SUBJECT: Proposed CP Rail Trail in West Hamilton (PW06052) - (City Wide)

RECOMMENDATION:

(a) That a real estate appraisal report be completed for the Canadian Pacific Rail corridor between Stroud Road and the Fortino’s property limit, at an estimated cost of $8,500, to be funded from the Cycling Capital Account 4030517124.

(b) That a Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment be conducted on the Canadian Pacific Rail corridor between Stroud Road and the Fortino’s property limit, at an estimated cost of $4,000, to be funded from the Cycling Capital Account 4030517124.

(c) That an initial design and cost estimate for the proposed trail be completed for the Canadian Pacific Rail corridor between Stroud Road and the Fortino’s easterly property limit, at an estimated cost of $27,000, to be funded from the Cycling Capital Account 4030517124.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Shifting Gears, the City’s cycling master plan, recognizes the potential for developing a portion of abandoned rail right-of-way in west Hamilton as a cycling and multi-use trail facility. The general area is from east of Fortino’s supermarket to Studholme Road, running parallel to and south of Main Street. Committee and Council endorsed this initiative in the report Update on Cycling Infrastructure Initiatives #PW03072a. Over the
past eight to ten years, the City has had on-going discussions with Canadian Pacific (CP) Rail about developing this trail, but little real support was forthcoming from CP. At a recent meeting between CP Rail and City staff, CP Rail expressed a newly increased interest in supporting the City's initiative. CP has suggested selling a portion of their spur line to the City for use as a rail trail, as well as allowing access through their Aberdeen rail yard. The spur line runs east/west between Stroud Road and the Fortino's easterly property line east of Rifle Range Road.

This proposed rail trail would then connect to the Hamilton/Brantford rail trail and provide a link across Highway 403 to Studholme Road via the CP Rail overpass. The proposed rail trail would serve as both as a recreational trail and as an east/west cycling commuter route running parallel to, and as an alternate to, Main Street West. It would connect to the Chedoke Rail Trail and the Scenic Drive stairs via the Chedoke Golf Course driveway and parking lot, and give potential access to the McMaster Innovation Park and downtown. The map below details the various bicycle and pedestrian connections to the proposed CP Rail Trail.

Bicycle/Pedestrian Connections to Proposed CP Rail Trail

Council approved policy with regard to real estate administrative principles requires that all project funding, both capital and operating, be in place, before commencing any purchase negotiations. Therefore, before entering into discussions with CP Rail, staff and Council would need to acquire more detailed information about the project lands, its condition and the cost to build the facility in order to consider a capital funding plan. To acquire this information, it is recommended that the following investigations into the project feasibility be conducted: a real estate appraisal report; an environmental site assessment (ESA); and a preliminary design and cost estimate.

The proposed east/west cycling/walking corridor in west Hamilton would provide an essential commuter link for the residents of Hamilton and the students and faculty of McMaster University. Furthermore, the potential to attract visitors from neighbouring
communities is increased by creating a continuous cycling network that would connect Hamilton to the City of Brantford via the Hamilton/Brantford Rail Trail. The proposed facility would also provide a fine recreational trail for local residents.

BACKGROUND:

The information/recommendations contained within this report primarily affect Ward 1.

Over the past years, the City has had on-going discussions with Canadian Pacific (CP) Rail about developing a cycling/multi-purpose trail in west Hamilton. The general area is from east of Fortino’s supermarket, east of Rifle Range Road to Studholme Road, running parallel to and south of Main Street. Committee and Council previously endorsed this initiative in the Update on Cycling Infrastructure Initiatives report #PW03072a. Up until recently, these discussions had not resulted in a favourable response from CP. At a recent meeting between CP Rail and City Staff, CP Rail expressed a newly increased interest in supporting the City's initiative, which may include selling a portion of their spur line to the City for use as a rail trail. The spur line runs east/west between Stroud Road and the Fortino’s easterly property line near Rifle Range Road. The purchase of the noted spur line would be made in conjunction with lease of access through the Aberdeen rail yard, connecting from Stroud easterly to Studholme Road.

This proposed rail trail would then connect to the Hamilton/Brantford rail trail and provide a link across Highway 403 to Studholme Road via the CP Rail overpass. The proposed rail trail would serve as both as a recreational trail and as an east/west commuter route running parallel to and as an alternate to Main Street West. It would connect to the Chedoke Rail Trail and the Scenic Drive stairs via the Chedoke Golf Course parking lot, and give potential access to downtown and to the McMaster Innovation Park, although the connection from Studholme Road across Aberdeen Avenue has yet to be defined. Given the current traffic volumes and the overall geometrics of Main Street West, the addition of cycling facilities on Main Street West is not feasible, thereby making this corridor very appealing.

Traffic Engineering and Operations Staff have completed an initial investigation into this proposed rail trail project. Preliminary drawings of the rail corridor have been prepared by a consultant and the project appears to be feasible from a design point of view. CP Rail employees have reviewed the preliminary design and agree that the project appears feasible from the rail operations side as well.

Council approved policy with regard to real estate administrative principles requires that all project funding, both capital and operating, be in place, before commencing any purchase negotiations. Therefore, before considering entering into discussions with CP Rail, a capital budget would have to be developed for which staff and Council need additional information about the project and its conditions. At this point we do not have a full understanding of the actual land value of the corridor, the existing environmental conditions within the corridor or the expected project construction cost. In order to move ahead with this project, it is recommended that the following investigations into the project feasibility be conducted: a real estate appraisal report; an initial environmental site assessment (ESA); and a preliminary design and cost estimate. Depending on the results of the initial environmental scan, additional environmental investigation may also be required. Once the complete picture is assembled, staff will
present a recommendation to Committee and Council on whether to proceed, and if so, a suggested method of funding.

**ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:**
Providing cycling facilities to residents of the City will increase opportunities for exercise, therefore helping to improve the quality of personal health and the quality of life. Furthermore, cycling for personal transportation helps to reduce motorized vehicle trips, thereby reducing air pollution and helping to create a sustainable transportation system within the City.

The potential to create an east/west cycling/walking corridor in west Hamilton which would run parallel to Main Street West would provide an essential commuter link for the residents of Hamilton and the students and faculty of McMaster University.

The potential to attract visitors from neighbouring communities is increased by creating a continuous cycling network that would connect Hamilton to the City of Brantford via the Hamilton/Brantford Rail Trail.

The proposed facility would also provide a fine recreational trail for local residents.

**ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:**
Council may elect not to support the expenditure of cycling capital funds to investigate the possibility of creating a rail trail along the CP Rail corridor. However, this route represents the best opportunity to create an east/west cycling/walking corridor in the area. Therefore, Staff does not support this alternative.

**FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:**

**Financial**
Sufficient cycling capital funds for the real estate appraisal report, the initial ESA and the construction estimate are available in Cycling Capital Account 4030517124.

**Staffing**
Internal staff from Traffic Engineering & Operations will be responsible for the overall project management of the investigations, design and final implementation of the proposed trail. Staff from the Development and Real Estate Division would be responsible for performing the real estate appraisal in-house. Staff from Capital Planning and Implementation will manage the site environmental investigations.

**Legal Implications**
N/A

**POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:**
The Real Estate Portfolio Management Strategy, as approved by Council on November 24, 2004, requires that “a budget item must be approved for the program, including the costs of real property and operational budget impact, before action is taken to acquire property”.
RELEVANT CONSULTATION:

Ward Councillor, CP Rail, the Development and Real Estate Division, Capital Planning and Implementation Division, Finance and Administration Division, McCormick Rankin Corp., and Water and Earth Sciences Associates Ltd.,

CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:

By evaluating the “Triple Bottom Line”, (community, environment, and economic implications) we can make choices that create value across all three bottom lines, moving us closer to our vision for a sustainable community, and Provincial interests.

Community Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No
Providing cycling facilities to residents can increase opportunities for exercise, therefore helping to improve the quality of personal health and the quality of life.

Environmental Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No
Cycling for personal transportation helps to reduce motorized vehicle trips, therefore reducing air pollution.

Economic Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No
The potential to attract visitors from neighbouring communities is increased by creating a continuous cycling network.

Does the option you are recommending create value across all three bottom lines? ☑ Yes ☐ No

Do the options you are recommending make Hamilton a City of choice for high performance public servants? ☐ Yes ☑ No
LOCATION PLAN

PROPOSED RAIL TRAIL CONVERSION:
CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY
ADJACENT TO
MAIN STREET WEST
CITY OF HAMILTON
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

LEGEND

PROPOSED RAIL TRAIL CONVERSION
EXISTING RAIL TRAIL

SCALE
NOT TO SCALE

DATE
2006-04-26

REFERENCE FILE NO:
PW06052