

President's Report

by Don DeGrandis

As spring is arriving and winter departs, we can all reflect on the great success that resulted from the Town of The Blue Mountains' decision last fall to spend the money to purchase equipment and provide staff to groom the Trail over the winter season. As a result, many more people enjoyed the Trail without the worry of navigating an uneven surface or deep snow. The Trail was fully groomed from Collingwood through The Blue Mountains. We hope that winter grooming will continue in the years to come and we will now focus our attention on encouraging Meaford's Council to follow suit and groom that section of the Trail as well.

We are also pleased to advise that two bicycle repair stations on the Meaford section are scheduled to be installed in early May. The station just west of Christie Beach has been sponsored in memory of Stan Feldman, who was an avid cyclist and Trail user. A plaque encourages users to "ride until you can't"...good advice for us all. The other station is to be located at the Trail's end, at the Meaford harbour, and is currently unsponsored.

I would also note that with the assistance of our Association, Meaford will be installing Trail etiquette signs in their segment. We will now have etiquette signs along the entire length of the Trail to remind users to be respectful of others. Also, following the retirement of two Directors, we will be planting two trees in recognition of their many years of volunteer service. You will be able to see them along the Trail in Meaford and Collingwood in the coming weeks.

Lastly, the Association has made a generous offer to fund Trail improvements in areas of concern, some of which were noted by respondents to our fall survey. In response, the municipalities have agreed to work together to make the best use of up to \$80,000 in Association funds. We are currently awaiting their proposal and will keep you posted on developments.

In closing I would advise that we are always looking for people to serve as a Director. If you are interested, please let us know by emailing us at georgiantr.info@gmail.com. Have a great trail season and get out there!

Georgian Trail Operations Report

This report is presented annually to each of the three participating partners - Municipality of Meaford, Town of the Blue Mountains and Town of Collingwood - to update them on the maintenance and operations of the Georgian Trail.

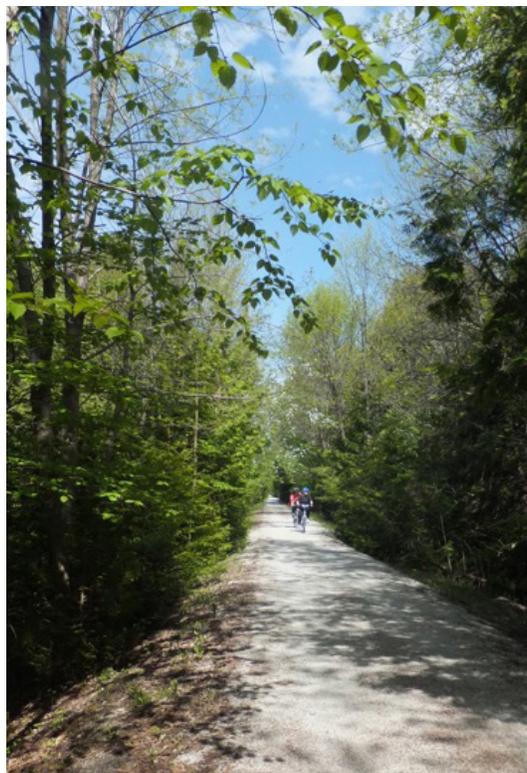
The Trail continues to see increased usage. Combined data from four counters installed last fall indicated that there was a total of more than 60,000 users in November and December. Year over year data is expected in future reports.

All three municipalities undertook monthly inspections, washout repairs, grass cutting and regular garbage collections.

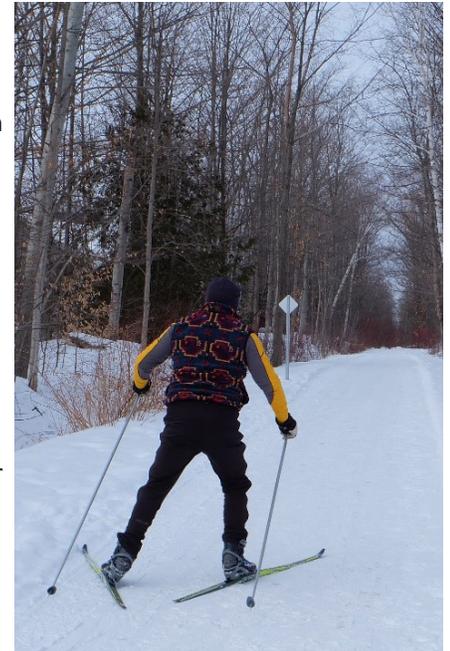
Georgian Trail costs were incurred as follows:

Meaford -	\$ 8,000 (14.9% of total)
The Blue Mountains -	\$42,982 (80.4% of total)
<i>Included in this was \$25,587 for the removal of ash trees.</i>	
Collingwood -	\$ 2,500 (4.7% of total)
Total cost	\$53,482

The **Municipality of Meaford** (Kilometers 1 - 7.2 or 22% of the trail) lifted tree canopies twice between Swarthmore Drive and Christie Beach Road, refurbished stone paths around bridges, and contracted for 2 concrete pads for bicycle repair stations.



Funding support will be provided by GC&STA this year to upgrade and widen trail surfaces



Winter grooming this year made it more usable for a wide range of winter activities.

The **Town of The Blue Mountains**

(Kilometers 7.2 - 27.7 or 62% of the Trail) removed dead trees and ash trees affected by the Emerald Ash Borer and implemented a noxious weeds program. Winter trails were groomed daily when there was adequate snow and privies were placed at three locations. Increased signage relating to safety was installed and sections of the Trail were top dressed.

The **Town of Collingwood**

(Kilometers 27.7 - 33 or 16% of the Trail) carried out monthly grass cutting and trimming and contracted weed spraying. Fallen or hazardous trees along the Trail were removed. Winter grooming also took place when there was adequate snow.

The Georgian Cycle and Ski Trail Association has offered financial support to all three municipalities for enhancements to the Trail. Some of these enhancements will reflect responses received in our member survey. The GCTA supports the councils' objectives of the responsible use of resources, restoration of nature and the fostering of a quality lifestyle for residents and visitors of all ages.



Board of Directors 2020-2021

Doug Brenner, Don DeGrandis, Janet Findlay, Steve Gorton, Murray Knowles

Your comments and ideas are welcome!

Please send them to: georgiantr.info@gmail.com

- Celebrate
- Contribute
- Enjoy

Summary of Responses to Georgian Trail Survey

The Georgian Cycle & Ski Trail Association sent out a Mailchimp survey to subscribers on October 24, 2020, asking for feedback on the condition of the Trail. We received 82 responses from a total of 283 subscribers (a response rate of 29%). 78% indicated their satisfaction with the surfacing of the Trail.

Subscribers were asked what parts of the Trail would benefit from widening, and why? Most respondents indicated satisfaction with the width of the Trail. We received the following suggestions for widening, focussed on areas where there is the most traffic:

Thornbury West: 6 comments

Lora Bay: 2 comments

Thornbury East and Georgian

Peaks: 3 comments

Macdonald's Furniture to Harbour

in Meaford: 1 comment

Respondents were asked if there were any other Trail improvements required. By far the most comments received (nine) suggested improved signage to remind cyclists to stop at intersections and slow down/share the trail with walkers.

A few additional comments referred to specific sections of the Trail needing better signage, such as the rerouted section in Meaford.

Three respondents mentioned problems with poop and scoop. One respondent said that the garbage problem has improved since the installation of trash cans (in the Blue Mountains) but more are needed.

There were three comments about the dangerous crossing at Highway 26.

Lighting was mentioned three times, with two people calling for lighted sections of the Trail and one concerned about light pollution.

One person suggested more benches and another mentioned replacing the older benches.

A final question asked if there were any suggestions for improvement to the newsletter, trail map or website. We received many positive comments and a few suggestions, such as phone app, a printed newsletter, and donation boxes.

GC&STA will be acting on the results of the survey. Thank you to all respondents for this valued input!

Winter Trail Grooming

This year, as part of a plan to increase outdoor recreational activities in these pandemic times, the Town of The Blue Mountains decided to groom the snow on the Georgian Trail. The concept was not new, as winter grooming has been proposed in the past but the necessary funding was not allocated to it. Equipment, in the form of a tracked tractor unit, was already available. However the grooming rig, to be towed behind, had to be procured at a cost of approximately \$4000.

Grooming the snow into a flat, packed surface makes the trail more easily usable for walking while also providing a suitable surface for snowshoes, x-country skis and fat-tired bikes.

The Town's goal was to groom the full length, within the boundaries of The Blue Mountains, as often as daily if snow conditions permitted.

On a typical day, the groomer left the Rec facility (at Tomahawk) on the 10th line about 6.30am, proceeding west along the trail as far as Christie Beach Road. It then turned about and groomed beyond Grey Road 21, before returning back along the trail to the 10th line. The full circuit took approximately 6.5 hours depending on conditions. Beyond this point, the trail was groomed by Collingwood to a similar standard, as were many of the Collingwood trails.



The grooming has been universally well-received by trail users of all kinds and has resulted in a safer surface and markedly more winter use.

The GCSTA Provides Trail Upgrade Funding

The Georgian Cycle & Ski Trail Association (GCSTA) has been an active partner in the maintenance and enhancement of the Georgian Trail since the trail's inception in 1989. Over the years, the GCSTA and our many donors have helped to fund numerous enhancements to the trail such as bicycle repair stations, bench additions, interpretive signage, large map boards, and other wayfinding signage. These projects were all done with the goal of improving the trail's attractiveness and safety.

In recent years we have noticed that the width of the trail has narrowed as nature has encroached. The trail, originally designed to be roughly 12 feet wide, now has numerous locations where this width has shrunk considerably – in some cases to only 5 feet. In addition, there are sections of the trail that require resurfacing. We feel that it is essential that the Georgian Trail surface be widened to its original design standard and appropriately maintained so all users - whether they be cyclists, pedestrians, skiers, runners, or dog walkers – can safely co-exist on this world class multi-use trail as trail usage continues to increase.

In order to help with this vital work, the GCSTA has agreed to contribute \$2500 per kilometre to each municipality for the length of trail within its jurisdiction to assist with the upgrading and widening of the trail surface in 2021. This funding amounts to \$84,000 - \$18,000 for Meaford, \$51,000 for The Blue Mountains, and \$15,000 for Collingwood.

At the time of printing, the three municipalities had agreed to work together to develop a common approach to complete this work, and the GCSTA will work with all municipalities to identify and finalize the trail sections that would benefit most from this funding. Many thanks to our loyal donors who have provided us with the financial resources to make this contribution.

Please Donate to the Georgian Cycle and Ski Trail Association

Donations are welcomed and needed to:

- Help with the cost of maintaining the Georgian Trail
- Enhancing the Trail experience for users
- Investing in trail surface improvements and drainage
- Keeping donors and the public informed and updated.

Income tax receipts are issued for donations of \$20 or more. (issued under the charitable organization registration #0813576-56) Our Trail Map is available at various locations around Town, however supporters now receive a digital copy of the newsletter by email.

Donate on-line at: www.GeorgianTrail.ca