

Aurora eyes improved pedestrian, cycling connections for Yonge's south end

A new multi-use path on Yonge Street from Bloomington Road to just south of Henderson Drive could help increase connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists alike in Aurora's south end.

The Town is seeking public feedback on the new multi-use path (MUP) after an information session earlier this month and a formal presentation to the Town's Active Transportation and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee.

"This north-south path will be designed to allow for a wide-range of recreational uses such as cycling, walking, jogging, and wheelchair access," says the Town. "The goal for the Yonge Street MUP is to allow the community to connect with key destinations in Town such as the Aurora GO Station, existing trails, schools, and local businesses.

"Currently, active transportation facilities are not provided along this stretch of Yonge Street. Cyclists share the road with motorists without dedicated and separated facilities, and pedestrians are using the shoulder of the road to access services and amenities north of this area. The multi-use path will increase safety for all road users."

Now in its design phase, the Town estimates a completion date of the path by the end of 2026, but "as the phase suggests" the devil is truly in the details.

The first public information session was held on January 14 at Town Hall, a meeting which attracted just over 20 residents.

Further options, all of which showed a terminus at the railway bridge just north of Industrial Parkway South and a north-south span of nearly 2 kilometres, were presented to the Committee last week "with one member suggesting further design work will need to be considered following Metrolinx's expansion of the bridge to accommodate the future double-tracking needed for all-day two-way GO Train service through Aurora.

The bridge would need wider footings than what was installed there more than 70 years ago and would impact designs. Another questioned whether the approved design will ultimately be a temporary measure depending on York Region's goals for transit in the area.

"We're looking at partnership with York Region so, in addition to making sure that the facility meets Town standards, we're also making sure it meets Regional requirements [because] we're exploring cost-sharing opportunities for a multiuse pathway within the boulevard," said Courtney Hough, a consultant from Ainley Group, tapped by the Town to lead the project.

Hough noted that the project's scope includes additional trail connections at Cannon Valley Court, at 14378 Yonge Street, and Elderberry Trail.

"We're looking at utility locations and conflicts, considering lighting of the active transportation facility and the roadway, and we're also looking at connectivity to existing facilities such as sidewalks, bus stops, mail boxes, and private residential driveways," she continued. "We have to consider the impact to trees and vegetation, then there is the topographical constraints and the need for a retaining wall and any associated railing or fencing that would go with the wall. We also have to look at impact to stormwater conveyance. The Region does have storm sewer infrastructure along this stretch of Yonge Street, so there are culverts, catch basins as well as ditching.

Three options for the MUP are under consideration.

All three options contain a MUP on the west side of Yonge Street.

The most economical option is proceeding solely with the MUP on the website. Just higher on the cost list is a model combining the

west side MUP with an east side MUP or sidewalk connections on certain sections of the east bank. Topping the list from a cost perspective is a model that includes an MUP both east and west, or a complete sidewalk from Bloomington to Industrial Parkway.

By Brock Weir