

Aurora Connects seeks feedback on Town's Active Transportation Master Plan

If you run, walk, jog or cycle, the Town of Aurora is looking for your feedback as it develops its new Active Transportation Master Plan.

The Town is seeking input from the public to create a more connected community where active forms of mobility are convenient, accessible and enjoyable," said the municipality in a statement.

Aurora Connects will lay out a vision for an expanded network of trails, cycling facilities and other types of physical infrastructure to support walking, cycling and wheeling. It will also identify how the Town can support new programs to get more people moving actively as they make their way across Aurora, creating a healthier, more sustainable community.

As the project gets underway, the project team wants to hear from you.

Feedback is being sought through survey and mapping tools available online at engageaurora.ca/atmp.

The plan will be developed as a series of discussion papers which, when finalized, will be included as a chapter in the final Aurora Connects document," the Town notes, adding the first of those papers are now available for public feedback at the same website.

This focus on active transportation is also a component in the redevelopment of the Town's Official Plan. (OP)

The draft OP, which is also now available for public comment, covers the principle of a "connected transportation network" which includes both active transportation and transit.

The Town's transportation system, including its transportation, transit, and active transportation networks have an essential role in supporting the growth of a complete community," reads the draft. "The policies of this plan seek to ensure the growth of a robust, multi-modal transportation system that meets the needs of all residents and is consistent with the Town's objectives for managed growth and sustainable development."

These objectives include the promotion of active transportation and the use of "alternate transportation modes such as transit, walking and bicycling to reduce the dependence on private motor vehicles;" the promotion of York Region Transit as an "essential, environmentally significant public service through appropriate land use and urban design policies" and ensuring the "development and maintenance of a safe, comfortable and enjoyable environment for pedestrians and cyclists, along roads and trails."

Sustainable modes of travel like active transportation and transit "have a vital role in supporting the creation of a healthy, safe, complete community," the draft continues. The reduction in dependence on cars and the promotion of physical activity, it claims, would result in lower emissions and a reduction in motor vehicle injuries."

In recognition of the health and environmental benefits associated with active transportation, it is a priority of this plan to facilitate an active and integrated multi-modal transportation system that is safe, efficient, economical, convenient and comfortable while respecting the heritage features and character of the community," reads the draft OP.

The Aurora Trail Network shall serve non-motorized movement such as walking, jogging, cycling, cross-country skiing or snowshoeing as outlined in the Aurora Trails Master Plan. It will link the Greenlands system, including existing and proposed off-road trails, with destinations such as schools, recreation centres, service commercial facilities, employment areas, shopping areas and the Aurora Promenade.

Council will strive to take advantage of the Oak Ridges Moraine, creek valleys and flood prone areas, especially along the Holland River, the Tannery Creek and their tributaries to complete the Open Space System. The location and creation of trails shall not

interfere with the primary ecological function of Environmental Protection Areas. Where possible, trails shall be placed on level shoulders of the valley, in buffers to natural features, and/or in already disturbed areas to avoid destruction of vegetation, erosion of valley slopes, and other ecological damage.?

Potential acquisition of lands to further the trail system, the draft notes, includes establishing right of ways with the Ontario Power Commission ?where this coincides with the proposed linear open space system? and areas to link the trail system to ?plateaus which allow exceptional vistas.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter