

Canadian Airport Regulations (CARS)

307.03 Airport Runway 14L-32R Extension & request to transfer City land at Puckett's Gulch to the Airport so it can move its fence for safety reasons

A walker's viewpoint to help make walking better, more popular

A look at the Airport's runway extension, the Airport Perimeter Trail and the perimeter trail's special role in area recreation and active transportation

Background: YG's information session, Aug 31, 2022, 4-7 pm at the Yukon Transportation Museum, and City Council's Public Meeting, Sept 12, 2022, 5:30 pm at City Hall

The Airport is asking the City for a chunk of land around Puckett's Gulch to allow adherence to CARS runway safety rules. This will involve significant changes to the Airport Perimeter Trail and to a popular access route up Puckett's Gulch. Stairs are not easy on everyone's knees!

In addition to last year's Airport Perimeter Trail closure, recreation on the cliffs over Downtown was further restricted because of caution over this spring's landslides. Now we're being asked to rethink our recreation needs again, without looking at the whole trail (well documented as an existing public use along the airport perimeter) and how the Airport controls it.

Some Background: Dec 2, 2021, as a walking advocate, I asked Highways to move the airport fence where the City had closed the Airport Perimeter Trail for safety[map #4].

Dec 3, 2021, the Airport mailed out 6680 consultation letters seeking public input on a runway extension by Jan 17, 2022 [see map, red arrows and bars]; there were only ten responses. I live downtown, but didn't receive one of the letters, nor have I talked to anyone who did.

Dec 24, 2021, Highways replied, denying my request. There was no mention that my letter touched on an active public consultation, clearly relevant to this trail.

"...the Yukon government is not currently considering adjusting the Erik Nielsen International Airport fence perimeter to facilitate the unofficial trail"

Aug 1, 2022, I first learned about this consultation at the City Council meeting on the Airport's request to obtain land at Puckett's Gulch as part of the runway expansion.

A walker's look the airport escarpment area

In light of this Airport land request, I've looked at pitfalls and walking opportunities in the airport area. I coded my observations as ✈️ for the runway process, ❤️ for improvements the community needs, and 🏠 for relevant planning opportunities. So, what did I find?

Downtown never had a City trail task force process. (One result was the well-used Airport Perimeter Trail was called an 'unofficial' trail in Highway's response to me.)

Looking beyond obvious active transportation needs like the Bike Network Trail's use of the area, the escarpment area will become even more important as the 2040 OCP's new South Growth Area fills with its 16,000 new residents. As well, the City Transportation Plan tries to reduce vehicle

trips to downtown; and YG and the City both have climate policies and health goals. Toss in YEC's new battery storage facility and YG's widening the Alaska Highway by the airport, and clearly the Airport Perimeter Trail will play a key City role.

Density requires walkable neighbourhoods, so to promote Downtown as a great place to live, the 2040 OCP proposes new parks and other amenities for Downtown. ❤️ The scenic upper escarpment edge could be a linear park, with interpretive geology, plants, First Nations and historical stories, art events and walks. It's a healthy walk in nature, with hills from Downtown.

Accessible trails in nature are way too scarce in the city. Many seniors, elders, parents with strollers, would be just as interested in the delightful viewpoints along the escarpment as people in wheelchairs. We should make more of the perimeter trail accessible, ✈️ but using foot-friendly crushed gravel instead of asphalt. Especially with signage in the airport terminal, this scenic 8-km walking trail around our international airport would be popular with tourists as well as residents.

Airport Perimeter Trail, a community project

This is a great opportunity for the City and YG to work together. As part of compensation for land transfer, it's reasonable there be a public commitment to maintain and enhance the airport environs trail infrastructure, and that work needed on the trail along the escarpment, shown as ✈️, be included as part of the deal. We need to see clear maps before work starts.

It's also reasonable to get confirmation that the City will take a lead to ensure trails, connections like the Airport Toe Trail and necessary improvements are coordinated.

All of the perimeter trail should be usable now. It's a year-round trail — winter biking, kicksledding, running, walking all help pack the trail. Trail use is healthy and free — closure during construction must be minimal. Especially in a pandemic, trail use should be paramount.

This valuable City asset should be maintained at a similar quality as the Airport's fence and perimeter road; ie, where the trail is at risk in the foreseeable future, move the fence. Yukon Energy graciously gave an easement to the City for the Rotary Centennial Bridge, a good model for the Airport. According to Airport consultants at the Aug 1 Council meeting, the runway extension is sufficiently funded to do a proper job.

Moving fences for safety and public good can go both ways! Let's look at a map of some other walkability issues.

Peter Long

Peter Long,
August 28,
2022





"Modern, safe and exciting recreational facilities are a key way that our government can support active living"
 Community Services Minister
 Richard Mostyn

"Yukon Government encourages walking as a healthy activity and environmentally friendly mode of transportation"
 Minister of Highways and Public Works
 Nils Clarke

1. ✈️ Puckett's Gulch

The newly routed perimeter trail must deal with winter winds and snow cornices. The route up the gulch to join the rebuilt perimeter trail will be significantly impacted. Rebuild as an All Ages and Abilities trail that works for walking, biking, running, even for kicksledding.

2. ✈️ Trail drop

Fix the broken asphalted surface at spot where the trail goes over a culvert; moving the fence is one solution.

3. 🚗 Path or staircase

The Downtown South Plan calls for a descent near Hawkins Hanson. This will be well-used. If not possible in the short term, then #6, the Airport Toe Trail, is an easy solution.

4. ✈️ Reopen perimeter trail

Erosion above Drury St. over the years was making moving the airport fence a looming necessity. In 2021, the City closed the trail for safety reasons as it lacked authority to move the fence. **Please, make it safe, move the fence!**

5. ✈️ Safety area

At the south end of the runway extension, the runway strip and runway end safety areas may affect the trail.

6. ❤️ Airport Toe Trail

This is a **key connector route** that will encourage trail use, for people to get out and be physical. Loops such as with the Millennium Trail and the Upper and Lower Riverdale trails, will be very popular. Yukon Energy's corridor will

work well as part of this route. Let's stop vehicles from eroding escarpment edges in this area.

7. 🚗 To Miles Canyon

Connect to the Yukon River Trail or up to Ear Lake with this simple, safe bypass of the Miles Canyon Road.

8. 🚗 RSW access point

Highlight route near battery plant road near RSW traffic light. From there, access roundabout and west of highway, Ear Lake, Miles Canyon, Whitehorse South...

9. 🚗 Crossings on all sides

Roundabout should be well-planned for non vehicles. Ensure there's trail access to MacLean Lake and Paddy's Pond/Ice Lake parks, Whitehorse South and above-the-airport neighbourhoods

and to future South Growth Area residents. Ensure people at the RV park can walk or bike to the escarpment and to Downtown.

10. ✈️ South end parking

This pull-off spot, well-used parking for using the perimeter trail, is presently covered by construction. Fix the rough downhill trail section along the fence. Connect to new highway paved path when ready.

11. 🚗 West side trails

Ensure trail access to Rock Gardens, Paddy's Pond/Ice Lake Park and above-the-airport neighbourhoods.

12. 🚗 Highway Underpass

It's not too late for a kid-safe crossing under the highway for walking, biking, running and kicksledding. Destinations

abound: Downtown, the Canada Games Centre, airport and operations escarpments, above-the-airport neighbourhoods, especially McIntyre, Valleyview and future tank farm residents.

13. 🚗 Baxter's Gulch

There should be easy access to the Escarpment Trail behind the City Operations complex; provide staff here coming from Riverdale and Downtown with easy walking. Work is needed on the Baxter's Gulch trail.

14. ❤️ Switchback Trail

A great green trail. Inspirational! Putting strategic handrails would not only deal with icy corners, they might stop people cutting switchbacks and wrecking the trail. Vehicles shouldn't be using it.