

Lots of big plans for Chain of Lakes greenway corridor

BY KIM MOAR
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Lorne Logan, chairman of the Chain of Lakes Trails Association, says as many as 50,000 people used the greenway corridor last year. (KIM MOAR)

The sky's the limit when it comes to plans for the Chain of Lakes trail, but it all comes down to money, says the chairman of a volunteer committee which manages the greenway corridor.

"Overall it's very positive," said Lorne Logan of the recently released final report of the Chain of Lakes Trails Association. "We recognize there's a bit of a discrepancy between some of the budget estimates, and what we can realistically do.

"We're better to work in the real world for this one," he added.

Some of the big ticket items outlined in the final report include nearly \$1 million in infrastructure improvements on HRM-owned land on both the east and west side of Chain Lake Drive in the Bayers Lake Business Park. The plan includes parking lots constructed along with washrooms, plaza space, benches and a fenced-in off-leash dog park.

The report, prepared by Ekistics Planning and Design and based largely on public consultation, also envisions \$413,000 in trail upgrades, including paving the entire trail, grass seeding the edges and installing crosswalks and emergency telephones along the 7.2-kilometre-long trail.

Logan said there are mixed opinions on whether the whole trail should be paved, or if part of it should remain as a crushed gravel path.

A paved surface can be plowed free of snow in the winter making it more accessible year-round, while an unpaved, unplowed section allows people to cross-country ski or snowshoe along the trail.

Future trail projects could also include \$394,000 for trail furnishings, such as benches,

bike racks exercise stations and other equipment.

Connecting the Chain of Lakes corridor to other recreation areas was ranked as the highest priority during public workshops. Connections identified include a \$138,000 trail to Long Lake Provincial Park below the St. Margaret's Bay Road overpass, and another \$568,000 link to the Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness area.

Other projects include overall trail beautification, interpretive signage, and upgrades to various neighbourhood trail entrances, such as those off Retreat Avenue, Rosemount Avenue, Keating Road and Crown Drive, and at the main entrance to the trail on Joseph Howe Drive.

Logan said over the past year, trail counts indicate as many as 50,000 people used the greenway last year.

The report suggests all capital projects could be complete within a 10-year time frame with a budget of an estimated \$5 million in 2012 dollars.

The volunteer association is now prioritizing its 2012 capital works. Some projects under consideration include installing distance markers along the trail so people know how far they've walked, improving some trail access points and having a centre line painted on the paved portion to encourage people to stay right while on the multi-use trail.

A final decision on this year's projects has not yet been made, and the association encourages any public input into trail improvements.

HRM allocates \$50,000 to municipal trail groups for capital improvements.

The Chain of Lakes Trails Association (COLTA) meets each month at the Canada Games Centre at 6:30 p.m., and are looking for a few more volunteers to sit on the committee.

The next scheduled meeting is May 16. The meetings are open to the public.

For more information, email coltanewsletter@gmail.com.