

Walking is an extremely important activity and since our city, as most progressive cities, wishes to have a walkable city, it needs to stay on top of this concept. The city is currently working on its regular update process to the Transportation Plan. I'm sure we'll see that the city is growing, that we need better public transportation and that it would be better if there was more active transportation. Active transportation comes when people like to walk and this implies recreational walking.

Winter walking downtown is not easy or safe under current city policy of not ensuring sidewalks are kept clear. Different city policies, including the OCP, note that access to trails is important and should be kept accessible to all residents. Yet, a recent request to ensure the lower escarpment paved trail be maintained in the winter was punted to sometime in the future.

I want to bring up a few walking issues/areas that severely constrain walking for downtown and other city residents: Airport Perimeter Trail, Bert Law Park, access to Hospital/Long Lake trails, and the Millennium Trail.

1: Airport Perimeter Trail. This has long been a well used trail for both downtown and above-the-airport residents. Earlier this year slumping caused the trail to slide a little in a spot that for years has been deteriorating. The city erected 'Trail Closed' signage.

People want to be able to have longer walks outside of the downtown streets. This is an extremely well used area. It's an easy longer loop using the trail down by the motocross area. Closing this trail discourages walking.

Over the years the Airport Planning process acknowledged the importance of this trail and all city public input planning processes have noted the importance of this trail. Below are photos from the Air North Fun Run a few years ago where they simply made a passage by moving the fence. This could quite easily, and cheaply, be done again.



2: Bert Law Park. In July this year, the bridge was temporarily closed. It's now mid October and the water is clearly down. Could the gravel bundles be dealt with? Rather than take these away, use them to improve the trail base on the island's main trail at the spots that get muddy and slippery. The current sign, hidden in one of the bundles, is an invitation to defy the city's intent here.

This is a well used 'wilderness' walk. There are few places downtown where people can get away and this is an important one. People should be able to park at the campground parking area to access this loop.

In reality it could be made an accessible loop. People in wheelchairs would love to have access to the outdoors and this place would be a special treat. The Wolf Creek accessible wilderness trail is good although not winter accessible and requires a long drive, and isn't bus accessible either.

3: Hospital Road/Lewes Boulevard switchback. For downtown residents, this is the trailhead to the great Long Lake/Hospital/Magnusson/Grey Mountain trail network. Unfortunately, in the winter it can be unusable.

Last year I asked Corrections and also the Reckless Raven crew to help but the trail was too badly frozen in to make it possible. Instead both tried to make a staircase across the switch back. This worked a little but then as the snow crumbled, made for a rather treacherous descent situation.

What some people do is drive over and park at the Hospital, a situation the Hospital would not like to see grow.

A simple solution here would be to re-edge the trail. Doing this before snow flies would make it easier to keep it accessible during the winter. Perhaps the city and city trail stewards could do a quick work party?

4: Millennium Trail. In the past few years the city has started to plough the trail. Then warming happens and the snow melts. Where the water can't drain, it pools and soon freezes. This can happen a few times over the winter. One easy solution would be to hand shovel a few drainage channels where this happens, and to sprinkle gravel where ice occurs.

I've pointed out in the past that when Two Mile Hill gets slippery, a few phone calls will have sanding trucks on the hill in minutes! Why can't major recreational/active transportation routes get the same courtesy?

Peter