

Executive Summary

Vision

Trail-based recreation represents a rapidly growing tourism sector that provides multiple benefits to society. The Blue Sky Region is fortunate to have an excellent inventory of trails. Discovery Routes Trails Organization has identified 230 km of the Trans Canada Trail (TCT) throughout the Blue Sky Region. One major impediment to the project in this region is the section of trail that will traverse the City of North Bay and connect to the communities of West Nipissing (Discovery Routes 2001).

The vision is to complete the section of the TCT from the existing western terminus of the Kate Pace Way (KPW) westerly to the former Town of Field. The completed trail will contribute to the health and prosperity of the community as a whole and will improve tourism and economic development opportunities.

The study area comprises the entire region from the City of North Bay to the former Town of Field. The ultimate goals of the route-planning portion of the study were primarily threefold as outlined below:

- **North Bay Snowmobile Route**
The first goal is to identify a viable snowmobile route through North Bay since the designated TCT route, the KPW, does not accommodate this core use.
- **Kate Pace Way Westerly Extension**
The second goal is to identify a route to link the westerly end of the KPW to the proposed TCT route.
- **TCT - North Bay to Field**
The final task is to identify a preferred route for the TCT westerly from North Bay to the former Town of Field.

Communication

A Discovery Routes steering committee was assembled to provide direction throughout the study. The members of the steering committee represent a broad spectrum of stakeholders with an interest in recreational trail development.

Public comments and concerns were channeled to the appropriate steering committee representative for discussion or comment. Study progress reports and new developments were posted on a web site established by FRi. This web site was accessible to steering committee members only and was updated on a continual basis. Regular meetings with the steering committee were used to track progress and provide continued direction. Meetings with stakeholder groups such as the Snowmobile Advisory Committee assisted in determining preferred route options.

Route Planning

Evaluation of Alternatives

A range of Alternatives were developed, analysed and evaluated for each of the three route planning sections. The evaluation of the proposed alternatives was carried out to assess impacts and benefits on five evaluation factors: Natural Environment, Social Environment, Economic Environment, Transportation and Cost. A preferred Alternative was selected based on the evaluation results.

North Bay Snowmobile Route

The Trans Canada Trail (TCT) is designed to support five core activities including walking/hiking, cycling, equestrian, cross country skiing and snowmobiling. The KPW has been designated as a portion of the TCT through North Bay. At this point in time the KPW does not support snowmobiling as a permitted activity. As part of this study, an alternative route to support the activity of snowmobiling will be identified to complete the TCT section through North Bay.

Evaluation Results

The preferred route for the TCT through North Bay for snowmobiling is Alternative 3 (Lake Nipissing) coupled with an amendment of the Snowmobile By-Law. It ranked first in four of the five categories evaluated and has been identified as the preferred route.

Alternative 3 (Lake Nipissing) ranked first under the Natural Environment Evaluation Factor. It has significantly lower impacts than the other alternatives since no new trail corridor is required. The other alternatives involve corridors that would have some impact on fish habitat (water crossings), provincially significant wetlands and terrestrial forest communities.

Alternative 3 (Lake Nipissing) ranked first under the Social Environment Factor mainly because it did not have a significant negative impact on residential areas compared to the other alternatives. It was also preferred from an aesthetics aspect since the other alternatives pass by

industrial sectors that include auto wreckers, scrap metal operations and industrial debris that do not present the City in the best light.

Alternative 3 currently provides the best access to the businesses and services important to snowmobilers as identified in the Chamber of Commerce Questionnaire. Future plans to provide access to a secure parking area for snowmobiles as part of the rail lands development will provide access to the DIA and further enhance this alternative.

Transportation is the only factor that Alternative 3 did not rank first. Since it is a lake route there are seasonal limitations and safety concerns related to ice conditions that are not encountered with a land-based route. Improved signage and a new route that avoids the mouth of Duchesnay Creek will improve the safety component of this section of the trail.

Alternative 3 is by far the least costly to develop. The other alternatives all involve the construction of an approved crossing of at least one railway that drives the cost up considerably.

Kate Pace Way Westerly Extension

The KPW currently ends at Memorial Drive adjacent to the former Kenroc property. It has been designated as part of the TCT. There currently is no linkage to the preferred TCT route on the abandoned CN rail line to the west. For evaluation purposes, it is assumed that ongoing negotiations with Nipissing First Nation will finalize the use of the CN rail line as the TCT.

Evaluation Results

The preferred route for the KPW from the current westerly terminus to the assumed TCT at the abandoned CN rail line is Alternative 1 (CP Rail Right of Way). It ranked first in four of the five categories evaluated and has been identified as the preferred route.

All three Alternatives utilize existing transportation corridors including roads and rail lines. None of the Alternatives are significantly different from a natural environment perspective.

Alternative 1 (CP Rail Right of Way) ranked first under the Social Environment Factor. It affected fewer private residences and it uses significantly less existing sidewalks and roadways for its corridor. The use of the abandoned CN rail line at Timmins Street provides good access to the community.

Alternative 1 does not provide the best access to the business community since the majority of the corridor is along the CP and CN rail line while the other Alternatives use existing roads (i.e. Main Street, Gormanville Road). However, access to businesses and services for non-motorized trail users is less of a priority than it is for the snowmobile trail users.

Alternative 1 from a transportation perspective is superior to the other Alternatives. It is a safer, more direct route. It has fewer road crossings and less of the corridor is shared with road and pedestrian traffic.

There is not a significant difference in costs associated with the three Alternatives. All of the Alternatives will require some asphalt paving, line painting and Alternative 1 and 3 will require some additional funds associated with fencing along the CP rail right of way.

TCT - North Bay to Field

The TCT requires a link from North Bay to the Sudbury area. The first phase is to complete the section from North Bay to the former Town of Field. The ultimate goal will be to complete the corridor from North Bay to Capreol utilizing the abandoned CN rail line and linking with the Rainbow Routes trail network.

Evaluation Results Summary

The preferred route for the TCT from the City of North Bay to Field is Alternative 1 (CN Rail Line). It ranked first in all of the evaluation factors.

Alternative 1 (CN Rail Line) ranked first under the Natural Environment Evaluation Factor primarily because it is an existing corridor and no additional impacts to terrestrial or aquatic habitats are expected. Alternatives 2 and 3 require a significant number of new water crossings, wetland crossings and some new trail corridor.

Alternative 1 (CN Rail Line) ranked first under the Social Environment Factor. It provides a good aesthetic view of Lake Nipissing over a large portion of the corridor and does not pose any significant conflicts with adjacent residents that couldn't be easily mitigated. A large portion of the corridor is adjacent to the Trans Canada Highway and provides excellent access for tourists and residents.

Alternative 1 provides the best access to the business community since a large portion of the corridor is adjacent to the Trans Canada Highway and provides excellent access the businesses and services provided by Nipissing #10 Reserve. It also provides links to existing snowmobile trails and canoe routes, which enhances the economic potential for this route.

Alternative 1 from a transportation perspective is far superior to the other Alternatives. It is a safer and much more direct route. No new water crossings are required and the existing bridges only require some safety modifications to allow pedestrian traffic. The other Alternatives utilize existing forest access roads that have traditional use that may conflict with the TCT core uses. These forest road networks are used by the forest industry, bear management operators,

trappers, baitfish harvesters, hunters, anglers, land-use permit holders. Since the preferred route is an abandoned rail line there is no conflicting traditional use.

Alternative 1 would be considerable less expensive to develop since the corridor and base already exist. Surface preparation, bridge modifications and signage are the only requirements to complete the trail. Maintenance costs should also be less costly since this is an established corridor with reasonable grades, sight lines, drainage and foundation.

Preferred Route Summaries

The combined distance for the preferred routes is approximately 68.8km and will require a total of \$1,978,631.50 in material costs to develop. This estimated cost converts to approximately \$29,000 per kilometre over the entire project. The preferred routes discussed in the previous sections are summarized in the following table:

Preferred Route Summaries		
Preferred Route Name	Distance	Estimated Material Costs
North Bay Snowmobile Route-Lake Nipissing Alternative	17.6km	\$69,762.50
Kate Pace Way Westerly Extension – CP Rail Right of Way	3.6km	\$267,335.00
TCT North Bay to Field – CN Rail Line	47.6km	\$1,641,534.00
TOTAL	68.8km	\$1,978,631.50

Funding Sources

Funding a project of this magnitude can be a daunting effort. Obtaining a single-source-funding partner would be difficult and not very realistic. There are a variety of good government funding sources that support multi-use, recreational trail development but the vast majority only fund to a level of fifty cents for every dollar spent. This forces trail developers to plan realistically and responsibly and to explore innovative funding sources for the remaining 50 percent. Support for the remaining 50 percent will be a combination of actual dollars and in-kind contributions.

In-kind contributions can come from a variety of sources such as Provincial/Municipal Governments, Trail Associations, Tourist Associations, Educational Institutions, Corporations and individuals.

During the development of snowmobile route Alternatives through North Bay, we developed a questionnaire to local businesses through the Chamber of Commerce. One of the questions was, “What dollar value do you estimate your business could gain per year with improved snowmobile access?” The responses ranged from 0 to more than \$20,000 per year. Those businesses that can derive direct economic benefits from recreational trail users should be solicited for funding donations. Funding levels could be structured similar to those used by the

Trans Canada Trail Foundation. Recognition for corporate sponsors could range from a single line on a recognition plaque to naming a portion of a trail after the corporate sponsor (e.g. Harbourside Marina Trail).

A user-pay philosophy can work to some extent but in general trail permits are not always considered favorably by trail users. If a trail permit fee is implemented it must be coupled with an enforcement component that can be costly. However, voluntary membership fees to trail organizations can contribute a small percentage of the revenues required for trail development.

Planned events utilizing a trail organization's assets (i.e. trail network) can supplement the revenues required for trail development. Poker runs, rallies, races and eco-challenges are popular events that can produce revenues. Retail products such as trail guide books, T-shirts, self-guided tours on CD or cassette or other innovative ideas can also produce some revenues.

Traditional government sources of funding have been identified for different stages of the trail development. Some of these sources have been used by Discovery Routes in the past and continue to be an important part of future projects. Since a large portion of the trail corridor may involve First Nations lands, we have identified a number of funding sources that address aboriginal tourism funding.

Partnerships

Obvious partners would include adjacent trail groups, associated businesses, municipalities, First Nations and institutions. Large corporations with local offices often wish to be associated with community projects and to project an image of a good corporate citizen. Identified partners include:

- The West Nipissing Nordic Ski Club
- Nipissing First Nation Economic Development Corporation
- Nipissing #10 Band Council
- The Community Waterfront Friends
- Frontier Adventure Trails
- College Boréal, Canadore College and Nipissing
- Chambers of Commerce

Short-Term Objectives

Over the next year, laying the groundwork for the final development of the TCT will have a direct impact on Discovery Routes' success on achieving their vision for this project. Communication will be a key issue in fostering community support to carry the project to completion. The following key objectives for the short-term are recommended:

- Present the findings of this study to North Bay City Council, West Nipissing Council and Nipissing First Nation Band Council
- Obtain approval for necessary By-law amendments to provide snowmobile access to and passage through North Bay
- Develop a comprehensive corporate sponsorship marketing plan for Discovery Routes and promote it
- Develop a communication plan that exploits the various communication media (i.e. press release, Chamber of Commerce newsletter, Council presentations) and keep the community informed of progress
- Determine the level of funding from current outstanding applications (i.e. Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation) and identify any shortfalls

Mid-Term Objectives

Over the next three years the objectives will focus on the actual construction of the trail and the development of partnerships and funding that will facilitate it. Key targets will be:

- Develop and formalize partnerships as outlined in a previous section that clearly defines the benefits and responsibilities of both parties and endeavor to identify more partners
- Pursue funding from a number of sources as outlined in a previous section
- Stage the development of the trail to ensure incremental success and to allow more time for sections yet to be finalized (i.e. CN rail line through Nipissing First Nation)
- Modify CP rail crossing at St. Joseph's Mother House as per Figure 7 once the route has been finalized
- Develop Discovery Routes retail products that market the organization and create revenue (i.e. trail guide)

Long-Term Objectives

The long-term objectives should be implemented over a 10-year time line. Most will focus on the completion of the TCT corridor and its maintenance.

- Implement a trail patrol to provide information to trail users, reduce vandalism, monitor trail condition and provide emergency response where necessary
- Seek corporate sponsor to supply a snowmobile/ATV to be used for the trail patrol
- Design a tracking system to determine trail use and changing trends
- Encourage interested parties to develop linked specialty trails to improve the viability and use of the TCT