinguishable and appropriately signed to clearly communicate with trail users the location and orientation of the trail.

4.1.3 BAYHAM

Recommended priorities for trail development in the Municipality of Bayham include

- ▶ Formalizing the existing rail-trail between Tunnel Line and Bridge Street (Port Burwell); and
- ▶ Extending the existing rail-trail that currently terminates at Bridge Street in Port Burwell, through to Pitt Street, and
- ▶ Further investigate developing a trail along the former rail corridor, between Fourth Street and Heritage Line.

In the Municipality of Bayham, the County, in partnership with the Municipality, should prioritize formalize the existing rail-trail that extends from Tunnel Line and Bridge Street (Port Burwell). This rail corridor was previously operated by the Tillsonburg, Lake Erie, and Pacific Railway. In its current state, particularly at the existing trail head at Bridge Street, a formal indication of the trail is lacking and could be mistaken for a snowmobile or ATV route. The County and Municipality are encouraged to formalize the existing trail, from introducing signage and directional markers, to grading and maintaining a consistent trail surface.



ENTRANCE TO TRAIL ON FORMER RAILWAY (WSP)

This segment of rail-trail forms the southern segment of a trail that could ultimately extend to the Town of Tillsonburg, and connect the communities of Vienna, Straffordville and Eden along the way. Investment in this trail could also prove to be a benefit for the County and Municipality in terms of its cycling tourism opportunity.

The second priority, extending the existing rail-trail that currently terminates at Bridge Street in Port Burwell, and extending it to Pitt Street, would connect the existing trail infrastructure to MHCS Ojibwa and the Museum of Naval History, as well as the commercial area on Robinson Street. This extension would connect trail users to a greater



number of tourist and commercial attractions and provide an off-road recreational link along the river in Port Burwell.

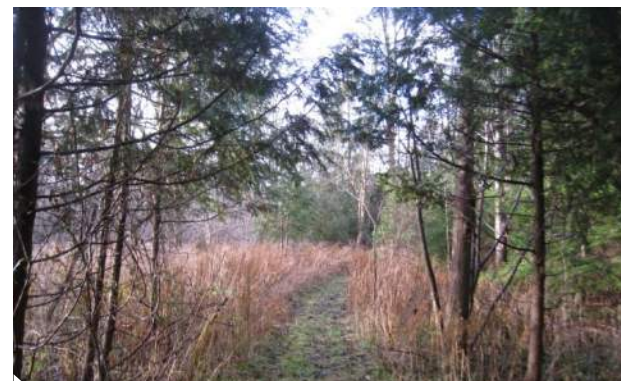
The third recommended priority for the Municipality of Bayham is to further investigate the development of a trail in Straffordville along the former rail corridor, between Fourth Street and Heritage Line. This former rail corridor is the same corridor mentioned above, as it pertains to the existing trail extending out of Port Burwell. Establishing this trail segment in Straffordville affords residents the opportunity to walk along a formalized off-road setting and addresses specific concerns from Straffordville residents about the lack of such opportunities. Developing the trail segment in question allows the County and Municipality to incrementally develop this larger trail corridor, which has the potential to extend from Port Burwell in the south to the Town of Tillsonburg in the north.

4.1.4 CENTRAL ELGIN

Recommended priorities for trail development in the Municipality of Central Elgin include

- ▶ Completing a trail link from the southern terminus of the Whistlestop Trail to approximately 750m south of Southdale Line, parallel to the London & Port Stanley (L&PS) rail corridor;
- ▶ Developing a new trail connection in Belmont, linking neighbourhoods on the north and south sides of the creek;
- ▶ Developing an in-boulevard trail on the south side of Caesar Road in Belmont, from Sherwood Ave. to Belmont Lions Park;
- ▶ Developing a trail through Cowan Park in Lynhurst.

The completion of a link from the southern terminus of the Whistlestop Trail to approximately 750m south of Southdale line is recommended to be implemented as part of the new neighbourhood development. This link would provide an off-road north-south linkage for residents living in the new neighbourhood, providing access to St. Thomas and all of the trails that connect with the Whistlestop Trail. The recommended priority trails for Belmont would provide north-south connectivity in the community, formalizing a trail linkage that has been used informally for a number of years.



INFORMAL TRAIL ALONG
KETTLE CREEK (WSP)

The in-boulevard trail on the south side of Caesar Road in Belmont improves walkability in the community and connects future proposed trail linkages.



In Port Stanley, it is recommended that the Municipality develops a waterfront trail from the east pier to Little Beach. The trail has the potential to contribute to the revitalization efforts around the harbour and adds to the experience of residents and visitors.

Lastly, it is recommended that the Municipality prioritize the development of a trail through Cowan Park. As a major recreational facility within the Municipality, the development of a trail through the park would add to the value it provides residents and visitors.

Refer to Central Elgin Trail Master Plan (2016) for additional details.

4.1.5 DUTTON-DUNWICH

Recommended priorities for trail development in the Municipality of Dutton-Dunwich include

- ▶ Further investigate opportunities to develop a trail loop utilizing a segment of the former Canada Southern Railway (CASO) corridor, Marsh Line, and Leitch Street; and
- ▶ Explore opportunities to utilize unopened road allowances for the purposes of trail development.

The development of a trail loop provides Dutton residents with another trail option, in addition to the trail located in Sons of Scotland Park.

This proposed priority project would leverage the County-wide initiative of pursuing opportunities to develop the former CASO Railway corridor into an off-road trail, spanning from the County boundary with the Municipality of Chatham-Kent to St. Thomas and traversing through Dutton.

Secondary, the County and Municipality are encouraged to explore opportunities to explore unopened road allowances for the purposes of developing trails through them. The following unopened road allowances should be explored in further detail:

- ▶ Walnut Line (
- ▶ Scotch Line (
- ▶ Docker/Currie Rd



LEITCH STREET INFORMAL CROSSING (WSP)



4.1.6 MALAHIDE

Recommended priorities for trail development in the Township of Malahide include

- ▶ Development of a trail in Springfield, utilizing the former east-west railway corridor; and
- ▶ Developing a north-south trail linkage in Springfield, from Finney St./Superior St. to Whittaker St./Broadway St.

The Township of Malahide, is recommended to prioritize the development of a trail in Springfield, utilizing the former railway corridor. In developing this trail, residents of Springfield would have an option when it comes to walking in an off-road setting, with the trail providing an alternative to using the trail at the Malahide Community Place,

The second priority mentioned above is the development of a trail connection in Springfield that links Finney St./Superior Street to Whittaker St./Broadway St. This proposed connection currently has a desire line, suggesting that pedestrians are already using this crossing location as a north-south linkage.



FORMER RAIL LINE
THROUGH SPRINGFIELD

Establishing a formal trail in this location also allows for connectivity with the Malahide Community Place and the Springfield Library, both of which are located further north along Whittaker Road.

4.1.7 WEST ELGIN

Recommended priorities for trail development in the Municipality of West Elgin include

- ▶ Establishing a trail connection in West Lorne, between Miller Park and West Elgin Secondary School;
- ▶ Developing a loop trail in West Lorne utilizing a segment of the former Southern Canada Railway Corridor, Munroe Street, and Graham Street;
- ▶ Establishing a trail connection in Rodney, between the Rodney Community Centre and the former CASO Railway corridor, primarily using Monroe Street; and
- ▶ Formalize a recreational path at the Rodney Community Centre where the existing track is located.



In West Lorne, it is recommended that the County, in partnership with the Municipality, establish a trail connection between Miller Park and Elgin Secondary School. This link would provide an alternative north-south corridor for students that live north of the school. The recommended trail loop in West Lorne would provide residents with an additional trail route for leisure purposes.

In Rodney, the County and Municipality are recommended to formalize a connection between the former CASO railway corridor and the Rodney Community Centre, traveling along Monroe Street.

Should the former CASO railway corridor be developed into a public trail, this recommended trail linkage would connect one recreational facility with another. Additionally, the formalizing of the recreational path at the Rodney Community Centre would allow for a trail facility that could be used by users of all ages and abilities.



TRAIL OPPORTUNITY TO
ELGIN ELEMENTARY

4.1.8 SOUTHWOLD

Recommended priorities for trail development in the Township of Southwold include:

- ▶ Establishing a trail connection along Fingal Line, between Iona Road and Union Road, and along Union Road between Fingal Line and Boxall Road.

The proposed trail priority for the Township of Southwold provides for greater connectivity to the Fingal Wildlife Management Area and the Fingal community. It also serves to provide an alternative trail option north of the Fingal Wildlife Management Area, where The Great Trail and The Lake Erie Waterfront Trail deviate to the south, along Lake Line.

The proposed trail connection is intended to connect to the intersection of Fingal Line and Iona Road, which is a short distance away from the Southwold Earthworks Historic Site, as well as the location where The Great Trail and the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail split.



FINGAL WILDLIFE
MANAGEMENT AREA



4.1.9 ST. THOMAS

Recommended priorities for trail development in the Township of Southwold include:

- ▶ Extending the Whistlestop Trail from Scott Street to immediately south of the railway corridor;
- ▶ Establishing an east-west connection parallel to the railway corridor at the proposed terminus of the Whistlestop Trail, from Station Street to Flora Street; and
- ▶ Establishing a trail along the St. Thomas Elevated Park, from King Street in the east to the municipal boundary in the west.

The first of the recommended priorities for trail implementation in St. Thomas is to extend the Whistlestop Trail from Scoot Street to immediately south of the railway corridor. This proposed priority extends a popular north-south trail corridor one block north, and the proposed east-west trail linkage from Station Street to Flora Street further connects the surrounding neighbourhood to the Whistlestop Trail. The area, as it exists today, has a number of desire lines, indicating that there is a demand for this proposed connection. Once at Flora Street, individuals will be able to formally cross the railway tracks at a road-crossing.



The second priority is to establish a trail along the St. Thomas Elevated Park, from King Street in the east to the municipal boundary in the west. Once developed, this proposed trail linkage would enable further connections from the east and west sides of the bridge.

R16.

The County and Local Municipalities should consider the priority projects and initiatives identified in the Elgin County Trails Study when deciding on the implementation of trails under their jurisdiction.



4.1.10 UPDATING THE NETWORK

The Trail Study is not intended to be a static document. Though the strategy has been developed as a blueprint / guide for future planning and development, it must be recognized that priorities change over time and additional or alternate opportunities may arise. The network plan is intended to be flexible. The timing and details related to the network's implementation should evolve through ongoing community consultation, discussions with private landowners, County and local municipal Council's decisions on priorities and detailed design studies.

As network changes or additions arise the overall intent and direction of the plan should be respected. To help facilitate this, the following should be considered when additional opportunities or changes arise:

- ▶ The validity of each route should be confirmed when it is being considered for implementation. Where it is determined that a particular route is no longer valid, or is impossible to achieve, a parallel route performing the same network function should be selected.
- ▶ Where applicable potential trail routes are considered as part of the Environmental Assessment process for municipal infrastructure projects.
- ▶ Input should be gathered from County and municipalities and partners e.g. conservation authorities, and interest groups through a coordinated communication process to ensure that trail users' needs are being considered and balanced.
- ▶ Performance of the facilities should be regularly monitored so that improvement in trail routing, design and maintenance can evolve as new information and new opportunities arise.
- ▶ The Elgin County Trail Strategy should be updated on a regular basis, at least every five years.

R17.

The Elgin County Trails Strategy should be updated in five years to include trails that have been completed and to optimize new trail development opportunities that have been identified in the intervening time.



4.2 NETWORK MANAGEMENT

The trail network illustrated in the Trails Study was developed using the GIS database provided by the client team at the project outset. The database can be integrated into County/City and local municipal databases used as a facility management tool. The database is associated with mapping information and includes a number of attributes for both the existing and proposed network linkages.

Staff responsible for implementation is encouraged to use the database as a tool when confirming the feasibility of trail routes and scheduling implementation. The tool can also assist provide operations staff with quick access to the location and characteristics of features within the network. This will enable more proactive planning of trail maintenance, will help to track work completed and can also be used to provide input to future budgeting.

As improvements or additions are made to the network, the database should be updated so it remains up to date, and is a useful asset management tool. The following are some of potential uses of the tool for trail planning and management:

- ▶ Monitoring of the database on a regular basis with regular updates from staff implementing new trails;
- ▶ Tracking and documenting locations requiring attention and / or maintenance based on comments received from staff and the public, so that maintenance can be proactive as opposed to reactive;
- ▶ Tracking of actual costs for capital and maintenance work;
- ▶ Assisting staff with the identification of priorities and budgets for upcoming projects and providing background materials for staff reports to Council; and
- ▶ Using the most up to date information on new trails to inform future editions of the Elgin-St. Thomas Cycling and Hiking Trail Map.

R18.

Use the GIS database developed during the development of the Elgin County Trails Study as the basis for a network implementation and asset management tool. Data generated should be incorporated into the existing municipal database and also used to inform the development of promotion and outreach materials (e.g. maps) where appropriate.



4.3 FUNDING

The planning, design and implementation of trails will require future investment by the County and its partners. While this study has not been designed to provide comprehensive costing for the proposed trail improvements, there is some direction provided on cost considerations. The considerations have been included to shape future discussions and to help inform future budgeting.

4.3.1 TRAIL CONSTRUCTION COSTS

Appendix | D lists unit costs for the construction of various elements of the multi-use pathway network. These are based on averages obtained from recent local construction projects as well as others from across Ontario, and were used to develop an opinion of probable cost to construct the trail network. For reference purposes, **Appendix | D** also includes guideline unit costs for individual items/amenities that may be required on a site-specific basis. Unit costs (in 2018 dollars) are based on the following assumptions:

- ▶ The unit costs assume typical or normal/average conditions for construction. For example, unit prices assume good soil conditions, an average requirement for grading;
- ▶ Estimates do not include the cost of property acquisitions, utility relocations, driveway/entrance restorations, permits or approvals for construction;
- ▶ Costs associated with major site-specific projects such as bridges, railway crossings, retaining walls and stairways are not included;
- ▶ Annual inflation, which includes increased cost of labour, materials, fuel etc., is not included; and professional services and/or staff time for detailed design and applicable taxes are not included.

As each trail segment becomes a priority for construction, a more detailed assessment as part of the design process will be required to determine site-specific conditions and design details. Detailed cost estimates can then be developed from the more detailed assessment.

Table 5 provides a high-level cost for implementing the proposed trail routes as per Maps 4-0 to 4.8. The costing is based on a blended unit rate of the primary, secondary and tertiary unit costs identified in **Appendix | D**. The blended cost assumes the trails portion only and does not include site specific costs for individual features such as bridges, boardwalks and higher order road crossings (i.e. mid-block pedestrian signals and pedestrian crossovers)



Table 5 | Estimated Trail Construction Cost by Municipality

MUNICIPALITY	EXISTING (KM) ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾	PROPOSED (KM) ⁽³⁾	TOTAL (KM)	BLENDED UNIT RATE (\$/M) ⁽⁴⁾	ESTIMATED CONSTRUCTION COST ⁽⁵⁾
AYLMER	4.0	3.7	7.7	\$250	\$925,000
BAYHAM	64.0	16.9	80.8	\$150	\$2,535,000
CENTRAL ELGIN	57.8	20.3	78.1	\$250	\$5,075,000
DUTTON / DUNWICH	49.2	17.0	66.2	\$150	\$2,550,000
MALAHIDE	46.8	2.1	48.9	\$150	\$315,000
SOUTHWOLD	67.5	27.9	95.3	\$150	\$4,185,00
ST. THOMS	43.3	11.0	54.3	\$250	\$2,750,000
WEST ELGIN	38.9	20.5	59.5	\$150	\$3,075,000
TOTAL	371.5	119.4	490.8	n/a	\$21,410,000

Notes:

1. Includes existing trails on lands owned by municipalities and public agencies (e.g. Conservation Authorities, the Provincial and Federal government. Also includes existing trails located on private property that have been established through agreements with individual landowners (i.e. applies to the Elgin Hiking Trail and some sections of the designated Great Trail / Trans Canada Trail)
2. Includes the (a) designated Great Trail / Trans Canada Trail route, (b) Great Lakes Waterfront Trail and (c) Elgin Hiking Trail. Portions of (a) and (b) are on-road, and some portions of (a) may not have been implemented. The Elgin Hiking Trail (c) is mapped based on information provided by stakeholders, and the entire route of the Elgin Hiking Trail could not be verified in the field.
3. Includes proposed routes identified during the development of the Elgin County Trail Study and proposed routes identified in previously approved local master plans such as the St. Thomas Trail Master Plan and Central Elgin Trails Master Plan.
4. Blended rate is based on the approximate portion of total proposed trails in each municipality that would be primary, secondary and tertiary.
5. Based on geographic boundary, and does include breakdown of how much of the estimated construction cost may be allocated to jurisdictions not listed in the table (e.g. County, conservation authorities or the Province).

4.3.2 POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

Funding to implement the trail network and supportive programs is intended to be a collaborative effort. It should not be the sole responsibility of the County or local municipalities. Potential external funding and partnership opportunities should be explored regularly and pursued wherever feasible to offset local costs.

Not all funders will be an exact fit. For example, some may not fund trail securement but they will fund land securement for environmental conservation.



This still may fit within the objectives of this strategy by utilizing securement partners, such as Conservation Authorities and land trusts. They can ensure the bulk of the land is protected in perpetuity while accommodating a trail network in the least environmentally sensitive areas of the land.

Additionally, some funders support trail acquisition but municipal government may be ineligible. Partnerships with profit organizations with an interest/trail mandate may help to leverage funding from sources that may not be typically explored for trails.

The following are some potential external funding sources that could be explored to support the implementation of trails and trail programs. The funding programs highlighted below were available at the time the Trails Study was prepared. It is not an exhaustive list and subject to change, therefore potential funding programs should be monitored regularly.

Table 6 | Potential External Funding Sources

OPPORTUNITY	ADDITIONAL DETAILS
FEDERAL GAS TAX	▶ https://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/plan/gtf-fte-eng.html
FEDERATION OF CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES GREEN MUNICIPAL FUND	▶ https://fcm.ca/home/programs/green-municipal-fund.htm
FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE / STIMULUS PROGRAMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ For Federal Government: https://www.canada.ca/en/office-infrastructure.html ▶ For Provincial Government https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-infrastructure ▶ https://www.ontario.ca/page/infrastructure-funding-small-communities
ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ https://otf.ca/ ▶ Grants that broaden access, improve community spaces to achieve a Priority Outcome ▶ From \$5,000 to \$150,000, available to charitable organizations
ONTARIO RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM	▶ https://www.ontario.ca/page/rural-economic-development-program



OPPORTUNITY	ADDITIONAL DETAILS
<p>ONTARIO SPORT AND RECREATION COMMUNITIES FUND</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ As part of the Ontario Sport and Recreation Communities Fund: http://www.grants.gov.on.ca/GrantsPortal/en/OntarioGrants/GrantOpportunities/PRDR006918
<p>TOURISM DEVELOPMENT FUND</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ http://www.grants.gov.on.ca/GrantsPortal/en/OntarioGrants/GrantOpportunities/OSAPQA005130
<p>SHELL ENVIRONMENT FUND</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ https://www.shell.ca/en_ca/sustainability/communities/funding-guidelines-process.html ▶ Shell Canada’s Social Investment Program supports community projects and initiatives that are located near their facilities and exploration interests throughout Canada ▶ Environment program supports Biodiversity /Conservation efforts and improve local environment ▶ application will re-open January 02, 2019.
<p>TD FRIENDS OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOUNDATION GRANT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Supports a wide range of environmental initiatives, with a primary focus on environmental education and green space programs ▶ Eligible projects include schoolyard greening, park revitalization, community gardens, park programming and citizen science initiatives ▶ https://www.td.com/corporate-responsibility/fe-f-grant.jsp ▶ Includes Municipalities and First Nations
<p>ENVIRONMENT CANADA HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM FOR SPECIES AT RISK</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ HSP allocates funds to projects that conserve and protect species at risk and their habitats ▶ Land must be located in a regional priority area and targeting a priority species ▶ A strong proposal for land acquisition must have confirmed SAR on the property or a property that is identified as Critical Habitat for a SAR listed species ▶ https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/environmental-funding/programs/habitat-stewardship-species-at-risk.html



OPPORTUNITY	ADDITIONAL DETAILS
<p>MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT, CONSERVATION & PARKS ONTARIO COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT FUND</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Payments from environmental penalties are available to the community impacted by environmental violations to support eligible projects within that affected community ▶ Projects can include acquisition but restoration projects will be given priority ▶ Available for Ontario Municipalities ▶ https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-community-environment-fund
<p>ONTARIO - MINISTRY OF TOURISM, CULTURE AND SPORT SUPPORT FOR ONTARIO'S TOURISM REGIONS - PARTNERSHIP FUNDING</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Regional Tourism Organization will be eligible to receive additional funds where they can demonstrate that they have received funds from other sources in support of regional activities. ▶ Partnership funding will be capped at a maximum of 20 per cent of the proportional allocation to a maximum of \$1.5 million. ▶ http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/regions/funding.shtml
<p>ECHO FOUNDATION ENVIRONMENT GRANT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Grants focus on Eastern Canada (Ontario, Quebec and the Atlantic provinces), with a priority given to the protection of natural areas of ecological importance ▶ Also support, on a case-by-case basis, a variety of other concrete endeavours designed to promote and enhance sustainable environmental practices ▶ Available to Charitable Organizations ▶ http://www.fondationecho.ca/
<p>K.M. HUNTER FOUNDATION ENVIRONMENT GRANTS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Supports three areas: Protection of wildlife species, Stewardship of land, and Organizations that fight to change the laws so that environmental areas can be protected ▶ https://www.kmhunterfoundation.ca/environment.html
<p>MCLEAN FOUNDATION ENVIRONMENT GRANT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ May consider land securement ▶ Provides grants with particular emphasis on projects showing promise of general social benefit but which may initially lack broad public appeal ▶ Available to Charitable Organizations ▶ http://mcleanfoundation.ca/donation_policy.html



OPPORTUNITY	ADDITIONAL DETAILS
WESTON FOUNDATION LAND CONSERVATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Protecting Critical Habitats, Environmental Education, Revitalizing Urban Green Spaces ▶ Does not accept unsolicited proposals ▶ http://www.westonfoundation.org/our-initiatives/land-conservation/
MOUNTAIN EQUIPMENT CO-OP COMMUNITY GRANTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Planning, construction and maintenance of facilities or infrastructure such as trails, skills-parks or backcountry shelters ▶ https://www.mec.ca/en/explore/spring-and-fall-grants
GOSLING FOUNDATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provides grants for Land Protection Including Acquisition and unsolicited proposals that fit within the mandate of the Foundation ▶ http://www.goslingfoundation.org/index.cfm?page=GrantPrograms
ROTARY CLUB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Rotary members contribute their skills, expertise, and resources to help solve some of the world's toughest problems. Foundation grants bring service project ideas to life ▶ https://www.rotary.org/en/our-programs/grants
LOCAL SERVICE CLUBS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ E.g. Lions, Optimist etc.

The pursuit of external funding should be a collaborative effort to maximize access to various opportunities. The County, Local Municipalities and trail partners are encouraged to pursue the many diverse funding streams that are available, or that may become available moving forward. This should include the exploration of land trusts as a strategy to expand beyond the trail and active transportation partnerships and funding opportunities described above.

R19.

In addition to capital funding, the County and the Local Municipalities should consider and explore other outside funding sources and cost-sharing opportunities to support the implementation of the trails network, outreach and promotion programs.



4.4 PARTNERSHIPS

The effort to implement the trails study and the future strategy will require significant coordination and collaboration. Relationships with existing partners should continue to be enhanced while new partnerships should be explored and fostered. The following is an overview of potential partnerships that should be continued or considered to facilitate the implementation of the study.

4.4.1 PARTNERS

1. ELGIN COUNTY

Elgin County is applauded for demonstrating its commitment to promoting economic development and tourism through an integrated Economic Development and Tourism Services Department. The county's motto "Progressive by Nature" sets Elgin County apart from other communities. Trails development connects visitors and local people with nature and the many other amenities in the County.

Elgin County is well positioned to play a leadership role in trails development through its capital works, marketing programs. These programs dovetail nicely with the County's planning, tourism and economic development strategies.

The County is the best organization to encourage, support and oversee intermunicipal trail connections and links to adjoining municipalities.

Elgin County is strategically situated in the centre of the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail network that extends from Lake Huron communities to Cornwall Ontario. Former rail lines traverse the County and connect with other adjoining communities to the east north and west. Former rail lines make ideal linear off-road trails connecting many communities.

Elgin County is ideally suited to leading regional level trail initiatives and wayfinding branding given its established working relationships with the area municipalities, Conservation Authorities, Provincial Parks, Great Lakes Waterfront Trail and adjoining communities.



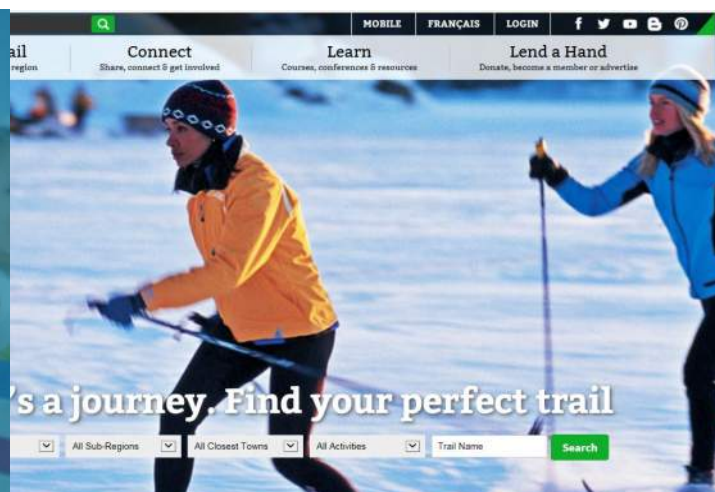
2. LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES

Local municipalities already play a lead role in developing, maintaining and providing trails and wayfinding for local trails with local trail partners. Although municipalities may enter into private access agreements with individual land owners to complete short missing trail links it is unlikely that the Municipality would establish extensive trails in the rural area using this arrangement. Therefore, the potential to develop additional long-distance trails in rural valley and wooded lands would be typically be limited to organizations such as the Elgin Hiking Trail Club.

3. OTHER TRAIL PARTNERS

SOUTHWEST PUBLIC HEALTH (FORMERLY ELGIN ST. THOMAS PUBLIC HEALTH) has played a leadership role regarding active transportation and trail role for close to 10 years, and key role should continue. This role has included:

- ▶ Mobilizing the County and Local Municipalities and other local partners to collaborate on active transportation and trail planning and design through the Healthy Communities Partnership,
- ▶ promoting and active transportation and trails through the Active Elgin website.
- ▶ Sharing messages about the many benefits of trails and active transportation
- ▶ Leveraging partnerships and funding opportunities through networks available to public health organizations, some of which are typically not available to municipalities.





CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES AND ONTARIO PARKS are responsible for developing, maintaining, providing wayfinding and promoting trails within their properties. Within Elgin County 4 conservation authorities are represented: Lower Thames Valley, Kettle Creek, Catfish Creek, and Long Point Region. All these agencies are important partners in a comprehensive strategy to promote and market Elgin County's trails given the majority of the destination trails in rural areas of the County are on lands owned and managed by the conservation authorities.

GREAT LAKES WATERFRONT TRAIL (WATERFRONT REGENERATION TRUST) provides pan provincial trail information, wayfinding and updated on line trail mapping. <https://waterfronttrail.org/>. The Great Trail (formerly branded as the Trans Canada Trail - Trans Canada Trail Foundation) provides pan Canadian trail information and updated on line mapping. <https://thegreattrail.ca/> Both of these trail routes are part of the Elgin County trail network, therefore users of the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail and Great Trail have the opportunity to become connected with trails in Elgin County when exploring these trails and their websites. In addition to this indirect marketing and tourism support, the Trans Canada Trail Foundation has provided funding for connecting and developing the Great Trail Route, and the Waterfront Regeneration Trust has helped to leverage partnerships and establish the Waterfront trail route through the County and to neighbouring municipalities.

ONTARIO TRAILS COUNCIL is a member driven-volunteer led, non-profit charity, that promotes the creation, development, preservation, management and use of recreational trails. Established in 1988 it is now the largest trail association of its type in Canada, with a membership consisting of over 220 economic development, tourism, planning, recreation, park and club organizations, municipalities, and conservation authorities.

OTC's goals include continuing to increase the number, length, variety and accessibility of trails throughout the province; providing an informed, credible voice in support of trails; promoting the safe and responsible use of trails; and acting as a provincial resource centre for trail information and promotion.

Elgin County, Catfish Creek Conservation Authority and the City of St. Thomas are currently members of the OTC. Other local municipalities and conservation authorities are also encouraged to become members.



THE SHARE THE ROAD CYCLING COALITION advocates for safe cycling and promotes safety.

ELGIN COUNTY HIKING CLUB <http://www.elginhikingtrailclub.org/> is a dedicated group of hiking volunteers that promote safe and enjoyable hiking opportunities and actively maintains a very informative website, and visitors come to Elgin County to hike the Elgin Hiking Trail. Trail access points and the route can be very difficult to locate in some locations. The Elgin County Tourism office in Port Stanley is frequented by visitors seeking information on the Elgin Hiking Trail route and access points. As a volunteer organization the Elgin County Hiking Club is challenged by ongoing maintenance and trail improvements. To make the most of the opportunities the Elgin Hiking Trail presents as a tourism resource and attractor, collaboration and partnership with local municipalities and the County would provide a platform for improvements to trail access, maintenance, route marking, promotion and outreach.

ELGIN STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL is a volunteer organization that provides environmental land stewardship opportunities and advice for landowners within Elgin County, Ontario. They are partners in the management of some of the destination trail locations such as the Fingal Wildlife Management Area, and also partners with the 4 conservation authorities represented in Elgin County. As potential partners the Elgin Stewardship Council could provide have a role in developing, maintaining and promoting destination trails. They could also have a role in securing funding for specific trail -related projects in natural areas.

<http://www.elginstewardshipcouncil.com/>

LAND DEVELOPERS are key partners. Elgin-St. Thomas is very fortunate to have a number of developers that understand the value that trails bring to the community and the neighbourhoods they create. Some have gone “above and beyond” to work in partnership with local municipalities to contribute to high quality, well connected trails within their developments and to surrounding neighbourhoods. Continuing to nurture these partnerships will have a significant positive impact as communities within Elgin County grow and prosper.



4. TRAILS COUNCIL

Establishment of a Trails Council comprised of County and local municipal staff stakeholders, representatives from Southwestern Public Health and Elgin County Tourism is should be considered. A Trails Council would work to coordinate the implementation of the strategy, share information related upcoming trail projects in each jurisdiction, develop and deliver encouragement, engagement, and promotion initiatives for the County's trails network, and share experiences and lessons learned from their own work and other jurisdictions.

In the short term the Healthy Communities Partnership would continue to have the lead role. As the trail portfolio grows and more partners are engaged, a Trails Council could take on this role and would include representatives from the Healthy Communities Partnership as well as Local Municipalities, the County, Conservation Authorities and key stakeholder groups.

R20.

The County and Local Municipalities should continue to explore partnerships as a method to leverage trail implementation, management, maintenance, communication, promotion and outreach.

R21.

The County, Municipality of Central Elgin and the Township of Southwold should explore collaborating with the Elgin Hiking Trail Club to better define and promote the Elgin Hiking Trail route and trail access points.

R22.

The County of Elgin should assume a lead partner role in planning, developing and marketing regional scale trails networks in concert with municipal and other partners.

R23.

An Elgin Trails Council should be established in Elgin County, comprised of the various trails partners to plan and develop trails, market hiking and cycling opportunities, and provide consistent wayfinding throughout Elgin County.



4.5 PROMOTION & OUTREACH

The success of a trail strategy or study goes beyond the implementation of infrastructure. Initiatives and activities to encourage people to become more active and use trails and tools to educate people on safe and responsible trail use are critical to establishing long-term community and behavior change.

Elgin County has a unique quality of place with rural landscapes, waterfronts, waterfront living and recreation. Recently, the County and its local municipal partners have been investing in, and strengthening the tourism sector. Attracting new residents to Elgin, including retirees and talented young workers who are leaving the larger cities such as those in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton area and seeking a more affordable and enjoyable lifestyle is one of the pillars of the tourism and economic development strategy. This investment in tourism and economic development is paying dividends as evidenced by new community growth and business opportunities in many areas of the County. Making the most of trail, active transportation and walkability opportunities, is an important part of this campaign to attract people to visit, reside in, and relocate business to Elgin County.

Some ideas for marketing and promotion are listed below, some of which may have already been operationalized. Where this is the case, these initiatives should be reviewed and enhanced where appropriate.

- ▶ On-line trail resource hub linked to County, Municipal and Partners' websites
- ▶ Maps and materials at local venues
- ▶ Promoting at industry trade shows such as Outdoor shows, the Toronto Bike Show etc.
- ▶ Tourism marketing
- ▶ Attendance and promotion at festivals, events, fairs and Municipal Open House days
- ▶ Education and partnering with other agencies such as school boards, conservation authorities and Ontario Parks
- ▶ Encourage participation and active lifestyles
- ▶ Celebrate trail openings
- ▶ Deploying trail counters and user satisfaction surveys
- ▶ Developing consistent trail branding and signage.



R24.

The County and Local Municipalities should review the education and outreach initiatives suggested in the Elgin County Trails Study and move forward with those that could be implemented as potential pilot initiatives.

5.0

CONCLUSION

The Elgin County Trail Study has been developed as a long-term strategy and guide for trail design, development and promotion throughout Elgin-St. Thomas. It builds upon excellent trail work that has previously been completed by municipalities and stakeholders over the past several decades. Moving forward in a collaborative manner with quality trail infrastructure and a coordinated trail marketing approach will add significant value to the unique, affordable and enjoyable lifestyle the area offers.

Key recommendations introduced throughout the report are summarized below, and are intended to provide direction on trail planning, design, maintenance; marketing and promotion.





#	RECOMMENDATION
1	Consideration should be given to including County and local municipal policies and/or schedules necessary to support trail development as part of an integrated approach to promoting healthy communities, tourism and local economic development.
2	Use the Route Selection Principles when undertaking detailed route feasibility assessments for trail linkages identified as part of the trails network or when network routing changes are being considered.
3	The proposed trail network in the Elgin County Trails Study should be used as a blueprint for future network development and to inform trail priorities at the local municipal level.
4	Developers should be expected to work through an iterative process with municipal staff, beginning early in the planning stages to create an appropriate trail network within their development area with links to external trails where appropriate.
5	Municipalities should review the suggested approaches for ongoing public participation for trails proposed in established neighbourhoods and determine an appropriate approach on a project-by-project basis.
6	Priority should be given to seizing opportunities to acquire former rail corridors for future linear trail development to maximize the creation of off-road trail networks and interconnect communities and tourist destinations.
7	Unopened road allowances are part of our Ontario heritage and should be retained in public ownership in perpetuity for potential trails development.
8	Consider opportunities that linear corridors such as unopened road allowances, utility corridors and abandoned railway corridors create for trails. Develop a business case regarding the use of such corridors as part of the trail network before declaring no interest in them for trail use.
9	Continue to explore potential opportunities for trails with rails in Elgin County on a case-by-case basis.
10	The County and Local Municipalities should explore a securement strategy for future trail routes on lands not in public ownership.
11	The County and Local Municipalities should use the trail design guidelines in the Elgin County Trail Study as the basis for trail design.



#	RECOMMENDATION
12	A consistent trail wayfinding identifier / brand should be used throughout the County. Consider using the template established by the City of St. Thomas as the basis for the wayfinding identifier, with subtle variation to reflect individual municipalities within the County.
13	The risk management and liability prevention strategies should be reviewed and incorporated into day-to-day decision- making processes where applicable when planning, designing and operating trails in Elgin County.
14	Using the maintenance strategies outlined in Trails Study and current Local Municipal trail maintenance practices as a starting point, Local municipalities should develop appropriate trail maintenance plans and budgets.
15	Annual maintenance budgets should be refined to accommodate the maintenance of trail facilities. Budgets should increase over time to correspond with the increase in the number / length of trail facilities that have been implemented.
16	The County and Local Municipalities should consider the priority projects and initiatives identified in the Elgin County Trails Study when deciding on the implementation of trails under their jurisdiction.
17	The Elgin County Trails Strategy should be updated in five years to include trails that have been completed and to optimize new trail development opportunities that have been identified in the intervening time.
18	Use the GIS database developed during the development of the Elgin County Trails Study as the basis for a network implementation and asset management tool. Data generated should be incorporated into the existing municipal database and also used to inform the development of promotion and outreach materials (e.g. maps) where appropriate.
19	In addition to capital funding, the County and the Local Municipalities should consider and explore other outside funding sources and cost-sharing opportunities to support the implementation of the trails network, outreach and promotion programs.
20	The County and Local Municipalities should continue to explore partnerships as a method to leverage trail implementation, management, maintenance, communication, promotion and outreach.



#	RECOMMENDATION
21	The County, Municipality of Central Elgin and the Township of Southwold should explore collaborating with the Elgin Hiking Trail Club to better define and promote the Elgin Hiking Trail route and trail access points.
22	The County of Elgin should assume a lead partner role in planning, developing and marketing regional scale trails networks in concert with municipal and other partners.
23	An Elgin Trails Council should be established by Elgin County comprised of the various trails partners to plan and develop trails, market hiking and cycling opportunities, and provide consistent wayfinding throughout Elgin County.
24	The County and Local Municipalities should review the education and outreach initiatives suggested in the Elgin County Trails Study and move forward with those that could be implemented as potential pilot initiatives.



Policy Background

1.0 Provincial and Local Policy

Trail development and promotion is supported by policy and plans at the Provincial and Local level of government. As part of the development of the Trails Study, it was important to develop an understanding of the policies and plans that exist and their influence on the development of the trail network, promotion and marketing initiatives. The following sections summarize key relevant policy.

1.1 Provincial Initiatives

Provincial Planning Policy – 2014

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) is a high-level policy that provides direction on matters of provincial interest with regard to land use planning and development. It provides a foundation for regulating the development and use of land in Ontario and supports the provincial goal to enhance quality of life for Ontarians. Policies contained in the PPS in combination municipal official plans provide the framework a comprehensive long-term planning to support principles of strong communities a clean and healthy environment and economic growth. The PPS addresses a wide range of themes such as strong and healthy communities, wise use and management of resources, protecting public health and safety.

The PPS references healthy active communities and active transportation, transportation and infrastructure corridors is the following statements.

Healthy, active communities are referenced in **Section 1.5**,

1.5.1a) planning public streets, spaces and facilities to be safe, meet the needs of pedestrians, foster social interaction and facilitate active transportation and community connectivity;

1.5.1 b) planning and providing for a full range and equitable distribution of publicly-accessible built and natural settings for recreation, including facilities, parklands, public spaces, open space areas, trails and linkages, and, where practical, water-based resources;

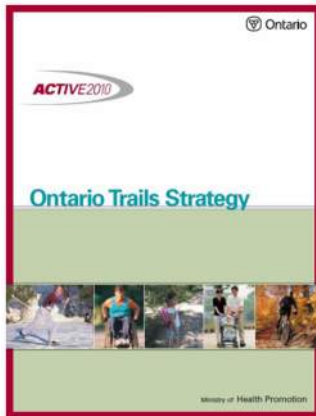
Transportation and Infrastructure corridors are referenced in **Section 1.6.8**. with specific mention of the need to plan for and protect linear corridors, which includes the preservation and reuse of abandoned corridors.

1.6.8.1 Planning authorities shall plan for and protect corridors and rights-of-way for infrastructure, including transportation, transit and electricity generation facilities and transmission systems to meet current and projected needs.

1.6.8.4 The preservation and reuse of abandoned corridors for purposes that maintain the corridor's integrity and continuous linear characteristics should be encouraged, wherever feasible.

<http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=10463>

Ontario Trails Strategy



This high level Provincial strategy lays out a long-term plan for developing, managing, promoting and using trails across the province and provide a foundation for updates to the Provincial Policy Statement in 2014. It acknowledges the contribution that trails make towards better health, strong economies and strong communities and the conserving of and appreciating the environment. The vision of the Ontario Trails Strategy Trails to “*create a world-class system of diversified trails, planned and used in an environmentally responsible manner, that enhances the health and prosperity of all Ontarians*” is supported by goals, strategies and actions. In 2015 the Ministry of Tourism Culture and Sport (MTCS) released the Ontario Trails Action Plan which provides additional details towards implementation of the actions and also supports the implementation of #CycleON, including developing a provincial tourism cycling route.

http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/sport/recreation/A2010_TrailStrategy.pdf

#CycleON: Ontario’s Cycling Strategy – 2013

In 2013, the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) released *#CycleON: Ontario's Cycling Strategy*. The strategy looks ahead 20 years and outlines what needs to be done to promote cycling across the province as a viable mode of transportation. It was followed by *#CycleON Action Plan 1.0* in 2014, which sets out recommendations to increase and support cycling tourism opportunities in the province. The vision provides a framework to design healthy, active and prosperous communities; improve cycling infrastructure; make highways and streets safer; promote cycling awareness and behavioural shifts; and increase cycling tourism in Ontario.

Since 2014 the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (MTCS) has been working with MTO and other partners to make progress on a number of items that advance the Cycling Strategy, including working with the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation (OTMPC) to support cycling tourism marketing efforts and supporting Regional Tourism Organizations (RTOs) in developing partnerships to advance cycling tourism projects. <http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/publications/ontario-cycling-strategy.shtml>

Supporting Ontario’s Trails Act – 2016

In 2016 the Province passed legislation that will help to sustain and improve the province's trails system. It will protect and enhance thousands of kilometres of the province's urban, suburban, rural and remote land and water trails by providing the trails community with enhanced tools to effectively develop, operate and promote trails; removing barriers to help connect and expand trails across the province; and increasing trail awareness and promoting local tourism by enabling the recognition of Ontario trails of distinction, supporting communities and jobs across Ontario; enabling the development of a classification system to help users find trails that match their interest and ability.

The legislation also provides the stand-alone Ontario Trails Act, plus several amendments to various Acts that affect or have a bearing on recreation trails, including the Occupiers Liability Act, Motorized Snow Vehicles Act, Off-Road Vehicles Act, Public Lands Act and Trespass to Property Act.

http://www.ontariotrails.on.ca/assets/files/pdf/prdownloads/Trail_FactSheet_MTCS%202016-10-05.pdf

http://www.ontla.on.ca/bills/bills-files/41_Parliament/Session1/b100ra.pdf

Ontario's Cycling Tourism Plan – 2017

Cycling tourism is experiencing rapid growth in Ontario and is increasingly recognized by the tourism industry as a powerful economic driver. Cycling offers health benefits and a unique way of viewing a destination, that make it attractive to active travellers looking for an authentic tourism experience. Ontario has the potential to be a premier cycling tourism destination. The economic benefits of cycling tourism to the province are already evident. Cycling visitors stay longer in Ontario and spend more than the average tourist.

Ontario's Cycling Tourism Plan sets out a mission and action items that will cultivate the existing potential for Ontario to emerge as a leader in the development of cycling tourism, and establish the province as a strong market, renowned globally for its cycling products and experiences. The Government of Ontario understands the important role that cycling tourism plays in building a strong economy and the positive impact it has on the lives of everyday Ontarians. The mission of Ontario's Cycling Tourism Plan is to increase and support cycling tourism opportunities in the province and promote cycling as a tourism draw in Ontario communities by:

Positioning Ontario as a premier destination for cycling tourism;

Creating healthy, active and economically prosperous communities; and

Working collaboratively to develop and promote cycling tourism products that will enable Ontario to meet or exceed global growth over the coming years.

<http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/tourism/cycling.shtml>

http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/tourism/pdf/cycling_plan.pdf

Province-Wide Cycling Network Study – 2018



The Ministry of Transportation (MTO) recently completed the Province-wide Cycling Network Study; one of the key initiatives identified in the Province's cycling strategy (CycleON). The Province-wide Cycling Network Study identifies a network of on and off-road cycling routes throughout Ontario that connect key destinations, regional and national trails and routes (e.g. The Great Lakes Waterfront Trail and The Great Trail (formerly branded as the Trans Canada Trail), which are connected to local cycling and trail networks. In more densely populated areas of the province the

proposed Province-wide Cycling Network is denser and caters to commuter and touring cyclists, whereas in less densely populated areas the network is focused more on cycle tourism/touring routes. In some regions this network is composed of significant sections of off-road multi-use trail including many kilometres of former railway corridors. In Elgin County three routes have been identified as part of the Province-wide Cycling Network;

the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail which generally follows the Lake Erie north shoreline utilizing the road network of County and Local Municipal roads;

a north-south route from Port Stanley, through St. Thomas and heading north to London; and the former Canada Southern (CASO) railway corridor heading west from St. Thomas through Chatham-Kent and into Essex County.

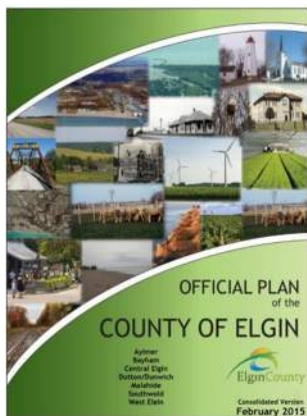
The Province-wide Cycling Network Study included a broad reaching consultation program to engage municipalities and key stakeholder groups across Ontario. The final study report including mapping of the proposed Province-wide Cycling Network was publicly released in April 2018.

<http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/safety/province-wide-cycling-network.shtml>

1.2 Local Policy and Initiatives

There is considerable policy support for trails and trail promotion within County and Local Municipal Official Plans and other policy documents. The following section provides a brief synopsis of key policies. Consideration should be given to strengthening, where appropriate, Official Plan policies to support the development and promotion of trails as a driver for healthy communities, economic development and tourism as planning, design and delivery of trails continue to evolve.

Elgin County Official Plan



The Elgin County Official Plan was approved by the Province in October 2013. Its purpose is to guide planning over a 20-year horizon and address matters of County importance while acknowledging local planning authorities and the need to provide a balanced approach to planning in the County. The Official Plan includes a number of policies that provide support for the development of trails.

Section A5-Economic Strategy

A5.3 Tourism

“The policies of this Plan are intended to recognize the importance of tourism to local economies by supporting the long-term viability and growth of existing and future tourism resources and destinations in the County. It is a policy of this Plan that the County and local municipalities should:

a) promote the maintenance, expansion and upgrade of existing tourism and tourist destination-oriented uses in the County and encourage the establishment of additional high-quality attractions, facilities, accommodations, services, and events;

e) develop and promote scenic, recreational and educational parkways and trails (such as the Talbot Trail) with well signed and interesting attractions along the Lake Erie shoreline and throughout the County”

C2.3 Permitted Uses (in Agricultural Area)

Permitted uses in the Agricultural Area designation include

j) passive non-motorized recreational uses, such as nature viewing and pedestrian trail activities;

E5.1 Transportation Objectives

(b) establish an integrated transportation system that safely and efficiently accommodates various modes of transportation including automobiles, trucks, public transit, cycling and walking.

d) promote public transit, cycling and walking as energy efficient, affordable and accessible forms of travel;

(l) support the protection of existing rail lines, promote and protect local rail heritage, and encourage the protection of abandoned railway rights-of-way for public uses such as trails and cycling paths.

E5.2 Pedestrian and Cycling Routes and Facilities

Local municipalities are encouraged to develop interconnected systems of cycling and walking routes providing access to major activity and employment areas and to future public transit. In order to plan for and encourage walking and cycling, local municipalities are encouraged to:

a) consider the provision of safe and convenient cycling and walking routes in the review of all development applications;

e) ensure that lands for bicycle/pedestrian paths are included with the land requirements for roads;

g) ensure that all pedestrian and cycling routes are designed to be safe.

E5.4.1.4 The County shall encourage local municipalities to provide safe and convenient pedestrian facilities by:

c) participating in multiuse trail development.

Town of Aylmer Official Plan Office Consolidation 2008

3.2.10 Trails and Walkways

The needs of pedestrians and cyclists will be considered in the review and evaluation of all development applications to promote alternative modes of transportation and to foster public health and recreational opportunities. New development and redevelopment should be planned to facilitate the creation of a linked pedestrian and cycling network connecting residential areas to employment and commercial areas as well as public parks, schools and other community facilities throughout the Town of Aylmer. As a minimum, a sidewalk shall be provided on one side of the road for all new development proposals involving the creation of new public roadways.

In undertaking municipal road construction and improvements, the Town of Aylmer will consider opportunities for the provision of sidewalks, bike lanes, on-road trail routes and similar pedestrian or cycling facilities.

4.6 Parks and Open Space (1) Land Use Objectives

(b) To ensure that an adequate and equitable supply of parks, open space, and trails and the full range of leisure opportunities are available throughout the Town;

(2) Land Use Policies

(f) Linkages including bicycle and pedestrian trails shall be encouraged between existing and new parks and open space lands;

4.8.1 Woodlands (2) Land Use Policies

(a) The uses permitted in areas identified as “Significant Woodlands” on Schedule “B” shall be limited to conservation, wildlife management, and passive outdoor recreation such as trails

Central Elgin Official Plan Office Consolidation 2013

The Recreation Master Plan identified and objective to explore establishing and expanding trails and linkage opportunities and promote their availability and location.

2.5.2.1 Open Space and Trails Policies

a) Central Elgin may support the creation of linked open spaces through the acquisition of land options outlined in section 5.3.1.12 or through the integration of:

1) Natural Heritage Features in public ownership including land owned by Central Elgin, Kettle Creek Conservation Authority, Catfish Creek Conservation Authority, Provincial and Federal Ministries and land trusts

b) Central Elgin will encourage the interconnection of existing walkways, trails and bicycle paths wherever possible and appropriate to provide continuous trail system linkages

2.8.5.4 Active Transportation

This section recognizes that active transportation trails and paths contribute to healthy communities and support sustainable modes of travel. Central Elgin supports the development and enhancement of pedestrian and shared use on non-motorized trails and bicycle routes.

2.13.1 Healthy Communities Policies

c) The Municipality shall encourage through the land use and transportation planning process, the provision of public access to a range of outdoor settings including parklands, open spaces and trails to support community health.

Township of Bayham Official Plan

The latest Official Plan was consolidated January 8, 2016, and a 5-year review is currently underway.

5.2.12.2 It is the policy of this Plan to support and encourage the development of trails on both public and private lands for both pedestrian and other non-motorized forms of transportation which are aimed at promoting public health through outdoor activities. Through the review of the layouts of any such trails, the Municipality will consider the impact of the trail use on any neighbouring land uses, and may require site plan control to address such issues as landscaping and fencing to protect privacy and to discourage trespassing.

5-year Official Plan Review Draft Amendments

4.2.5 Community Design

i) Encourage the provision of pedestrian, cycling and trail linkages through the development approvals process;

4.5.7.3

Council will encourage public service facilities to be co-located in the community hubs of the Villages of Port Burwell, Straffordville and Vienna to promote cost-effectiveness, facilitate service integration and access to active transportation.

Dutton Dunwich Official Plan Consolidated May 2013

Does not contain polices related to trails or active transportation.

Township of Malahide Official Plan Five Year Review 2011

6.1.3 Active Transportation

6.1.3.1 It is the policy of this Plan to support and encourage the development of sidewalks for pedestrian movement within its settlement areas.

6.1.3.2 It is the policy of this Plan to support and encourage the development of trails on both public and private lands for both pedestrian and other non-motorized forms of transportation which are aimed at promoting public health through outdoor activities. Through the review of the layouts of any such trails, the Township will consider the impact of the trail use on any neighbouring land uses, and may require site plan control to address such issues as landscaping and fencing to protect privacy and to discourage trespassing.

Township of Southwold Official Plan and Comprehensive Zoning By-Law 2013

3.8 Facilities and Services, Subsection Transportation

It is the policy of the Township to provide and maintain safe, efficient, cost-effective and reliable transportation systems that integrate with adjacent systems and those of other jurisdictions to serve the needs of the local population. The Township promotes the preservation of roads considered scenic, the development of bicycle and pedestrian options, a Township-wide trail system and alternative design standards relative to municipal rights-of-way.

4.6 Open Space includes public trails as a permitted use.

5.5 Public Uses and Utilities permits the re-use of abandoned utility and/or transportation corridors for public purposes.

West Elgin Official Plan, 2008

The West Elgin Official Plan does not contain any policy directly related to trails, however it notes that the tourism potential is largely untapped and recognizes that tourism can act as a catalyst for the development of adjacent lands.

2.1 Economic Development

Objectives are designed to foster economic development in West Elgin, including

c) to enhance existing tourist attractions and develop new tourism related establishments and activities;

2.4 Tourism

The Municipality shall encourage tourism through improving, and increasing awareness of, its natural and cultural heritage, through supporting new tourism initiatives, activities and establishments and through capitalizing on the untapped potential of the Lake Erie shoreline.

4.2 Community Development

4.2.2 Intensification and Redevelopment

Intensification and redevelopment shall be encouraged in the 'Village Areas' of Rodney and West Lorne where opportunities are greatest for these purposes. Opportunities include abandoned railway lands, former industrial sites and other vacant or underutilized lands.

5.0 Village Areas

Both villages are more or less bisected by a former railway corridor; reminiscent of the key role the railways once played in the settlement and development of the area. As is the case with a number of similar communities, the railway fostered the early development of both Rodney and West Lorne. The use of the railway corridor through West Elgin, however, declined substantially over the years to the point that railway traffic has come to an end and the railway lines abandoned and the tracks removed. Use of the corridor may be suitable and desirable for a trail linking the two villages.

City of St. Thomas Trail and Parks Master Plan

St Thomas Trail Master Plan was adopted in 2007 with a goal to address the changing recreational needs of the community. The plan sets out a number of trail related objectives, including.

Developing an understanding of the needs and desires of trail users;

Establishing a hierarchy of primary, secondary and tertiary trail standards for walking and bicycling activities;

Developing policies to assist in the planning of new park developments;

Developing an implementation schedule for trails over the next 20 years; and

Preparing cost forecasts for trail development.

The Master Plan defines three types of trail which are proposed for implementation strategically throughout the City to create a connected system of spine routes and looped connections:

Primary Trails – major corridors that provide a direct route through the City (e.g., multi-use trails)

Secondary Trails – which make up a large portion of the network and provide links to the primary trails and access major destinations and trail loops (e.g., recreation trails)

Tertiary Trails – which are made up of walkways through parks and other open spaces as well as hiking trails

The Master Plan sets out a network of facilities and complementary recommendations addressing a range of topics such as general trail and park recommendations including updates to the Leisure Master Plan and Official Plan, the development of marketing techniques to promote trail development and use, and the promotion of trail user rules and regulations. Also included are recommendations related to trail

development and planning for park space. It is suggested that recommendations in the Master Plan should be considered as part of the development of any future active transportation master plan(s).

Elgin-St. Thomas Active Transportation Initiative

The *Elgin St. Thomas Active Transportation Initiative (ATI)*, completed in 2012 was one of the first introductions to active transportation planning at a county-wide scale in Elgin St. Thomas. Some of the area municipalities had previously developed trail and sidewalk plans, and made infrastructure improvements while others had not. One of the objectives of the ATI was to review, consolidate and build upon the work that had been completed, harness the growing energy and local demand for active transportation, and to develop a framework for moving forward in a common direction.

Following the completion of the ATI a number of other plans and initiatives have been completed or are ongoing, all of which continue to add to this momentum.

In 2014 the *Elgin-St. Thomas Cycling Master Plan* study was completed which provided a clearer picture for a county-wide cycling network.

In early 2017 the Municipality of Central Elgin completed the *Trails Master Plan* which included recommendations for improved trail connectivity to St. Thomas, connectivity to destination trails in the rural area, and a detailed assessment of existing and potential trails in urban areas of Belmont and Port Stanley, as well as consideration for new community growth in each.

Elgin County Cycling Master Plan

In 2014 Elgin County and the local municipalities completed the *Elgin St. Thomas Cycling Master Plan*. The Cycling Master Plan builds on the work previously completed by the County to develop a comprehensive Active Transportation Initiative and identifies a network of on-road cycling linkages which could form a cycling network spanning the entire County. As part of the network, a set of on-road cycling linkages were identified throughout the various local area municipalities connecting major communities and destinations.



Due to the nature and design of trail infrastructure, it can be hard to create a continuous and connected system of trail linkages across a wide area. Because of this, it is important to identify active and sustainable transportation connections which link the existing and proposed trail linkages. The proposed on-road cycling routes identified in the County's Cycling Master Plan help to achieve this connectivity and provide complementary on-road cycling linkages which provide access to the trail connections.

Central Elgin 10-Year Trails Master Plan and Implementation Strategy

The Central Elgin 10-year Trails Master Plan and Implementation Strategy was endorsed by Central Elgin Council in 2017. This first long-term trail planning plan sets out a vision for trails that will improve trail assets and connectivity in key areas of the municipality, in particular those areas which are expected to see significant community growth in the coming years.

In addition to a comprehensive set of trail design guidelines, the plan includes detailed recommendations for trail implementation priorities in Lynhurst, Norman-Lyndale, Belmont, Port Stanley, and Union.



**Healthy
Communities
Partnership Slides
Nov. 6, 2018**

ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

Presentation Outline

1. Study Purpose and Vision
2. Process
3. Policy Support
4. Public Engagement
5. Recommended Trail Network
6. Designing Trails
7. Trail Implementation Priorities
8. Promotion and Outreach
9. Next Steps



ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

1

Study Objectives

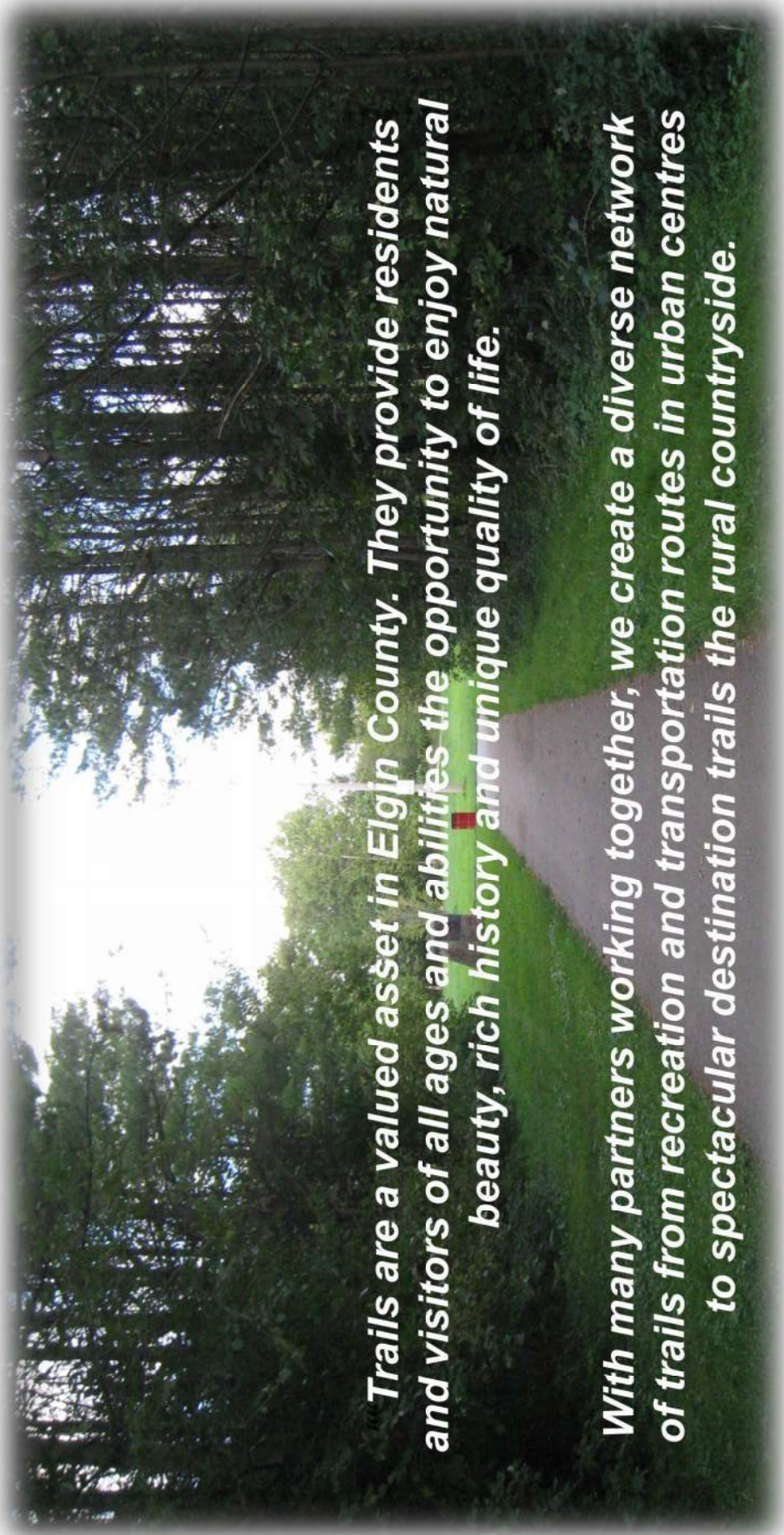
Objectives

- Understand the current state of trails throughout Elgin County
- Review local policies and plans influencing trail development
- Consult with the public and stakeholders;
- Recommend a County-wide trails network;
- Develop goals, priorities, and costs and strategies for improving existing trails and expanding the trail network throughout the County
- Review successful implementation and funding models and sources;



ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

1 Vision for Trails In Elgin County



Trails are a valued asset in Elgin County. They provide residents and visitors of all ages and abilities the opportunity to enjoy natural beauty, rich history and unique quality of life.

With many partners working together, we create a diverse network of trails from recreation and transportation routes in urban centres to spectacular destination trails the rural countryside.

ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

2

Process / Timeline

- **April 2018** – Project start-up
- **April to early June 2018** – Conduct background research and launch online interactive questionnaire
- **June and July 2018** - Public Information Centres and Pop-up Displays
- **June to September 2018** – Conduct field investigations and prepare the draft Trail Study
- **September to November 2018** - Finalize the Trail Study

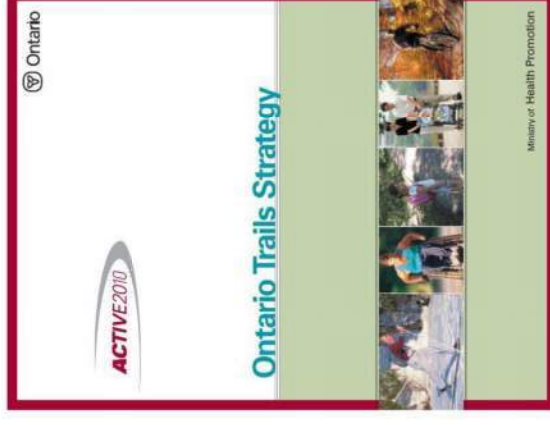


ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

3

Policy Support

- Interest, support and momentum for trails at all levels of government
- Local Official Plans
- Local Master Plans and Initiatives



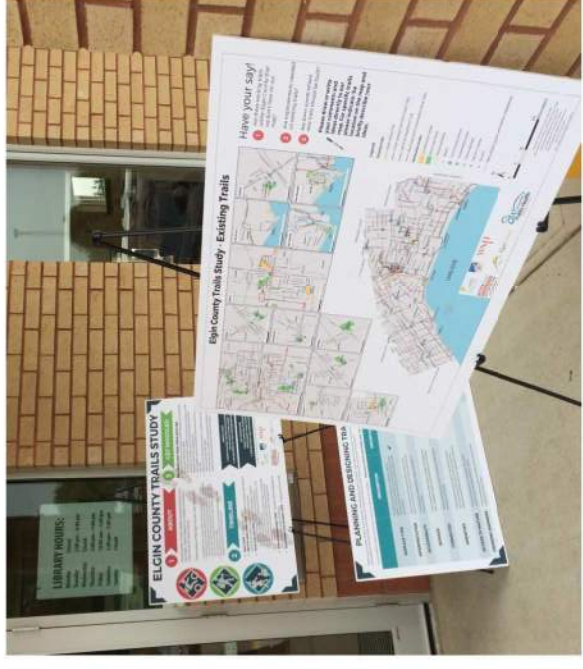
Recommendation 2.1: As part of the next Official Plan updates at the County and Local Municipal level consideration should be given to including any policies and/or schedules necessary to support trail development and promotion.

ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

4

Public Engagement

- On-line interactive site linked to Active Elgin “MetroQuest” from end of May to mid-July
- Pop-up displays with hard copy comment forms at public libraries
- In-person Rosy Rhubarb Festival (Shedden, June 9), and Springfield Family Day (Springfield, June 16)
- Reach out to additional stakeholders

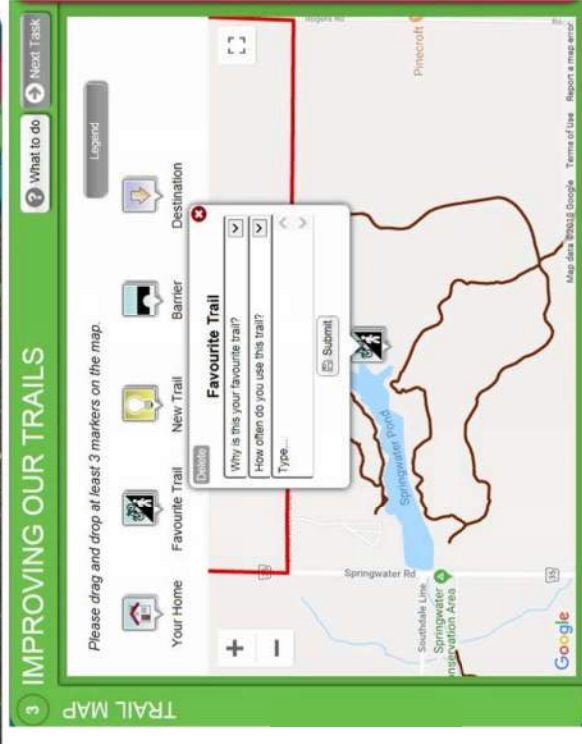
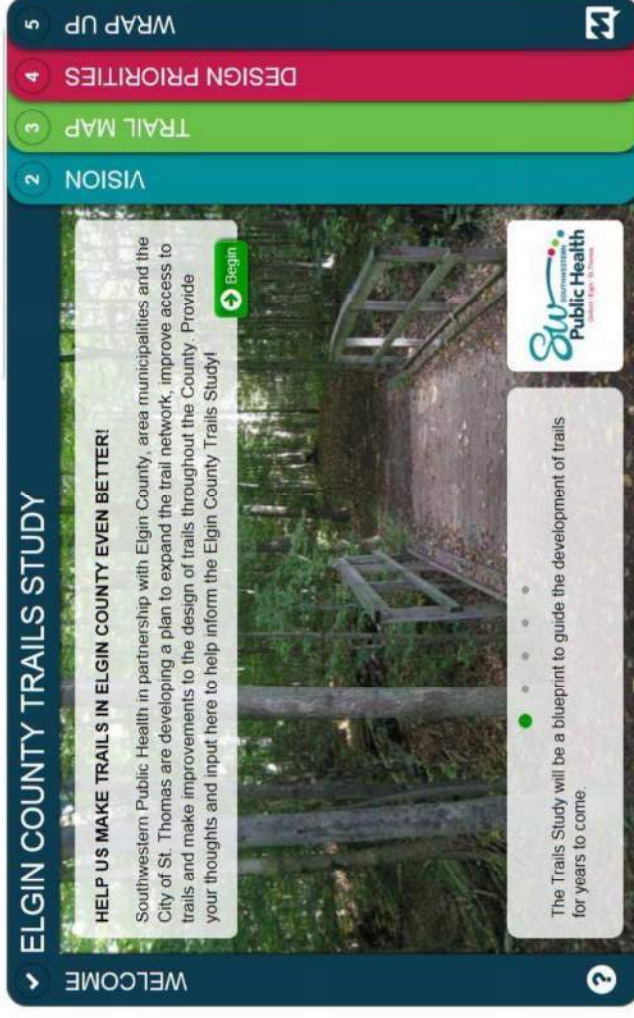


ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

4

Interactive Site

- “MetroQuest” linked to Active Elgin <http://www.activeelgin.ca/>
- 5 screens
 - Welcome / Introduction
 - Vision
 - Trail Mapping
 - Trail Design Priorities / Preferences
 - Wrap up
- 41 individual respondents, 93 mapping points (49 with comments), 108 combined from other screens
- End of May to mid-July



ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

4

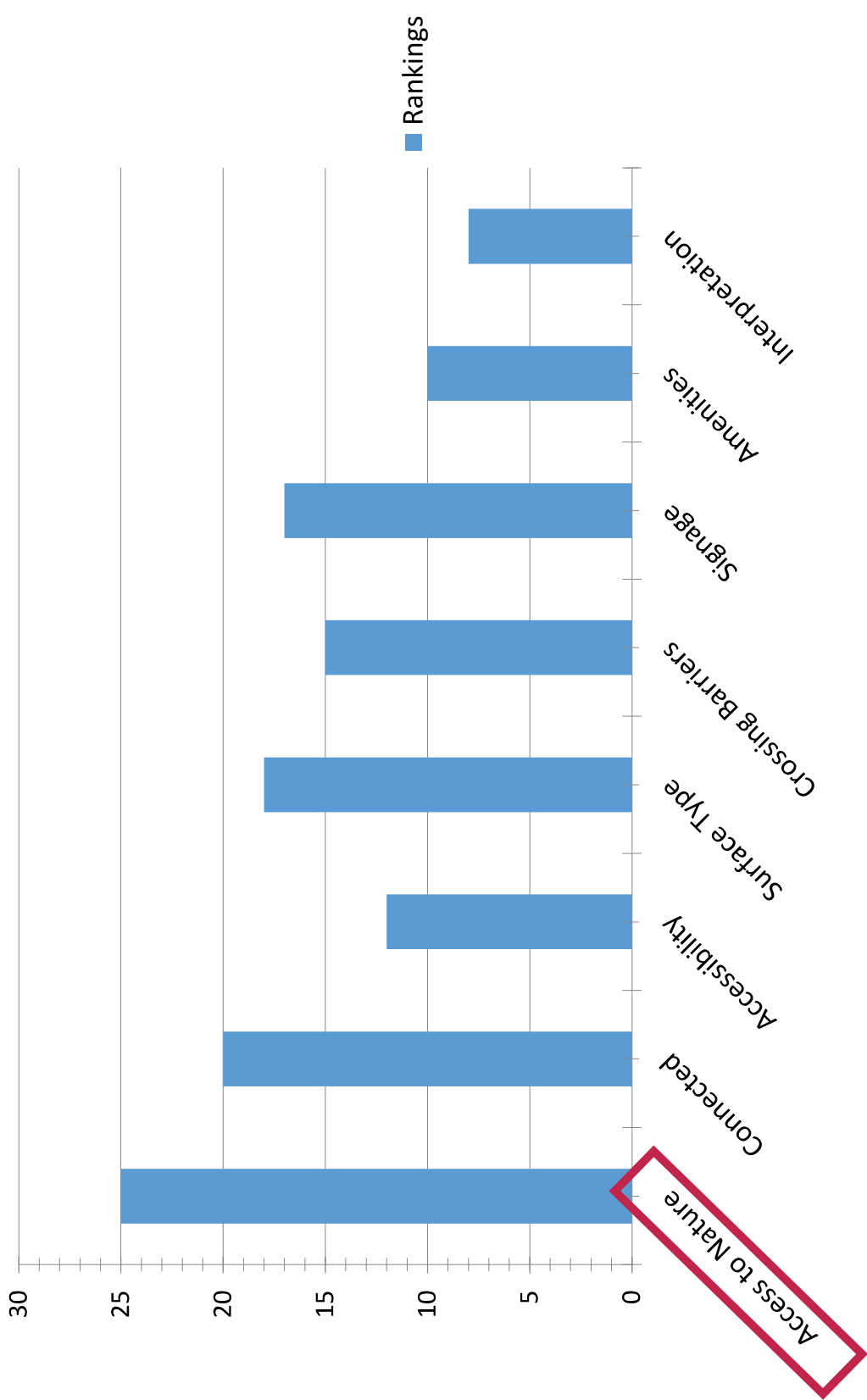
Some comments related to Vision

- Smaller local trails are great, but there should also be more trails that connect places.
- Would like to see a trail across Elgin County using more of the old railway beds from east to west.
- St. Thomas and Elgin will have an interconnecting web of off road trails that allow people to safely use for recreation and travel, growing active transportation and the ability to get from A to B.
- They should encourage access to parks, entertainment, neighborhoods and healthcare.
- Junction points where bus transportation and paths enable people to move around town with either mode seamlessly.
- Some well maintained and interactive (tech related/ kid friendly) , some more rugged and off the beaten path
- Family friendly; suitable for young children
- They need to be clearly marked and have a start and finish point.
- Access nature from anywhere & everywhere
- Introducing trails to those new to "walking"
- Encourage people to interact politely on multi-use trails.

ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

4

Key Principles / Preferences



ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

4

Some comments related to Design Priorities / Preferences

- Not on roads / separated from traffic
- Do not like paved paths for hiking/walking. Hard on legs/joints, not pleasant if you are looking to be in nature
- Paved preferred
- Fountains/water access and washrooms are a great perk
- Important to have some accessible trails
- Simple signage at start, but keep signs to a minimum once on the trails
- It is always good to know about our local area - maps are great
- I like it when the signage states how many minutes walk it is to next street
- For the most part the trail is fairly clean, but please please provide more trash bins

ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

4

3 IMPROVING OUR TRAILS

TRAIL MAP

Please drag and drop at least 3 markers on the map.

Legend

Your Home Favourite Trail New Trail Barrier Destination

Why is this your favourite trail?
How often do you use this trail?
Type...

Submit

Springwater Pond

Springwater Rd

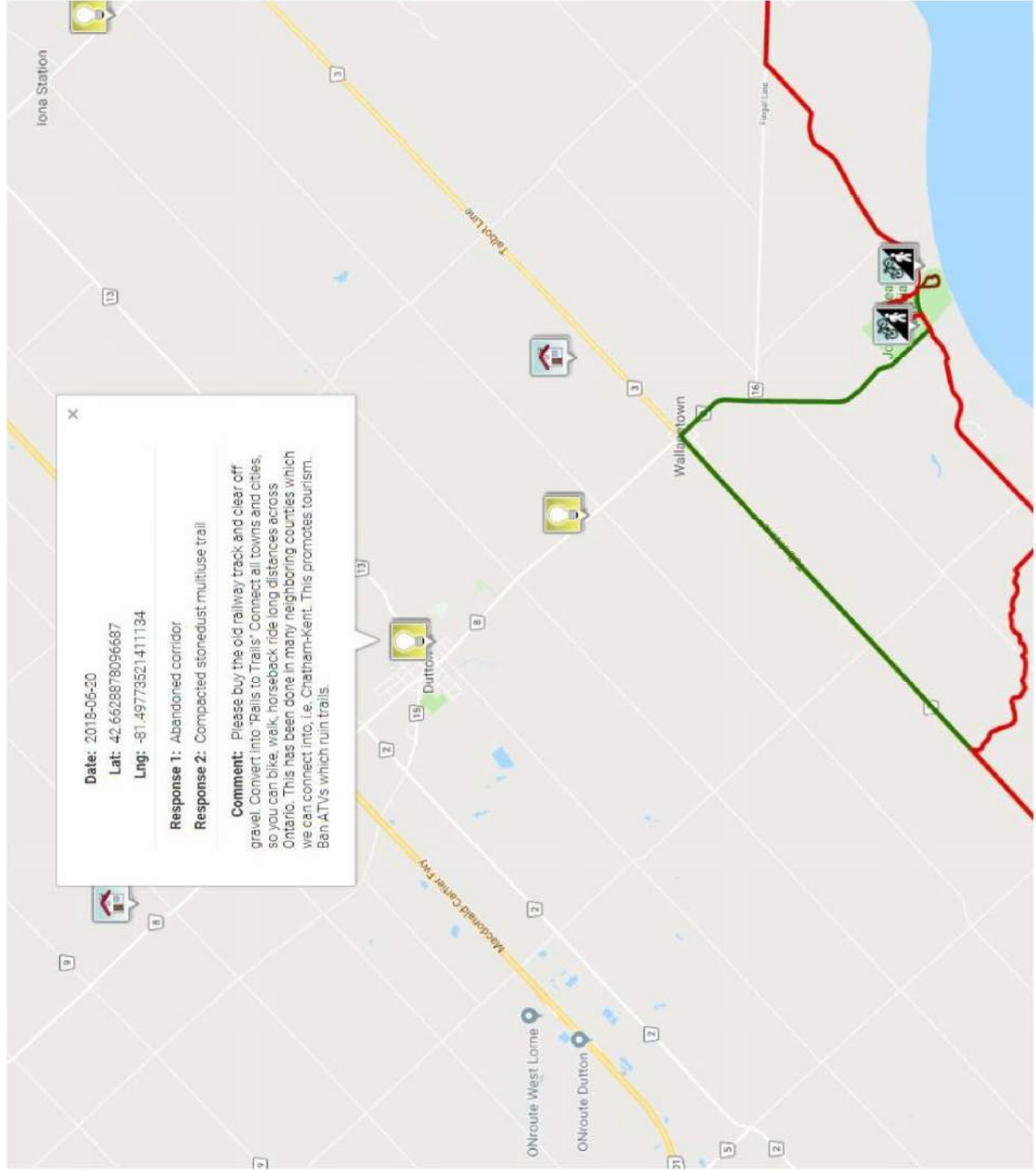
Southdale Line

Springwater Conservation Area

Map data ©2018 Google Terms of Use Report a map error

ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

4



ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

4

5 THANK YOU!

WRAP UP

? What to do

Final Questions (Optional)

What is your age?

Which gender do you identify with?

Do you currently use trails in Elgin County?

If you answered yes, please indicate why

If you answered no, please indicate why

Do you have any other comments for the team?

Submit Final Questions

Skip

THANK YOU

If you have questions or would like further information about the Elgin County Trail Study please contact:

Jessica Lang (Health Promoter,
Southwestern Public Health)
T: 519-631-9900 ext. 1304;

E: jlange@elginhealth.on.ca

Jay Cranstone (Senior Landscape
Architect, WSP Canada)

T: 519-904-1755;

E: jay.cranstone@wsp.com

This project was made possible in part through funding from the Public Healthy Agency of Canada.



ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

4

Other comments

- As a member of the Belmont Horticultural Society, I would love for our society to collaborate with Central Elgin and design destination gardens along the trail system with heritage signage.
- Love the current bike trail, I run it almost daily! Lights on it for safety at night would be amazing, as well as extending it around the city!
- Proud of our trails that we have so far, and so many opportunities for more. Such a lovely area here.
- Safe and connected trails will certainly improve active transportation, and I hope to see the momentum continue.
- Elgin residents should receive a trail map in the mail. If knew about the services we would be more inclined to use them. I've heard people use some of the trails, but it would be nice to know about all of it.

ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

4

- Pop Up Displays**
- With hard copy comment forms at public libraries
 - Belmont Library, Belmont
 - John Kenneth Reference Library Dutton Shedden
 - Southwold Township Library, Southwold
 - Stratfordville Library, Stratfordville
 - Malahide Community Place, Springfield

1 ABOUT

Southwestern Public Health received funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada to develop a Trails Study for Elgin County.

The purpose of the Elgin County Trails Study is to:

- Understand the current state of trails throughout Elgin County
- Identify and map existing trails
- Connect new trails with existing trails including the Egin Hiking Trail, the Trans Canada Trail, and the many existing trails in parks and conservation areas
- Provide guidance on planning and designing trails in new neighbourhoods as communities grow

2 TIMELINE

- April 2018** - Project start-up
- April to early June 2018** - Conduct background research and launch online interactive questionnaire
- June and July 2018** - Public Information Centres
 - John Kenneth Reference Library Dutton, 236 Shackleton Street, Dutton
 - Southwold Library, 1000 Lakeshore Road, Southwold
 - Stratfordville Library, 12105 Whittaker Road, Springfield
- June to September 2018** - Conduct field investigations and prepare the draft Trail Study
- September and October 2018** - Finalize the Trail Study

3 GET INVOLVED

We need your help. Have your say!

- Review the map accompanying this display and provide the study team with your ideas
- Visit the Active Elgin website: <http://www.activeelgin.ca> and provide your ideas and opinions using the interactive questionnaire and participating in the online survey
- Participate in upcoming Public Information Centres in June and July
- Reach out to friends, family and co-workers and encourage them to provide their ideas
- Contact one of our project representatives below if you would like further information about the project.

JESSICALANG
Health Promotion Specialist
Southwestern Public Health
T: 519.631.9900 ext. 1304; E: jjlang@elginhealth.on.ca

JAY CRANSTONE
Senior Landscape Architect
WSP Canada Group Limited
T: 519.904.1755; E: jaycranstone@wsp.com

Elgin County Trails Study - Existing Trails

Have your say!

- Are there any trails in Elgin County that you think are missing? If so, where?
- Are there any trails that you think are missing that you think are important?
- Are there any trails that you think are missing that you think are important?

Please draw or write your comments and map the location on the map and briefly describe your ideas.

PLANNING AND DESIGNING TRAILS

There are a number of factors trail planners and designers need to consider when determining what improvements are needed to existing trails and where new trails should be located. Listed below are some of the factors.

In your opinion what are the most important factors to consider? Please put a check mark beside your top 3.

SURFACE TYPE	DESCRIPTION	IMPORTANCE
	Trail width and surface (i.e. wide versus narrow, asphalt, versus stone/past or woodchips) is part of the trail experience and should be selected based on the surroundings.	▼
INTERPRETATION	Trails should provide opportunities to learn more about local history, culture and natural environment.	
ACCESSIBILITY	Trails should be designed for all ages and levels of physical ability.	
SIGNAGE	Trails should have high quality signage that helps trail users navigate to desired destinations and amenities.	
CONNECTED	Trails should provide access to important destinations and points of interest.	
AMENITIES	Trails should be easy to get to, and have amenities such as parking lots for cars, benches, rest areas, washrooms and bike parking in appropriate locations.	
ACCESS TO NATURE	Trails should provide a break from the urban environment and allow access to nature.	
CROSSING BARRIERS	Trails should provide connectivity across barriers and connect to other routes.	

Are there other factors that should be considered?

ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

4

Pop up Displays and In-Person

- Favorite Trails
 - Trails in Conservation Areas (Springwater, Archie Coulter, Dalewood, Dan Patterson)
 - Trans Canada Trail south of Talbot Line to Lakeview
 - Lorne Spicer Trail
 - Fingal Wildlife Management Area
 - Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Whistlestop Trail
 - Waterfront Trail from Port Burwell to Wallacetown
- Don't know where trails are, not sure which ones are accessible, trail markings hard to find
- More marketing and events around trails
- Walking trails in Belmont along Kettle Creek
- Develop trails along abandoned railway lines
- Create trails in small towns to encourage people to get out and walk



ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

5

Recommended Trail Network

- Amalgamation of many trail types and partners
- Local trails, regional trails, destination trails

Existing ^{(1) (2)}	Proposed ⁽³⁾	Total (km)
381.8km	116.5km	498.3km

Notes:

- 1. Includes existing trails on lands owned by municipalities and public agencies (e.g. Conservation Authorities, Ontario Parks and National Historic Site. Also includes existing trails located on private property that have been established through agreements with individual landowners (i.e. applies to the Elgin Hiking Trail and some sections of the designated Trans Canada / Great Trail route)
- 2. Includes the (a) designated Trans Canada Trail/ Great Trail route, (b) Great Lake Waterfront Trail and (c) Elgin Hiking Trail. Portions of (a) and (b) are on-road, and some portions of (a) may not have been implemented, and (c) is mapped based on information provided by stakeholders. The entire route of the Elgin Hiking Trail could not be verified in the field.
- 3. Includes proposed routes identified during the development of the Elgin County Trail Study and proposed routes identified in previously approved local master plans such as the St. Thomas Trail Master Plan and Central Elgin Trails Master Plan.

Recommendation 3.1: Use the Route Selection Principles when undertaking detailed route feasibility assessments for trail linkages identified as part of the trails network or when network routing changes are being considered. .

Recommendation 3.2: The proposed trail network in the Elgin County Trails Study should be used as a blueprint for future network development and to inform next steps and priorities at the local municipal level.

DRAFT
Map 3-0
Elgin County Trails Study
Proposed Trail Network
County-Wide Map

Legend

- Trail
 - Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Lake Erie Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area Trails
 - Proposed Trails
- Destination Areas
 - Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
 - Beach
 - Community Centre
 - Conservation Area
 - Provincial Park
 - Seniors' Centre
 - School
- Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)
 - 1. Proposed Trails include previously proposed trails from other approved municipal master plans and trails proposed as part of the Elgin County Trails Study.

0 3.75 7.5 15 Kilometers

Projection: UTM Zone 17 N, Datum: NAD 1983.
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Note: Map is not intended for navigation.



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Map 3-1

Elgin County Trails Study
Proposed Trail Network
Town of Aylmer

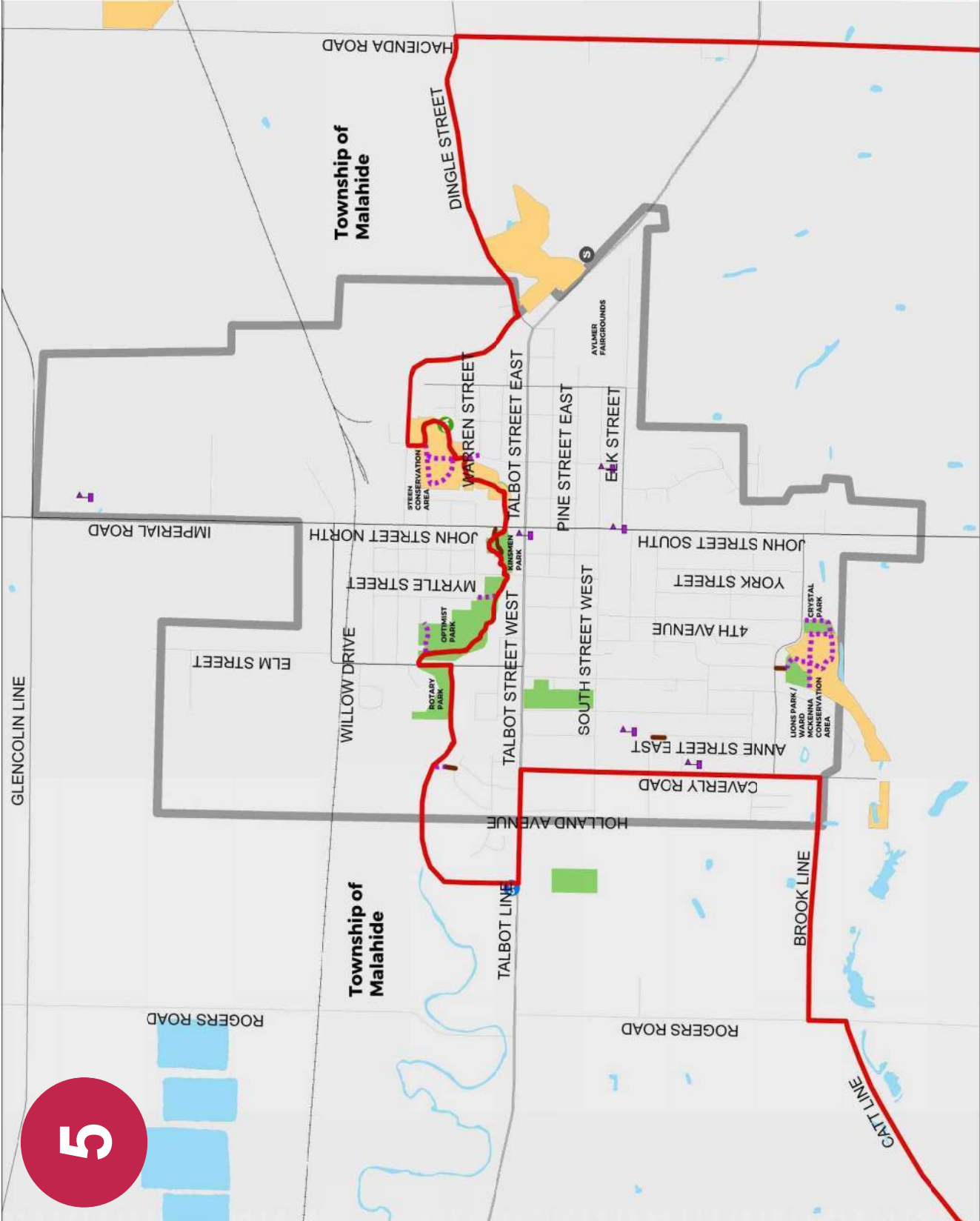
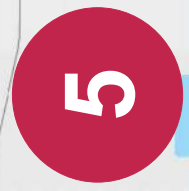
Legend

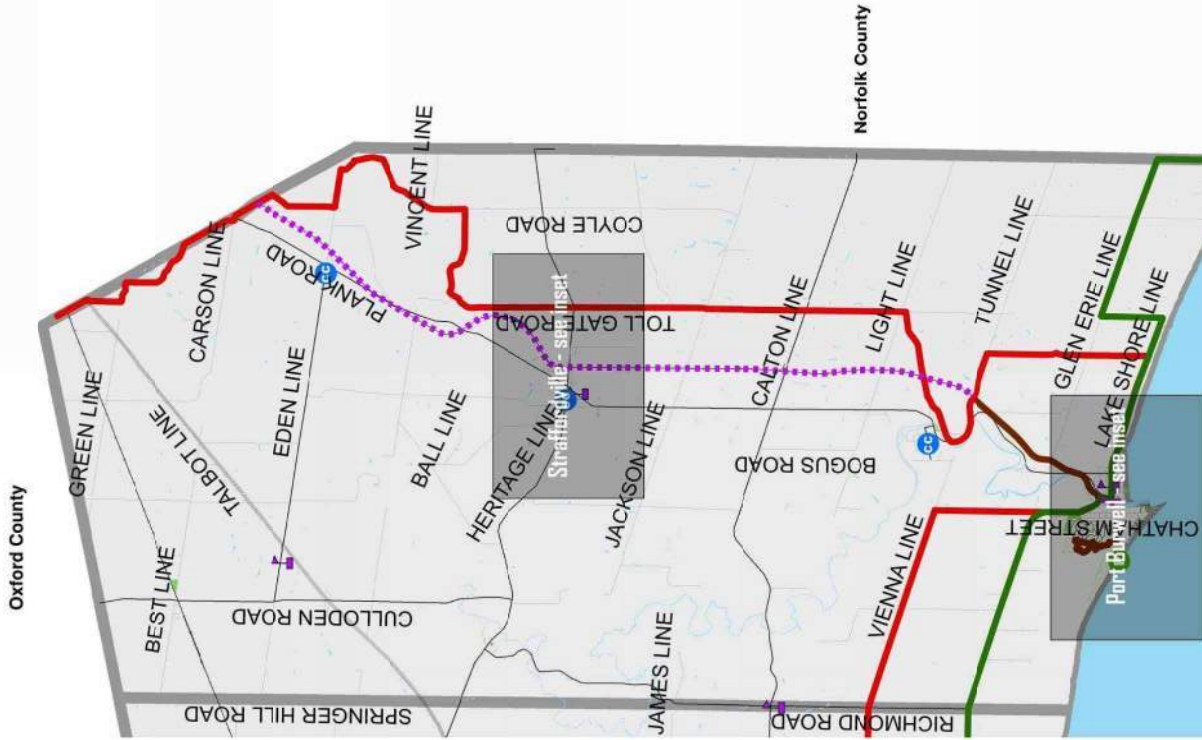
- Trails
 - Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Lake Erie Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area Trails
 - Proposed Trails
- Destination Areas
 - Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
 - Beach
 - Community Centre
 - Conservation Area
 - Provincial Park
 - Seniors' Centre
 - School
- Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)

1. Proposed Trails include previously proposed trails from other approved municipal master plans and trails proposed as part of the Elgin County Trails Study.



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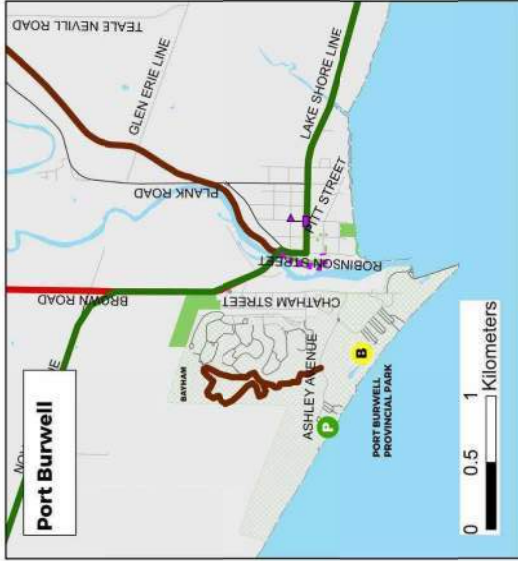


DRAFT
Map 3-2
Egin County Trails Study
Proposed Trail Network
Municipality of Bayham

- Legend**
- Trails**
- Egin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Lake Erie Waterfront Trail
 - - - Municipal and Conservation Area Trails
 - - - Proposed Trails
- Destination Areas**
- Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
- Other Features**
- B Beach
 - CC Community Centre
 - CA Conservation Area
 - P Provincial Park
 - S Seniors' Centre
 - + School

--- Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)

1. Proposed Trails include previously proposed trails from other applications, as well as new trails and trails proposed as part of the Egin County Trails Study.

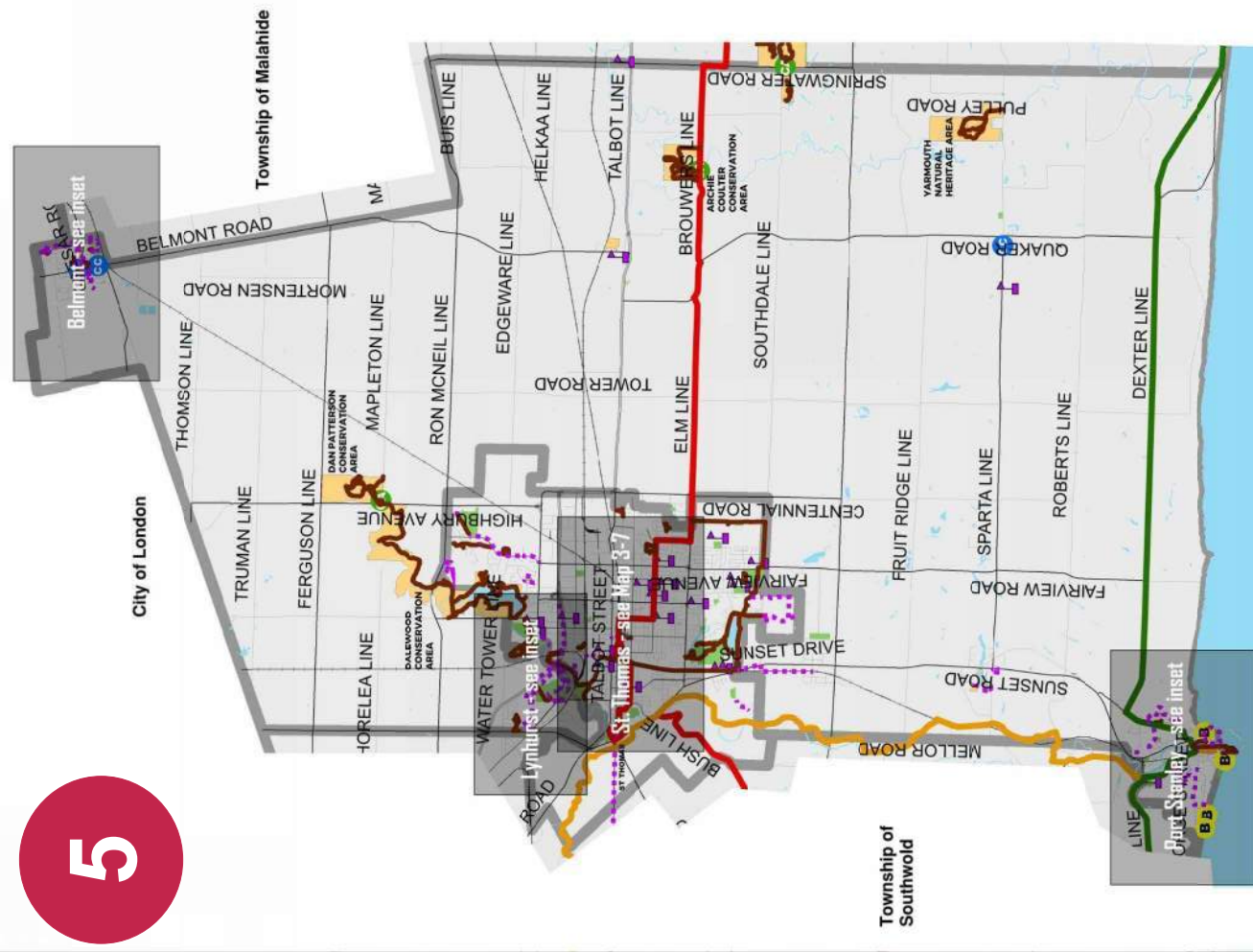
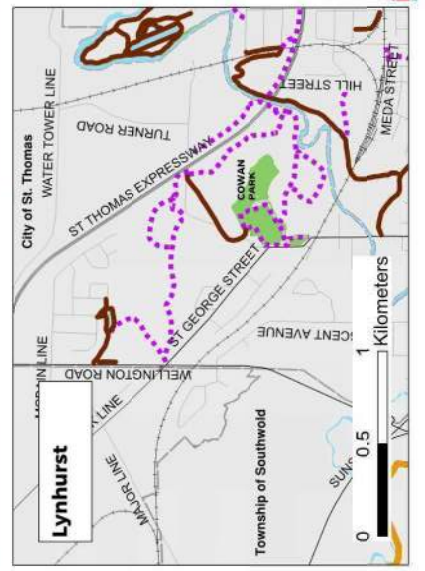
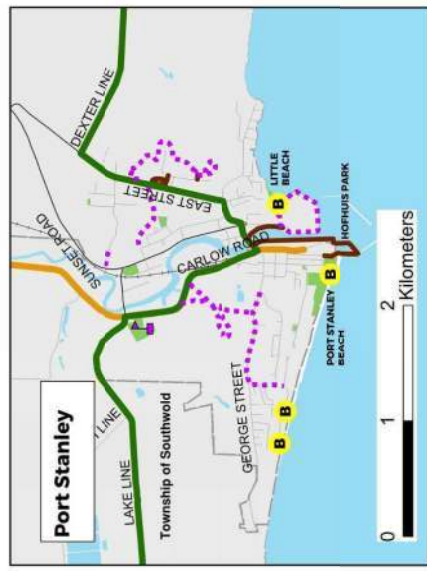
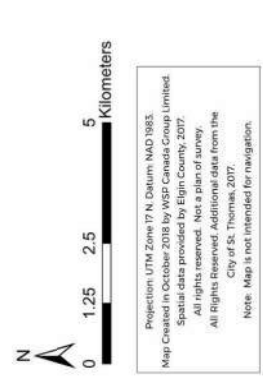


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Map 3-3
Elgin County Trails Study
Proposed Trail Network
Municipality of Central Elgin

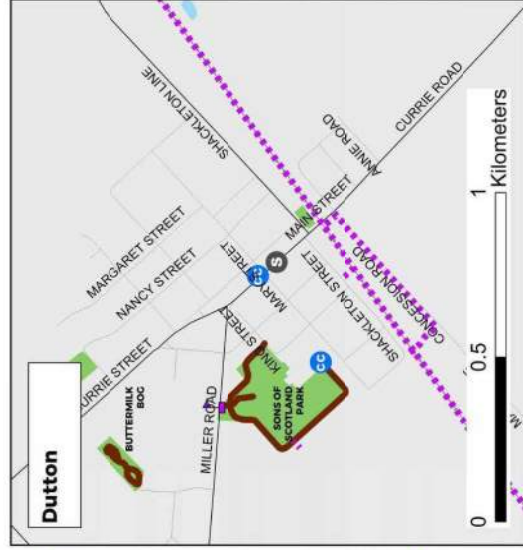
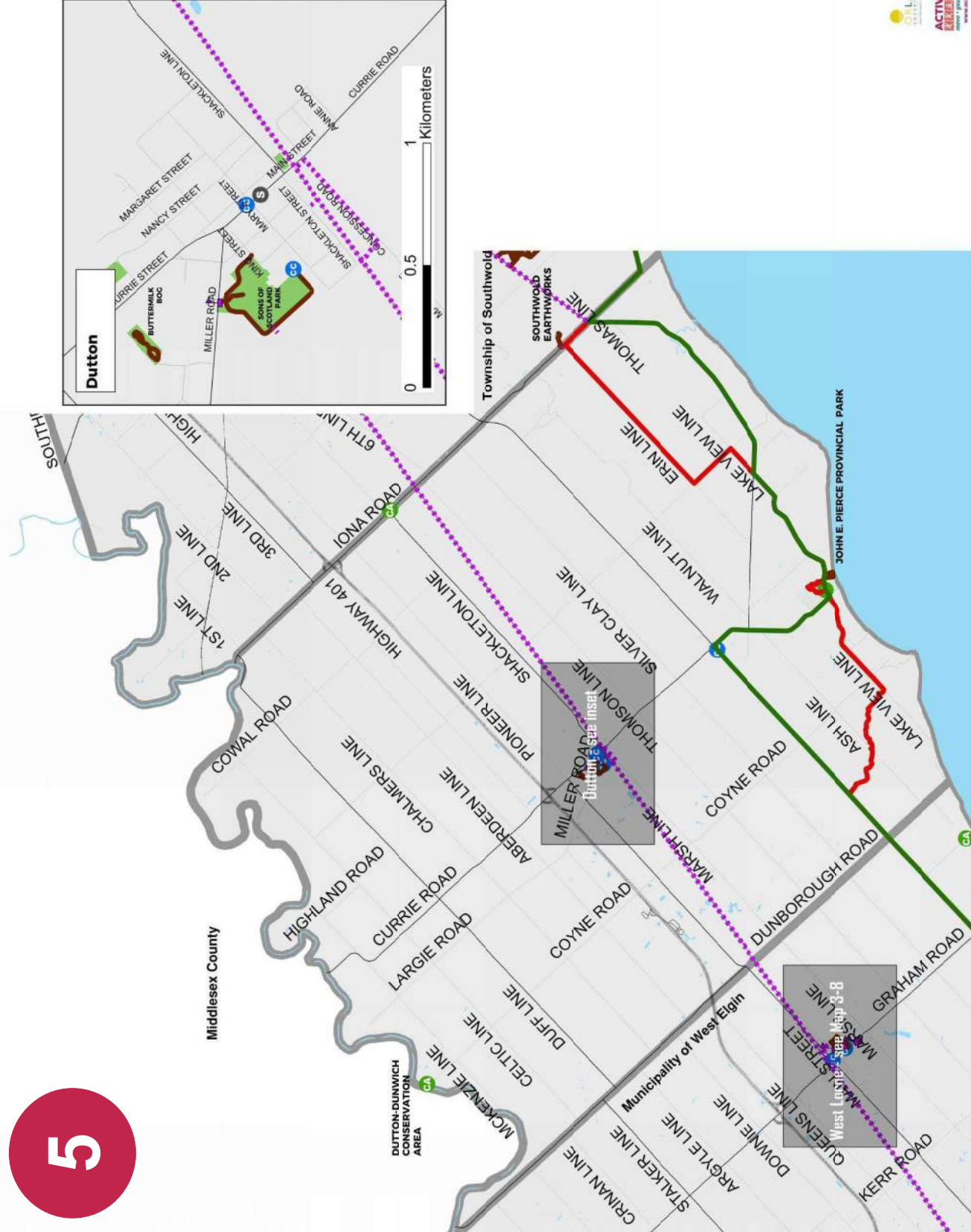
- Legend**
- Trails**
- Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Lake Erie Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area Trails
 - Proposed Trails¹
- Destination Areas**
- Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
 - Beach
 - Community Centre
 - Conservation Area
 - Provincial Park
 - Seniors' Centre
 - School
- Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)**
- 1. Proposed Trails include previously proposed trails from other approved municipal master plans and trails proposed as part of the Elgin County Trails Study.



DRAFT
Map 3-4
Egin County Trails Study
Proposed Trail Network

Municipality of
Dutton-Dunwich

- Legend**
- Trails
 - Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Lake Erie Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area Trails
 - Proposed Trails
 - Destination Areas
 - Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
 - Beach
 - Community Centre
 - Conservation Area
 - Provincial Park
 - Seniors' Centre
 - School
 - Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)



1. Proposed Trails include previously proposed trails from other approved municipal master plans and trails proposed as part of the Elgin County Trails Study.

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Map 3-5

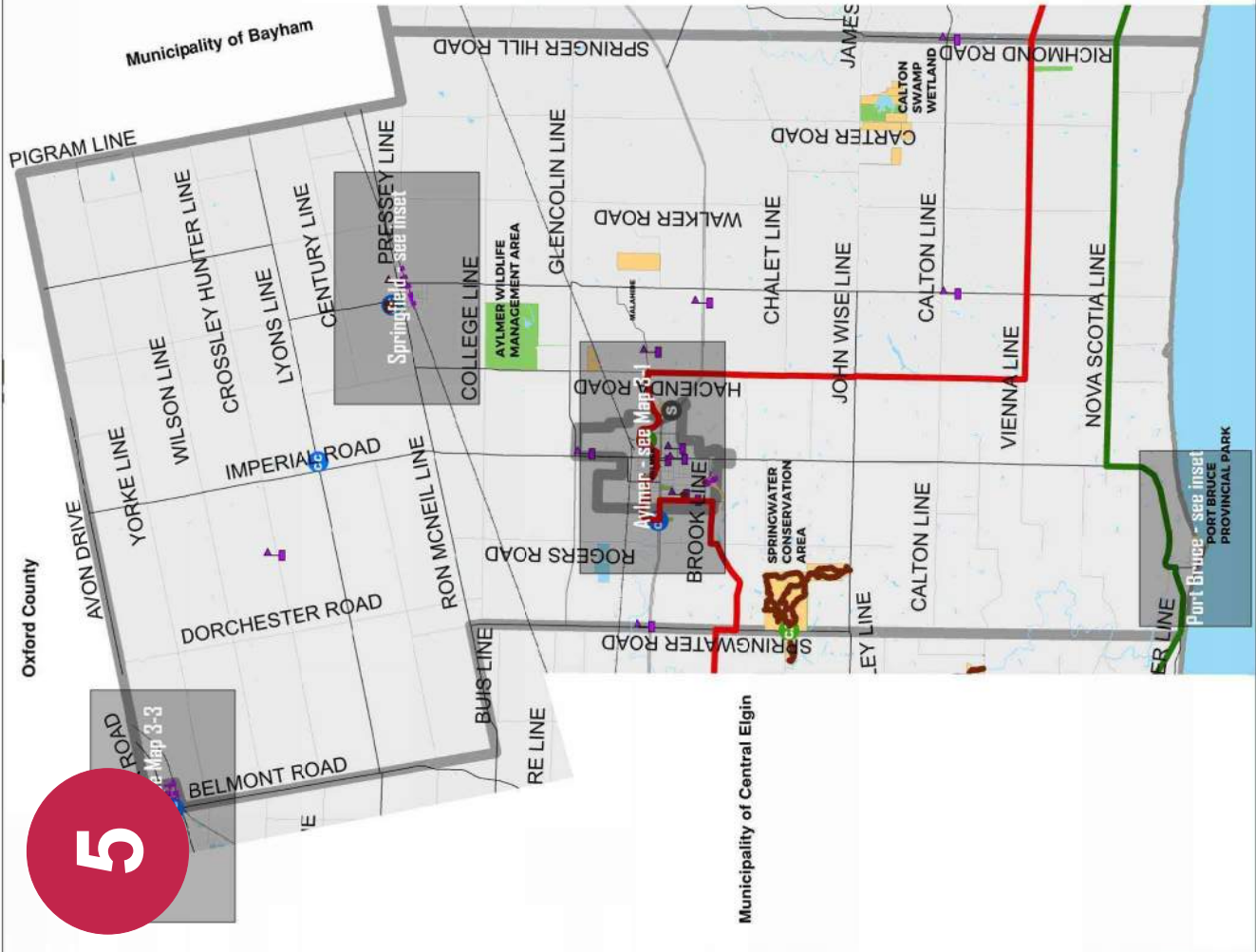
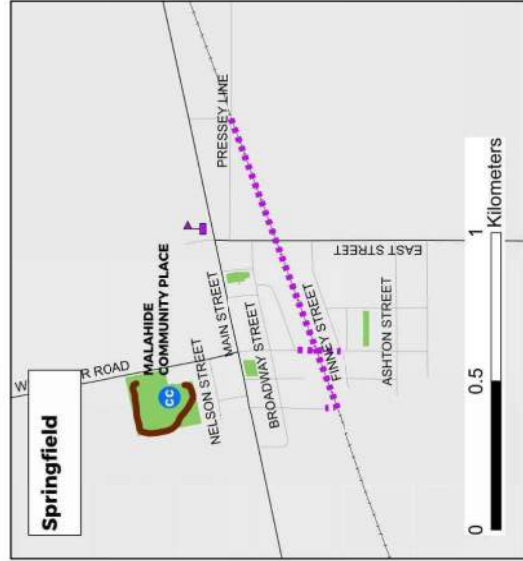
Elgin County Trails Study Proposed Trail Network Township of Malahide

- Legend**
- Trails
 - Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Lake Erie Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area Trails
 - Proposed Trails
 - Destination Areas
 - Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
 - Reach
 - B
 - CC
 - Community Centre
 - Conservation Area
 - Provincial Park
 - Seniors' Centre
 - School
 - Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)

1. Proposed Trails include previously proposed trails from other approved municipal master plans and trails proposed as part of the Elgin County Trails Study.



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5

Map 3-3

Springfield - see inset

Port Bruce - see inset

Port Bruce - see inset

Oxford County

Municipality of Bayham

Municipality of Central Elgin

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Map 3-6

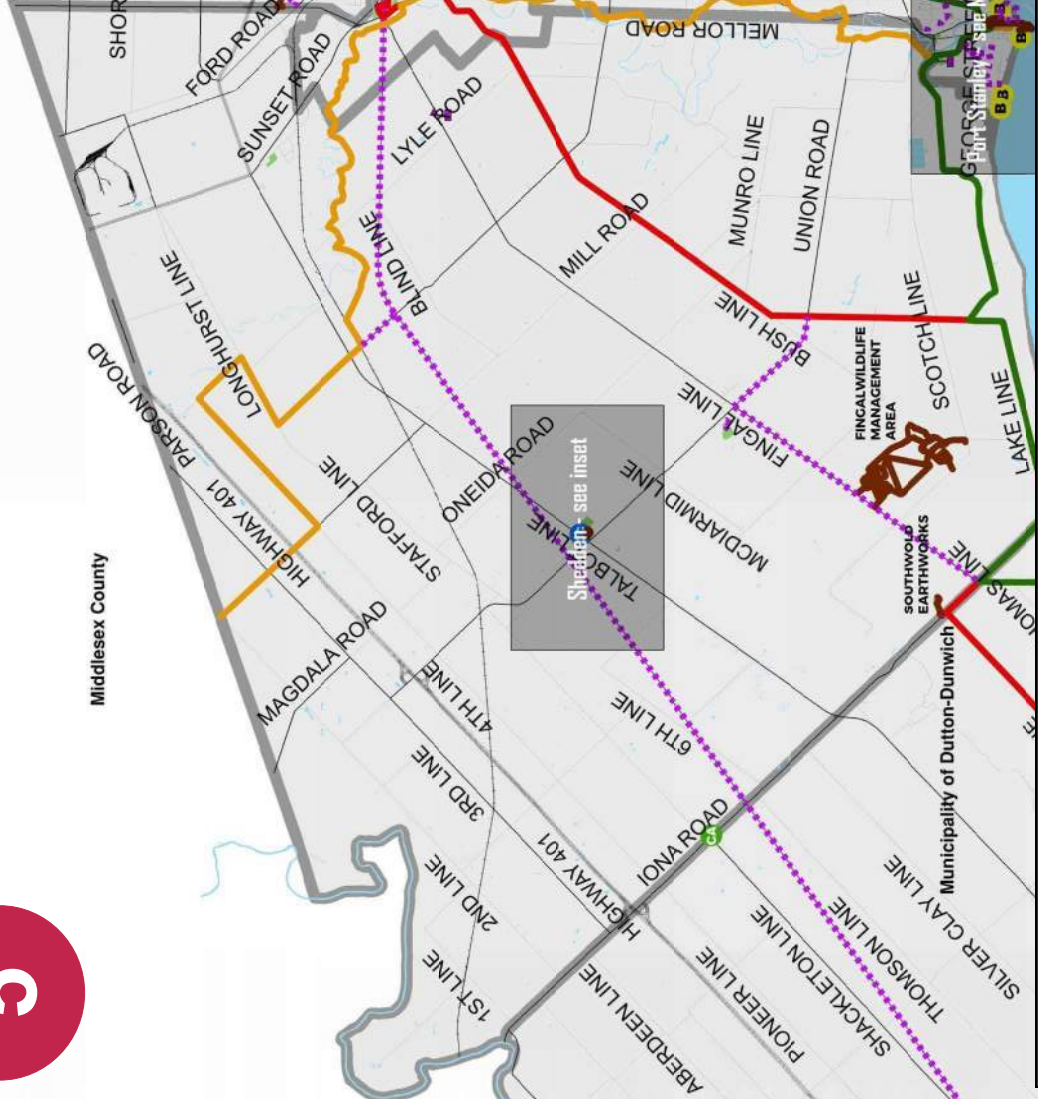
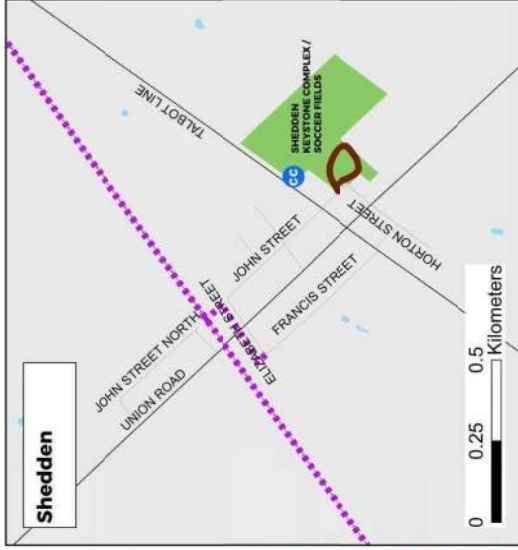
Elgin County Trails Study
Proposed Trail Network
Township of Southwold

- Legend**
- Trails**
- Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Lake Erie Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area Trails
 - Proposed Trails
 - Destination Areas
 - Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
 - Beach
 - Community Centre
 - Conservation Area
 - Provincial Park
 - Seniors' Centre
 - School
 - Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)

1. Proposed Trails include previously proposed trails from other reports, as well as new trails and trails proposed as part of the Elgin County Trails Study.



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Recommendation 3.8: The County, Municipality of Central Elgin and the Township of Southwold should explore collaborating with the Elgin Hiking Trail Club to better define the route of the Elgin Hiking Trail and access points to the trail.

DRAFT
Map 3-7

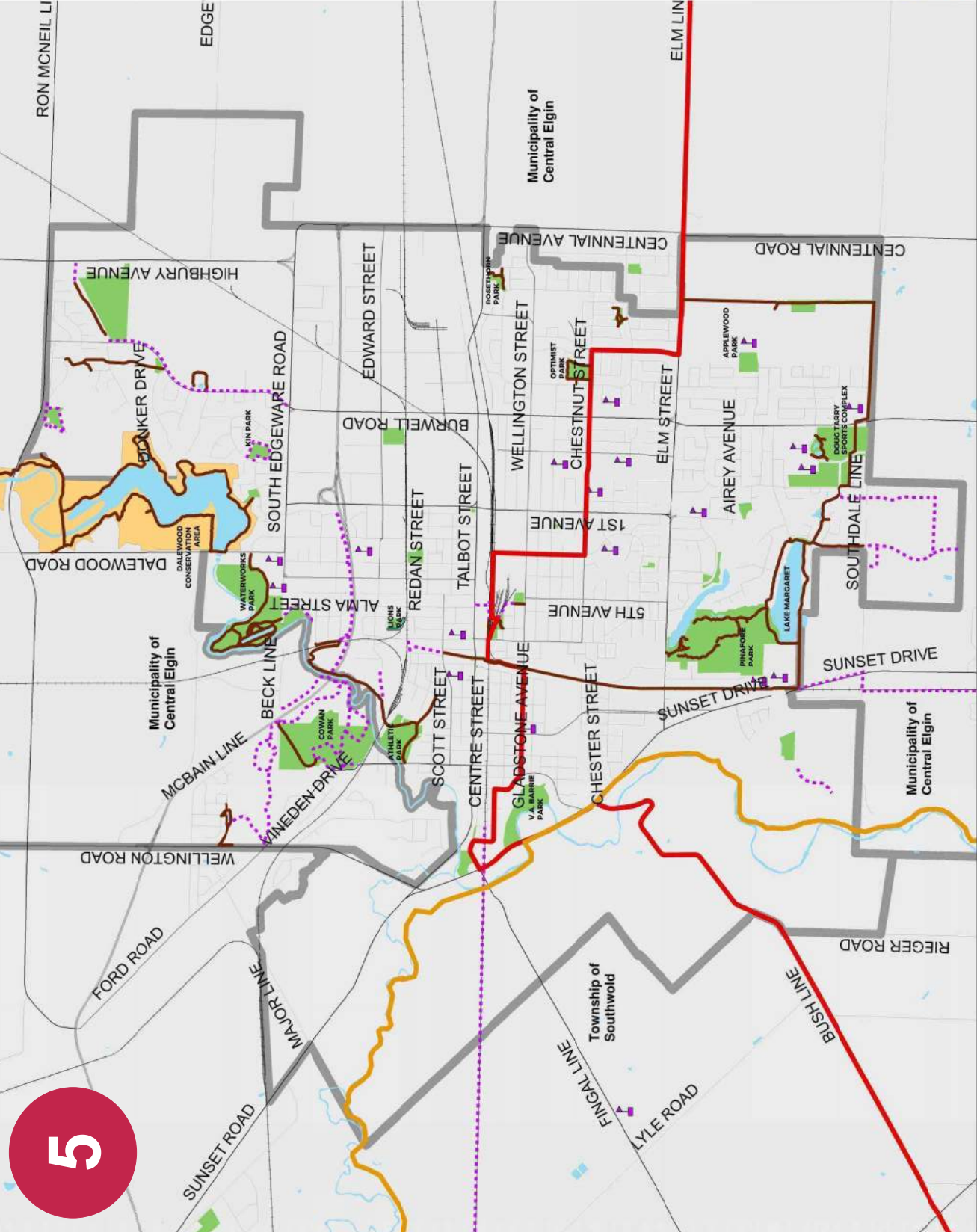
Elgin County Trails Study
Proposed Trail Network
City of St. Thomas

- Legend**
- Trails
 - Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Lake Erie Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area Trails
 - Proposed Trails¹
 - Destination Areas
 - Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
 - Beach
 - Community Centre
 - Conservation Area
 - Provincial Park
 - Seniors' Centre
 - School
 - Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)

¹ Proposed Trails include previously proposed trails from other approved municipal master plans and trails proposed as part of the Elgin County Trails Study.



Projection: UTM Zone 17 N, Datum: NAD 1983.
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5

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Map 3-8

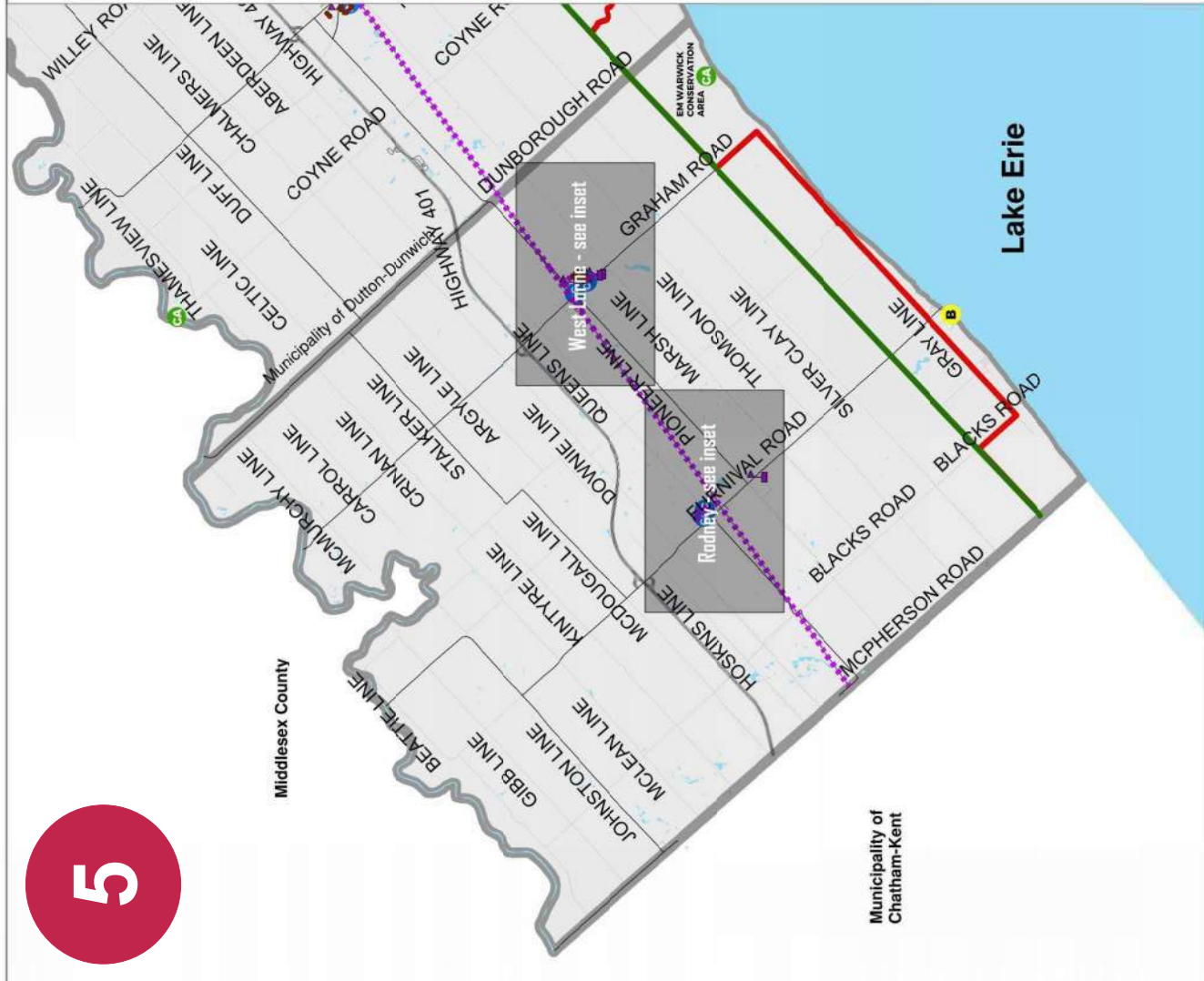
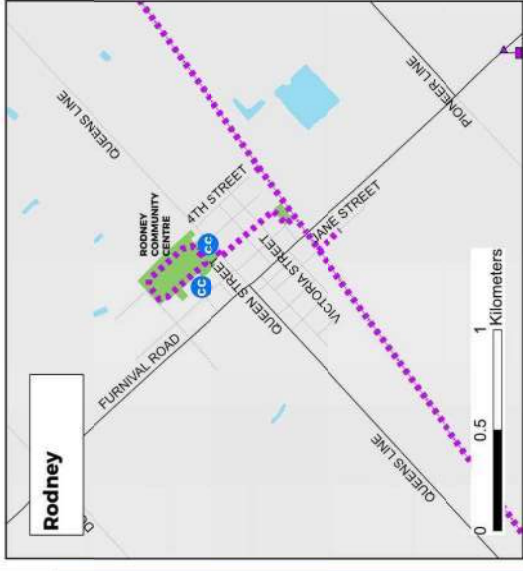
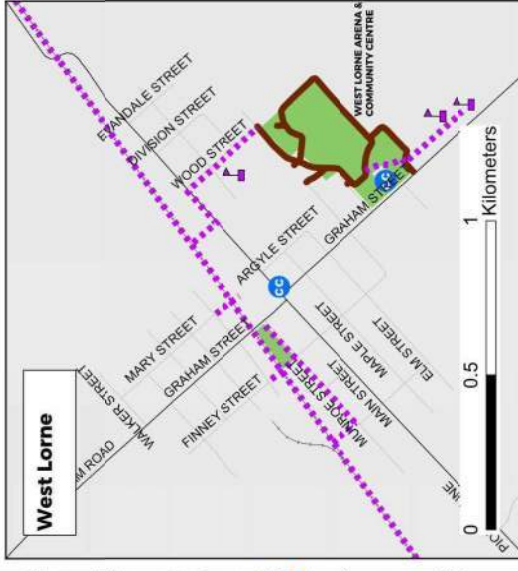
Elgin County Trails Study
Proposed Trail Network
Municipality of West Elgin

- Legend**
- Trails**
- Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Lake Erie Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area Trails
 - Proposed Trails
- Destination Areas**
- Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
 - Beach
 - Community Centre
 - Conservation Area
 - Provincial Park
 - Seniors' Centre
 - School
- Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)**

1. Proposed Trails include previously proposed trails from other studies as well as new trails and trails proposed as part of the Elgin County Trails Study.



Projection: UTM Zone 17 N, Datum: NAD 1983.
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Note: Map is not intended for navigation.



ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

6

Planning, Designing and Maintaining

- Planning
 - Integrating Trails in New Development and Established Neighbourhoods
 - Natural Areas and Buffers
 - Trails and Environmental Assessment

Recommendation 3.3: Developers should be expected to work through an iterative process with municipal staff, beginning early in the planning stages to create an appropriate trail network within their development area with links to external trails where appropriate.

Recommendation 3.4: Municipalities should review the suggested approaches for ongoing public participation for trails proposed in established neighbourhoods and determine an appropriate approach on a project-by-project basis.



ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

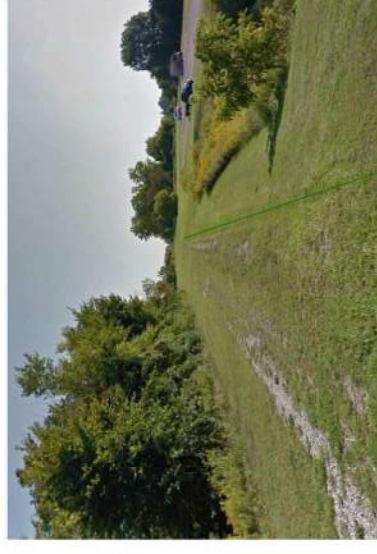
6 Planning, Designing and Maintaining

- Planning
 - Trails and Environmental Assessment (EA)
 - Linear Corridors
 - Urban and Rural
 - Water, sewer, gas pipelines
 - Hydro corridors
 - Abandoned Railway Lines
 - Unopened Road Allowances

Recommendation 3.5: Consider opportunities that linear corridors such as unopened road allowances, utility corridors and abandoned railway corridors create for trails. Develop a business case regarding the use of such corridors as part of the trail network before declaring no interest in them for trail use.

Recommendation 3.6: Continue to explore potential opportunities for trails with rails in Elgin County on a case-by-case basis.

Recommendation 3.7: The County and Local Municipalities should explore a securement strategy for trail routes on lands not in public ownership.



ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

6

- **Design Guidelines**
 - Trail Types (Primary, Secondary, Tertiary)
 - Road Crossings (Urban and Rural)
 - Staging Areas
 - Accessibility (AODA)
 - Access Barriers and Gates
 - Trail Signage
 - Bridges
 - Trail Amenities
 - Lighting

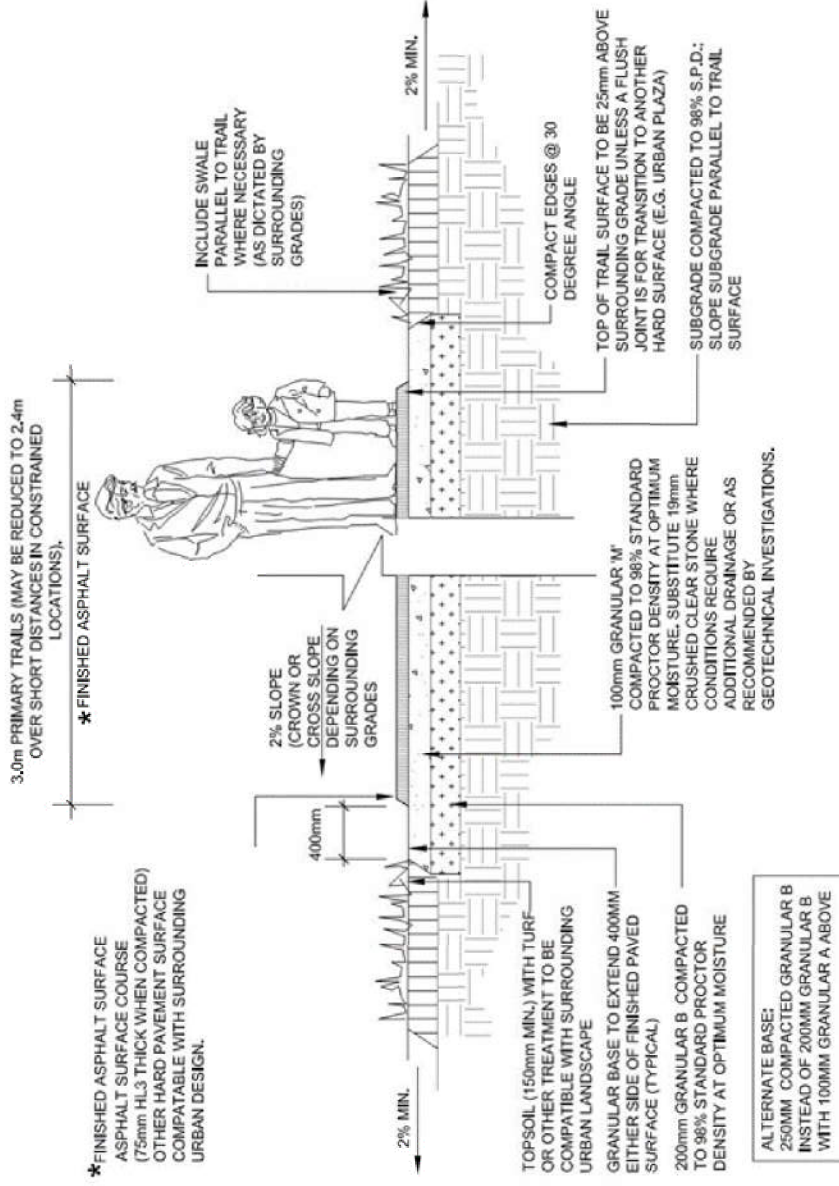
Recommendation 3.9: *The County and Local Municipalities should use the trail design guidelines in the Elgin County Trail Study as the basis for trail design.*

ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

6

Primary Trail

- Main trail links, provides access to key destinations, main routes or loops in a park, and may include destination trail loops
- 3.0m preferred; 2.4m minimum
- Typically hard surface (asphalt, concrete, or other accessible surface)
- Easy trail rating, suitable for a broad spectrum of users
- Highest density of trail amenities
- Anticipated high level of use and maintenance
- Designed to meet or exceed minimum accessibility requirements
- Lighting may be considered

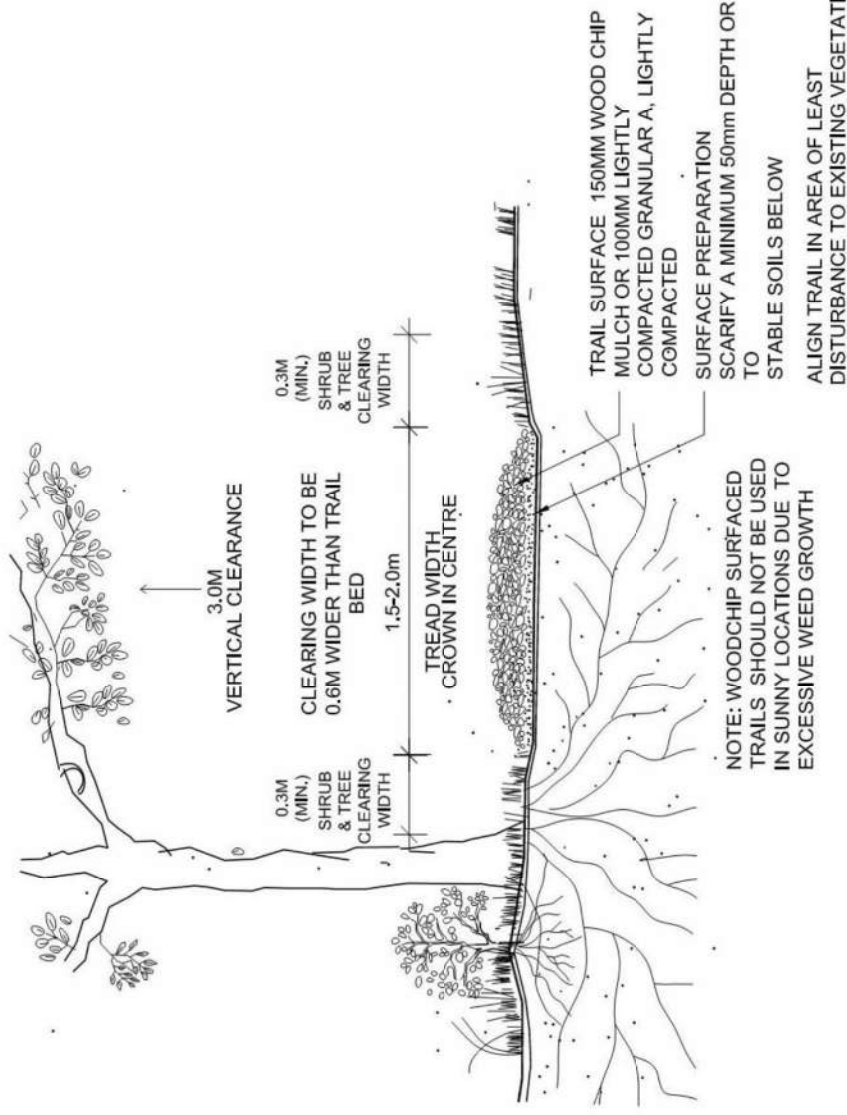


ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

6

Tertiary Trail

- Backcountry / Wilderness” style trails; with a challenging trail rating
- Connects to secondary trails, may have destination trails in sensitive natural areas
- 1.5 – 2.0m preferred; 0.75m minimum
- Generally natural or woodchip surface with compacted granular in select locations
- Suitable for a narrower range of users
- Trail structures may be necessary
- Moderate – low density of amenities and maintenance



ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

6 Road Crossings



Advance Warning Sign



Median Refuge



Pedestrian Crossover



Mid-block Pedestrian Signal

Typical application:

- Lower order roads
- Lower traffic volume
- Lower pedestrian and cyclist demand and volume

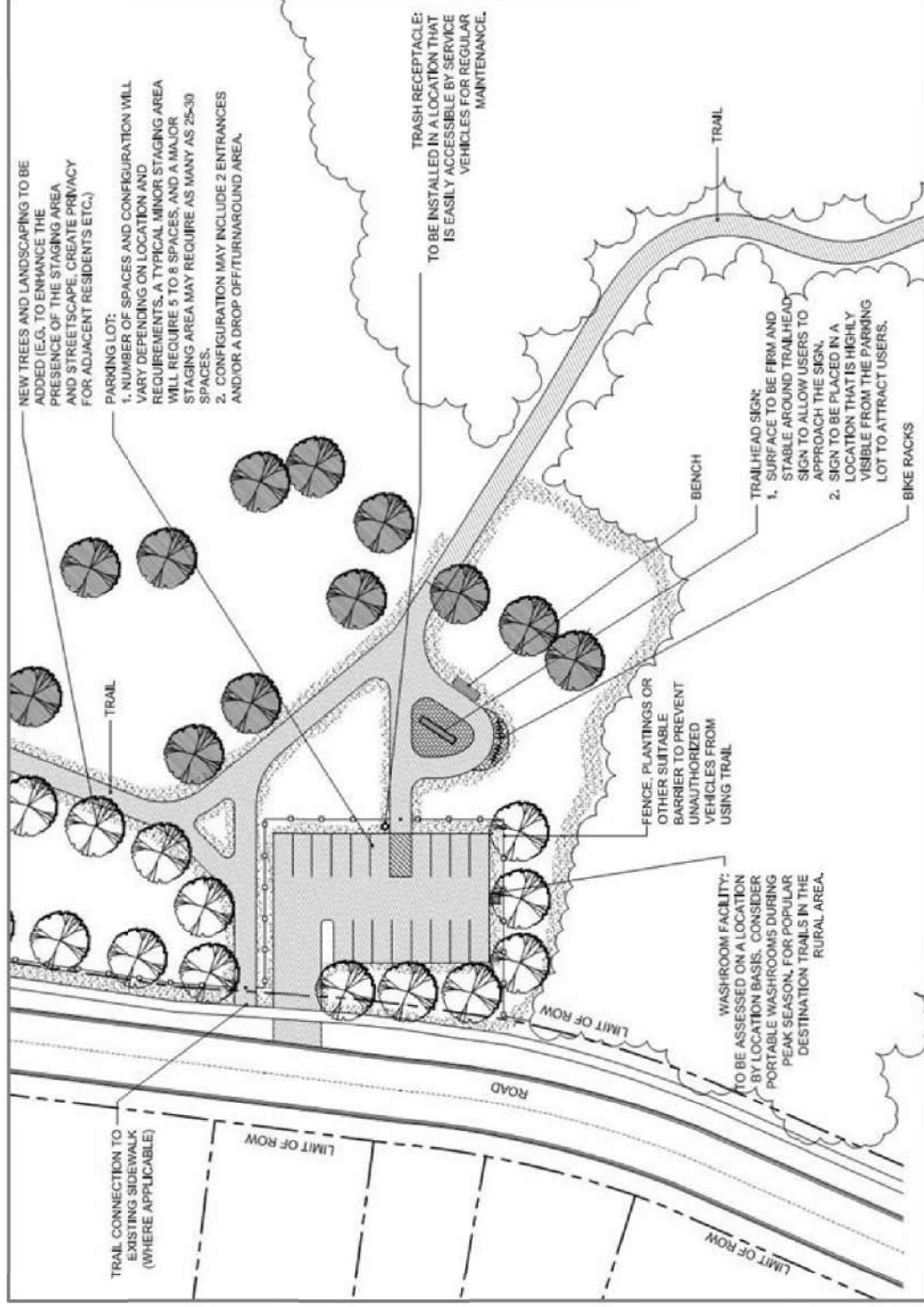
- Guidelines for a “menu” of road crossing types
- Road type / classification
- Traffic volume
- Anticipated volume of trail users
- Urban or rural location

- Higher order roads
- Higher traffic volume
- Higher pedestrian and cyclist demand and volume

ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

6

Staging Area



ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

6

Signage

“Family of Signs”

- Trailhead
- Directional / wayfinding
- Interpretive
- Regulatory



RB-93
300 mm x 450 mm



Recommendation 3.10: A consistent trail wayfinding identifier / brand should be used throughout the County. Consider using the template established by the City of St. Thomas as the basis for the wayfinding identifier, with subtle variation to reflect individual municipalities within the County. .

ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

6

- **Maintaining**
 - Liability and Risk Management
 - Trail Maintenance



Recommendation 3.11: The risk management and liability prevention strategies should be reviewed and incorporated into day-to-day decision-making processes where applicable when planning, designing and operating trails in Elgin County.

Recommendation 3.12: Using the maintenance strategies outlined in Trails Study and current Local Municipal trail maintenance practices as a starting point, Local municipalities should develop appropriate trail maintenance plans and budgets. .

Recommendation 3.13: Annual maintenance budgets should be refined to accommodate the maintenance of trail facilities. Budgets should increase over time to correspond with the increase in the number / length of trail facilities that have been implemented.

ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

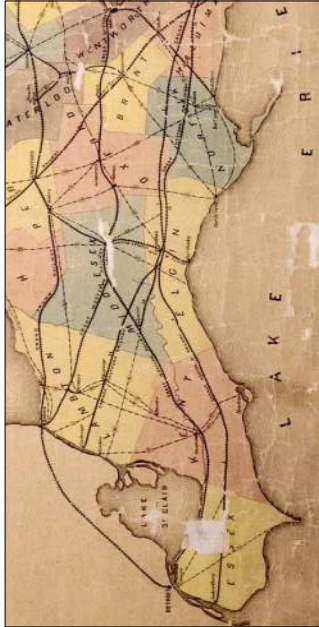
7 Implementation Priorities

Recommendation 4.1: *The County and Local Municipalities should consider the priority projects and initiatives identified in the Elgin County Trails Study when deciding on the implementation of trails under their jurisdiction. .*

Recommendation 4.4: *In addition to capital funding, the County and the Local Municipalities should consider and explore other outside funding sources and cost-sharing opportunities to support the implementation of the trails network, outreach and promotion programs.*

Recommendation 4.5: *The County and Local Municipalities should continue to explore partnerships as a method to leverage trail implementation, management, maintenance, communication, promotion and outreach. .*

DRAFT
Map 4-0: Priorities
Elgin County Trails Study
Proposed Trail Network
County-Wide Map



RAILWAY MAP
 OF
 THE PROVINCE OF
ONTARIO,
 showing Lines, Stations, and Connections.
 Published by the
 W. H. BROWN & SONS, LTD.,
 TORONTO, CANADA.

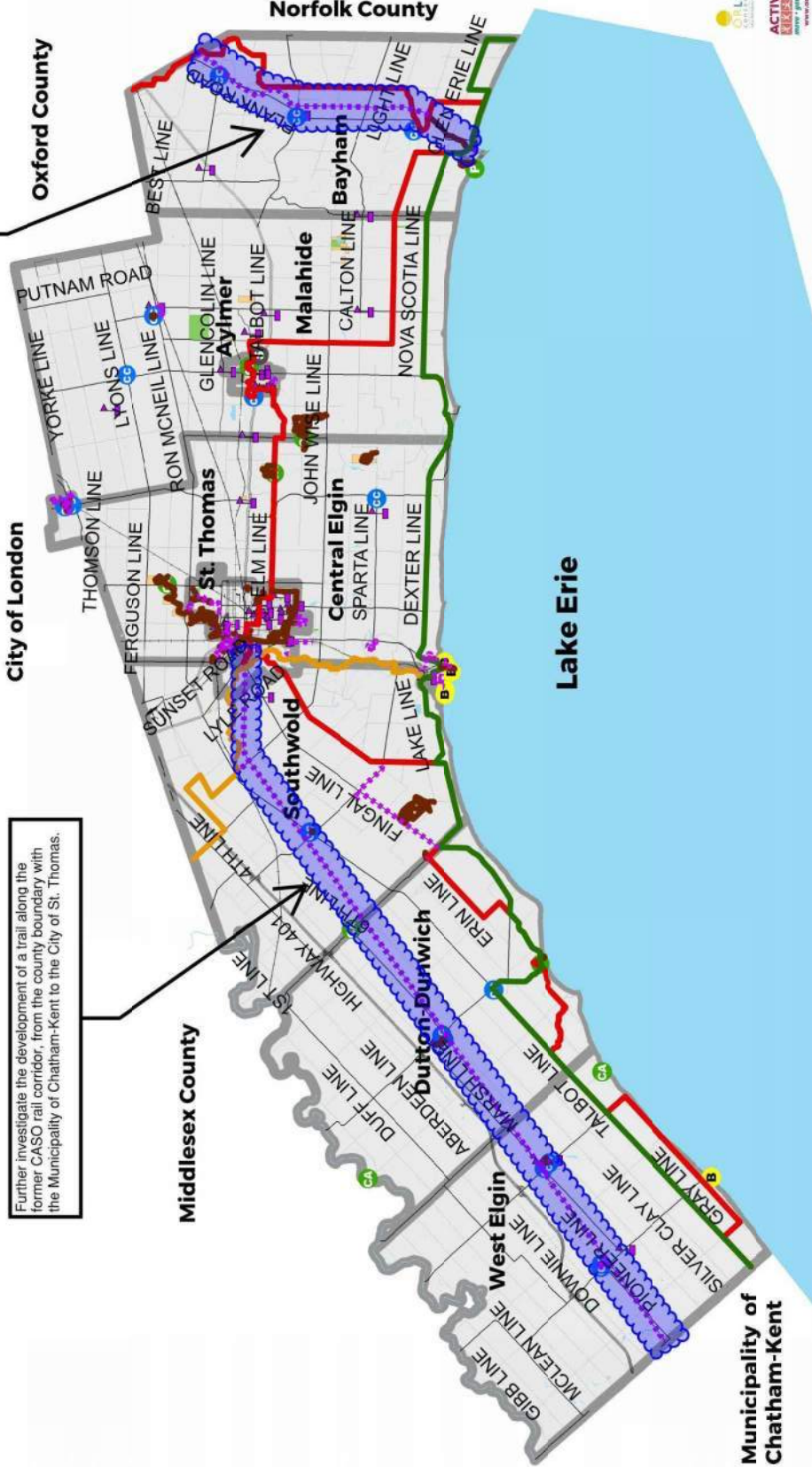
Further investigate the development of a trail along the former CASO rail corridor, from the county boundary with the Municipality of Chatham-Kent to the City of St. Thomas.

Further investigate the development of a trail along the former rail corridor, between Port Burwell and the Town of Tilsonburg.

- Legend**
- Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Lake Erie Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area Trails
 - Proposed Trails
 - Destination Areas
 - Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
 - Beach
 - Community Centre
 - Conservation Area
 - Provincial Park
 - Seniors' Centre
 - School
 - Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)
1. Proposed Trails include previously proposed trails from other approved municipal master plans and trails proposed as part of the Elgin County Trails Study.



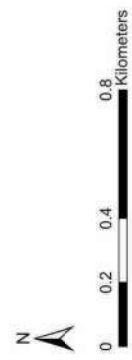
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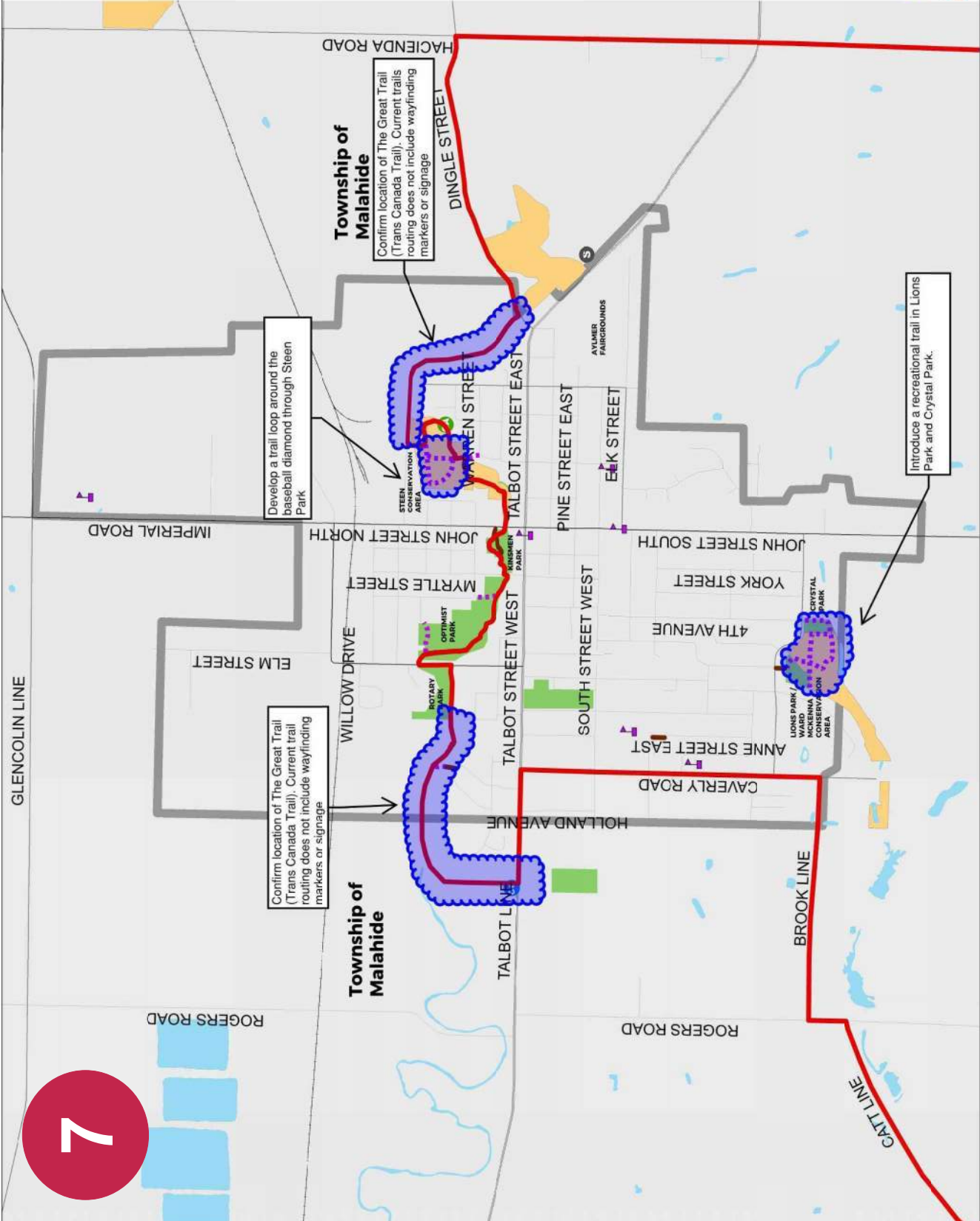
DRAFT
Map 4-1: Priorities
Elgin County Trails Study
Proposed Trail Network
Town of Aylmer

- Legend**
- Trails
 - Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Lake Erie Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area Trails
 - Proposed Trails
 - Destination Areas
 - Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
 - Beach
 - Community Centre
 - Conservation Area
 - Provincial Park
 - Seniors' Centre
 - School
 - Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)

1. Proposed Trails include previously proposed trails from other approved municipal master plans and trails proposed as part of the Elgin County Trails Study.



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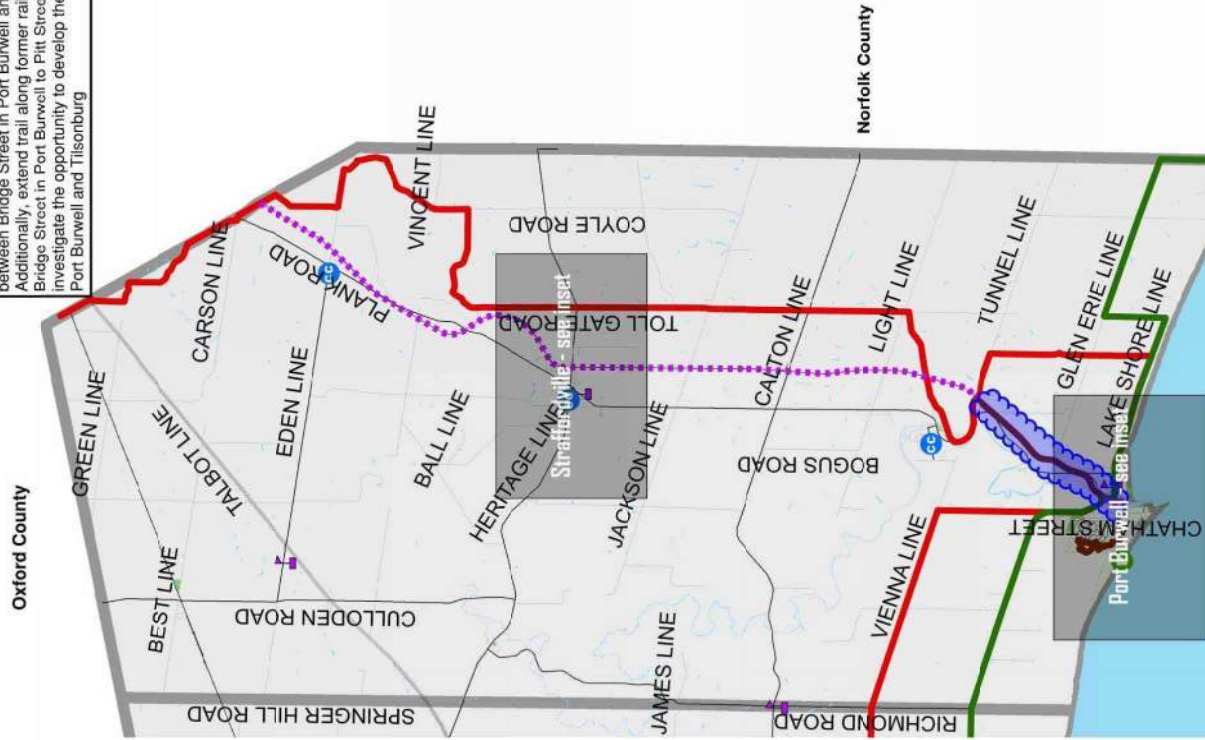
Develop a trail loop around the baseball diamond through Steen Park

Confirm location of The Great Trail (Trans Canada Trail). Current trails routing does not include wayfinding markers or signage

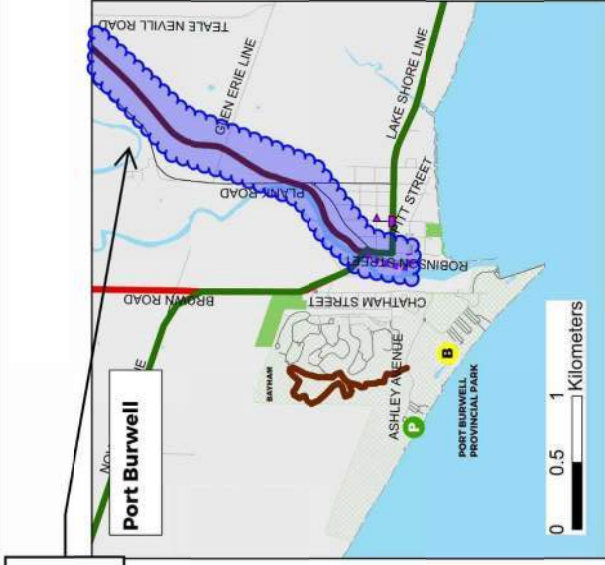
Confirm location of The Great Trail (Trans Canada Trail). Current trail routing does not include wayfinding markers or signage

Introduce a recreational trail in Lions Park and Crystal Park.

Formalize the trail along the former rail corridor, between Bridge Street in Port Burwell and Tunnel Line. Additionally, extend trail along former rail corridor from Bridge Street in Port Burwell to Pitt Street. Further investigate the opportunity to develop the trail between Port Burwell and Tilsonburg



Township of Malahide



Further investigate the development of a trail along the former rail corridor, between Fourth Street and Heritage Line.

DRAFT Map 4-2: Priorities Egin County Trails Study Proposed Trail Network Municipality of Bayham

Legend

- Trails**
 - Egin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Lake Erie Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area Trails
 - Proposed Trails
- Destination Areas**
 - Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
- B** Beach
- CC** Community Centre
- CA** Conservation Area
- P** Provincial Park
- S** Seniors' Centre
- T** School

--- Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)
 1. Proposed Trails include previously proposed trails from other reports and maps, as well as new trails proposed as part of the Egin County Trails Study.



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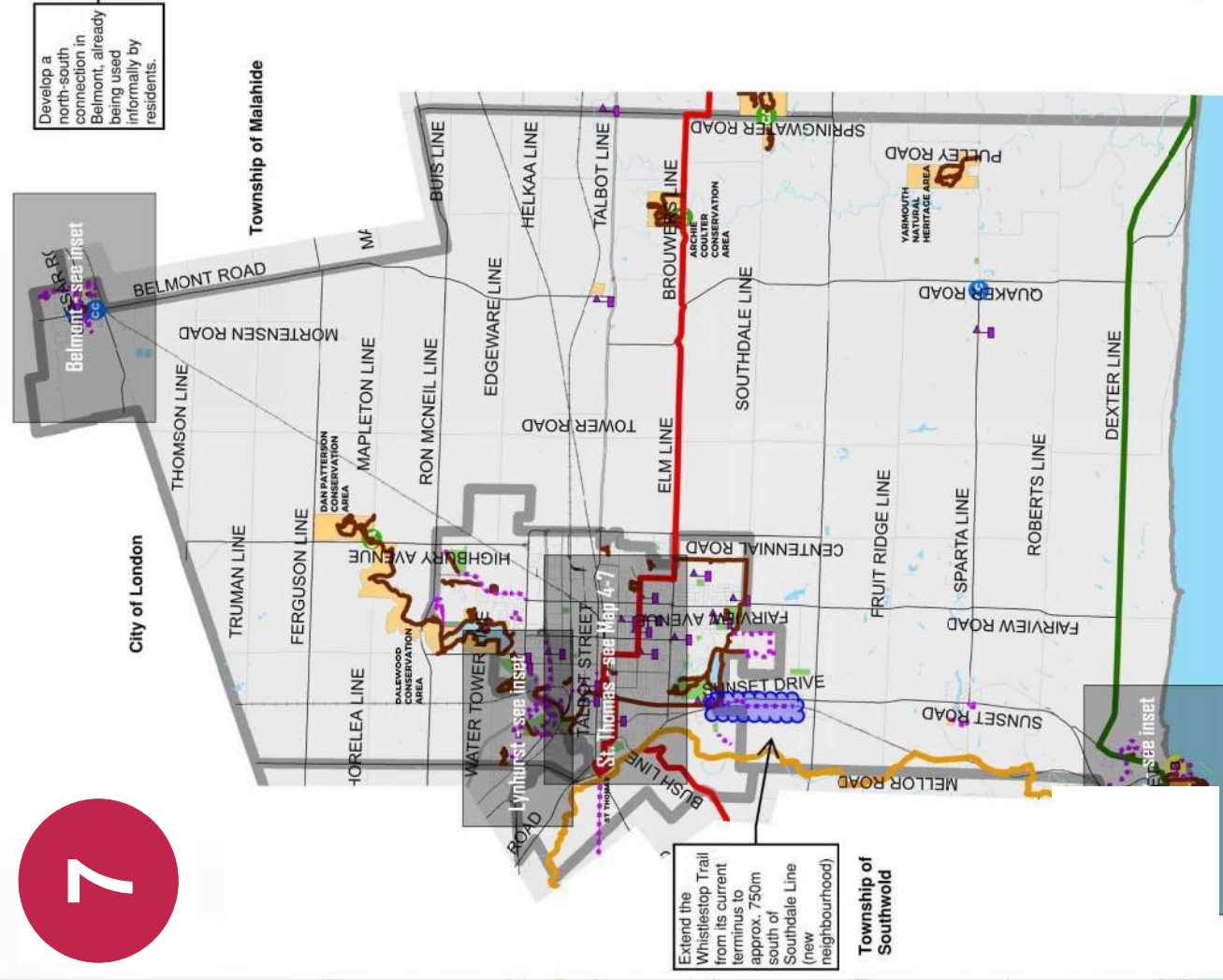
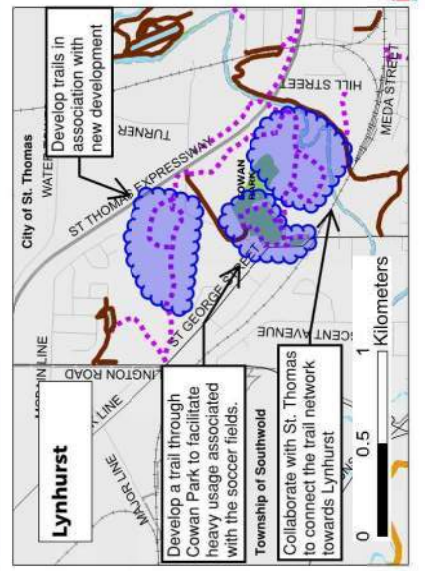
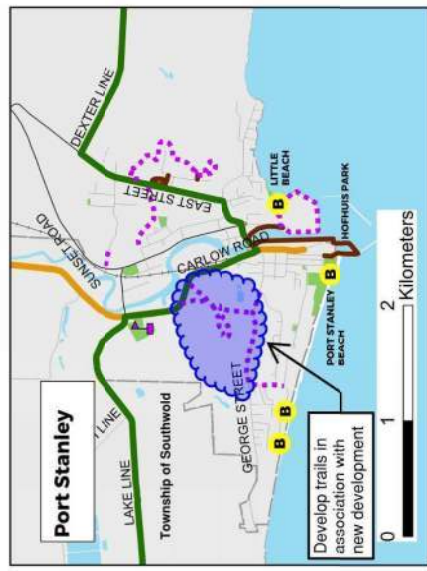
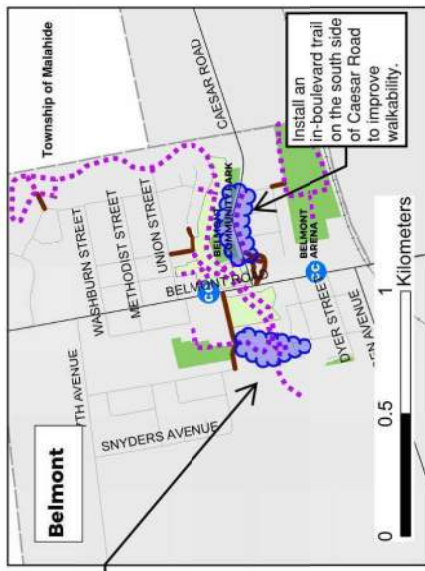
DRAFT
Map 4-3: Priorities
Elgin County Trails Study
Proposed Trail Network
Municipality of Central Elgin

- Legend**
- Trails**
- Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Lake Erie Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area Trails
 - Proposed Trails
- Destination Areas**
- Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
 - Beach
 - Community Centre
 - Conservation Area
 - Provincial Park
 - Seniors' Centre
 - School
- Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)**

1. Proposed Trails include previously proposed trails from other approved municipal master plans and trails proposed as part of the Elgin County Trails Study.



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Develop a north-south connection in Belmont, already being used informally by residents.

Extend the Whistlestop Trail from its current terminus to approximately 750m south of Southdale Line (new neighbourhood).

See inset

See inset

See inset

See inset

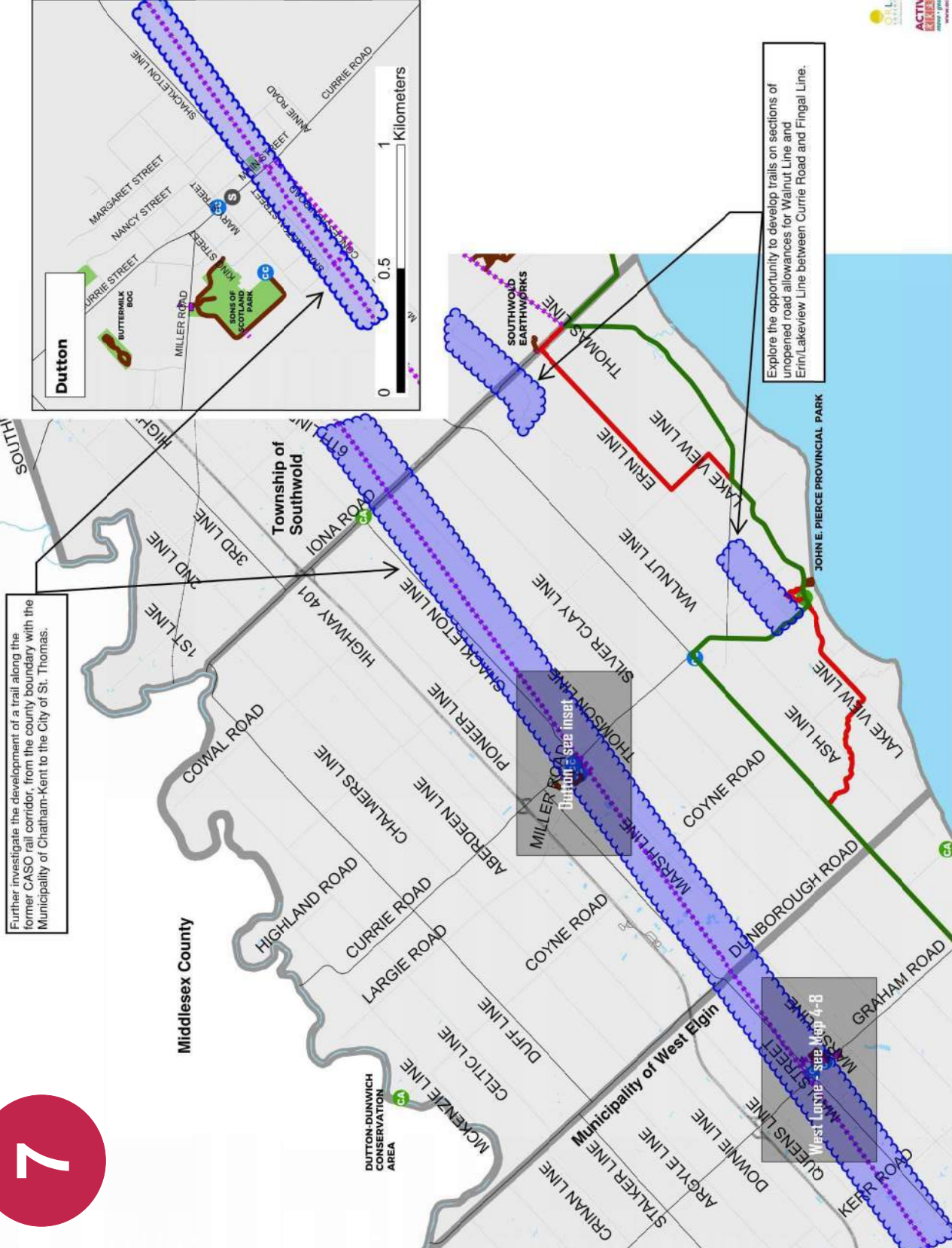
DRAFT
Map 4-4: Priorities
Elgin County Trails Study

Proposed Trail Network
Municipality of
Dutton-Dunwich

- Legend**
- Trails
 - Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Lake Erie Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area Trails
 - Proposed Trails
 - Destination Areas
 - Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
 - Beach
 - Community Centre
 - Conservation Area
 - Provincial Park
 - Seniors' Centre
 - School
 - Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)

1. Proposed Trails include previously proposed trails from other approved municipal master plans and trails proposed as part of the Elgin County Trails Study.

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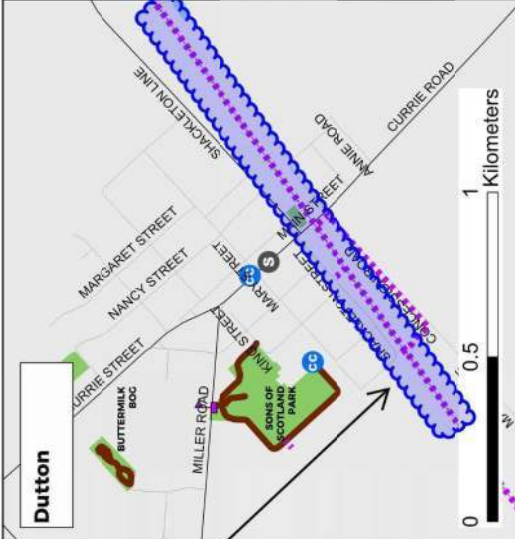


Further investigate the development of a trail along the former CASO rail corridor, from the county boundary with the Municipality of Chatham-Kent to the City of St. Thomas.

Explore the opportunity to develop trails on sections of unopened road allowances for Walnut Line and Erin/Lakeview Line between Currie Road and Fingal Line.

Miller Road - see inset

West Lonsie - see Map 4-8



DRAFT

Map 4-5: Priorities Elgin County Trails Study Proposed Trail Network Township of Malahide

Legend

- Trails**
 - Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Lake Erie Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area Trails
 - Proposed Trails
- Destination Areas**
 - Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
- Reach**
 - Community Centre
 - Conservation Area
 - Provincial Park
 - Seniors' Centre
 - School
- Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)**

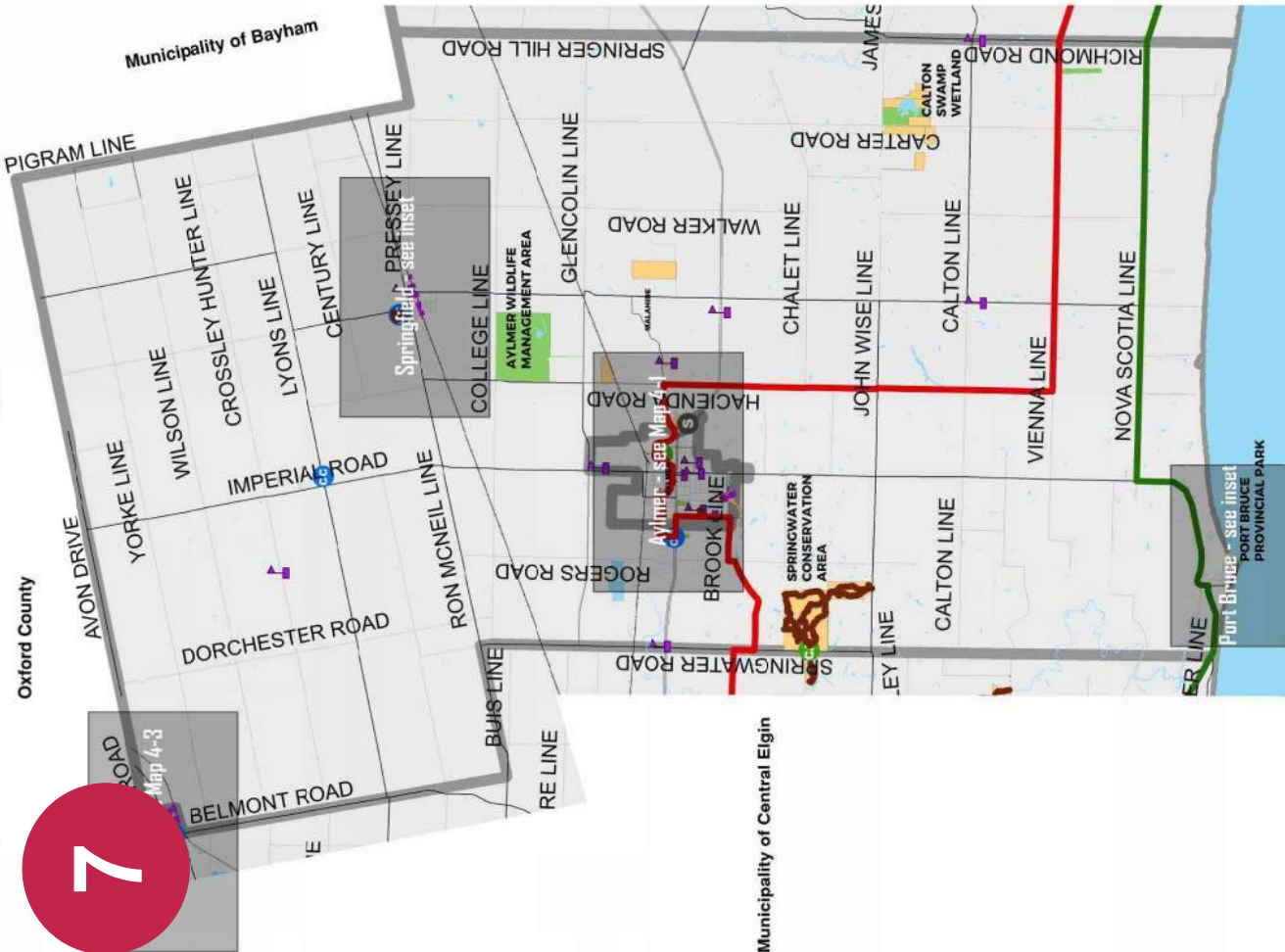
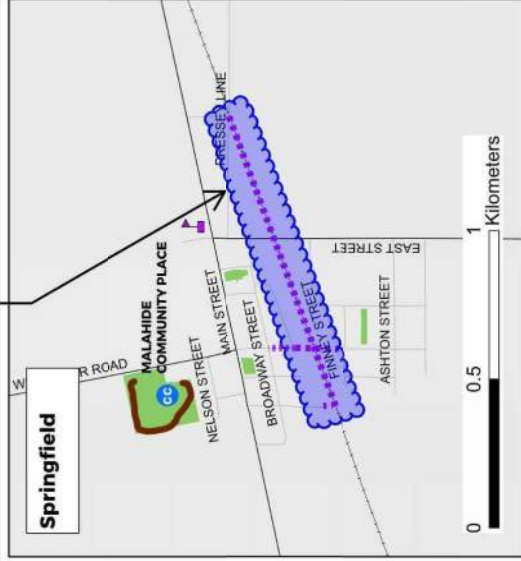
1. Proposed Trails include previously proposed trails from other approved municipal master plans and trails proposed as part of the Elgin County Trails Study.



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Further investigate the development of a trail along the former rail corridor, between Inverness Street and Pressy Line. Proposed north-south linkage, from Finney St./Superior Street to Broadway St./Whittaker Street connects with the existing sidewalk, allowing for a connection to Malahide Community Place.



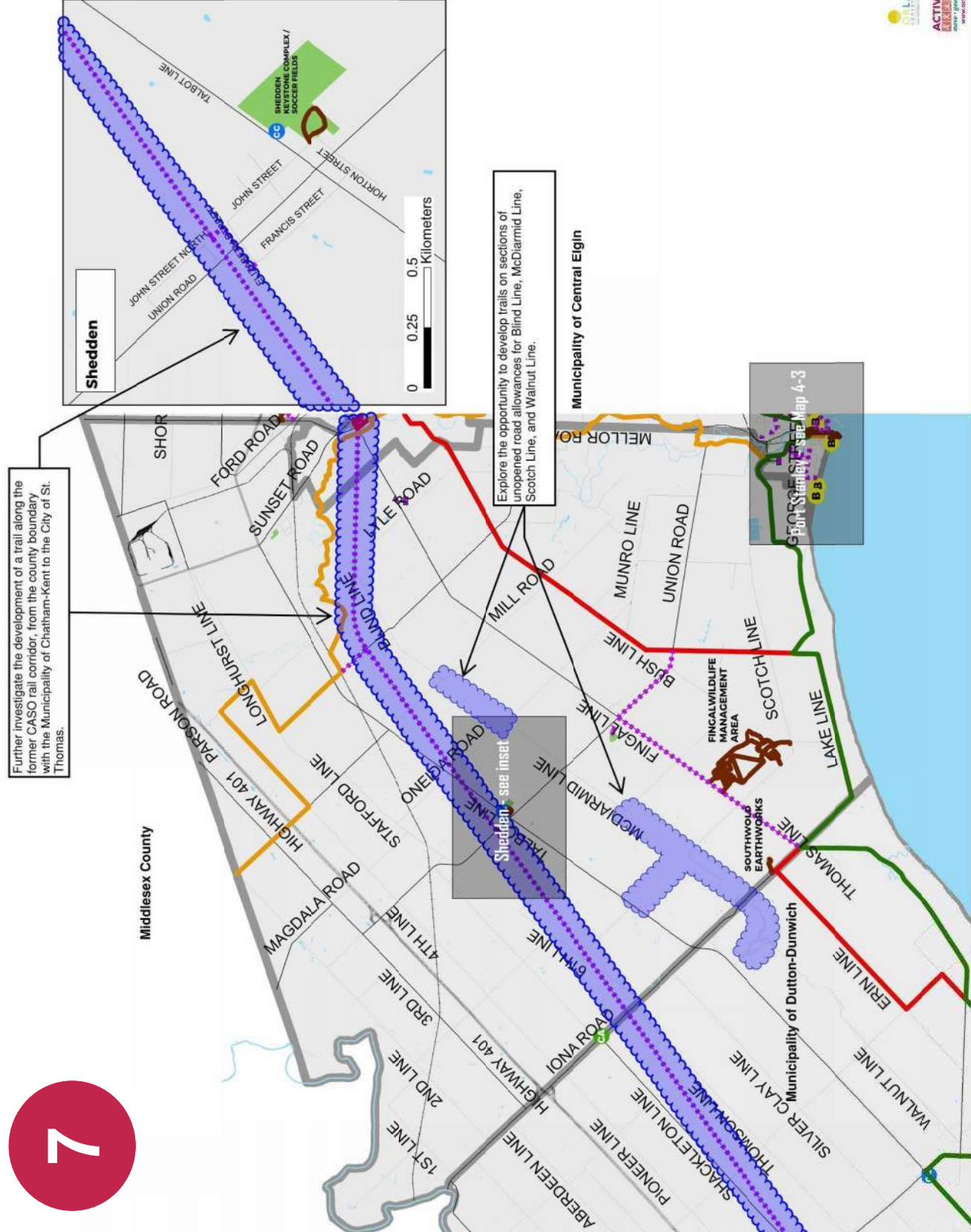
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Map 4-6: Priorities
Elgin County Trails Study
Proposed Trail Network
Township of Southwold

- Legend**
- Trails**
- Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Lake Erie Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area Trails
 - Proposed Trails
 - Destination Areas
 - Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
 - Beach
 - Community Centre
 - Conservation Area
 - Provincial Park
 - Seniors' Centre
 - School
 - Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)

1. Proposed Trails include previously proposed trails from other studies, as well as new trails and trails proposed as part of the Elgin County Trails Study.

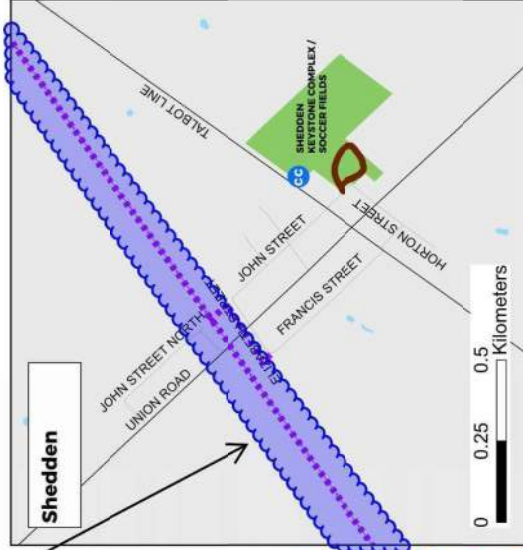


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 Note: Map is not intended for navigation.



Further investigate the development of a trail along the former CASO rail corridor, from the county boundary with the Municipality of Chatham-Kent to the City of St. Thomas.

Explore the opportunity to develop trails on sections of unopened road allowances for Blind Line, McDiarmid Line, Scotch Line, and Walnut Line.



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Map 4-7: Priorities Elgin County Trails Study Proposed Trail Network City of St. Thomas

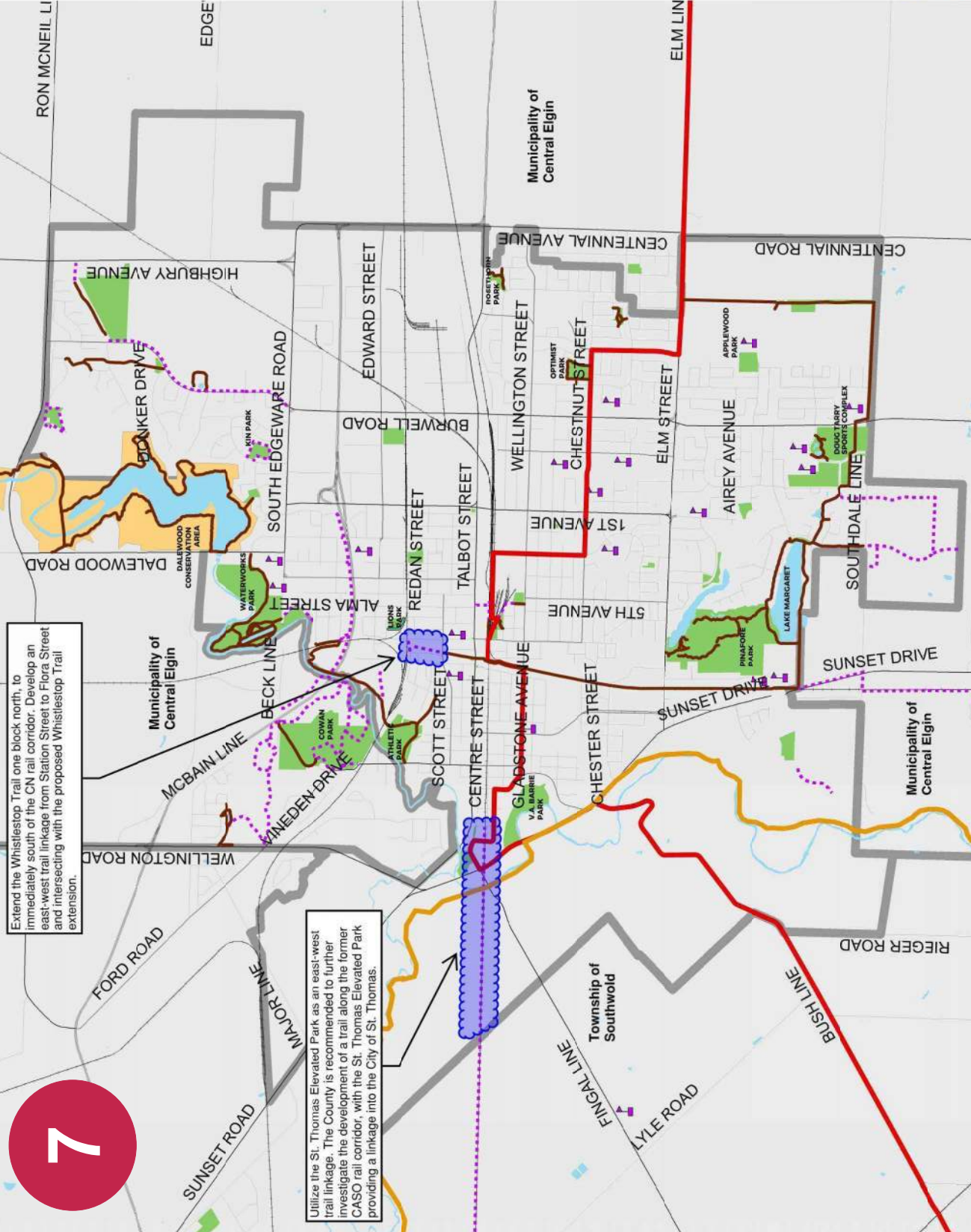
Legend

- Trails
 - Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Lake Erie Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area Trails
 - Proposed Trails¹
- Destination Areas
 - Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
 - Beach
 - Community Centre
 - Conservation Area
 - Provincial Park
 - Seniors' Centre
 - School
- Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)

¹ Proposed Trails include previously proposed trails from other approved municipal master plans and trails proposed as part of the Elgin County Trails Study.



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Extend the Whistlesop Trail one block north, to immediately south of the CN rail corridor. Develop an east-west trail linkage from Station Street to Flora Street and intersecting with the proposed Whistlesop Trail extension.

Utilize the St. Thomas Elevated Park as an east-west trail linkage. The County is recommended to further investigate the development of a trail along the former CASO rail corridor, with the St. Thomas Elevated Park providing a linkage into the City of St. Thomas.

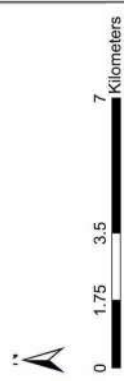


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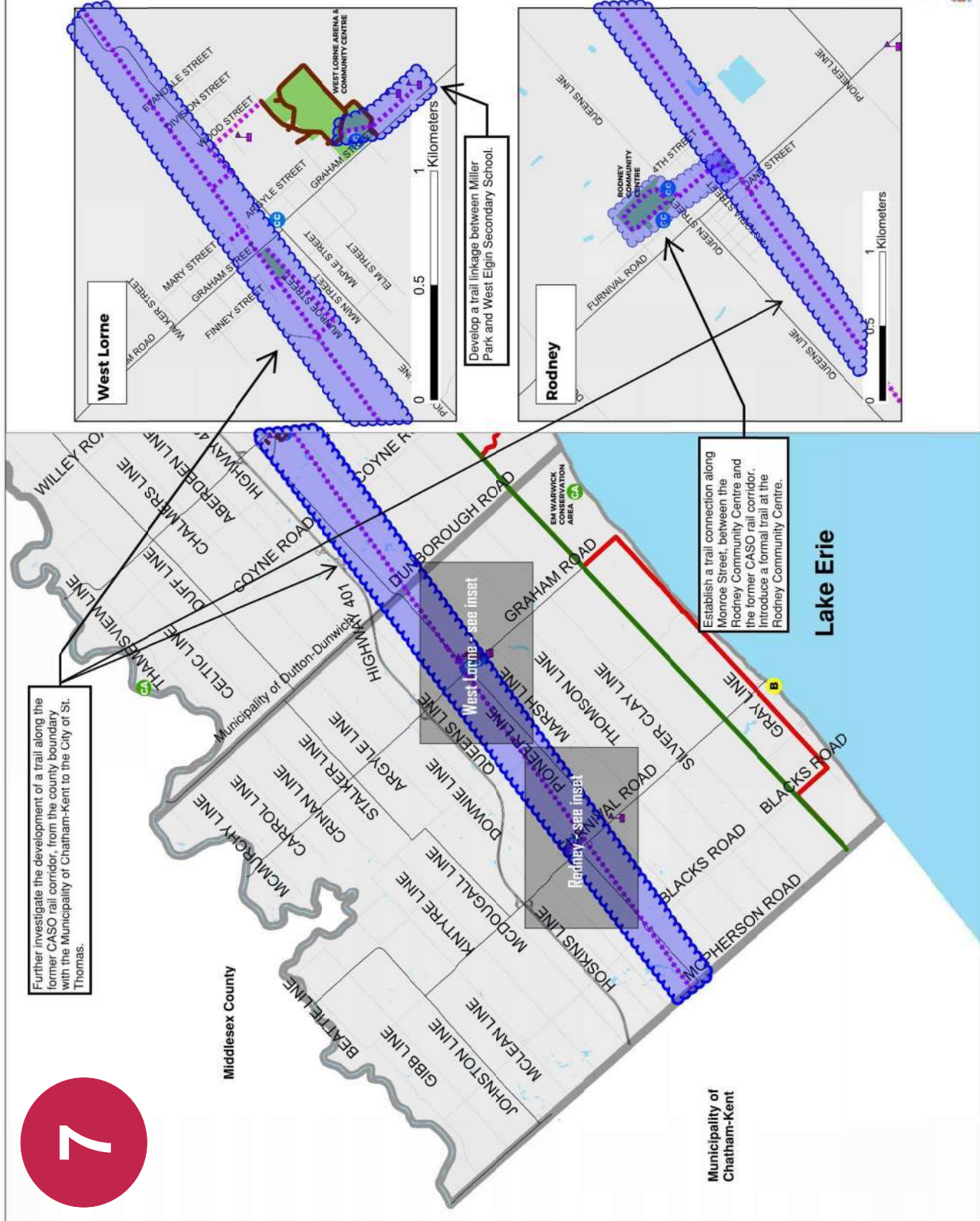
**Map 4-8: Priorities
Elgin County Trails Study
Proposed Trail Network
Municipality of West Elgin**

- Legend**
- Trails
 - Elgin Hiking Trail
 - Trans Canada Trail (The Great Trail)
 - Lake Erie Waterfront Trail
 - Municipal and Conservation Area Trails
 - Proposed Trails
 - Destination Areas
 - Conservation Areas
 - Municipal Parks
 - Provincial Parks
 - Beach
 - Community Centre
 - Conservation Area
 - Provincial Park
 - Seniors' Centre
 - School
 - Rail Corridors (Active and Inactive / Abandoned)

1. Proposed Trails include previously proposed trails from other studies. New trail pairs and trails proposed as part of the Elgin County Trails Study.



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ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

8

Promotion and Outreach

- On-line, County, Municipal and Partners' websites
- Maps and materials at local venues
- Trade shows (e.g. Toronto Bike Show)
- Tourism marketing
- Festivals, events and fairs
- Municipal Open House days
- Education and partnering
- Encourage participation
- Trail openings
- Trail counters and user satisfaction surveys
- Branding and Signage



Recommendation 4.6: The County and Local Municipalities should review the education and outreach initiatives suggested in the Elgin County Trails Study and move forward with those that could be implemented as potential pilot initiatives.

ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

9

Conclusion



Recommendation 4.2: The Elgin County Trails Strategy should be updated in five years to include trails that have been completed and to optimize new trail development opportunities that have been identified in the intervening time .

ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY

9

Next Steps

- Finalize costing
- Submit Draft Trail Study report for review
- Address comments and issue final report
- Follow-up

ELGIN COUNTY TRAILS STUDY DRAFT

NOVEMBER 6, 2018





Unit Price Schedule

Appendix C - Unit Price Schedule

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	UNIT	VALUE	COMMENTS/ASSUMPTIONS
1.0 TRAILS				
1.1	Multi-use trail in-boulevard in an urban setting	linear m	\$350	3.0m wide hard surface trail (asphalt) within road right of way one side of road and 1.5m concrete sidewalk on opposite side
1.2	Hard surfaced multi-use trail in park or open space setting	linear m	\$250	3.0m wide hard surface trail (asphalt) within park setting, assuming normal site conditions
1.3	Natural surface trail in a woodland or valley setting	linear m	\$50	1.5m wide includes clearing and grubbing
1.4	Granular surfaced multi-use trail in park or open space setting	linear m	\$150	3.0m wide, compacted stone dust surface normal site conditions
1.5	Granular surfaced multi-use trail on abandoned rail bed	linear m	\$125	3.0m wide, compacted stone dust surface, includes signage along trail and gates at road crossings
1.6	Woodchip surfaced trail in a woodland setting	linear m	\$100	2.4m wide
2.0 STRUCTURES AND CROSSINGS				
2.1	Pedestrian Boardwalk (Light-Duty)	square m	\$400-\$700	Structure on footings or helical piles, includes basic railing (higher cost for custom/artistic railing)
2.2	Self weathering steel truss bridge	square m	\$2000 - \$2500	Footings/abutments additional, assume \$30,000 per side for spread footings; \$90,000 per side for piles
2.3	Grade separated cycling/overpass of major arterial/highway	each	\$1,000,000- \$8,000,000	Requirements and design vary widely, use price as general guideline only
2.4	Metal stairs with hand railing and gutter to roll bicycle	vertical m	\$3,000	1.8m wide, galvanized steel
2.5	Trail / Road transition	each	\$2,500	Typically includes warning signs, curb cuts and minimal restoration (3.0m trail)
2.6	At grade mid-block crossing	each	\$5,000	Typically includes pavement markings, warning signs, curb cuts and minimal restoration. Does not include median refuge island.
2.7	Median Refuge	each	\$20,000	Average price for basic refuge with curbs, no pedestrian signals
2.8	Mid-block Pedestrian Signal	each	\$75,000-\$100,000	Varies depending on number of signal heads required
2.9	Pedestrian Crossover	each	\$40,000-\$60,000	Assumes PXO B based on Ontario Traffic Manual Book 15
3.0 TRAIL ACCESS AND ACCESS CONTROL				
3.1	Lockable gate (2 per road crossing)	each	\$5,000	Heavy duty gates, price for one side of road (2 required per road crossing). Typically only required in rural settings or city boundary areas
3.2	Metal offset gates	each	\$1,200	"P"-style park gate
3.3	Removable Bollard	each	\$500-\$750	Basic style (e.g. 75mm diameter galvanized), with footing. Increase budget for decorative style bollards
3.4	Berming/boulders at road crossing	each	\$600.00	Price for one side of road (2 required per road crossing)
3.5	Granular parking lot at staging area (15 car capacity-gravel)	each	\$15,000-\$20,000	basic granular surfaced parking area (i.e. 300mm granular B sub-base with 150mm granular A surface), with precast bumper curbs
3.6	Page wire fencing	linear m	\$40	1.5m height with peeled wood posts
3.7	Chain link fencing	linear m	\$100	Galvanized, 1.5m height
4.0 SIGNAGE				
4.1	Regulatory and caution signage (off-road trail) on new metal post	each	\$150-\$250	300mm x 300mm metal signboard c/w metal "u" channel post
4.2	Signboards for interpretive sign	each	\$500-\$800	Does not include graphic design. Based on a 600mm x 900mm typical size and embedded polymer material, up to 40% less for aluminum or aluminum composite panel
4.3	Staging area kiosk	each	\$2,000-\$10,000	Wide range provided. Price depends on design and materials selected. Does not include design and supply of signboards
4.4	Signboards for staging area kiosk sign	each	\$1,500-\$2,000	Typical production cost, does not include graphic design (based on a 900mm x 1500mm typical size and embedded polymer material). Up to 40% less for aluminum or aluminum composite panel
4.5	Trail directional sign	each	\$500-\$750	Bollard / post (100mm x100mm marker) , with graphics on all 4 sides
4.6	Trail marker sign	each	\$250	Bollard / post (100mm x100mm marker), graphics on one side only
5.0 OTHER				
5.1	Major rough grading (for multi-use trail)	cubic m	\$10-\$25	Varies depending on a number of factors including site access, disposal location etc.
5.2	Clearing and Grubbing	square m	\$2	
5.3	Retaining Wall	square m face	\$450-\$600	Unit price for stackable precast concrete units
5.4	Bicycle rack (Post and Ring style)	each	\$150-\$250	Holds 2 bicycles , price varies depending on manufacturer (includes installation)
5.5	Bench	each	\$1000-\$2,000	Price varies depending on style and size. Does not include footing/concrete mounting pad
5.6	Safety Railings	linear m	\$100-\$120	1.4m height basic post and rail style
5.7	Small diameter culverts	linear m	\$150-\$250	Price range applies to 400mm to 600mm diameter PVC or CSP culverts for drainage below trail
5.8	Trail lighting	linear m	\$130-\$160	Includes cabling, connection to power supply, transformers and fixtures. Solar lighting is less since no cabling and transformers are required.

GENERAL NOTES:

- Unit Prices are for functional design purposes only, include installation but exclude contingency, design and approvals costs (unless noted) and reflect 2018 dollars, based on projects in southern Ontario
- Estimates do not include the cost of property acquisitions, utility relocations, major roadside drainage works or costs associated with site-specific projects such as bridges, railway crossings, retaining walls, and stairways
- Assumes typical environmental conditions and topography
- Applicable taxes and permit fees are additional



Land Securement for Trails

APPENDIX D – LAND SECUREMENT FOR TRAILS

By 2036, the projected population growth in the St. Thomas area requires between 3,600 and 4,500 new dwellings with 71% – 76% of them to be detached houses. With the increase in population and consequential rise in demand for trail use, there will also be potential challenges in acquiring the most ideal lands for optimum trail routes. Such housing construction will consume countryside and unless trail routes are stabled beforehand, opportunities could be lost.

Land securement is the acquisition of land, land use rights, or an interest in land with the purpose of ensuring long term environmental protection and stewardship. Land securement takes the form of ownership, a lease or other type of conservation agreement and is delivered through a wide variety of mechanisms such as donation, purchase, transfer and any combination thereof. Differing from land procurement, land securement is to be undertaken with the ultimate purpose of the establishment of trails in perpetuity.

1.0 EXISTING LAND & TRAIL SECUREMENT

In looking to identify what lands to acquire, it is helpful to examine land securement initiatives in relation to land trusts and conservation authorities as noted in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Land Securement Partners in the Area

Organization	Actively securing in the area	Partnership Potential	Focus
Lower Thames Conservation Authority			
Kettle Creek Conservation Authority			
Catfish Creek Conservation Authority	Yes	Yes	Ecological or expansion of existing holdings
Long Point Conservation Authority			
Thames Talbot Land Trust	Yes	Yes	Ecological
Long Point Basin Land Trust			
Trans Canada Trail			
Elgin Hiking Trails Club	No	Little	Connecting trail
Thames Valley Trails Association	No	Little	Connecting trail

Each organization can have its place in helping this initiative. The following are some of the ways they can aid:

- ▶ Holding title or easements
- ▶ Landowner outreach
- ▶ Negotiations
- ▶ Fundraising
- ▶ Trail development/maintenance

When it comes to land and trail securement, multiple partners help close more deals. Landowners sometimes need options. If they don't care to deal with one agency organization (e.g. government), there is another (e.g. charity).

Partners also come in handy with funding applications. With multiple partners shown to request funding, an application is more likely to get accepted over single group applications. Partners can also leverage time and resources thereby allowing more project to be completed in a single year.

2.0 SECUREMENT OPTIONS

Properties can either be secured on title by fee-simple ownership or by registering a conservation easement on title.

2.1 FEE SIMPLE

Fee simple is the most effective method of natural area protection. In this scenario, the recipient acquires complete control of management and rights to the property by holding title. A property can be acquired either by purchasing or receiving as a donation.

2.2 TRAIL EASEMENT

Trail easement agreements ("easement"), are legally binding agreements registered on title whereby the landowner permits access for a trail. The easement can be made to run in perpetuity so that all future owners of the property must allow the same access.

2.3 VARIATIONS OF FEE-SIMPLE

With either securement option of fee-simple or an easement, there can be creativity and flexibility to meet with the landowner's needs and wishes. With fee-simple, there can be an array of scenarios considered. They are as follows:

PARTIAL TAKING

This is an acquisition of only part of a property. For the purpose of securing trail, often, a portion or strip of land is all that is needed. A landowner with a residence on their property may be willing to dispose of the majority of the property while retaining the

building and amenity area. The advantage to this method is that usually the part of the property severed for trail purposes does not include the bulk of the value of the property. For example, a landowner could retain a residential lot and acreage around the residence, and retain the majority of the value of the property in a smaller area than the undevelopable conservation land. The land severed is then owned and managed by the recipient (municipality or partner).

In some cases, landowners will want to donate or sell the entire parcel to the recipient. In the case of a sale, the recipient may want to recover some of the purchase price by severing and selling off the developed or developable portion of the property. It is advisable to negotiate a long closing date to provide sufficient time to market the developable lot and aim for a simultaneous closing.

Municipalities and conservation authorities can execute a direct conveyance, while land trusts must apply for a severance to the Committee of Adjustment as per Planning Act requirement.

GRATUITOUS DEDICATION

Through the planning process with development applications, municipalities have the ability to take parkland. This would apply for any development applications in areas with proposed trail or existing unsecured trail.

In this instance, a developer dedicates land within a development proposal as a condition of approval of the application. This will usually result in a dedication of lands to either the municipality or CA. Land Trusts are unlikely to be involved in this kind of transaction.

DONATION

Donation can take many forms and can be complete or partial. Primarily, the donor has two options:

1. Donate all, or part, of the property direct to the recipient. This process is usually quick and can be a significantly lower cost option. A charitable donation receipt can be issued in respect to the value of the property if desired which can be applied against tax returns in the same fashion as other charitable tax receipts but capital gains tax applies.
2. Donate all (or part) of the property to the recipient through the Environment Canada Ecological Gifts program. This process usually takes 5 to 12 months to complete and can carry more costs associated with appraisals and surveys. The advantage is that the tax receipt can be applied more generously over a longer period than a normal tax receipt.

BEQUESTS

Landowners may elect to provide for a gift of land in their Will – perhaps as a personal or family legacy. The main benefit of arranging a bequest is that there is no cost during the landowner’s lifetime. A bequest can be cost effective from a tax perspective against the estate (note: this applies to donation only). However, wills can be contested by family and result in possible loss of the property. In light of these limitations, a life interest agreement/lease back arrangement can be a better alternative to the donor.

LIFE INTEREST AGREEMENT/LEASE BACK ARRANGEMENT

When the vendor/donor wishes to retain an interest in the property, they can enter into either a ‘life interest agreement’ or a ‘lease back arrangement’ for their continued use of the property (e.g. firewood, hay harvesting, maple syrup operation). The land can be donated, purchased or split-receipted. The value of the retained interest would be determined by a qualified appraiser. The agreement would specify a set term or continue as long as the vendor resides on the subject property.

Although “life-interest” suggests a time period equivalent to the landowner’s lifetime, it is prudent to state a timeframe in the agreement and specify an expiration date of the term.

SPLIT RECEIPT

A ‘split receipt’ can be viewed as either a donation of land (or conservation easement) with cash consideration back to the donor, or a purchase of land with a donation of land value in cash back to the purchaser. Essentially, the vendor agrees to sell the property at less than market value and receive the remainder of the value in the form of a tax receipt. Through the Ecogifts Program, the donated portion must be a minimum of 20% of the appraised value to qualify for a split receipt. Conversely, the landowner cannot receive more than 80% in cash.

Split receipt should only be offered as an option if the prospective landowner refuses to consider all other donation options.

TRADE LANDS

Trade lands are similar to donations where a landowner wishes to donate or bequeath their property; however, in these instances the property does not contain any significant environmental features. These lands should be treated similarly to stocks or annuities that a donor offers so the charity can sell off the asset with the proceeds being directed into land securement of ecologically significant lands or as directed by the donor. The land could also be traded with another landowner’s environmentally significant lands.

EXCHANGES

Landowners who own property where trail would be optimum may exchange their parcel for a property suiting their needs which is owned and unused by the municipality. These arrangements may bring funds to rare since the landowner's land could be worth less monetarily and thus has to offer additional cash with the exchange to make it fair. The additional funds can be used to acquire additional conservation lands. While these transactions traditionally consist of the exchange of fee simple interests, they can consist of any combination of property interests. Note that land exchanges are not necessarily acre for acre. Any exchange would be based on appraised value as valley lands would not be valued the same as developable tableland.

OPTION TO PURCHASE & RIGHT OF FIRST REFUSAL

An 'option to purchase' is a contract that allows the recipient to buy a property at a set price for a stipulated period. It is a written contract by the landowner to sell the property and not withdraw this offer during the identified term. The recipient pays a consideration fee for this option of upwards to \$10,000. This mechanism is often used by a conservation group as a means of 'buying time' in an attempt to acquire a specific piece of land – presenting an ideal opportunity to fundraise for the purchase costs. This is an agreement between a landowner and the recipient, or other prospective buyer, which gives the recipient an opportunity to match any third party offer to buy a property. It sets out the conditions of sale and is registered on title. This method is considered an interim measure and can be an effective tool to use when negotiations have been halted (e.g. unacceptable appraised value). It can also afford time for the recipient to purchase a property that already has an easement in cases where the recipient decides they would rather hold title than enter into an easement.

The 'right of first refusal' is another method used to discourage competing potential buyers (e.g. developers). The holder of the first rights has priority and therefore maintains some leverage against other potential buyers. There is a fee associated with this method and there is no expiration date. It can only be exercised when the landowner decides to sell.

LAND TRANSFERS

Public landholding agencies such as the Ontario Realty Corporation (ORC), utility companies, or railway companies could decide to transfer environmentally sensitive lands, or ask an organization to be a backup holder for their lands should the agency cease to exist in the future. These lands could either be fee-simple title or partial interest (e.g. easement). These types of transfers only occur if the recipient organization is willing to accept the lands, and the lands meet the organization's criteria. The agency looking to transfer title may require the recipient organization to sign a landholding agreement or transfer agreement to ensure that the lands are

properly managed in perpetuity. It would be prudent for the recipient of transferred lands, or a contingency holder, to only accept the land if the agency transferring can offer complete and accurate files and stewardship funds available as part of the transfer.

THE ECOLOGICAL GIFTS PROGRAM

The Ecological Gifts Program enables owners of property with sensitive natural features to preserve wildlife habitat. Ecological Gifts are qualified charitable land donations that generate enhanced income tax benefits. Donations of fee simple title and partial interests, including easements, are eligible. In many scenarios the landowner can continue to hold title and/or live on the land. Donors of ecogifts receive a donation receipt for the fair market value of the gift.

Ecological gifts (ecogifts) receive tax treatment that is superior to most other charitable gifts. Ecogift tax advantages include:

- ▶ Eliminated taxable capital gain on the disposition of the property
- ▶ No income limit for calculating the tax credit/deduction
- ▶ Donation value certified by the Government of Canada
- ▶ A 10-year carry-forward period for claiming the donation

The process of making an ecological gift is relatively straightforward. The donor will basically have two steps to complete that include providing: (i) information to support the evaluation of the land as ecologically sensitive, and (ii) an appraisal of Fair Market Value by a qualified appraiser along with a signed Application for Appraisal Review and Determination. The donor and recipient will generally cooperate on the application to confirm that the property is qualified as ecologically sensitive. The recipient will also often help the donor arrange for the appraisal of fair market value and complete the applications.

The difficulty with applying trail securement with the Ecogift program is that trail use is not considered complimentary to ecological preservation. Narrow footpaths (i.e. hiking trail) could be fine if already present at the time of application. Requesting a change in use to accommodate a trail would be frowned upon and likely denied.

3.0 LANDOWNER OUTREACH

A primary goal of any land securement program is to educate target landowners about the various long-term conservation options that are available to them. Most landowners only know about two options when it comes to disposition of their land:

- ▶ Sell it; or
- ▶ bequeath it to family

Deciding to gift one's property is a big decision that can take a landowner several years to make as it is often their largest financial asset. Even if a landowner doesn't express interest in the various securement options available to them at this time, the landowner now has increased awareness about them should they change their mind in the future. As in fundraising, approaching people for land donations also requires patient cultivation. Building relationships is essential. It could be many years later when a landowner becomes ready to consider securement.

The approaches listed below involve proactive landowner contact; however, the possibilities are good that some landowners will take the lead in contacting a conservation authority or land trust to discuss the donation or sale of their land after the land securement program has become aware to them. This is particularly likely the partners are active in the area, have a good reputation with landowners and the community, and have provided good communication regarding trail connection, conservation land securement programs and tax incentives to landowners.

The initial steps associated with landowner contact include developing a landowner contact list, preparing landowner packages and property mapping. The landowner contact program will include the elements described in the sections below. These elements are based on years of experience in implementing these programs on the ground with landowners but regional factors also come into play.

The basic approach as listed below includes the following elements:

- ▶ Developing a landowner contact list
- ▶ Circulating the confidential list to appropriate partners requesting introductions and/or background information
- ▶ Mailing a package of information to the landowner if no introduction is given
- ▶ Following up with a phone call(s)
- ▶ Schedule a property visit to discuss options with interested landowners

Approaches that are more personal should be applied where relationships or connections with landowners on the list already exist. For example, encouraging local councillors, land trust and CA Board and Committee members and/or other members of the community to initiate contact with known landowners through a phone call or quick drop-in is sometimes all it takes to initiate land securement discussions. These introductions through a known and trusted source usually get the best results. For properties where the landowner is not known, mailing a package first so the call and/or drop in is not completely unannounced is a better way of establishing contact with landowners and lets them review background materials in advance of contact. This also allows the landowner to ask questions when called and reduces the amount of follow up later on. Additionally, using mailings to follow up with landowners where

relationships have been initiated are a good way to keep and maintain the relationship, especially if the landowner is not able to participate in a conservation land securement project at the present moment but may in the future. Other methods include holding 'neighbour to neighbour' kitchen table meetings (i.e. a friendly landowner hosts a meeting and invites other neighbours to learn new information and discuss topics relating to securement and stewardship). Holding community workshops on stewardship issues of interest to landowners to establish landowner leads (this will also bring in a wider audience than the specific landowner list unless it is by invitation only).

DEVELOPING A LANDOWNER CONTACT LIST

Along the target corridor, a landowner list needs to be developed. Landowner contact information needs to be collected (e.g. mailing address, phone number) so that packages can be mailed and followed-up on. Each property should be reviewed through GIS analysis with orthoimagery and parcel fabric data layer to determine appropriateness of the individual parcel for the most appropriate securement method. For example, positioning of improvements on a property may make a trail through a section infeasible.

MAILING

This will involve sending out an introductory letter explain the collaborative effort to make trail connections, a brochure outlining the various long-term securement options, and an optional photo mosaic map of the subject property. Ecogifts Program brochures should not be included in the mailing. The goal here is to introduce the landowner to the key material and encourage a meeting. Once rapport is made and insight into a positive conservation motivation is established, the idea of an ecogift can be introduced if applicable.

TELEPHONE CONTACT

This step involves calling identified landowners to introduce them to the program in an attempt to arrange a meeting. In most cases, this step best follows the mailing so that the telephone call is not a 'cold call'. Discussing land securement in detail should be reserved for a face to face meeting.

DROP-INS

On occasion, a drive to priority areas and dropping in on target landowners and especially properties for sale by owner or properties is a way to make a meeting happen. This is a necessary action for landowners who are unreachable via the telephone or who have unlisted contact information. Drop-ins are more welcoming when done in spring, summer and autumn.

SCHEDULED SITE VISITS

Once a contacted landowner expresses interest in the program, a landowner visit can be scheduled and if there is a strong interest from the landowner to consider securement, a Property Evaluation Form can be filled out. It is always emphasized to the landowner that they should seek professional legal and financial advice before making any decisions.

LANDOWNER LEADS

This involves following up on leads from various community individuals, organizations and partners. These will be followed up after discussion with the referrer on the appropriate next steps.

LANDOWNER INFORMATION SESSIONS

For the target areas, invitations can be sent to each of them to come and listen to presentations on a variety of topics and speakers that would interest them such as tree planting subsidies/programs, attracting pollinators, and then long-term land protection options and finally an estate planner can show land legacy tax scenarios. Some landowners may come up to speakers and want further information. The receptivity to land securement will often be easier using this approach.

WEBSITE

A proactive way to reach landowners is to have more information of the trail initiative and land securement options website. This will allow landowners to review donation information posted on the site and make contact if interested.

PRESENTATIONS

Giving presentations to various local groups and clubs (e.g. Rotary Club, Kiwanis) in the area of target areas is means of educating influential community members about conservation options and tax benefits, and receiving introductions to target landowners.

4.0 SECUREMENT PROJECT PROCESS

For the first year following the adoption of this Strategy, it is expected that landowner outreach to all the targeted landowners of each priority zone. Land securement can still happen in concurrence with landowner outreach but few results are expected in the first couple of years. Seeds get planted in the minds of landowners, and then after time, projects begin to manifest at a relatively faster rate. Further, securement projects take time to process; several months to several years, is common especially with donations.

Following landowner outreach endeavors, some of the targeted landowners may express interest in land conservation or trail dedication, which will likely give rise to a

meeting on site, provided the landowner lives on or close to the property. Once a landowner expresses an interest to proceed, a desktop property evaluation should be done, with maps of the property and one locator map to provide context. The property evaluation would then be circulated to the Healthy Communities Partnership, or a “Trail Securement Committee”, for consideration.

4.1 PROJECT APPROVALS

It is recommended that the Committee will work to develop two property securement lists. List One would outline ‘active’ properties for securement, and List Two would identify ‘potential’ properties for securement. The list of potential securement opportunities is developed first and will include those new properties that have been brought to the attention of the conservation land securement representative, whether this person is staff or contractor, and warrant further consideration. Once a candidate property has been identified, a property evaluation involving desktop analysis and where necessary, field investigation will be undertaken. This will provide an assessment of the ecological significance of the property in the context of the priority areas identified. Further, the desire to acquire the property and a landowner’s interest in working with the group or one of its securement partners to develop a mutually acceptable transaction will need to be assessed. This could take the form of a fee-simple purchase, donation, split-receipt, easement, etc. Depending on the property history and preliminary site evaluation, additional environmental studies may also be required (e.g. Phase 1 and 2 Environmental Assessments).

Properties that have been moved on to the active list will then be pursued for securement upon review and recommendation by the Committee to the proposed title holder. To prioritize how important any given property would be will involve identifying the funding source or program to secure the property whether it is a purchase, easement or donation. Once the funding is determined, the field representative will proceed to secure the property (e.g. negotiate agreement, obtain appraisal, commission survey, etc.).

4.2 DUE DILIGENCE

Once a landowner of a target property has expressed interest to donate or sell the land, there should be additional assessment to receive and review the following:

- ▶ Confirmation of ownership to ensure the correct representative is negotiating. This can be done in a preliminary title search or obtaining a recent copy of property tax form from the owner.
- ▶ Signed Letter of Intent to confirm the landowner’s intent to proceed with project. This can be drafted and given to the land donor / vendor for convenience.

- ▶ Appraisal to determine fair market value to Ecological Gifts Program standards if it is a donation or appraisal to determine fair price if a purchase. There can be an exception with purchases if there is a high degree of confidence in values of recent comparable sales.
- ▶ Existing survey if available; otherwise commission a survey by an Ontario Land Surveyor (OLS) if boundaries are in question, if required by funding partner, or if the securement method is a partial taking or conservation easement.
- ▶ Site inspection during a time of no snow cover. If deemed necessary from that inspection, a Phase 1 Environmental Assessment may be done

The intent behind this consideration is to identify the costs associated with undertaking due diligence; not to evaluate or predict the outcome or resultant outcome of this work. For example, a project where a survey and appraisal is required will be less favorably weighted than a project that does not require these steps due to the financial saving. With all properties, regardless of nature of securement, due diligence as a process, may identify concerns with a property that impact its attractiveness, for example, identifying undesirable encroachments or encumbrances.

TITLE SEARCH

A title search produces documents showing the property's ownership history to determine the landowner in question has a saleable interest in the property and any restrictions on title.

LETTER OF INTENT

It is in the best interest of conserving time and resources to obtain a 'letter of intent' from the landowner about a potential securement project before spending the time and money on an appraisal. It should not be too strict in its wording to prevent alienating the landowner but it may be helpful in gauging a landowner's real interest. Such a letter can commit the Partnership to pay for the appraisal but claim 50% of the appraisal cost back should the landowner back out of the arrangement.

APPRAISALS

Appraisals determine the value of the land to be acquired. From the land securement principles listed above, when purchasing land, allow a flexible 10%+/- variation in purchase price to get the deal done. Ultimately a willing buyer and seller determine fair market value. Prior to commissioning an appraiser, it is recommended that the landowner's expectations are close to the likely outcome of an appraisal. If far apart, further negotiation is advised.

In addition to the standards noted above, to qualify for the Ecogifts Program and potentially other funding programs, all appraisals must be at arm's length from the parties to the transaction.

As comparable conservation land value data ('comps') is accumulated from several closings, a price per acre value from strong comps may be enough in some cases to make an offer if fee-simple purchase is the only option the landowner will consider. If staff have strong confidence in land value, the need for an appraisal may be deemed optional.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

In land transactions, legal advice from a lawyer or notary experienced with real estate law. It should also be suggested to the landowners also involved in the transaction receive their own independent legal advice about the transaction, legal documentation and implications.

LAND SURVEY

In most cases, a survey should be conducted to clearly determine the exact boundaries of the property being acquired. A new survey is always required if a partial taking or easement is negotiated. In cases where an entire property is being acquired, a copy of the original survey may be enough.

5.0 COST OF LAND SECUREMENT

In addition to features that can be mapped, there is a wide range of aspects that need to be considered when deciding to secure land. These considerations include additional natural heritage values, but also consider risk and financial impacts. These aspects naturally vary from project to project and therefore cannot be accurately forecasted. Such project-specific considerations may be deemed a positive aspect in favour of a securement project or a negative component. These considerations include:

- ▶ Method of Securement (purchase, donation, split receipt, etc.)
- ▶ Need/desire to undertake restoration
- ▶ Long term stewardship and carrying costs
- ▶ Due Diligence search results
- ▶ Risk - the potential for both downside and upside risk
- ▶ The nature and current uses on the land

5.1 SECUREMENT PROJECT COSTS

Focusing on receiving donations of land and conservation easements obviously saves from the cost of a purchase, but securing a donation is still costly. The often referred to as "soft costs" (appraisal, survey, legal, etc.) can add up (see Table 2).

Table 2: Typical Land Securement Costs

Item	Estimated Cost
Appraisal	\$4,000 - \$7,000
Legal	\$1,500 - \$5,000
Survey	\$2,500 - \$15,000
Phase 1 Assessment	\$2,000 - \$4,000
Staff/contractor time	\$4,000 - \$12,000
Total	\$14,000 - \$43,000

5.2 LAND VALUES

The monetary value of land varies within the area. Wetland land is less expensive than tableland. As markets inflate, the application is to land which is usable for development and agriculture. Undevelopable land values are much slower to rise. Further, there are very few buyers of unusable lands. It is expected that the Partnership will be the only significantly active land securement organization in the area. As such, it will be influential on the market values for these types of lands.

5.3 BUDGETING FOR SECUREMENT

The criteria used to establish the target areas already filtered out a vast amount of eligible target securement land for proactive landowner outreach, but with the chosen target areas still leaves 365 properties to do further orthoimagery review on to screen out more properties as unsuitable for securement. For example, several buildings spread out from the centre of a one hectare lot could be observed. This would be challenging to come up with a securement option appealing to both the Committee and the landowner.

The securement budget for the first year can be largely accommodating for outreach and negotiation time. Preparing for one purchase and one donation in the first year would also be prudent. As projects begin to manifest from the outreach, rare should start to see how truly reliable securement and funding partners in that area are. A later adjustment to prioritizing zones for outreach can then be based on funding and securement partner interest level.

In addition to securement costs, other cost and risks need to be considered.

STEWARDSHIP & ENDOWMENT FUNDS

In order to provide adequate resources in perpetuity for properties to cover stewardship and maintenance related activities, a detailing of costs is necessary for each acquired property (both fee-simple and easement properties). Costs should include both infrequent and short-term costs (e.g. tree planting, fencing) and

repetitive and long-term costs (e.g. insurance, clean-up, monitoring, etc.). The costs can be categorized as those that are administrative or stewardship and maintenance related. There is more direct stewardship and maintenance required on owned land versus land under an easement agreement. Examples of costs are listed below as well as their likelihood for fundraising.

LAND ADMINISTRATION - CARRYING CHARGES

Typical ongoing costs of land securement include: property taxes, risk management, insurance, access, perimeter signage, and fencing (note – these costs can be difficult to fundraise for and more reliant on endowment funding).

Adequately budgeting for the full life cycle costs of properties is essential. The following sections outline the costs associated with acquisitions in the past few years, which is a reliable indication of projected costs over the coming years. The examples below demonstrate some of the elements that must be considered within the securement costs and planned for. The higher these costs, the less favourable the securement project will be.

STEWARDSHIP / LONG TERM MAINTENANCE COSTS

When acquiring a property, there may be issues to be resolved to minimize hazards and liability. It may be a short term, one time fix or a long term, ongoing cost. The table below outlines some of the potential items and a range of costs. See Appendix F to calculate costs related to land stewardship.

CARRYING COSTS

Property tax for non-government organizations can be the primary carrying cost; therefore, it is recommended that the County or local municipality holds title to the land or easement.

Each property acquired may increase or impact the insurance premiums of the holder; probably less so for a municipality with an existing land portfolio.

LIABILITY

Prior to any securement a comprehensive risk assessment should be undertaken to provide information around any current or potential future risks to the property in respect to public use. This risk assessment should include management measures required to address key risks.

MAINTENANCE

Depending on the nature of the trail and its intended use, maintenance requirements will vary. Areas which encourage public access, such as trails and picnic areas, would require regular, seasonal maintenance such as mowing. Trails through managed forest areas would need a bigger maintenance budget.

UNDESIRABLE USES

Bush parties, ATV's use, and illegal activities such as dumping, and wildlife poaching are common in rural areas. Engaging local residents and users in helping to deter prohibited activities can greatly help. The more active a trail is for the intended use will deter the illegal activities.

ECOLOGICAL RISKS

In taking on property there is a degree of ecological risk that needs to be assessed. Depending on the nature of the property it may contain invasive species (dog strangling vine, Japanese knotweed, giant hogweed and others) which need to be addressed, or it may be in a condition which leaves the property susceptible to ecological pressure from invasive species, for example, farmlands that have been recently abandoned.

Cost and risk management of taking on lands should never outweigh the upside risk, or positive impacts of securing lands. If they do, the property should not be secured without increasing the stewardship fund accordingly.

REFERENCE

https://www.stthomas.ca/UserFiles/Servers/Server_12189721/File/City%20Hall/Planning%20and%20Building%20Services/Planning%20Services/PopHsgEmplStThomasApr22-15.pdf