

CORPORATION OF THE COUNTY OF HURON

Economic Development Services

To: Chair and Members, Committee of the Whole Day 1

From: Cindy Fisher, Tourism Coordinator and Rebecca Rathwell, Project Manager

Date: October 26, 2015

Subject: **Guelph to Goderich (G2G) Lease Proposal - Report #5**
Former CPR rail line through Huron County

RECOMMENDATION

1. That two Councillors be appointed to attend a G2G Working Committee Open House, one Councillor for November 26, 2015 (Perth East Recreation Centre, Milverton 7-9pm) and one Councillor for November 28, 2015 (Blyth Community Centre 2-4pm).
2. That Council reconfirm its support in principle for the signing of the lease with the Province of Ontario.
3. That the County be represented by a staff member and alternate on the G2Ginc. Board.
4. That G2Ginc be requested to provide a work plan, costing, and detailed update by November 2016 for consideration in the decision to sign the lease with the Province.

Executive Summary

The reasons for the above recommendations are summarized as follows.

1. At the previous public meetings, further public consultation was promised when the Working Committee had completed its work.
2. County Council originally confirmed its support in principle for signing the lease in March 2014. A reconfirmation of support is recommended to provide a context for further work (e.g., reports from G2G Inc. etc.).
3. A County staff member on the G2G Inc. Board will ensure consideration of County issues and information flow to County Council.
4. Since G2Ginc. signed an interim lease with the Province in July 2015, the trail is proceeding under the direction of this non-profit organization. One year of operation of the trail by G2Ginc. would provide important information to County Council on the potential costs and issues associated with the trail before further consideration of signing the lease.

BACKGROUND

The Huron County portion of the line extends from the Town of Goderich at the Menesetung Bridge (west limit) to the County boundary east of Walton (east limit), representing approximately 53 kilometres (approximately 300 acres).

In June 2013, Report #1 was presented to Committee with several recommendations regarding next steps for consideration of leasing the former CPR line in Huron County. The Committee approved a motion that “staff be directed to further investigate and report back on the summary issues identified in the Guelph to Goderich Trail report, including holding a public meeting” and that “the Warden and Councillors Vincent and Rintoul be appointed to attend the public meeting.” County Council endorsed the motion at its meeting of July 2013.

In February 2014, Report #2 was presented to Committee, with several recommendations regarding next steps for consideration of leasing the former CPR line in Huron County. The Committee approved a motion that “support in principle for the signing of the lease with the Province of Ontario for the Huron portion of the former CPR rail corridor (G2G) be approved and staff proceed with the next steps identified in the report and bring back another report”. County Council endorsed the motion at its meeting of March 2014.

In September 2014, Report #3 was presented to Committee, with two recommendations regarding next steps for consideration of leasing the former CPR line in Huron County. The Committee approved a motion “that staff assemble a G2G Working Committee to work through the identified issues, develop a stewardship model, develop a cost and phasing model, convene a public open house, and report back to Council, and consideration be given in the 2015 budget for a temporary staff position to resource the G2G Working Committee.” County Council endorsed the motion at its meeting of October 2014.

In April 2015, Report #4 was presented to Committee, for updating purposes only. The report advised of the status of the Working Committee, and that G2Ginc was in a position to negotiate a lease of the non-leased portions of the railbed with the Province’s Land Mgt. Company (Del Management Solutions – DMS).

In July 2015, G2Ginc. announced that it had signed an interim lease on unleased sections. Subsequently, the group has proceeded in signing sections as ‘open for hiking only’ or ‘closed’ (sign graphic provided).

The GART and Blyth Greenway Trail, remain open as in the past and leases with the Province continue to be held by the Maitland Trail Association, Menesetung Bridge Association and Township of North Huron respectively.

Huron County section	Lessee for trail	Status
Goderich Menesetung Bridge aprox. km0 – km2.4	Menesetung Bridge Assc.	Trail open
Goderich to Auburn (GART) aprox. km2.4 to km13	Maitland Trail Assc.	Trail open
SW of Auburn from Maitland River to Cty. Rd.#25 aprox. km13 to km24	G2Ginc.**	See below
Cty. Rd.#25 (Blyth Greenway Trail) aprox. km24 to km26.5	Township of North Huron	Partially open
End of Blyth Greenway Trail east to Huron County Boundary km26.5 to 53	G2Ginc.**	See below

**Provided by G2Ginc. – All sections under lease by the Province to G2Ginc. are initially signed as such and marked ‘closed’. Where sections are assessed as passable for hiking they are upgraded to ‘hiking only’. Sections assessed as ready for ‘hiking & biking’ are marked accordingly. The status of sections is dynamic as improvements are a work in progress and as well signage has been subject to vandalism. Surface refurbishing and installation of gates at access points is underway and ongoing.

COMMENTS

G2G Working Committee

Since December 2014, seven (7) G2G Working Committee meetings have been held. The Working Committee consists of: abutting agricultural property owners in Huron and Perth, G2G Inc. Board members, the OFA member service representative, and staff from Planning and Development from Huron County and

Perth County. Since the inaugural meeting of the committee, representatives from the HCFA (and PCFA) have been appointed and a Huron County Council representative was appointed in June 2015.

The Committee has;

- Worked through the compiled list of concerns (attached) regarding the rail trail. Policies and best practices were documented as solutions to address these concerns.
- Recognized the importance of biosecurity and as a result a biosecurity expert from OMAFRA presented at a recent meeting.
- Developed a Communication (attached) that was sent to all adjacent landowners in July and;
- In its final role two Open House/drop-in dates are scheduled for November 26th (evening in Perth County) and November 28th (afternoon in Huron County). The open house will be an opportunity for the public to discuss matters and future plans with G2Ginc. Board Members and the G2G Working Committee.

The Goderich to Guelph Rail Trail Inc. (G2G Inc.)

Incorporated in August 2013, with non-profit charitable status, this organization has a Board of Directors. In addition to the board members, G2Ginc. has a full organization structure that encompasses 4 main committees with accountability and reporting to the board of directors, as follows: Trailway Advisory; Trailway Events; Operations and Charitable Foundation.

Each of the committees has representation structured to encourage members from each geographic area for the purpose of defining the needs of each subsection of trail, as follows: Kissing Bridge Trailway (Waterloo/Wellington), Perth Harvest Pathway (Perth) and Lake Huron Route (Huron).

Vision:	To facilitate a community-based conversion to a trail of the former CPR right-of-way between Goderich and Guelph.
Goal:	A safe and accessible connection that has regional and provincial cultural and economic development capacity.
Projects:	To date - construction of the Millbank Bridge, Lease agreement with the Province, placed signage on the trail, with a plan in place to open the closed sections for hiking and/or cycling as surface work is undertaken. The goal is to have all portions open by July 2017.

The end goal of both the Province and G2G Inc. is to see the Counties of Huron and Perth ultimately lease the rail bed when they are ready to do so. Therefore, the westerly 82 km (Huron and Perth) would be leased in a fashion similar to the easterly 45 km where the Region of Waterloo (Wellington County) have held the lease with the Province since 1997. It is G2G Inc.'s intent to develop and manage the asset, and signing of the interim lease has allowed them to commence that work and continue to fundraise.

Update on Perth County

Perth County continues to be part of the G2G Working Committee. Perth County continues to be interested in Huron County's progress and has not signed a lease to date.

Potential County Role:

Considerations for the County being the future lease holder are as follows;

- Accountability to the public
- Long-term coordinated planning, e.g., connection to TransCanada trail
- Agreement with G2G Inc. on roles and responsibilities
- Enhanced forest coverage through linear tree corridor
- Increased funding opportunities
- Longevity and sustainability
- Consistency with other Counties, i.e., Region of Waterloo and Wellington County

OTHERS CONSULTED

1. Infrastructure Ontario – Joanne Houghton / Dell Management Solutions
2. Perth County Planning and Development Dept – Allan Rothwell
3. Region of Waterloo – Chris Gosselin / Kissing Bridge Trail Assoc.
4. Members of G2G Inc. - Paul Vandermolen and Chris Lee - Huron Reps
5. Public Works Department, County of Huron – Steve Lund
6. Planning and Development Dept – Victor Kloeze and Ben Van Dieten (research), Scott Tousaw
7. G2G Working Committee

BUDGET IMPACTS

The continued monitoring and reporting of staff on this project will be accommodated within existing budgets. At such time as County Council agrees to sign a lease with the Province, dedicated staff time would be required (possibly 0.25 FTE or a reallocation of current staff, subject to further information after 1 year of G2G Inc. operations).

APPENDICES

1. Signage graphics
2. Policies Chart
3. July 2015 Communication

“Original Signed by”

Cindy Fisher, Tourism Coordinator

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Rebecca Rathwell, Project Manager

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Scott Tousaw, Director Planning and Development & IT

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Brenda Orchard, CAO

Appendix 1

G2Ginc. Signage

