

## DRAFT: FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY

Dear Mr. Detwiler:

At the March meeting of the Ecusta Rail Trail Advisory Committee, a draft trail maintenance document was provided for preliminary review by the Committee. As you know, the ESB is very supportive of the Ecusta Trail and appreciates its distinctive sustainability benefits to the community. Because you are the City representative for the Committee, we would like to offer some comments on the draft document for your consideration.

We recognize that the ongoing operation and maintenance of the trail will be an important element to ensuring the trail continues to be an asset to our community. We assume that the portion of the trail that is in the City would be maintained by City staff and in our role as an advisory board to the City, we would like to offer a few suggestions regarding several elements of the draft document.

1) The draft document recommends that a regular task would be to “Blow Off Trail” three times weekly. We recognize that given the scope of the effort, this task would likely not be attempted using gas-powered backpack blowers but would use commercial grade towable or walk behind blowers. Nevertheless, we suggest that the considerable air and noise pollution levels generated by any leaf and debris blower would detract significantly from the community element of the trail and this task be carefully reviewed to ensure it is essential.

If determined to be essential, we suggest that the frequency of the task be reviewed to determine if three times a week might be reduced. Perhaps, this task could be considered an irregular task to be carried out when warranted and that the time-of-day when the equipment is used be limited to mid-morning to mid-afternoon to limit the impact of noise pollution on the community. If trail blowing is considered essential, we further suggest that equipment used for the task be reviewed to obtain the least polluting, quietest workable solution including available zero emission blowers.

2) The second element of the draft document mentions herbicide application and recommends that six treatments be applied annually. We certainly appreciate that the Ecusta trail will likely need herbicide application to manage existing invasive plants that have flourished during the years when the right-of-way was vacant. We hope that as time goes by, areas along the trail will be “adopted” and more

desirable, perhaps pollinator friendly, plants will be established along the trail. In the interim, we suggest that the application of pesticides be conducted on an as needed basis rather than in a blanket fashion on a pre-established schedule. Finally, we recommend that caution be used in selecting the appropriate herbicides. As we are all aware, the path of the trail is often times adjacent to wetland areas and streams and commonly drains into local waterways. As such, the potential adverse impact of herbicides on aquatic organisms should be acknowledged and caution be taken to ensure the application be done in as moderate a manner as possible and in clear conformance to application guidelines.

3) The draft recommendations mention the potential for the application of snow and ice treatment. This recommendation is annotated with a question mark and we assume that indicates it is likely to be an optional element. We recognize that safety on the trail is paramount and that areas that are excessively slippery may be considered unsafe. We recommend that this element be applied only when the benefits clearly outweigh the cost and potential environmental impacts of the action. While ice melt products have improved markedly in recent years, their adverse environmental impacts remain and when the benefits are limited the application may not be warranted. We recommend that if this element is considered, that it perhaps follow guidelines used for such actions on secondary City sidewalks and recognize that the trail may see less pedestrian and bicycle traffic during the time of year when snow and ice is present.

Lastly, we note that the Committee and the Friends of the Ecusta Trail have briefly mentioned the possibility of citizen groups volunteering to monitor and perhaps help maintain (pick up trash) sections of the trail. The ESB would like to be one of the first organizations to offer our efforts in that role. We realize that the trail will have distinctive benefits to the overall environmental sustainability of our community and we hope that we can show our strong support by offering to monitor and maintain a section of the trail.

Thank you for your consideration and please feel free to let us know if we can try to answer any questions you or the Committee may have.