

Rouge National Urban Park Greenway

Distance: 22.5 Km | 55% Existing



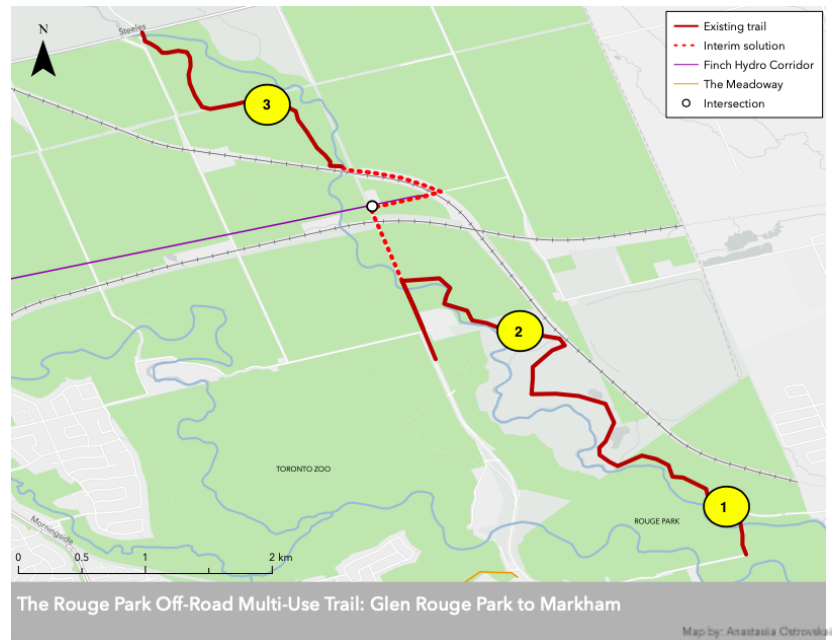
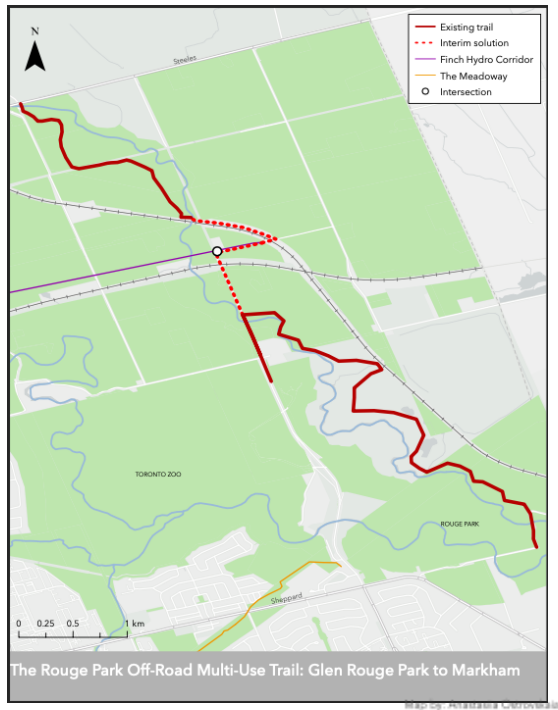
The Rouge River valley has the potential to be home to one of the best off-road multi-use trails in Canada. An urban wilderness close to the centre of Canada's largest metropolis, Rouge National Urban Park stretches unbroken from Lake Ontario to the Oak Ridges Moraine. The park is a vast and scenic urban forest in Scarborough. Yet existing trails are unpaved and in poor condition, with extensive erosion and steep slopes. It is home to many wildlife species and habitats, including at-risk species. Rouge Park hosts beautiful trails that take users through nature towards major destinations, but none of the Rouge trails are true multi-use trails. They are mostly rough hiking trails that are in poor condition and unsuitable for bicycles, the elderly, or wheelchairs. There is a major opportunity in Rouge Park to create off-road multi-use trails that connect pedestrians and cyclists from Scarborough through Rouge Park east to Pickering and north to Markham. It is past time to create accessible multi-use trails through the park. Rouge Park adjacent to TTC routes and GO transit stations, parks, schools, and local businesses. The proposed off-road multi-use trail network in Rouge Park will help connect 10 parks, 28 publicly funded schools, and over 8 neighborhoods housing 77,000 residents. In total, the proposed routes total approximately 22km. Adding these sets of proposed trails in Scarborough will encourage active transportation such as walking and cycling. These trails will provide connectivity to all areas of Scarborough by alternate modes of transit, reducing auto-dependance. Implementing an off-road connected network in Rouge Park will produce a comprehensive set of corridors that will enable Scarborough residents to access Lake Ontario, the Meadowway, the

Finch hydro corridor, Pickering, Markham, and Toronto Zoo, while enabling fun and safe modes of transportation. The following sections describe the layout of the route, including what already exists and where more connection is needed.

Glen Rouge Park to Markham

Overview

The proposed trails in Rouge Park will intersect in Glen Rouge Park and go in three directions: north to Markham, south to Lake Ontario, and east-west to access two hydro corridors and nearby neighborhoods. One major route will lead from Glen Rouge Park and go north up the Rouge River toward Markham. This route is an important route as it connects communities in Rouge Park not only to Markham, but also the Toronto Zoo along the way. It is a total of 10km. This route will provide access to the heart of Rouge Park's scenic and impressive views and forests. Building this route will also serve to renovate and improve 3 existing trails that are now in poor condition



Existing trails

The 3 trails this route will utilize are, in order: 1. Mast trail; 2. Cedar Trail; and 3. Woodlands Trail. All of these trails are dirt paths and include stretches with serious erosion and steep slopes (Figures 1 and 2). These trails have great potential to allow more access to the park. The dirt paths are currently poorly maintained, include steep sections, and are not accessible for disabled users or wheelchairs (Figures 3 and 4). In Toronto's multi-use trail guidelines, routine and regular maintenance such as sweeping of trail surfaces and pruning shrubs should be taking place on these parkland trails. In addition, a lot of the habitats and sensitive areas have been damaged by human disturbance. Many informal trails lead away from the main path into sections of the wilderness (Figure 5). One way to improve these trails will be to create a new, paved, multi-use trail through the urban park. We recognize that the creation of a network of paved, multi-use trails through the park will bring more users to the park, and pose risks of environmental damage, but they also present an opportunity to repair the damage caused by existing degraded trails while improving accessibility for all users.



Figure 1. Start of Mast Trail. (Photo by Amaan Jabbar)



Figure 2. Start of Cedar Trail. (Photo by Amaan Jabbar)



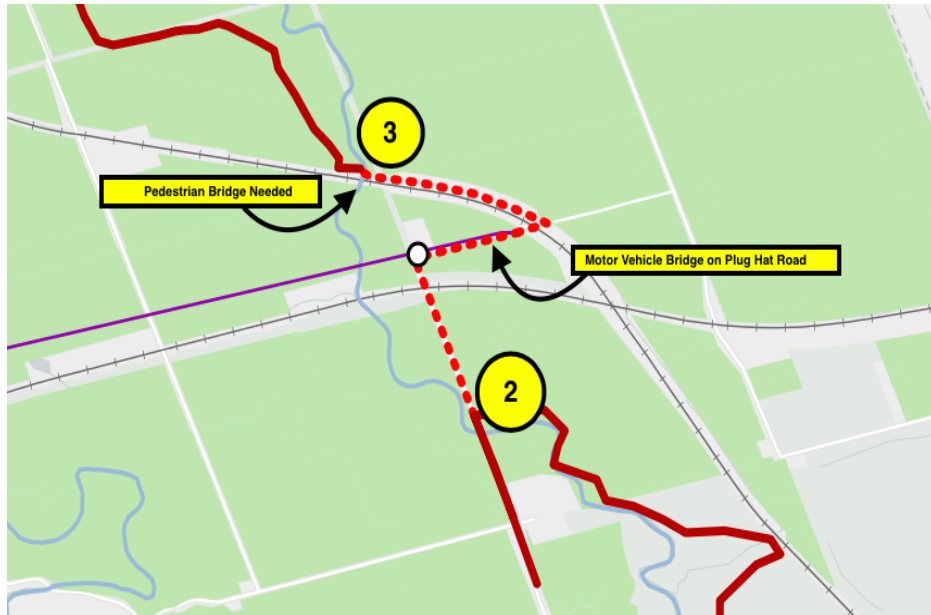
Figure 3. Steep inaccessible climb, Mast Trail. (Photo by Amaan Jabbar)



Figure 4. Low maintenance on Mast Trail. (Photo by Amaan Jabbar)



Figure 5. Socially created trail blocked off due to poisonous plant. (Photo by Amaan Jabbar)



Connections

The majority of this route from Glen Rouge to Markham already exists, but there is one missing piece that, if implemented, will create a complete connected route. Cedar trail (2) comes to an end at Meadowvale Road. To connect to the next trail, called Woodlands Trail (3) (Figure 6.1), an on-street connection is required using Meadowvale Rd and Plug Hat Rd. A slight off-road connection is also required to connect to Woodlands Trail after the motor vehicle bridge on Plug Hat Rd (Figure 6). The challenges to creating this connection from Cedar Trail to Woodlands Trail lies mainly in the off-road connection segment after the bridge. Our proposed solution for this problem is to create a small pedestrian/cyclist bridge over the river so people can continue onto the next trail to Markham. The total length of new trails is less than 2km. This accessibility to Markham is significant even though a portion of it is an on-street connection. On-street connections also require wayfinding signs for path users to easily distinguish which direction to go when continuing onto the next path.

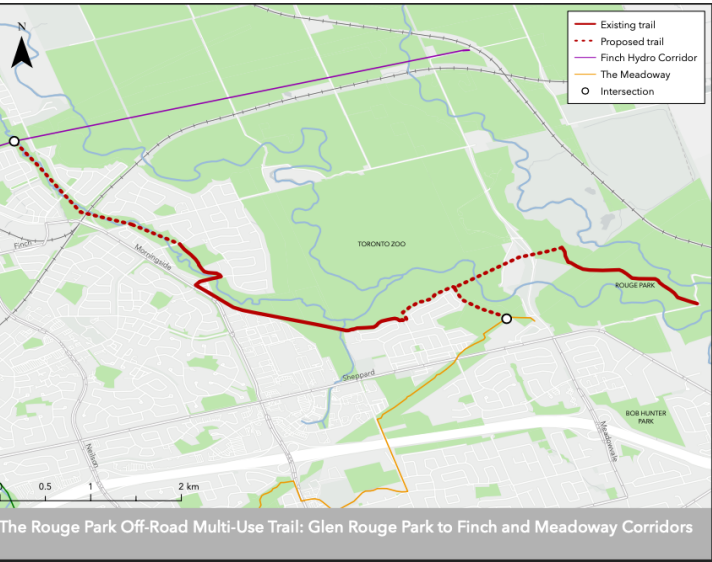


Figure 6.1. Woodlands Trail.
(Photo by Amaan Jabbar)

Figure 6. Plug Hat Rd motor vehicle bridge (Photo by Amaan Jabbar)

To explore Scarborough, people need to utilize open space that is present and take advantage of it. That is why, in the next section, we propose another off-road multi-use trail to provide access to Scarborough's easternmost neighborhoods.

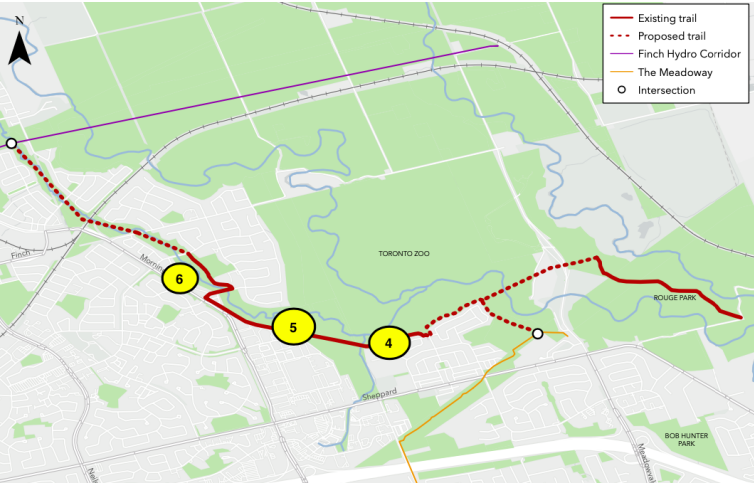
Glen Rouge Park to Finch and Meadowway Hydro Corridors



Map by: Anastasia Oltrowska

Overview

This route will also begin at Glen Rouge Park. It will create a route for pedestrians and cyclists to access the Finch and Meadowway hydro corridors and also the Toronto Zoo and Twyn Rivers Park. There are many benefits to connecting the two hydro corridors in Scarborough. These long, linear spaces cut through the heart of Scarborough and, when completed, will allow easy access to Rouge Park from other parts of Toronto. This route will make use of underutilized green space in Scarborough to connect existing short segments of off-road trail that currently do not connect together. The parks network in Scarborough can be used to connect residents across the area and keep cyclists and pedestrians away from the busy, multi-lane roads and near nature and quiet trails.



Existing trails

This route will connect 3 new existing trails with the Finch corridor, the Meadowway, and Glen Rouge Park. The route as a whole is about 10km. The existing trails in order are: 4.Upper Rouge Trail, 5. Scarborough Railpath, and 6. Littles Park Path. These three paths are currently in reasonable condition, with good paving, painted middle lines separating traffic, and good widths. There are already partially existing connected sections like Upper Rouge trail to Scarborough Railpath (Figure7). The main priority here will be to connect these existing trails together to achieve a connected network.



Figure 7. Upper Rouge Trail leading to Scarborough Railpath. (Photo by Amaan Jabbar)



Figure 8. Littles Park Path running behind Flemming Elementary School. (Photo by Amaan Jabbar)



Figure 9. Unused greenspace across the street from end of Littles Park Path. (Photo by Amaan Jabbar)

Connections

There are several missing pieces in this route that need to be built to complete it. The first task would be to extend the Upper Rouge Trail (4) by 1.15km eastwards so that it connects to the Meadowway.

Extending the Upper Rouge Trail (4) westward will connect it to the Scarborough Railpath (5), which runs for 1.5km from Upper Rouge trail to Morningside Ave and Morningview Trail Rd. After the railpath, to get to the next path, known as Littles Park Path (6), you must follow Morningview trail road for 200m until you reach the start of Littles Park Path.

To connect from the north end of Littles Park (6) to the Finch hydro corridor will requires 1.7km extension from Littles Park Path through Misty Hills Park (7) and Point Rouge Trail Park (8).

A path is needed through Misty hills (7) and Point Rouge Trail Park (8) to complete the connection of the two hydro corridors. This addition will provide access to both hydro corridors and ease access to the rest of Scarborough. Currently, Misty Hills Park (7) and Point Rouge Trail Park (8) are large open spaces with greenery. Building a multi-use trail in these parks will be challenging as they currently include wetlands bordering the river, but making this connection will be so important for overall connectivity that we believe this is worth doing. An elevated multi-use path on pylons would be ideal here, but a trail can also be built on the west side of the river (Figure 10).

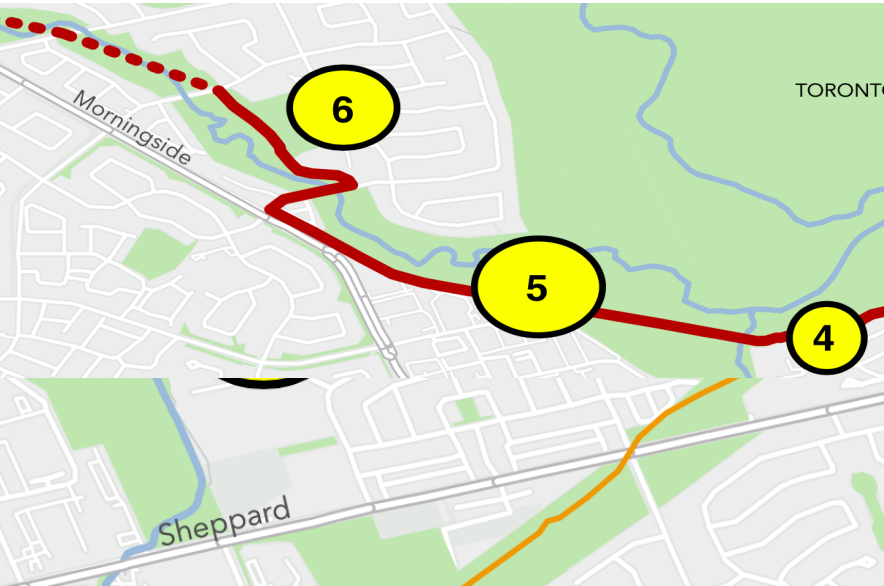
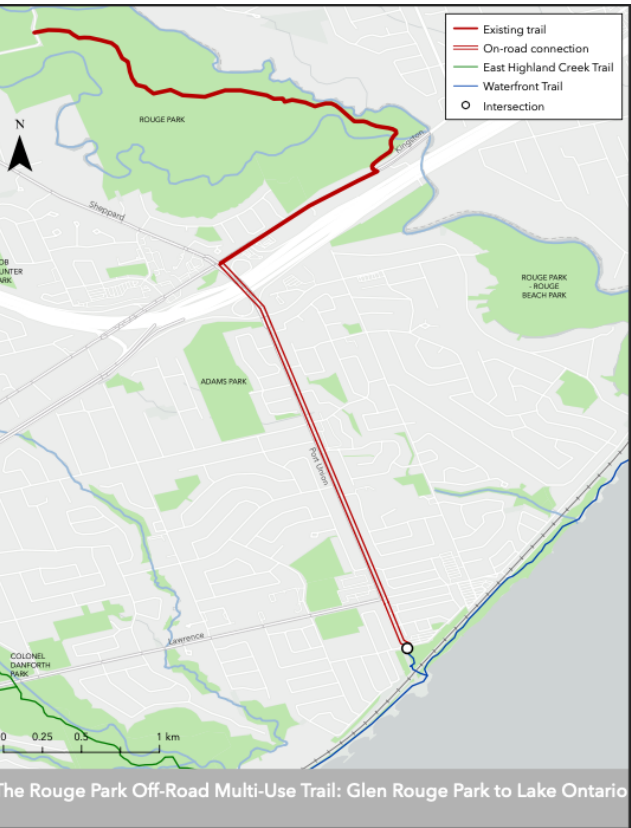




Figure 10. Aerial view of Point Rouge Trail Park. (Photo by Andre Sorensen)

Glen Rouge Park to Lake Ontario



Overview

This final route differs from the rest of the proposed routes for Rouge Park. This route goes from Glen Rouge Park to Lake Ontario. This segment is critical to cross the 401 highway and have access to the Lake Ontario Trails. It is about 2.5km long and is an on-street connection. The reason this route is not off-road is because creating an off-road trail through the Lower Rouge would be very difficult, because the Rouge River is bordered on both sides by private property and the floodplain itself is almost entirely wetlands (Figure 11).

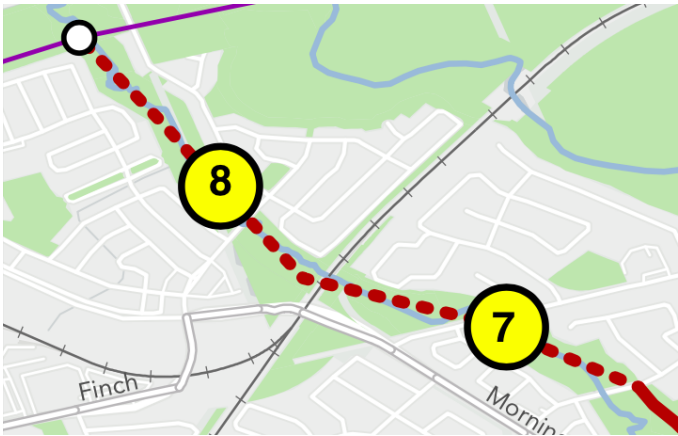




Figure 11. Google Maps shot of the Lower Rouge displays private properties backing onto the river.

We suggest that the best way to connect the proposed Rouge National Park trails to the Lake Ontario Shoreline Trail will be via Port Union Road (9), where raised cycle tracks on both sides of the road and expansions of the sidewalks are set for construction in 2023 (Figure 12).

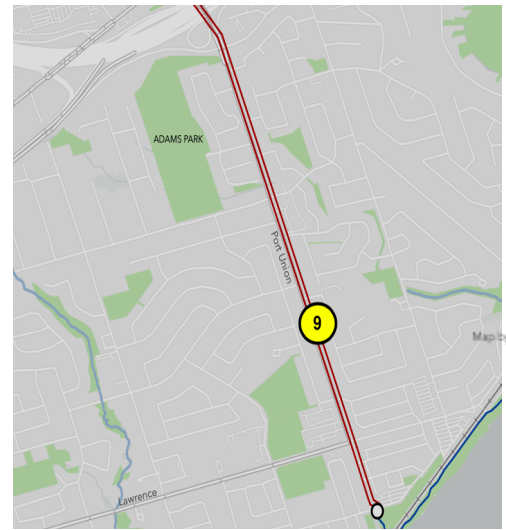


Figure 12. City of Toronto rendering on the future look of Port Union Road.

Also, a small portion of Kingston Road (10) will be used to access Glen Rouge Park. This will make it more accessible for cyclists and pedestrians to access the Glen Rouge trails using an on-street connection.



Conclusion

Overall, this proposed network in Rouge Park will benefit every Scarborough resident. Experiencing nature in our own community, and going out and exploring different parts of Scarborough, is all possible with this set of proposed networks. This network will make it possible to easily arrive at key locations across Scarborough and provide many connectivity gains enabling residents to reach their destination with ease. Allowing a connected off-road infrastructure to exist in Scarborough will reduce the burden of getting around without a motor vehicle and help encourage active transportation. These trails will be barrier-free not just for cyclists and pedestrians, but also for wheelchairs and other mobility assistance devices, strollers, and small children on bikes. This proposed network will attract cyclists and pedestrians from across Toronto to come and enjoy the trails and will facilitate social interactions, physical activity, and safe transport, contributing to a liveable and healthier Scarborough for all.