

Moving airport fence back from edge and reopening Airport Perimeter Trail June 3, 2025

People have been lobbying for years for the airport to move the fence in a couple of spots to facilitate the City reopening downtown's Airport Perimeter Trail. There are continual recommendations that in a couple of small spots the fence must move to make room for the trail, yet this keeps getting ignored. Yukon Energy graciously gave an easement to the City for the wildly successful Rotary Centennial Bridge and Millennium Trail attraction. Our trail is a very long-standing trail and should be grandfathered in as an Official Trail, without it being such a big deal. This trail shouldn't be discarded just because the airport is dragging its heels on moving the fence, after all, the City gave land for runway extension for \$1.

Background documents and links

1999 Airport Development Plan

(See 2 image jpegs in my email): [Map, Trail issues and recommendations](#)

2.5.2 Trail Issues & Recommendations

"The importance of protecting the trails along the top of the escarpment and around the airport perimeter was identified during consultations in 1998 on the planned runway extensions. The perimeter trail is well used year round.

"From an airport development perspective, trail use, boundary fence placement and drainage are the main issues. Due to the extent of bank slippage that has occurred over the years, the well used perimeter trail and boundary fence are approaching the escarpment edge in some areas. This situation was aggravated in the past by poor surface drainage practices which directed run-off towards the escarpment edge. This has been corrected by reorienting site drainage away from the escarpment and by looking at ways to relocate either the fence or trail to ensure access continuity.

"The most prominent concern raised was related to the importance of preserving the perimeter trails around the airport property. A number of respondents pointed out that both the top of the escarpment and north and south boundary trails are well used on a year round basis and are key components of the overall city-wide trail system. It was suggested the trails should be looked at as an asset and developed accordingly noting the potential to link both the airport and the nearby Transportation Museum and Beringia Centre to the downtown.

"Responsibility for trail development and maintenance within the escarpment control zone rests with the City of Whitehorse Parks & Recreation Department under the Downtown Escarpment Land Use Policy. The responsibility of airport management is to ensure the security of the airport while accommodating this longstanding activity.

"The following recommendations respond to public access concerns and airport security

"Provision for a 3-6m perimeter trail right-of-way around the entire airport should be included in the airport Land Use Plan.

"Boundary fences along the escarpment edges should maintain a 3-6 m setback between the top of slope and perimeter fence where required."

Clearly the fence and security perimeter road are airport responsibility to move.

2018 Robert Service Way Study

https://www.whitehorse.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Robert_Service_Way_Plannin.pdf (pages iii, 13, 20 maps)

"Work with airport administration to address airport trail erosion;" and

"Maintain minimum 30-metre development buffers from the top of escarpment and retain trail connectivity;"

2020-2030 Aviation Investment Strategy, January 8, 2021

https://yukon.ca/sites/default/files/final_aviation_system_investment_strategy_jan_8_2021_0.pdf

“When asked specifically which investments should be prioritized, the top three investments identified in the survey were those that support public health and safety, communities and the tourism sector.” (page vi) These are exactly the same priorities our Airport Perimeter Trail needs!

“The City and Government of Yukon have agreed that there shall be no development within 30 metres of the edge of the cliffs/bluffs, with the exception of the perimeter pedestrian trail.” (page 5.20)

Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport Airfield Upgrades Summary report

<https://yukon.ca/sites/default/files/hpw-cars-307-consultation-summary-report-enwia.pdf>

Note that in replies to the curiously small number of respondents, no acknowledgement is made of trail issues around the south end of the runway expansion. Also Transport Canada, NAV CANADA and the City of Whitehorse did not provide feedback, and of 6680 notices delivered to the public, only 10 gave feedback.

Whitehorse airport construction should be finished by fall 2025: YG

<https://www.wingsmagazine.com/whitehorse-airport-construction-should-be-finished-by-fall-2025-yg/>

According to a January 2024 statement on the airport, highways and public works minister Nils Clarke said “\$160.6 million has been designated for the main runway replacement contract, secured by Flatiron Construction Company.” The minister was quoted at the time as saying that the remaining funds would fund “various airport projects that are currently in the planning phases.”

It would cost a pittance for the airport, as a good neighbour, to adjust a couple of fenced sections! It definitely affects the “public health and safety, communities and the tourism sector” mentioned in the 2020–2030 strategy.

I’ve addressed the City a number of times on the Airport Perimeter Trail

- In my Dec 2021 input to Transportation Master Plan, I give an overview of the back and forth with officials from city and YG around the Airport Perimeter Trail.
(See PDF attachment in my email: [whitehorsewalks2transportationPlan.update](#))
- Aug 28, 2022, I submitted to Mayor and Council on Airport Perimeter Trail and the application by the airport for land needed for a runway expansion. I point out the need for density in the downtown and how we could have a linear park along the top of the bluffs. That this could be a crushed gravel trail, an accessible extension to the existing portion of paved perimeter trail.
(See PDF attachment in my email: [RestoretheAirportPerimeterTrail](#))
- On Oct 3, 2022, I responded to Parks saying that they couldn’t do anything because this wasn’t an Official Trail. Also I requested a downtown trail process.
(See PDF attachment in my email: [ToMayor&CouncilOct3,2022](#))
- On Oct 11, 2022 I submitted a response to the City's Strategic Priorities 2022-2024 process discussing the airport trail and my feeling why the City should be acting on this. This trail is a key aspect of a viable, walkable, green downtown.
(See PDF attachment in my email: [ToMayor&CouncilOct10,2022](#))
- On April 26, 2023 I appealed for DRA to be consulted as part of the geotechnical assessment being done after the latest slides.
(See PDF attachment in my email: [speech to council, Apr 24, 2023](#))

Thanks for hearing me out. This really is one of Whitehorse’s finest walks. Part of the problem is the City wouldn’t call this an Official Trail because we hadn’t done a trail plan for downtown, and the airport wouldn’t work with us to adjust the fence because it was just an unofficial trail.

And the tourism sector will certainly use this trail, especially if becomes an accessible linear nature park. Remember, roads in spots suitable for heavy airport vehicles are clearly pretty safe for walkers and wheelchairs.