



# NS&T TRAIL FEASIBILITY MASTER PLAN

## Vision

**The NS&T Trail pays homage to the history of the NS&T railway. The multi-use links downtown Niagara Falls with nearby communities, connects parks and open spaces, and enhances recreation, tourism and active transportation opportunities across the City.**



## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this feasibility master plan is to develop a strategy for a continuous 9.3km multi-use recreational facility which will repurpose and occupy a portion of the decommissioned Niagara, St. Catharines & Toronto (NS&T) Rail Corridor. The study provides a high-level planning framework for redevelopment and construction and examines potential integration with the existing and planned community with the intention to insert a city-wide recreational trail. The recommended route for the Trail has been developed in consultation with the general public as well as a number of key stakeholder groups.

## Project Objectives

Objectives of the plan are:

- 1** To maximize the potential for the idle NS&T rail corridor by developing an accessible multi-use trail that connects people to where they work, live and play.
- 2** To identify a trail alignment and route that improves neighbourhood connectivity, establishing a continuous network of public recreation and active transportation options and encourages health-supportive choices for local trips.
- 3** To solicit public and stakeholder feedback to ensure community buy-in and impart local influence on the trail.
- 4** To develop a feasible phasing and implementation plan that prioritizes trail implementation and identifies “quick win” opportunities.

## History

Originating as an “interurban” electric line, the main lines of the NS&T once provided service to St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Port Dalhousie, Thorold, Welland and Port Colborne and was pieced together from several smaller lines. Many of the remnant lines and their vestiges remain visible throughout the City and provide the unique opportunity for a new and modern transportation network (Niagara, St. Catharines and Toronto Railway).

## Planning & Policy Influences



Niagara Region Complete Streets Design Manual



Niagara Falls GO Station Secondary Plan



Thorold Stone Road Extension Environmental Assessment Roundabout



Bridge Street Environmental Assessment

## 2 COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The proposed NS&T Trail was shared with the public for an online engagement consultation from June 30<sup>th</sup> until August 6<sup>th</sup> 2021.



**1,400**

visitors to online engagement site

Participants provided commentary on such things as desired activities, amenities, and materiality as well as their opinions surrounding the historical narrative of the trail. The results were informative and provided valuable feedback from the community.

Overall, comments were predominantly positive with the majority of citizens supportive and excited for the trail to be developed. The following are conclusions gathered from the results of the survey:

- 1 The community indicated that they would mostly use the trail for walking, cycling and jogging
- 2 In both rural and urban areas of the trail, people would prefer asphalt surfacing
- 3 Residents would like to see a variety of amenities along the trail, the preferred being site furnishings including seating, lighting and wayfinding signage as well as natural features such as trees, and vegetated areas
- 4 Most participants would like to see the historical narrative reflected along the trail by means of historical markers of significant locations, interpretive graphic display boards and historical plaques

### Trail Amenities

**Wayfinding & Branding** – Regulatory, iconic, and educational signage.

**Site Furnishings** – Seating, waste and recycling

**Barriers and Fencing**



## Surfacing

- ⚙️ **Asphalt** – Ideal; cost effective, quality, easy to maintain
- ⚙️ **Granular** – Relatively environmentally friendly, inexpensive; accessibility and maintenance challenges
- ⚙️ **Concrete** – High Quality, Long Lasting; Costly

## Design Principles

Considering the vision for the proposed NS&T Rail Trail, it is important the trail is planned, designed and delivered to reflect the following design principles:



## Accessibility



## History



## Compatibility



## Placemaking



## Environment



## Safety & Comfort

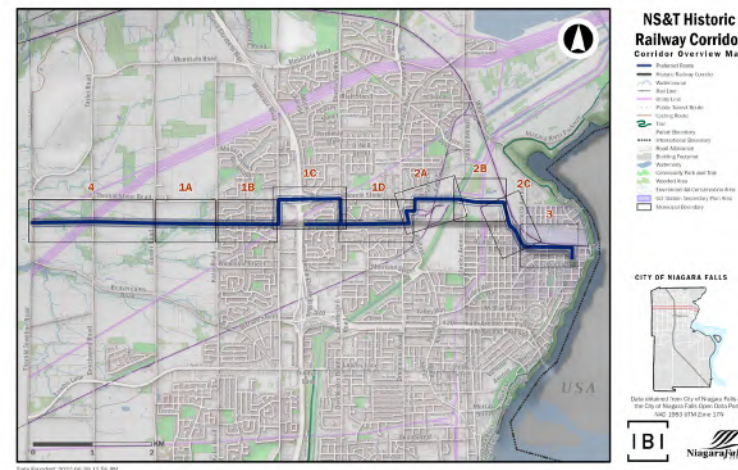


## Connectivity

### 3 IMPLEMENTATION

## Recommended Route

While the historic NS&T railway corridor alignment is the preferred alignment for the trail, in some locations the routing may need to deviate to avoid major conflicts, be more readily implementable, and/or reduce costs. Given these considerations, the recommended route is a combined alignment of existing corridor and neighbouring connections.



While the full implementation of the length of the trail is preferred, a phased approach provides:

- ⚙ Realistic expectations for the feasibility of some of the major physical constraints;
- ⚙ The potential time required to acquire the appropriate capital funding;
- ⚙ The amount of coordination on projects and policy items that overlap and/or are adjacent; and,
- ⚙ The prioritization of the various portions of the recommended trail route according to the existing conditions and required input.

## Implementation Phasing

This master plan provides for a phased approach to the implementation of the NS&T Trail, which has been developed having consideration for context, coordination, resources, and capital investment; availability and source of funding will ultimately influence the establishment of implementation priorities.

Project segments have been grouped into three phases for implementation, which are outlined in detail in the master plan report. Their respective estimated timelines for implementation are as follows:

1. **Short Term:** 1 - 3 years
2. **Medium Term:** 4 - 7 years
3. **Long Term:** 8+ years

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## 4 NEXT STEPS

This feasibility study marks the first of a series of steps in the process for implementing the NS&T trail.

Subsequent steps will generally include pre-design and master plan refinement (such as further consultation, soliciting required studies, permitting, preliminary design development), followed by detailed design, tendering and construction implementation. This master plan provides the guiding vision and should be consulted as the trail becomes a reality.

