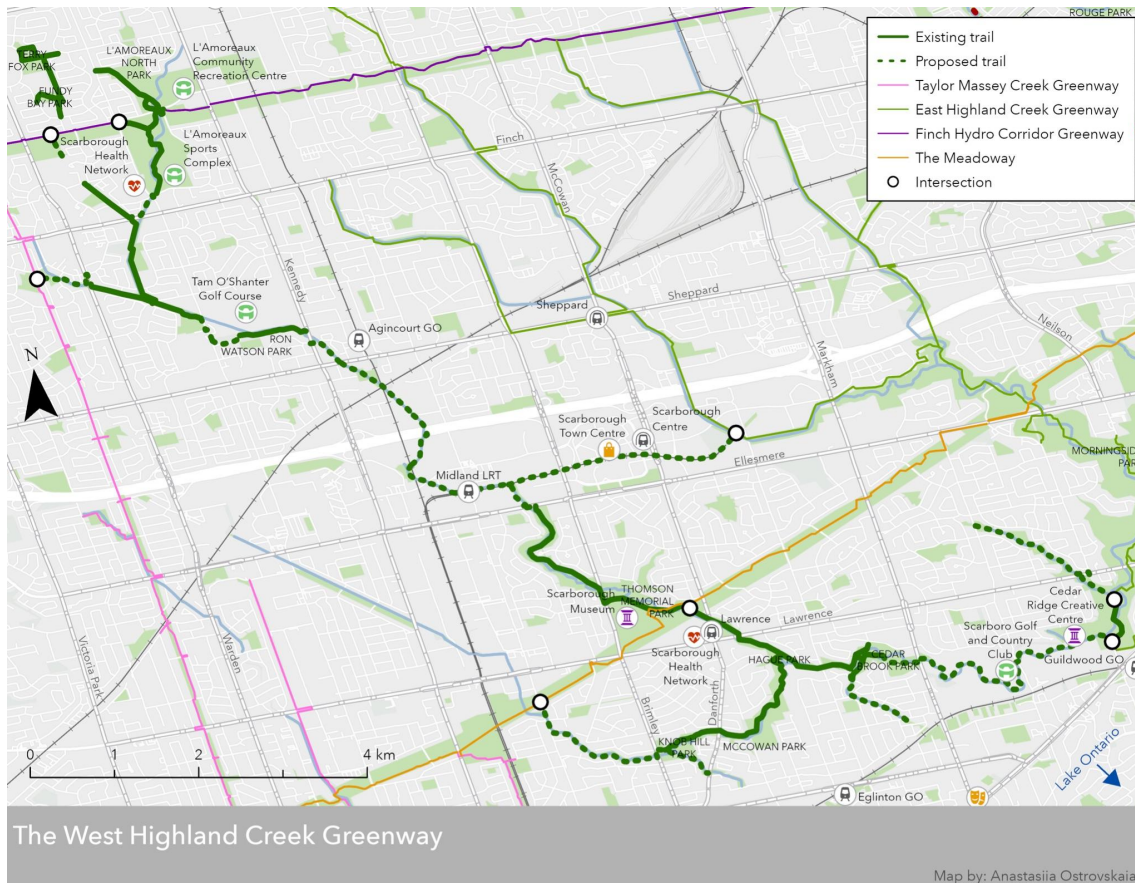


## West Highland Creek Greenway

Total Length: 31.6km | 51% Existing



The West Highland Creek Greenway is a 31.6km, multi-use, off-road trail that will run along West Highland Creek in Scarborough, becoming a part of a vital north-south connection in the city. The trail will start just south of Steeles Ave E, will connect the Finch Hydro Corridor to the Meadowway, and will connect to the Taylor Massey Creek and East Highland Creek Greenways, eventually leading to Lake Ontario. The West Highland Creek Greenway will also connect the existing Agincourt GO station, as well as the future Lawrence and Scarborough Town Centre Scarborough Subway Extension stations, allowing many Scarborough residents to complete their first- and last-mile trips off-road by foot or bicycle.

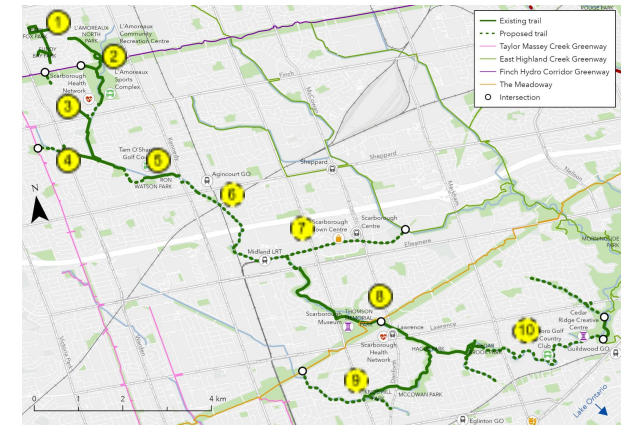
The West Highland Creek Greenway will allow cyclists of all riding skill levels, pedestrians, and wheelchair users to get around the city while staying off-road. This multi-use trail will run through over 20 parks and ravines across western Scarborough, and will rehabilitate sections of Highland Creek that are currently concrete-lined storm drains to create a series of linear parks.

The West Highland Creek Greenway will connect 11 Toronto

neighbourhoods, extending through numerous residential, commercial and employment lands and providing off-road access to many major destinations, including Scarborough Town Centre, hospitals in the Scarborough Health Network, the Scarborough Museum, the Cedar Ridge Creative Centre, and the Scarborough Village Theatre. The trail will be located within a 1km radius of 95 publicly-funded schools, allowing kids to cycle to and from school and giving them a chance to be active, enjoy fresh air, spend more time with their friends, and develop a better sense of independence. There are also 107 places of worship and 7 libraries within a 1km distance of the trail, which will improve access to important facilities in Scarborough. A total of approximately 251,891 Scarborough residents will be able to get to the trail in under 10 minutes. This means that for about a third of Scarborough's population, this trail will provide better access to nature, give an opportunity to be more physically active, and improve physical and mental health outcomes. Since this trail connects so many various destinations, it will allow people to quickly get from point A to point B without having to deal with traffic, parking, or gas prices.

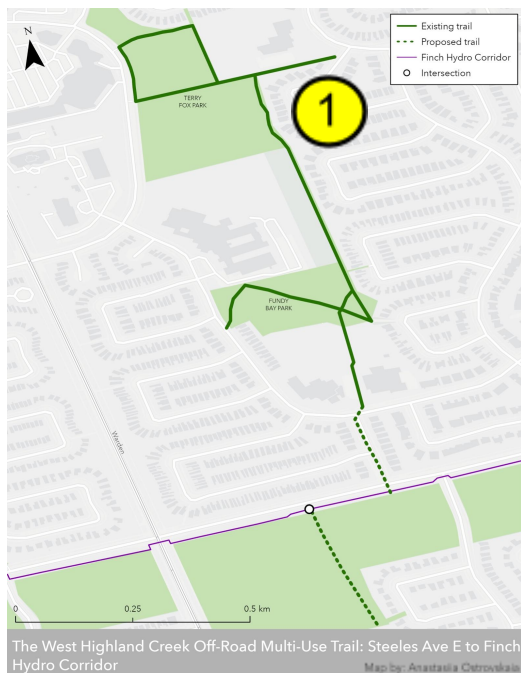
Overall, the West Highland Creek Greenway is an essential addition to the Scarborough active transportation network, and the best part is, it can be implemented quite easily, because much of the trail already exists, as discussed next.

Approximately 51% of the proposed West Highland Creek Greenway already exists, which significantly reduces the amount of infrastructure that will have to be built from scratch. Fortunately, all of the existing 16km of trail are paved, although most of that is not fully up to the City's standards. The average widths of existing trails vary from 1.5 to 2.5m, and only about 20% of all paths meet the minimum multi-use trail width guidelines. As a result, widening of existing trails will be required to facilitate safe bi-directional flow and accessibility along the West Highland Creek Trail. The good news is, this process should be painless, as we found no evident physical constraints that could prevent or complicate widening of any existing trails, and there is ample green space available on one or both sides of every existing part of the trail.



The majority of existing trails along West Highland Creek are located in parks and ravines, and are heavily used by local residents. Cyclists, runners, parents with strollers — all seem to enjoy the trails and the access to scenic green spaces that they provide. The main problem is that they are not connected together into a continuous network. Therefore, in addition to improving the condition of existing trails, we propose building approximately 15.6km of new multi-use off-road trails to ensure uninterrupted connection and flow for all users.

The first **existing** segment of the trail extends from Steeles Ave E to the Finch hydro corridor. The trail begins at the Wintermute Rd and Triangle Villas Dr intersection. This first segment of the trail, approximately 1.2km in length, has an average width of 2.6m, is evenly paved, and is used primarily by Steeles neighbourhood residents for recreational purposes. The trail connects Terry Fox and Fundy Bay Parks, and provides convenient access to Terry Fox Public School. There is a shaded sitting area located along the trail, and the trail is equipped with light fixtures and garbage bins. The trail ends at Fundy Bay Blvd, with cyclists using Innislawn Rd to get to McNicoll Ave and the Finch hydro corridor. There is currently no trail in this part of the Finch hydro corridor, but when that is built the West Highland Creek Greenway will connect to it. As this is a secondary trail, we propose widening it to 3m.



**Figure 1.** The trail is equipped with functional light fixtures, as well as garbage bins (not pictured in the photo). (Photo by: Anastasiia Ostrovskaia)



**Figure 2.** The trail seen in Terry Fox Park, and parents with their kids were seen using the trail to reach the playground. (Photo by: Anastasiia Ostrovskaia)



**Figure 3.** A shaded sitting area in Terry Fox Park located right next to the trail. (Photo by: Anastasiia Ostrovskaia)



An important **existing** branch of the trail is located in L'Amoreaux Park. It starts at Birchmount Rd, goes through the smaller L'Amoreaux North Park, crosses McNicoll Ave, and connects to the bigger L'Amoreaux Park south of McNicoll Ave. as well as to the proposed Finch Hydro Corridor Greenway. This trail is one of the more scenic ones, and provides access to valuable facilities and amenities, including the L'Amoreaux Community Recreation Centre, an off-leash dog park, a waterpark, a tennis centre, and a sports centre. The average width of this paved trail is 2.7m, which is the minimum width requirement for secondary trails. But as we suggest designating this trail as a primary trail, it is advised to widen it up to 3-3.6m.



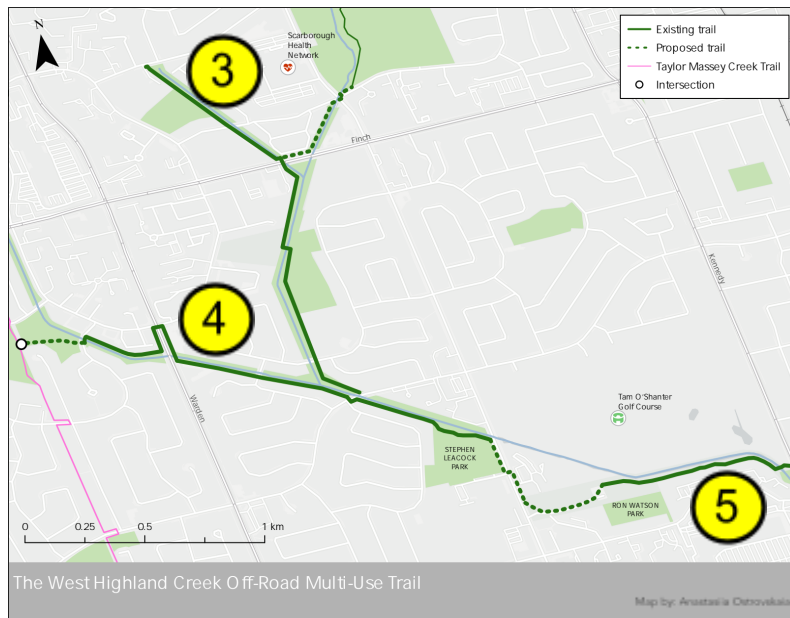
**Figure 4.** A cyclist using the L'Amoreaux Park trail south of McNicoll Ave. The trail is well-paved and wide enough to facilitate bi-directional flow of bicycles, pedestrians, or wheelchair users. (Photo by: Anastasiia Ostrovskaia)



**Figure 5.** The trail in L'Amoreaux North Park has a number of secluded sitting areas that offer beautiful views of the pond. (Photo by: Anastasiia Ostrovskaia)



**Figure 6.** An existing underpass allows grade-separated crossing of McNicoll Ave on both sides of the river. There is a lack of lighting fixtures in the underpass, so while during the day the underpass is sufficiently lit, it may be dangerous at night. (Photo by: Anastasiia Ostrovskaia)



South of West Highland Creek, the trail crosses the Finch hydro corridor and reaches the **existing** section of the trail located in between Warden Ave and Kennedy Rd. Currently, this segment of the trail is characterized by narrow width and somewhat inconsistent paving; however, with widening and improvement, it has the potential to become a beautiful linear park mere minutes away from home for many people.

**3** This 2.5km trail begins at Brookmill Blvd and runs through a number of local neighbourhoods and parks, providing access points to the nearby residential buildings, a school, and a football field. There are some light fixtures located along the trail, but their spacing is inconsistent.



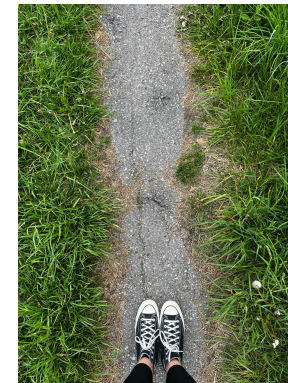
**Figure 7.** Part of the trail extending from L'Amoreaux Dr to Finch Ave E. While currently too narrow to be used by anyone but a single cyclist or an able-bodied pedestrian, green space is available to allow for widening.

(Photo by: Anastasiia Ostrovskaiia)



**Figure 8.** Beginning of the trail section at Brookmill Blvd.

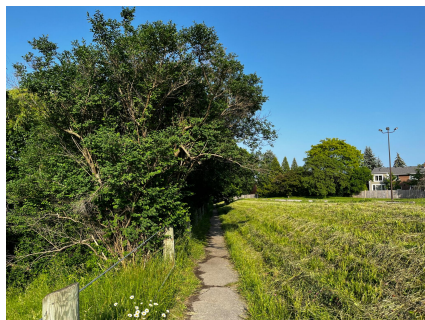
(Photo by: Anastasiia Ostrovskaiia)



**Figure 9.** Some existing trails along West Highland Creek are surprisingly narrow — for instance, this section is only 29cm wide.

(Photo by: Anastasiia Ostrovskaiia)

**4** Another entrance point to the trail is located at Warden Ave. E. The average width of this section is 60cm, and the paving is uneven.



**Figure 10.** Entrance point to the trail at Warden Ave E. Ample green space on the right side of the trail can be used to easily increase the width.

(Photo by: Anastasiia Ostrovskaiia)



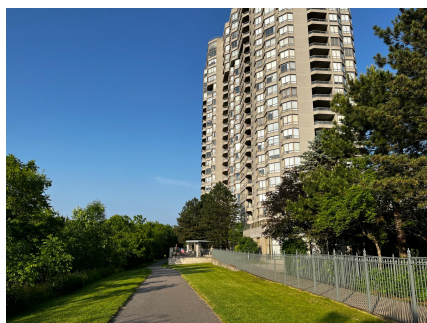
**Figure 11.** The trail connects local residents to a large playground in Stephen Leacock Park.

(Photo by: Anastasiia Ostrovskaiia)



5

This section of the trail is interrupted by Birchmount Rd., but continues along West Highland Creek just north of Tam O'Shanter Golf Course. This 607m long stretch of the trail extends from Ron Watson Park to Kennedy Rd. The trail is approximately 2.4m wide and is fully paved.



**Figure 12.** The trail is located right in front of residential buildings. A lot of people were seen taking casual strolls here.  
(Photo by: Anastasiia Ostrovskaia)



**Figure 13.** The existing trail goes through a parking lot, and should be relocated around the parking lot to prevent conflicts with cars and ensure a continuous off-road path.  
(Photo by: Anastasiia Ostrovskaia)



The next part of the trail is a **proposed** major new connection. This 3.5km multi-use trail alongside West Highland Creek will start at Sheppard Ave E and extend south to Ellesmere Rd, where it will connect to the existing trail in Birkdale Ravine. This area is primarily designated as industrial, employment and undeveloped land, and the creek in this section is channelized with concrete sides. Building this section of the trail will provide an opportunity for the restoration of the natural heritage functions of Highland Creek and the creation of a linear park. It is important to note that an additional long-term benefit of this restoration will be to reduce flooding risk downstream. This section of the trail is a key element for ensuring the continuity of the West Highland Creek Greenway, as it will connect two existing portions of the trail north and south of the 401. The trail will be located in close proximity to Scarborough Town Centre, which will see significant development and intensification in the next 20 to 30 years, embracing its role as a connected urban centre and attracting new residents. This trail will also improve connection to Agincourt GO station, enhancing local residents' access to public transportation.



**Figure 14.** Channelized West Highland Creek passing under the railway.  
(Photo by: André Sorensen)



**Figure 15.** Current state of the creek north of the 401.  
(Photo by: Anastasiia Ostrovskaja)



**Figure 16.** This trail will provide local residents with uninterrupted off-road access to the proposed Toronto High Line. (Photo by: Anastasiia Ostrovskaja)



**Figure 17.** Channelized creek continues to run past Midland LRT station. (Photo by: Anastasiia Ostrovskaja)

However, Highway 401 does present a major obstacle for this off-road multi-use trail.

The proposed trail from Sheppard Ave E to Ellesmere Rd will need to cross the 401 to connect to the existing trail further south. Currently, Highland Creek is channeled through a culvert under the highway's 13 traffic lanes.

The proposed 1km interim solution is to route the trail along Emblem Ct to Midland Ave just north of the 401, and stay on Midland Ave to use the existing underpass (see Figure 19), returning to the off-road trail next to Midland SRT station. The creation of an adequate cycling infrastructure on Midland Ave in that area would be required for this on-road detour.



**Figure 18.** Existing culvert under the 401 for West Highland Creek.  
(Photo by: Anastasiia Ostrovskaja)



**Figure 19.** Existing underpass on Midland Ave enables crossing the 401.  
(Photo by: Anastasiia Ostrovskaja)

The long-term solution, however, is the expansion of the existing culvert under the 401 to create an off-road underpass for cyclists and pedestrians. The tunnel should follow the requirements set out in the Toronto Multi-Use Trail Design Guidelines, including the proper width, overhead clearance, and lighting. Old Elbe Tunnel in Hamburg, as well as the pedestrian and bicycle tunnel underneath Amsterdam Central station, serve as examples of good tunnel design appropriate for this area.

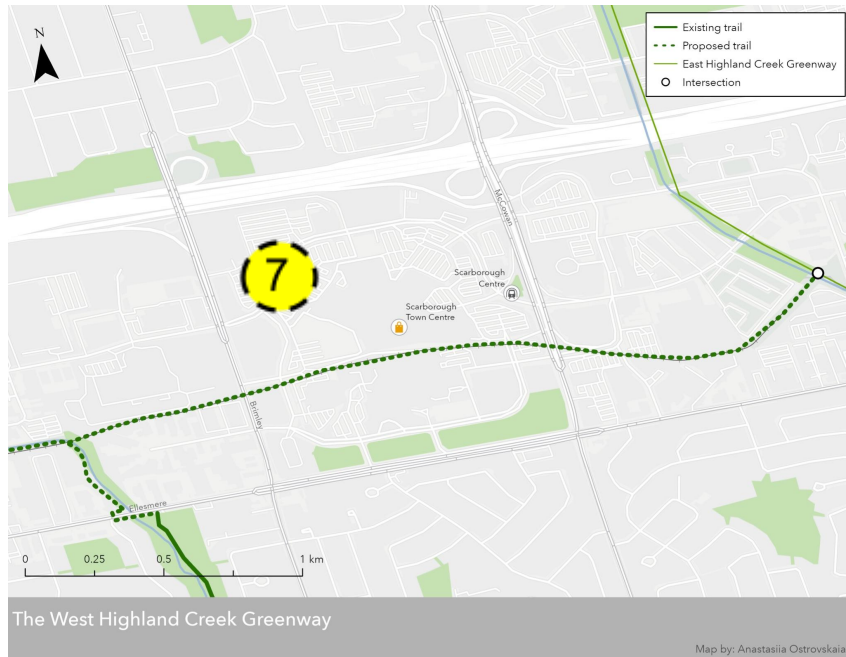


**Figure 20.** Old Elbe Tunnel in Hamburg.



**Figure 21.** Pedestrian and cycling tunnel under Amsterdam's central railway station.





This next part of the trail is **proposed** to be located along the east-west part of the Scarborough Line 3 SRT, starting at Midland Station and extending past McCowan Station, to connect to the East Highland Creek Greenway west of Bellamy Rd N. The TTC Board has already approved the decommissioning of the SRT in 2023, so an opportunity to redevelop and repurpose the existing structures has emerged. This trail will run on top of the elevated guideway, will create a continuous off-road connection to Scarborough Town Centre, and will also connect the West Highland Creek and East Highland Creek Greenways. Inspired by New York City's High Line Park, the Toronto High Line could become one of the most innovative and functional green spaces and multi-use trails in the city.



**Figure 22.** High Line Park in New York.



**Figure 23.** High Line Park in New York.



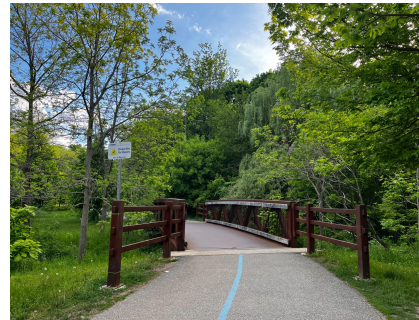
The next **existing** segment of the West Highland Creek Greenway is a 7km long trail that runs through ravines and parks south of the 401. It starts at Ellesmere Rd and extends south, connecting to the Meadowway trail and then continuing to Hague Park, where it splits into two branches (going west and east). The average width of the trail varies from 2 to 3.5m, in some places exceeding the minimum width requirement for multi-use trails. The entirety of this section of the trail is evenly paved.



**Figure 24.** The trail runs through Thomson Memorial Park, the busiest park along the West Highland Creek Trail. (Photo by: Anastasiia Ostrovskaia)

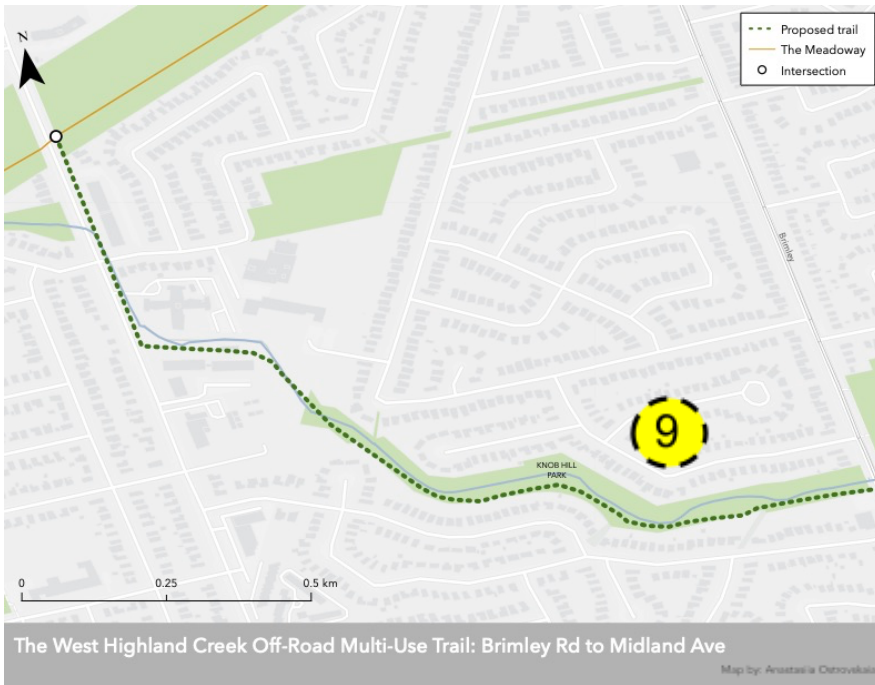


**Figure 25.** Part of the trail approaching the Meadowway from the north exceeds the minimum width requirement for multi-use trail and has appropriate pavement markings for cyclists. (Photo by: Anastasiia Ostrovskaia)



**Figure 26.** Bridge crossing West Highland Creek just north of the Meadowway. (Photo by: Anastasiia Ostrovskaia)





A new **proposed** 1.5km trail will be located in the existing green space between Brimley Rd and Midland Ave south of the Meadowway. The densely forested corridor there is 48m wide, with Highland Creek in its natural state in the middle of it. The trail will run alongside the creek, minimizing potential disruption to local residents. This trail will improve the nearby neighbourhoods' connection to the Meadowway, as well as create a complete green loop around the Bendale South neighbourhood.



**Figure 27.** A bird's-eye view from Brimley Rd onto the wide forested corridor between Gully Dr and Citadel Dr.  
(Photo by: André Sorensen)



In principle it will be important to make this **proposed** 3km trail connection between West Highland Creek and East Highland Creek. This trail would allow for a direct connection between West Highland Creek and East Highland Creek Greenways, creating a complete off-road green loop along the tributaries of Highland Creek south of the Meadowway. But here, the creek flows through the privately owned Scarborough Golf and Country Club, which currently separates West Highland Creek and East Highland Creek. It is a major obstacle for this trail, so we recommend an interim connection. If ever this land is redeveloped, the City should ensure that this connection is completed.

As an interim solution, starting from Cedar Brook Park, one could take Markham Rd to Stevenwood Rd and stay on Confederation Dr (see Figures 26 and 27) until Cedar Ridge Park. There, the trail will descend into the ravine (see Figures 28 and 29) and continue east through Highland Creek Park to connect to the East Highland Creek Trail.





**Figure 28.** Proposed interim on-road connection via Confederation Dr. The public right-of-way (ROW) on this street is 20m, which will allow adding an accessible and safe multi-use lane without compromising movement of vehicles or infringing on private property.  
(Photo by: Anastasiia Ostrovskaja)



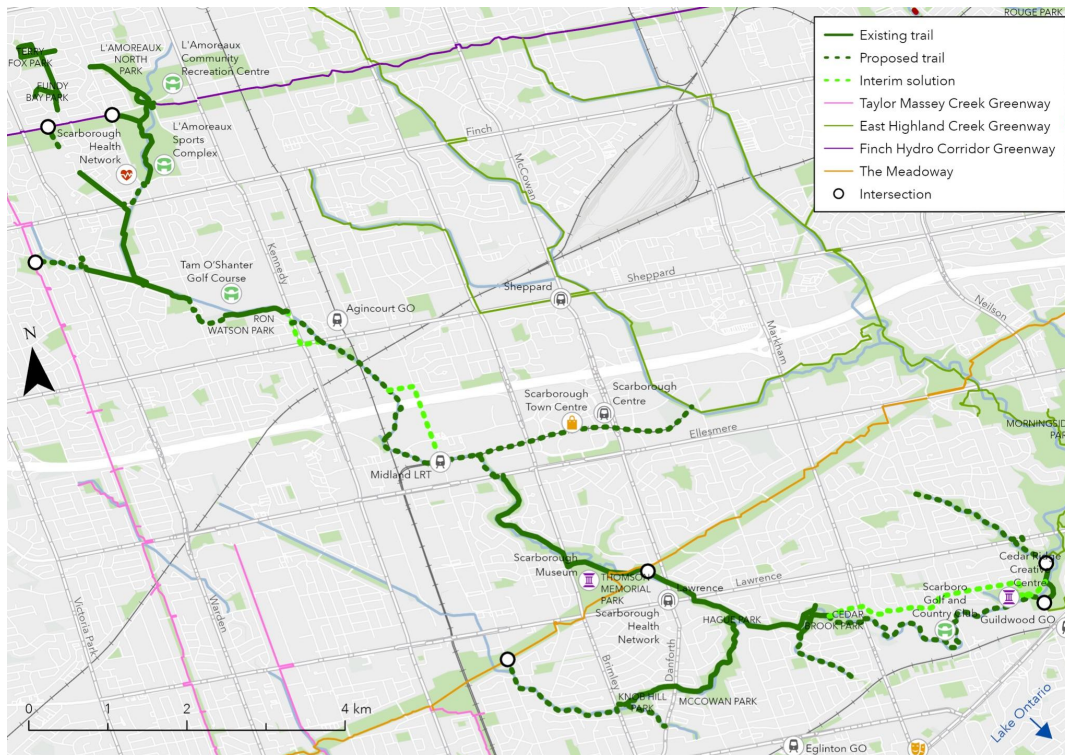
**Figure 29.** The interim route will cross the Confederation Dr and Scarborough Golf Club Rd intersection, which may require a signalized intersection here.  
(Photo by: Anastasiia Ostrovskaja)



**Figure 30.** Existing dirt path going from Cedar Ridge Park to Highland Creek Park. This trail will be widened and paved using the green space on both sides of the path.  
(Photo by: Anastasiia Ostrovskaja)



**Figure 31.** As you complete the descent back onto the off-road trail, you can enjoy this beautiful view of the river surrounded by luscious trees.  
(Photo by: Anastasiia Ostrovskaja)



The West Highland Creek Greenway With Interim Solutions

Map by: Anastasiia Ostrovskaja

Despite the two obstacles, the West Highland Creek Greenway remains relatively easy to build, and the benefits of this trail are expected to far outweigh the costs. The proposed trails will significantly improve connectivity in the area, and will create a great environment for cycling and walking.