

Moose lawyers will fight destruction of railbed

The Editor,

The future of the railway corridor through Chelsea and La Pêche invokes diverse conceptions. The municipality of Chelsea has teamed with Sentiers Chelsea to replace the track with a trail. The Chelsea Communities Preservation Association opposes anything but a steam train. The Wakefield Steam Train Group seeks a tourist attraction at the north end. The Moose Consortium would repair the corridor to operate double-decker trains every hour, morning to night, and would develop 'rails-with-trails', consistent with Chelsea's 2002 feasibility study.

Moose Consortium's plan aligns with provincial and federal law, and advances ecological and socio-economic sustainability of the Greater National Capital Region. It does not require taxpayer money, and will create substantial direct and indirect employment. These commercial passenger railway operations would add to government and business revenues. Our property-based financing enables service to semi-rural,

low-density areas, respecting heritage, agriculture, and low-impact lifestyles.

Some who purchased residential property adjacent to this railway may have assumed that no genuine train service would ever operate on it.

Anyone may verify with Transport Quebec that this corridor is a legally active railway and the owner has level-of-service obligations towards train operators. A railway is not 'discontinued' merely because the owner neglects core maintenance obligations. Discontinuance of a railway requires the owner to first openly offer to sell the corridor to other railway companies.

Moose Consortium plans to pay lease fees to owners of the infrastructure it will use. The railway from Gatineau to La Pêche would remain publicly owned and regulated. Moose Consortium will pay for landscaping (berms, bushes) to mitigate effects of normal railway

and pathway operations on adjacent properties. Speed controls, signalling, and crossings will be suited to local circumstances.

Some who purchased residential property adjacent to this railway may have assumed that no genuine train service would ever operate on it. But assumptions do not change law. And individual interests of a few shall not outweigh the broad public interest.

Moose Consortium successfully pursued legal action to protect railways and bridges that, in violation of federal and provincial laws, the cities of Ottawa and Gatineau would have taken out of service. The Consortium is currently pursuing legal steps required to prevent destruction of the railway between Gatineau and La Pêche.

The directors of Moose Consortium welcome open, multi-stakeholder discussion and collaboration based on a premise of optimizing the public interest in a National Capital Region context, while accommodating needs of nearby residents.

Joseph Potvin
Chelsea, Qc

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Don't derail trail

The Editor,

My family lives on Mill Road in Chelsea, just over the tracks, and we have been hoping for years that a trail would replace the rail line. It would be a real pleasure to bike safely with the kids and be able to go out on a stroll with the fireflies without tripping over the rails.

Will there be challenges? Of course. But I am hopeful that there are good solutions to all of the potential issues. Garbage and recycling bins, road barriers to prevent vehicle access, parking protocols, and good signage (perhaps including a user code of conduct) could all go a long way towards preventing disorder. Lots of people currently visit Mill Road to access the river and the ski trail and we find that they are generally very respectful and not at all disruptive.

As part of the analysis of the Sentiers Chelsea Trails proposal, let's connect with the many communities that have implemented this sort of rail-to-trail

conversion and learn from their experiences. I am curious about how they have addressed problems, what they would do differently if given an opportunity, and whether any residents have campaigned to reinstate the defunct rail beds once the trail was operational.

Let's explore the possible solutions to problems rather than derailling the trail from the get-go.

Aden Seaton
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Chelsea needs its own 'Galloping Goose'

The Editor,

As long-time resident of Chelsea and current resident on Station Road in Tenaga, I am dismayed at the attacks and opposition to the municipality's goal of establishing a multi-use trail along the train tracks running through Chelsea.

One only has to travel outside of Chelsea to quickly realize how popular multi-use trails

have become. They are everywhere. The numerous ones I have cycled and walked on seem to greatly enhance their respective regions. In Victoria BC, for example, property owners boast their proximity to the Victoria trail, 'The Galloping Goose', as it has created a more vibrant community and increased property values.

Since the train corridor is public property, it should be

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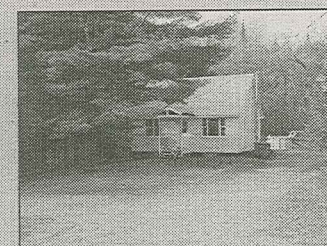
available for use by all residents and not just benefit the property owners adjacent to it. The removal of the current tracks and rails and the installation of a hard surface trail will provide a safe walking and cycling path for all Chelsea families and will benefit all residents.

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Rails to Trails is a done deal

A beautiful 20 km strip of land along the river means different things to different people, but it has always been a defining piece of our community. This pathway has shaped our history, linked our neighbourhoods, and been a magnet to residents for over a hundred years. We have a great opportunity to shape the direction of this pathway for the future.

Despite the opinions, outrage, and criticisms floating around concerning the future of the railway corridor, the key question is not if the year-round trail is built, but what kind of trail we are going to get.

The trail is a done deal. After the Corporation du chemin de fer de l'Outaouais (CCFO) asked the municipality to take back its lease for the railway corridor in 2013, Chelsea council made a unanimous decision to convert the tracks into a year-round community trail. The Active Transport Plan, commissioned by council as part of its master planning process, had already identified the railway corridor as "an invaluable potential green corridor and key structural element for active living for Chelsea residents."

Not only did council decide

it wanted a trail; it also wanted an affordable, simple trail and they wanted it soon. In 2015, following a council discussion, municipal staff received orders to start the process of figuring

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out what it would take to pull up the tracks, grade the path on the existing footprint, put up safety barriers, and get it done by November 2017.

Since then, there have been a string of key council decisions supporting the steps to make the year-round trail a reality. In March 2015, council voted to establish a joint committee with Sentiers Chelsea Trails (SCT) representatives to study the feasibility of extending the winter trail to a four-season, multi-use, non-motorized trail.

Now everything is hanging on the 'F' word: Feasibility. While a feasibility study has been commissioned and the report should be out soon, it represents only one piece of the feasibility puzzle. Public consultation and finding the money to do the work are both essential steps in this process.

For years now, many members of our community have embraced the trail and invested their time and money to support its operations. SCT volunteers trim the brush along the trail bed to keep it open for summer and winter activities and have raised more than \$20,000 from individuals and local businesses, which was donated to the municipality to offset the expense to its maintenance budget.

While the goal may be clear, details of the project, namely trail design, are not. It's the details that will make the difference to residents' lives. The public consultations will give residents the perfect opportunity to get answers to their questions and concerns. So bring on those public consultations.

Roberta Walker is a member of Sentiers Chelsea Trails and is a resident of Chelsea.