

What We Learned Report: Proposal to Expand the All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Trail Network

On Tuesday, December 17, 2024, a total of 43 participants attended the virtual information session – hosted on Zoom – to learn and discuss the proposed expansion to the current **All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) trail network**. By that time, the online survey about the expansion on Engage Ottawa/Participons Ottawa had already garnered more than 600 responses.

The meeting was hosted by the City’s Planning, Development and Business Services Department with Councillors **George Darouze, and Clarke Kelly** in attendance. The following outlines comments provided during the virtual information session.

Issue 1:	Shared Trails/Multi-Use of the trails proposed for ATV trail expansion
Comments and Questions:	<p>Comment: ATV Clubs stop using the shared trails in the City of Ottawa when grooming commences, so ATVs and snowmobiles don’t operate on any of the shared trails at the same time.</p> <p>Question 1: Are there by-laws that prohibit ATVs using shared trails as snowmobiles and multi-use trails?</p> <p>Question 2: Regarding multi-use of trails, can users that ski, walk, etc. use the trails in the winter?</p>
Response:	<p>Response to Question 1: Referring to ATV, ORV and Snowmobile (By-law No. 2019-421) Section 17: Yes, there are by-laws that prohibit ATVs using shared trails as snowmobiles and multi-use trails. By-law No. 2019-421, Section 17 allows an agreement between snowmobiles and ATV clubs to share the trails. However, no agreements between the clubs have commenced which prohibits ATVs from using the snowmobile trails at this time.</p> <p>Response to Question 2: The ATV By-law does not prohibit other users of these trails identified in the By-law; however, users are encouraged to consult other relevant city by-laws, policies or other applicable legislation to determine permitted use. For additional information, please consult the by-law.</p>

<p>Issue 2:</p>	<p>ATV Access During Hunting Season in Marlborough Forest (Ward 21)</p>
<p>Comments Concerns and Questions:</p>	<p>Question 1: What about existing access to hunting properties in Marlborough Forest? Hoping the expansion would not impact existing access.</p> <p>Question 2: The Marlborough Forest has restrictions for motorized vehicles during the summer. Is this still the case?</p> <p>Question 3: The existing trail from Paden Road to Rogers Stevens Drive which then continues to Kettles Road - what type of construction/maintenance will take place throughout the existing trail.</p> <p>Comments: Regarding the existing access to hunting properties within the Marlborough Forest: They have the right to access these properties during winter with trucks. They would be able to access the trails during hunting seasons.</p> <p>Concerns: It is a concern that [ATV riders] would be able to access the trails at the same time as hunting seasons</p>
<p>Response:</p>	<p>Response to Question 1: Existing access to hunting properties in Marlborough Forest will not be impacted by the proposed trail expansion. Currently, the trails in Marlborough Forest are available for ATV riders who are part of the ATV club. The City is not imposing any new restrictions as a result of the proposed trail expansion. Applicable access times must still be adhered to.</p> <p>Response to Question 2: Yes. Regarding ATV access during the summer months, the current rule as per the ATV By-law (No. 2019-421 section 17) and relevant policies remain. ATVs are permitted on the trail from September to December.</p> <p>Response to Question 3: General maintenance of the existing trail from Paden Road to Rogers Stevens Drive which then continues to Kettles Road will be maintained by the City of Ottawa. However, the City would discuss maintenance required due to damage caused by the ATV Clubs. Maintenance will continue to be a discussion between City staff and ATV Clubs.</p>

Issue 3:	Trail Time of Use and Hunting Season – Comment Only
Comment:	Comment: Opening the trails from September to November is not worth the risk. It's a lot of work and effort to have three months of trails [open] in the middle of hunting season. There's no permit system for it. It's not on the Quad-On app. I support the ATV community but I just don't think it is worth the risk in this area.
Response:	

Issue 4:	Right of Way – Comment Only
Comment:	Comment: Consider the amount of road right-of-way use that is not used necessarily to connect trails: Example is the loop around Bayview Ave in Constance Bay and the Loop from the Marlborough Forest to North Gower. It doesn't seem to make sense to drive through neighbourhoods and villages on an ATV. ATVs are for offroad use
Response:	

Issue 5:	Membership Requirements
Question:	Question: Regarding access to Paden Road over to Roger Stevens Road: Do We now need a membership to access?
Response:	Response: You do need membership to access these trails if riding but there are exceptions for access to trails while hunting –you do not need membership if hunting in this area. Membership has been required since 2013 with one of the following ATV Clubs: Nation Valley ATV Club, Rideau Lakes ATV Club and West Carleton ATV Club.

Issue 6:	Noise in Wards 4&5
Comment:	Comment: It's difficult to have a conversation in our house with ATVs and Bikes ripping up the road. It is important to understand the proximity of these trails to homes (and the noises the ATVs cause).
Question:	Question: Is the noise from 7am to 11pm year-round?
Response:	Response: ATVs are allowed to ride from 7am to 11pm from May 15 to the time when snow cover is deep enough for snowmobiles. ATVs do not generally ride year-round.

Issue 7:	Trails near the boundaries between the City of Ottawa and the Quebec/Inter-Provincial Trails
Questions:	Is Quebec on board with these trails?
Response:	The City of Ottawa is taking note of these comments, however, these lands are not under the current purview and are not within the City's authority.

Issue 8:	Dirt Bikes
Questions:	Does this expansion include dirt bikes or trails for bikes?
Response:	No, the trail expansions are only being put forward for All-Terrain Vehicles.

<p>Issue 9:</p>	<p>Environmental Impact & Assessments</p>
<p>Questions:</p>	<p>Question 1: Will there be some assessment of impact from this increased access and use of trails? Question 2: On existing trails, what kind of use is taking place now, of a non-motorized nature? How is that going to be affected?</p>
<p>Response:</p>	<p>Response to Question 1: These trails and roads currently exist, they are not being constructed. These are connections and linkages between existing trails. Response to Question 2: Current use includes pedestrian, cycling, skiing and they will continue to be able to use these trails. The far right-hand side of the trail will now be used by motorized vehicles, who will slow down to 10 kph from 20 kph to pass or meet other, slower users</p>
<p>Comments:</p>	<p>Comment from the City of Ottawa: City staff to provide comments on the City's position regarding environmental impacts and assessments. Comment: I hope the city has engaged Ducks Unlimited. Marlborough Forest has entered an agreement with them and it is important to get their perspective on how ATV'ing will impact their role in maintaining these significant wetlands.</p>
<p>Issue 10:</p>	<p>Safety – Comment Only</p>
<p>Comment:</p>	<p>Comment from West Carleton ATV Club: The West Carleton ATV Club mission is committed to safe and legal riding. Currently ATV riders are driving illegally. This proposal aims to give ATV riders road access to leave the Constance Bay area to get to the OFATV trail network – where riding is legal. With legal access in West Carleton, our club would be committed to bringing awareness regarding legal access to roads. One of our main goals is to help reduce illegal riding in West Carleton.</p>

Issue 11:	Policing
Question:	Question: How will the ATV clubs police their members to respect staying on the side of the [road]? Who polices this and what are the consequences?
Response:	Response: The Ottawa Police Marine, Dive and Trails (MDT) Unit patrols All-Terrain Vehicle trails in the Ottawa area. The ATV clubs have volunteer trail wardens. Trail wardens ensure riders have trail passes, stay on marked trails, and educate riders as required. Volunteer trail wardens, representing private landowners, are able to work with the police to issue trespassing charges (or otherwise) as required.

<p>Issue 12:</p>	<p>Beachburg Line</p>
<p>Questions:</p>	<p>Question 1: Does the red line trail on the map run along the decommissioned rail line (Beachburg Line)?</p> <p>Question 2: Do we know if there's an existing trail that would bring us to West of Ottawa or Kanata? There's the bed rail in Arnprior, but it is used for the snowmobiles in the wintertime and not sure if the trail is shared with ATV's.</p> <p>Question 3: What is the current agreement for the trails and bridges in this area? What uses are permitted?</p> <p>Question 4: Will ATVs ride on the gravelled section of the Beachburg trail (such as the red trail in Wards 4 & 5) or will they ride parallel, but separate from the trail?</p> <p>Question 5: Regarding the railway line (or what is now called Beachburg Line) that is being used by the snowmobile association currently: Is anyone supposed to be using that for any reason? Or is the snowmobile club allowed to use the Beachburg Line because it has an arrangement with the City of Ottawa in which it has committed to providing the maintenance of the trails up to city accessible standards? Is this the current situation?</p>
<p>Response:</p>	<p>Response to Question 1: Yes, the red line trail on the map runs along the decommissioned rail line.</p> <p>Response to Question 2: Yes, the proposed trail expansion will bring riders to West of Ottawa/Kanata.</p> <p>Response to Question 3: The bridge to Quebec is not owned by the City and is not part of this proposal. Currently, approved use of the Beachburg Subdivision is limited to the snowmobile clubs.</p> <p>Response to Question 4: ATV riders will ride on the Beachburg trails. They are required to ride to the right of the path.</p> <p>Response to Question 5: The snowmobile clubs have a non-exclusive use agreement with the City of Ottawa on the Beachburg Subdivision. They have been the first, and so far only, group to have requested permission to use the Beachburg Subdivision. (From Real Estate).</p>

Comment:	<p>Comment from the City of Ottawa: With regard to the current use of the Beachburg Subdivision and the bridge, the City has no formal authorization and permission for pedestrians or cyclists to use it or not. Also, the rail bed has not been upgraded to properly accept pedestrians or cyclists. Based on this information session, the City understands that the residents want to see a multi-use trail in the area.</p>
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Issue 13:	Traffic
Question:	<p>Question: Is there any estimate of the increase in ATV traffic this will bring?</p>
Response:	<p>Response: Not at this time. Staff will work with the ATV clubs to establish baselines and growth estimates throughout the upcoming year.</p>

Issue 14:	Needhams Side Road & Ridgetop Road
Question:	<p>Question: Regarding the portion of Needhams Side Road and Ridgetop Road: What is the rationale for including these two roads into the expanded trail system? Will trees be cut? Who is paying for that?</p>
Response:	<p>Response: The city is not paying for the expansion for the proposed expansion of the ATV trails. The City is reacting to the proposals put forward by the ATV Clubs. The City is reviewing and identifying if the proposals received make sense or if tweaks are required. The City will investigate the answers to these questions.</p>

Issue 15:	Roads used to access the new trails
Question:	<p>Question: Are there any discussions occurring regarding increased maintenance or degradation of any of the other roads with the increased use from ATVs?</p>
Response:	<p>Response: There has been some examination into the maintenance required as well as the potential degradation. ATVs are lighter vehicles, even though they do have more aggressive tires. The City will be looking into this in more depth with Road Services.</p>