



Recreational Trails Consultation Document & Guidelines

Background

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) was enacted in 2005 with the overarching goal for making Ontario accessible for people with disabilities by the year 2025. Under this legislation, an accessible Ontario is to be achieved through the development, implementation and enforcement of accessibility standards.

Accessibility features in the exterior environment will be regulated primarily through the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) (O. Reg 191/11).

The IASR requires municipalities to consult the public, people with disabilities and their municipal accessibility advisory committee on the design of recreational trails to develop design solutions that reflect local conditions and meet the needs of all users. This applies to new or redeveloped existing recreational trails that the Municipality intends to maintain. The following design components must be consulted on:

1. The slope of the trail.
2. The need for, and location of, ramps on the trail.
3. The need for, location and design of,
 - i. rest areas,
 - ii. passing areas,
 - iii. viewing areas,
 - iv. amenities on the trail, and
 - v. any other pertinent feature. O. Reg. 413/12, s. 6.

In addition to these consultation requirements, as per the IASR, all municipalities shall ensure that any recreational trails that they construct or redevelop, and that they intend to maintain, meet the following technical requirements:

1. A recreational trail must have a minimum clear width of 1,000 mm.
2. A recreational trail must have a clear height that provides a minimum head room clearance of 2,100 mm above the trail.
3. The surface of a recreational trail must be firm and stable.
4. Where a recreational trail has openings in its surface,

- i. the openings must not allow passage of an object that has a diameter of more than 20 mm, and
 - ii. any elongated openings must be orientated approximately perpendicular to the direction of travel.
5. Where a recreational trail is constructed adjacent to water or a drop-off, the trail must have edge protection that meets the following requirements:
 - i. The edge protection must constitute an elevated barrier that runs along the edge of the recreational trail in order to prevent users of the trail from slipping over the edge.
 - ii. The top of the edge protection must be at least 50 mm above the trail surface.
 - iii. The edge protection must be designed so as not to impede the drainage of the trail surface.
6. Despite paragraph 5, where there is a protective barrier that runs along the edge of a recreational trail that is adjacent to water or a drop-off, edge protection does not have to be provided.
7. The entrance to a recreational trail must provide a clear opening of between 850 mm and 1,000 mm, whether the entrance includes a gate, bollard or other entrance design.
8. A recreational trail must have at each trail head signage that provides the following information:
 - i. The length of the trail.
 - ii. The type of surface of which the trail is constructed.
 - iii. The average and the minimum trail width.
 - iv. The average and maximum running slope and cross slope.
 - v. The location of amenities, where provided. O. Reg. 413/12, s. 6.
- (2) The signage referred to in paragraph 8 of subsection (1) must have text that,
 - (a) has high tonal contrast with its background in order to assist with visual recognition; and
 - (b) includes characters that use a sans serif font. O. Reg. 413/12, s. 6.

(3) Where other media, such as park websites or brochures, are used by the obligated organization to provide information about the recreational trail, beyond advertising, notice or promotion, the media must provide the same information as listed in paragraph 8 of subsection (1). O. Reg. 413/12, s. 6.

Application

In consultation with the Middlesex Accessibility Advisory Committee, lower tier municipalities, members of the public and individuals with disabilities, a group of recreational trail design guidelines have been developed with municipal best practices in mind.

Design

Trail Slope

- Where environmentally practicable, restrict cross slopes to 2%, running slopes under 5%
- Where this is not practicable, trail designer should consult with stakeholders to determine best possible outcomes
- Outcomes may include warning measures such as signage: “Caution, steep slope” or in a less extreme case, an opportunity for grade separation (ramps and or switchbacks).

Ramps

- Ramps should be designed to meet and exceed Ontario Building Code and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation

Rest Areas

- Rest areas shall be put on trails where space is available. Benches to be incorporated into rest areas where possible and at the discretion of the municipality.
- Benches shall:
 - Have a seat height between 450mm and 500mm
 - Have arm and back rests
 - Consider placing an arm rest in the middle of the bench to avoid individuals sleeping on them
 - Be of contrasting colour to their background
- Rest areas shall:
 - Be adjacent and away from the accessible path of travel
 - Ensure ground surfaces are firm, stable and slip resistant
 - Ensure colour contrast strips distinguish the path of travel from the rest area itself
 - Provide a clear space of 3353mm wide by 1525mm deep
- The distance between rest areas is at the discretion of the municipality

- Consider every 250m + or – 50m based on site conditions for the first 1000m of trail

Passing Areas

- Passing areas (strategic trail widening) to be installed at the municipalities discretion based on reported high volume areas and or trail intersections
- Minimum 300mm widening at 5000mm to 10000m long

Viewing Areas

- Viewing areas to be installed at the municipalities discretion
- Share characteristics of that of a rest area – likely larger
- Benches and surface type to mimic that of rest areas
- Best practice to include signage to support viewing area (infographics etc.) Sign panels shall be installed with tops no higher than 2.4m and no lower than 1.8m. Signage to be on primary accessible trail route

Amenities

- Trail amenities to be installed at the municipalities discretion
- Amenities may include benches (to meet specs noted under rest areas), waste and recycling bins, bicycle racks, shade shelters and lighting

Public Survey Feedback

On November 1, 2018, a survey went out to the general public in Middlesex County regarding accessible recreational trails. The survey was posted on the County website as well as the local municipalities' website. Consisting of 16 questions, the survey was geared to collect high level information from members of the community that use the trails in Middlesex County and what they would like to see on those trails. Of the 51 respondents, 8 individuals identified as living with a disability. The survey spanned across the entire County with data being collected from all local municipalities. The survey closed November 26, 2018.

Some statistical highlights include:

- 74% of respondents felt it was important to include rest areas on trails
 - 76% of those respondents felt it was important to incorporate benches into those rest areas
- 88% of respondents felt that rest areas should be spread out evenly throughout the trail
- 60% of respondents felt it was important to have passing areas on trails
- 72% of respondents felt it was important to have viewing areas on trails

- 74% of these respondents would like to see signage supporting these viewing areas
- 80% of respondents would like to see waste and recycling bins on trails