4.0 TRAIL DEVELOPMENT & MAINTENANCE STANDARDS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The following development and maintenance standards are intended to apply to City sponsored and co-sponsored “off-road” multi-use recreation trails. Where trails are operated by Hamilton trails systems partners, the standards which apply will be those developed and approved by that partner. The partners will be encouraged to utilize the City standards where appropriate to ensure integration of both systems.

Where multi-use recreation trails connect to or connect through City parks, it is intended to utilize the applicable trail style and standard. However, it is not intended that recreational trail standards be applied on a City-wide basis to other City parks. The recreational trail standard does not imply a change to existing City park trails standards.

4.2 TRAIL DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Issues to be addressed include:

1. new trails or upgraded trails
2. trail location (ward)
3. context (urban/rural)
4. trail style (on/off street)
5. trail width
6. trail surface type
7. trail use/users
8. single vs. multiple users
9. seasonal vs. year-round use
10. gradient
11. trail accessibility/barrier free
12. degree of difficulty
13. trail length
14. land ownership
15. trail stewards
16. trail access
17. links to other trails/systems
18. special considerations or site conditions
19. road crossings
20. trail signage
21. level of use

With respect to trail access and equity, many groups face barriers or disadvantaged access to community life. Ensuring that trails are accessible to all people within the population is necessary to ensure that everyone is about to fully participate in community life. The design of the trail system should be easily accessible to pedestrians, cyclists and other non-motorized (exception of electric wheelchairs) means of transportation. This Master Plan recognizes that many electric scooters and wheelchairs utilize trails where surface types and grades permit; the design and trail classification in this Master Plan considers these user groups and provides opportunities for these users.

Other components of a linear park-trail system include:

- rest stops with benches/garbage cans

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77 Ibid.
• interpretive nodes and points of interest
• benches, comfort stations, bike racks strategically placed
• viewpoints, where applicable
• significant landscape features (e.g. cascades/waterfalls)
• trailhead parking areas
• links to existing and future City parks
• signs for direction, information and interpretation\textsuperscript{79}

4.3 Trail Style

Hamilton’s trails are subdivided into two main classes: on-street bike routes and off-street recreational trails, on the basis of function. Further divisions are made to address multiple uses and design considerations; for example multi-purpose recreational trails, recreational trails, cycling trails, hiking trails, and inline skating. These classifications, technical trail development and maintenance standards contained in this Master Plan apply to City sponsored or co-sponsored components of the trails system.

Hamilton’s trail partners which include the Royal Botanical Gardens, Hamilton Conservation Authority, TransCanada Trail, Waterfront Regeneration Trust, Hamilton Waterfront Trust and Bruce Trail Association operate using different planning and administrative standards and their standards apply to their trails. These trails are identified separately on the Master Plan and individual Ward Plans. Where possible, this Master Plan classifies these trails using the system developed to classify City sponsored and co-sponsored trails.

The trail development and maintenance standards addressed in this Master Plan do not apply to partner operated trails systems. These are the responsibility of the partner organization. Furthermore, projects recommended to be implemented within this Master Plan are intended to implement City sponsored or co-sponsored trails. Further clarifications in responsibilities are provided in the discussion of trail classification.

4.3.1 On-Street Bike Route

Many cycling trails are provided for “on-street” use in a variety of ways. These provide for the efficient, safe cycling movement through City streets and are primarily designed for and intended as commuter trails. Some trails have designated lanes within which cyclists move while others share space with vehicular traffic. These facilities are planned and developed in conjunction with the planning and development of City of Hamilton Transportation Master Plans. Budgeting, project and environmental approvals are administered by the Public Works Department, Operations and Maintenance Division. “On-street” cycling facilities proposed in existing Transportation Master Plans are provided for within this Master Plan where practical, and links to and from cycling facilities are provided to join the “off-street” system.

\textsuperscript{79} City of Hamilton. Parks, Culture and Recreation Master Plan. May 27, 2002. pg 117.
Bicycles are recognized as vehicles under the legislation applicable to vehicular traffic and may use city streets irrespective of the provisions of this Master Plan. This Master Plan connects/uses these facilities where they have been planned for and developed in order to help implement sustainable transportation and development plans for the City of Hamilton.

4.3.2 Off-Street Recreational Trails
The bulk of Hamilton’s trails system is “off street” and comprises a variety of types of trail, ranging from multi-purpose (hard paved surface, stonedust surface) to recreational and walking/hiking trails (stonedust, woodchip or packed earth).

Trails provide for safe, off-street movement through the City and are primarily intended for recreational purposes. These trails are designed for a wide range of uses and user groups ranging from introductory easy lifestyle health trails, to more challenging levels of physical activity requiring much higher levels of fitness. A wide range of uses are accommodated including, but not limited to: hiking, walking, running, strollers, electric scooters/walkers, in-line skating, and cycling.

These trails are planned and developed in conjunction with the Planning and Development Department of the City of Hamilton. Budgeting, project and environmental approvals are administered by Public Works Department, Capital Planning and Implementation Division.

Where practical, links to and from these systems are provided to join the “on-street” system. Many of these off-street trails are owned, operated or managed by others and link to City of Hamilton Trails. Discussion regarding trail partners is provided later in this report within the implementation section.
4.4 TRAIL CLASSIFICATIONS

The standards of many different communities and agencies were researched to assist in developing trail classifications for width, surfaces and uses. Many communities and documents deal with either on or off-street cycling only. Multi-use paths are off-street facilities which share use by pedestrians, runners, cyclists, inline skaters and in some cases, users of motorized scooters. However, many of the documents and communities which were reviewed do not adequately consider a wide range of users using the trail(s) concurrently. Based on field observations, public input and experiences in other communities, the standards recommended in this Master Plan consider in a practical manner, the possibility of numerous types of users utilizing trails simultaneously.

This approach parallels current research which is being conducted with respect to new methodology for the determination of trail width in some jurisdictions of the United States; which has come about as a result of emerging new users as well as increasing numbers of trail users. The AASHTO (American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials) recommendation of 3.0m has historically been the standard for trail design width for many communities. Trail widths in various jurisdictions have been increasing from 3.6m to much wider. This trend is evident in a number of standards which were reviewed for the purpose of this Master Plan.

“The AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities. ...standards contained therein were developed using the operational characteristics of the bicycle to determine design criteria. While this research is not intended to validate or discredit the AASHTO criteria, comparisons to AASHTO are appropriate because of its status as a national guide.”

### SUMMARY OF TRAIL WIDTHS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOCUMENT</th>
<th>MULTI-USE TRAIL WIDTH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allegheny County Parks Comprehensive Master Plan</td>
<td>3.0m width (3.0m) plus .6m clear zone either side Qualified that the above is minimum, width must be considered on a case-by-case basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycle Facility Planning Suzan Anderson Pinsof/Terri Musser American Planning Association 1995</td>
<td>3.0m width trail, 3.65m in urban areas where heavy use is anticipated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Guidelines for Bikeways Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth Transportation, Operations and Environment Division, December 1999</td>
<td>Multi-Use Path: absolute minimum: 2.5 minimum: 3.0 desirable: 4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design, Signage and Maintenance Guidelines Waterfront Trail Victor Ford Associates Inc. 1997 for the Waterfront Regeneration Trust (Design options for single users, such as cyclists only are not included in this summary.)</td>
<td>• Urban/High Use Areas: Travel Width: 4.0-4.5m preferred • Rural/Low Use Areas: Travel Width: 3.0m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Guelph Guelph Trail Master Plan</td>
<td>3.0-3.5m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities</td>
<td>Width and Clearance:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) 1999</td>
<td>3.0m width + .6m clearance either side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition: Shared Use Path – A bikeway physically separated from motorized vehicular traffic by an open space or barrier and either within the highway right-of-way or within an independent right-of-way. Shared use paths may also be used by pedestrians, skaters, wheelchair users, joggers and other non-motorized users.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halton Regional Transportation Master Plan Appendix I – Cycling and Pedestrian Infrastructure Plan</td>
<td>3.0m, hard surface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrian Priority Pathways: soft surface, .7m width for single track, 2.4m width for double track</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississauga Multi-Use Recreational Trail Study 2001 Review for the Bicycle and Pedestrian Route Study Final Report July 2001</td>
<td>Class I Path: 3.0 to 4.0m wide, can be one-way or two way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions: Class I Path: completely separate from vehicular network. Designed primarily for the use of wheelchairs, pedestrians, cyclists, in-line skaters and skateboarders. Surface is most often asphalt.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario Bikeways Planning and Design Guidelines, March 1996 Ministry of Transportation Ontario Definition of Multi-Use Path: A facility which allows shared use by bicycles, pedestrians, roller-bladers, joggers, and other non-motorized forms of transportation, usually excluding horses, and which generally segregates cyclists and is not a sidewalk.</td>
<td>Multi-Use Path (two way) Shared with Pedestrians Without Physical Separation (from pedestrians) 2.4m + 1.2m = 3.6m desired 2.4 minimum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region of Waterloo Cycling Master Plan</td>
<td>4.2 to 4.7m including .6m clear zone either side. Urban trails – asphalt Rural trails – granular/screenings Definition of Clear Zone: Pathway shoulder area clear of obstructions. Recommended shoulder surface material gravel or grass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Clara County Parks Coyote Creek Parkway County Park: Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan and Master Plan</td>
<td>3.7m minimum width + .6m minimum shoulder each side</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<tr>
<td>Technical Handbook of Bikeway Design Vélo Québec in collaboration with the Ministère des Transports du Québec and the Canadian International Development Agency</td>
<td>Bicycle path with separation from pedestrians: 3.0m + 1.0m separation + 1.5m pedestrian path</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bicycle path without separation: 3.0m + 1.5m pedestrian path</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trails for the Twenty-First Century, 2nd Edition Planning, Design and Management Manual for Multi-Use Trails Rails to Trails Conservancy Charles A. Flink, Kristine Olka, Robert M. Searns</td>
<td>All non-motorized users: Urban: 14 ft (4.3m) Suburban: 12 feet (3.65m) Rural: 10ft (3.0m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discusses separation of trail users.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration Characteristics of Emerging Road and Trail Users and Their Safety “the results of this research will be valuable in either updating or developing new design guidelines for road and shared use path design to better accommodate emerging user groups”.</td>
<td>Current research re: trail design widths based on scientific analysis. Calculator tool available fall of 2005.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A calculation tool which was available in the late fall (2005) Shared-Use Path Bicycle Level of Service Calculator, provides the means to calculate trail width based on scientific research. Field data categories upon which the research was based are as follows: physical dimensions of various wheeled devices, space required for three-point turn, lateral operating space (sweep width), turning radii, acceleration capabilities, speed and stopping sight distance (brake reaction time, braking distance. The individual trail initiatives provided in this Master Plan are based on the following recommended trail classifications:

- **Class A** – trail width of 6.0 m
- **Class B** – trail width of 4.0 m
- **Class C** – trail width under 2.0 m

As outlined in the section on trail design considerations, many factors must be looked at together in order to finalize trail type, width and surfaces. In general terms, trails can be classified by considering anticipated uses and emerging users. For example: hiking/walking; walking/cycling; walking; cycling/inline skating are anticipated uses; however each of those may be further classified. For example, typical design considerations for a bicycle often do not include bicycle + trailer combinations, tandem bicycles, or adult sized tricycles.

Based on a generalized user profile, trail surfacing and width will need to be selected in conjunction with location and the other design considerations. **Section 4.2, Trail Design Considerations**, has been incorporated for convenience and consistent application of these considerations. A chart is included together with each individual Ward trail initiative using

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these design criteria. The design considerations are clearly shown so that a system wide approach may be utilized based on each trail project.

4.5 **TRAIL SURFACES**

Trail surfaces have been classified in three categories as follows:

**Type 1** – asphalt/concrete *Year-Round Use*

**Type 2** – granular (limestone on granular) *Seasonal Use*

**Type 3** – native soil/woodchips *Seasonal Use*

Selection of surface types will need to consider uses, user profile, gradient, trail width and maintenance requirements.

**Class A – Type 1, Multi-Use Recreation Trail**

For example, a 6.0 m wide Class A trail with a Type 1 asphalt or concrete surface would allow for the broadest, most inclusive range of uses and users concurrently. The Waterfront Trail is an excellent example of this type of trail. While not appropriate in all locations, this trail appeals to a very broad, inclusive range of concurrent uses and users.

**Class B – Type 1 or 2, Multi-Use Recreation Trail**

For example, a 4.0m wide Class B trail with a Type 1 asphalt or concrete surface would allow for a lower volume of users while limiting concurrent uses such as inline skating. A 4.0m wide Class B trail with granular Type 2 surface would allow for a large number of users, but reduce the number of user types. For example, inline skating, walkers and some motorized scooters would not be able to negotiate a Type 2 granular trail surface.

**Class C – Type 3, Recreation Trail**

At the other end of the range are trails less than 2.0 m wide, Class C trails, with Type 3 native soil or woodchips surface. The Bruce Trail and Royal Botanical Gardens Trails are good examples of this trail type. These trails offer a different type of experience with limitations on the types of uses and users.

4.6 **TRAIL SIGNAGE/PICTOGRAMS**

For a trail system as large and complex as Hamilton’s, a wide variety of signs will be required. Many of the types of signs required for use in the trail system are currently in use. Examples of these signs are shown in Section 7.2.5, Trailhead and Interpretive Signage.

In addition to those signs already in use, other signs will need to be developed. *The design of a new signage system is beyond the scope of this report, however, some guidance is provided for specialty signage that will be required in the future to assist in design work.*

Existing trailhead signs currently have two sides. In most cases, these signs are installed and intended for viewing both sides. A separate report on trailhead signs was completed which is included in the complete version of this report under Appendix 3, Trailhead Signs, Location and Condition Guide.

Trailhead signs generally utilize one side for a trail map, which will require updating from time to time depending on the Ward and degree of change/additions to the trail system. In all likelihood, signs should be updated every 3-5 years. The trailhead maps currently in use on
trailhead signs (2006), utilizes a vinyl based copy of the “Hamilton Bikeway, Trails and Parks” map which were installed in 2002 based on 2001 maps. Since 2002, some maps may have been updated or replaced. However, based on our site work as of 2005, no new signs were found.

On the reverse side of the trailhead sign, existing signage and information varies widely from location to location across the City. This map also contains useful information on signs, safety and rules of the road. As the trail system advances and is implemented, new signage will be required to introduce and provide additional information on the trail(s). This includes, but not limited to trail style, trail use, accessibility, degree of difficulty, length, links to other trails, special considerations, interpretive signage.

We also created and introduced the concept of “Degree of Difficulty” physical fitness rating level utilizing familiar Alpine Ski Symbols, adapted for use on trails; shown as:

- Easy/Lifestyle/Recreational Trail
- Moderate Exercise
- Sustained Exercise and Steep Hill

These pictograms and degree of difficulty ratings should be utilized at each trailhead using only the pictograms appropriate for that trail(s). Information on these is shown for specific Ward initiatives on the individual data sheets in Section 5.3, Individual Ward Projects. In addition to pictograms, interpretive or degree of difficulty ratings, a number of other signs and pictograms are required. These are currently utilized on the City of Hamilton Bikeway, Trails and Parks map, March 2005 edition.82

82 City of Hamilton Bikeways, Trails & Parks Map, March 2005.
For the purpose of these new signs, we have researched and utilized, where possible, international pictograms. The exceptions are three pictograms that were created by G. O'Connor Consultants Inc. (Running, In-Line Skating, Electric Scooter). The Hamilton Waterfalls Logo was created by Steve Barnhart, City of Hamilton.

It is not intended that all pictograms be utilized in all locations, however, each site/trailhead will require a varied number of pictograms and signs to explain that portion of the system. In this regard, a standardized vocabulary of signs should be utilized City-wide using the range of pictograms shown. In addition, some excellent examples of interpretive signs are illustrated in Section 7.2.5 of this report.

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83 The International Pictograms Standard. Todd Pierce. Design Pacifica International LLC, Published Cincinnati, Ohio, 1996.
Interpretive signs with “Big Picture thinking” may also be considered on the back of trailhead signs which should be considered when final signs are designed. Individual interpretive signs, like the examples shown, will of course be required at various locations throughout the system and should be utilized as required. Section 3.2 discusses potential interpretive themes.

Under separate cover, the report “Waterfalls & Cascades of Hamilton, Phase 2 – Upgrades and Enhancements”, April 2006 by G. O’Connor Consultants Inc., provides direction on interpretive education related to waterfalls. Ultimately, both system’s, trails and waterfalls, interpretive education should be integrated into one system.

4.7 Trail Safety

Where trails are used by older persons or persons with disabilities, the provision of safety measures such as regular patrols should be provided. Passive measures will also be installed such as washrooms, benches, shaded rest areas and emergency phones where appropriate and on a detailed site or trail basis.

A volunteer patrol system may be used similar to the one operating in the Dundas Valley sponsored by the Hamilton Conservation Authority. This would provide assistance where required to trail users. In addition to having some first aid training and equipment, patrol staff would also have a radio which can be used to access the Trail Centre Authority staff.

The general condition does not support the lighting of recreational trails except in the special exceptions listed below. In most instances, recreational trails are located in natural environments which do not allow for natural surveillance by the surrounding communities. Therefore, lighting of these trails would further encourage the public to enter an area that is potentially unsafe at night. Lighting would give the public a false sense of security in these instances. This direction is according to Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles (CPTED) which indicates the important of natural surveillance of public spaces by surrounding land uses. When natural surveillance is not feasible at night, the public should not be encouraged to enter into natural areas through lighted trails. However, an example of lighting of trails has been provided on the waterfront trail. This practice has taken place due to the greater usage of the trail by the public. The trail in this case has been designed with a 6 metre width recognizing the tremendous number of users on the trail; the trail provides a significant connection across the city and generally provides high levels of natural surveillance. Lighting of the pedestrian staircases up the Niagara Escarpment has also taken place, recognizing that the stairway serves a transportation linkage function up and down the Escarpment for pedestrians and lighting assists with climbing the stairs safely.

4.8 Trail Maintenance

These recommendations augment the standard City of Hamilton parks operations maintenance procedures and are intended as a guide to ensure appropriate and consistent recreation trail maintenance. Maintenance is conducted at two levels: inspection/report and the actual physical maintenance. The objectives behind inspections include:

- To ensure user safety

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To reduce/limit liability
- To maintain a high standard of quality
- To aid in planning maintenance tasks
- To preserve the aesthetic character of features and ensure user satisfaction.

The trails master plan outlines recommendations for inspections and record keeping and provides an overview of maintenance techniques.

4.8.1 Protecting the Public From Hazards
In the event hazards are identified during inspections, if possible the hazard should be eliminated on discovery or as soon as practical thereafter. Trail maintenance reports provide a means to record and prioritize repairs to be conducted at a later time and in addition provide a means of tracking the history of works conducted at a site specific level.

4.8.2 Risk Management
The responsibility of the City as owner of the lands is defined in the Occupier's Liability Act (Appendix 10). The Act allocates a "common" duty of care owed by all property owners to anyone entering onto the property to ensure that the entrant is reasonably safe while on the premises. In order to encourage public entities to open their land for recreational use, immunity is provided for recreational landowners by allowing them a "reduced duty of care" in which "a person who enters (the) premises ....shall be deemed to have willingly assumed all risks." In order to qualify for this reduced duty of care the following criteria apply:

1. The entry must be for the purpose of a recreational activity;
2. The premises are recreational trails reasonably marked by notice as such.

The option to provide lighting on trails must be taken into careful consideration as a lit trail may create the perception that it is safe to walk at night. A child, teen or even adult who would not normally use an unlit trail may be lulled into a false sense of security and use a trail that is lit.

Trail Owners must decide if the trail lighting is a reasonable precaution to take in terms of ensuring the navigational safety of the trail users. For instance, if the trail serves as a necessary link between two points, which is frequently used as a means of traveling (as opposed to recreational use), then it is reasonable to provide lighting on that trail to ensure safety to the user and prevent them from injury caused by tripping/falling.

4.8.3 Timing and Frequency
Scheduled inspections should occur 3 times a year for all trails: spring, mid-summer and fall. Other inspections will occur – following a report of damage, or a catastrophic event such as a flood or windstorm.

4.8.4 Procedure
Carrying a paper or automated versions of the Maintenance Inspection Form (MIF), the inspector walks the entire route, inspecting every feature along the trail. An automated or paper copy of the trail map should be used to identify the location of every walk feature. This could eventually be linked to the City’s GIS data and provide a valuable and dynamic tool.
Maintenance inspectors will consider issues of safety and trail aesthetics when carrying out their inspections. The safety of the user is of primary importance. The inspections should include visible damage and potential damage and hazards.

Before beginning the inspection, the following information should be recorded on the MIF:

- The trail name, number and Ward
- The date and time of inspection
- The type of inspection (scheduled vs. other)
- The unit of measurement to be used when assessing damages

If damages are identified and repairs are required:

- Note damages on the MIF
- If the damage is not clearly obvious, mark it with spray paint or flagging tape
- Record all measurements necessary to plan and implement repairs
- Indicate the appropriate recommendations
- Indicate the priority of action

While inspecting a trail, note any observations on trail use, such as the number of users encountered, or ATV tracks.

If a problem is minor and it can be solved during the inspection, the inspector should take the appropriated action and record the action he/she has taken (e.g. unclogging a blocked culvert).

### 4.8.5 Recording Data

Inspections of the trail system infrastructure should include all site furnishings and structures along with the trail surface. All walk features are assigned a unique F-code (feature code) so they can be easily identified. Some damages are not associated with actual walk features (e.g. washout, blown down tree). In these cases a trail map and descriptive information should be provided to outline the location of the trail damage. For a complete list and description of feature and feature identifier codes refer to Table 1 within the sample inspection form.

### 4.8.6 Trail Infrastructure Items

**Hard Surfaces** including edges and identification of uneven surfaces that may create tripping hazards such as cracks, humps, ruts, heaving or missing surfaces.

**Soft Surfaces** including mud holes, ruts, damage from washouts or where grading and/or a drainage feature may be required.

**Drainage Structures**, free of debris and note areas that require a drainage feature. Structures include culverts, swales and area drains (soak-away pits).
Boardwalks and Decks including missing boards, protruding nails and damaged or loose wood.

Steps including stability of structure, damage to hardware and damaged or missing boards, Stonework including damaged and missing pieces of stone and/or grout.

Garbage Bins are being emptied as needed and in proper structural condition.

Signage including faded or damaged signs and record any vandalism or graffiti

Benches and Picnic Tables including inspection for splinters and sharp edges that could cause injury, hardware is tight and in good condition and surfaces are stable, secure and free of graffiti

Railings including checking for stability, shake test for loose hardware and footings, locations where elements could be added to improve stability and safety of the rail

Bollards including footing, checking for degree of visibility especially at night, does it require a reflective strip

Lighting including review of cracks or damage to lens, bulb and other fixtures, exposed wires and proper illumination at night

FOR TRAIL MAINTENANCE PLEASE REFER TO THE CITY OF HAMILTON TRAIL MAINTENANCE STANDARDS MANUAL. THE BRUCE TRAIL ASSOCIATION PATROLS THE BRUCE TRAIL REGULARLY AND REMOVES POTENTIAL HAZARDS AND RECORDS ANNUALLY THEIR MAINTENANCE ACTIVITIES. HAMILTON CONSERVATION AUTHORITY AND ROYAL BOTANICAL GARDENS TRAILS UNDERGO REGULAR MAINTENANCE.