

Missing Link Snowmobile Club

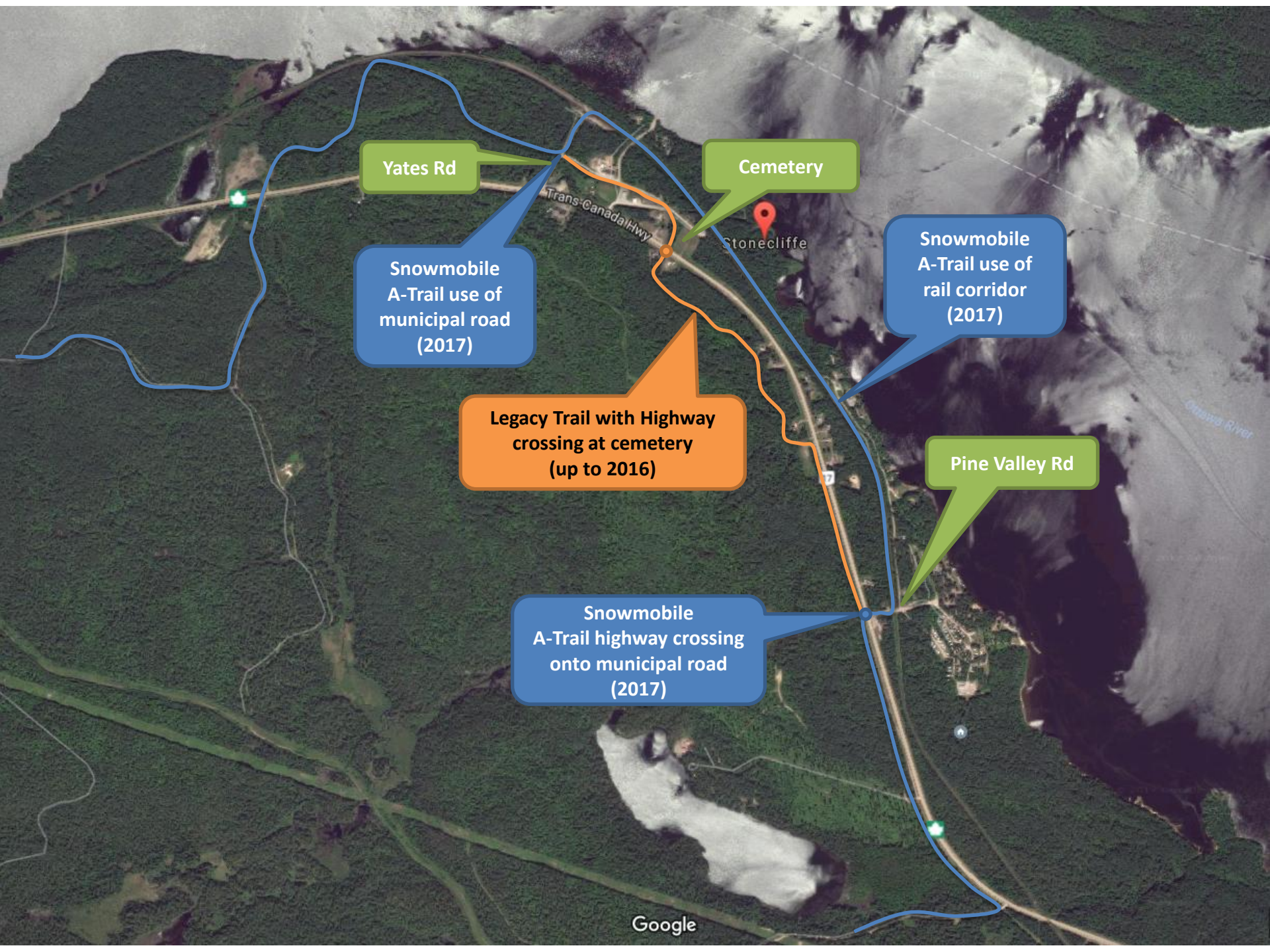


Stonecliffe Trail
September 15th, 2017

Recap: 2017 Trail Changes



- In the fall of 2016, an opportunity presented itself for the snowmobile club to utilize a portion of the abandoned rail bed for the 2017 season.
- Bob & Jan Elder were consulted Oct 15th 2016 regarding the trail reroute and the club agreed to install additional ‘*No Trespassing*’ signs at their private entrance.
- The snowmobile club asked and received municipal staff approval to route the snowmobile trail along the ditches of Pine Valley Road and Yates Road to connect the existing A-trail endpoints to the rail bed (email dated 2016-11-04).
- Calvin Chartrand Transport was then hired in November to grade and prepare the trail for winter use.
- After hearing grapevine concerns about children safety on Yates Road, the club installed ‘*Children Playing*’ signs to help mitigate these potential safety issues.
- Advantages to this approach included:
 - A much safer highway crossing compared to the legacy trail crossing at the cemetery (the deep ditch on the cemetery side & location of crossing in the middle of a highway corner)
 - Eliminated the ongoing conflict between the snowmobile trail and the heliport pad (the trail encroached on Logger’s Road)
 - Provided a better rider experience (Happy’s Way is a very curvy/windy trail and historically difficult to groom due to water issues)
 - Provided a safer and better groomer operator experience, in particular the improved highway crossing



Yates Rd

Cemetery

Snowmobile A-Trail use of municipal road (2017)

Snowmobile A-Trail use of rail corridor (2017)

Legacy Trail with Highway crossing at cemetery (up to 2016)

Pine Valley Rd

Snowmobile A-Trail highway crossing onto municipal road (2017)

Recap: Municipal Concerns



- The municipality raised the following concerns in a letter to the snowmobile club dated 2017-02-22:
 - Snow left on roads, in particular boat launch road
 - Snow build-up along Yates and Pine Valley Roads
- As a result, the club took immediate action to reinforce the notion with all groomer operators that we needed to do a better job on our road crossings.
- A follow-up letter from municipal staff was sent on March 8th 2017 stating if we did not stop placing snow on municipal roads, the snowmobile club would be charged for the snow removal and the OPP would be contacted regarding violations of the highway traffic act.
- Under the impression we had permission to groom the trail along the ditches of our municipal roads, the snowmobile club arranged a meeting with the clerk on March 9th 2017 to better understand staff concerns.
 - It is at this meeting the snowmobile club was asked to stop grooming the ditches
 - It is at this meeting the snowmobile club was informed of other safety and noise issues surfacing within the community.
 - It is at this meeting the snowmobile club was asked about possible traffic calming devices such as speed bumps and gates.
- The ditches were never groomed again after this misunderstanding was clarified with the clerk
- Note this was approaching the middle of March, nearing the end of the snowmobiling season

The clerk made it clear she was going to recommend to council that snowmobile trails not be placed on or beside municipal roads in the future.

Recap: Community Concerns



- After community concerns were brought to our attention, the snowmobile club contacted all residents whose property was adjacent to the section of the rail corridor where the trail was rerouted in order to get direct feedback.
 - A community stakeholder’s meeting was tentatively planned for Sunday April 2nd 2017 in order to get all residents along the rail corridor together in one room and discuss concerns directly.
- The club was informed that any meeting whereby a majority of Councillors are present could be considered a meeting of council:
 - Requiring public notice of the meeting
 - Thereby there was no guarantee the topic would be limited to the rail issues
 - As this was more formal than the club was looking for, the club deferred the community stakeholder discussion to our AGM planned one day later on April 3rd 2017
 - The AGM was open to all members of the public
- During the discussion at our AGM, area residents raised the following concerns:
 - Safety: snowmobilers not stopping at intersections
 - Safety: snowmobilers speeding on Yates Road
 - Noise: complaints of excessive noise alongside the new rail trail
 - Incidents of snowmobilers urinating on Yates Road

One incident of public urination was brought to the club’s attention in January, the remaining concerns did not surface until middle of March and at our AGM on April 3rd 2017 (toward the end of the snowmobile season).

2018 Trail Options



1. Move the A-trail across the highway and utilize the existing 196 pipeline trail as the A-trail, and either
 - a) Maintain a B-trail route through the community, or
 - b) Establish B-trail feeder trails at each end of the community – one trail for the businesses providing accommodation and one trail for access to services at Yates General Store
2. Extend the use of the rail bed at each end to eliminate the need for travelling on Pine Valley Road or Yates Road
3. Establish a new trail route behind Happy Demarco's, travelling behind the old MNR complex, and crossing the highway closer to Yates General Store
4. Revert back to the legacy trail using Happy's Way, crossing at the Stonecliffe cemetery, and alongside Logger's Road to Buckshot Lane.

Each one of the above options has both good points and bad.
There is no single 'perfect' way forward!

Establishing a New Trail



- The snowmobile club investigated the possibility of routing the A-trail on the south side of the highway through the backside of the Demarco and MNR properties with a highway crossing closer to Yates General Store.
- Any point west of Yates General Store, the highway crossing itself poses significant challenges given the steep grade on the north side of the highway and the associated wetlands.



At the end of the day, MTO will not give the snowmobile club permission to cross in the middle of the highway curve at Yates General Store as it does not meet the current highway line of sight requirement of 250m in each direction.

Moving the A-trail Across



- Contrary to some local opinions, the area businesses do provide value to this community.
 - The businesses provide a stopping point for all to enjoy our natural playground.
 - Many full-time transplants to this community were first introduced to this area by frequenting Yates General Store or staying at one of the local campgrounds
 - The campgrounds provide an additional pool of volunteers to which the community does draw upon
 - The local businesses rely heavily on each other to survive – YGS convenience makes the campgrounds more attractive and the campgrounds in turn direct a flow of customers to YGS
 - Don't be naïve – once a rural business closes, it rarely ever comes back (Commonwealth Plywood, Sarrazin's Inn, Hilltop Cottages, B&B Gas Bar, Mackey Motel, Mackey Mall, Laurentian Dairy to name a few)!
- The trail was originally routed thru the village for safety reasons and the convenience of fuel, food, and accommodations.
 - Travelling through a community gives the rider a sense of locale and safety – it is a very long ride from Deep River to Mattawa without going thru any established area.
- Though feeder trails do exist in some parts of the trail system, there is no question convenience and ease of navigation has a direct influence on the rider's decision where to stop.
- Volunteer fundraising efforts by local organizations also benefit from increased traffic thru the village.
- It is blatantly wrong and unfair for anyone to suggest he/she knows the business and related impacts of moving the trail better than the business owner (unless they have been in the same business for the same length of time).

It is the unanimous opinion of the snowmobile club that moving the A-trail out of the village will have a detrimental impact on local businesses, which in turn would have a detrimental impact on the community at large.

Reverting the Trail Back



- During our May meeting, the club unanimously declared this was our preferred approach going forward, aside from the safety and other reasons the trail was moved to begin with.
 - With all the dissention in the community, we just wanted to go back to the way it was!!
- Subsequently, the following stumbling blocks were encountered when investigating this option:
 - a) Happy Demarco is willing to grant a one year extension for the use of his property for the trail to cross the highway at the cemetery.
 - b) The property across the highway from Happy's and located beside the cemetery belongs to his late brother. This property is now being managed by the lawyers looking after his brother's estate and Happy cannot give us permission to use that property (as he has arranged in the past).
 - c) The construction of the new ball diamond gazebo leaves no room for the legacy snowmobile trail with no obvious route other than travelling directly on Logger's Road.
 - d) There is no way around the heliport without travelling on the municipal road.

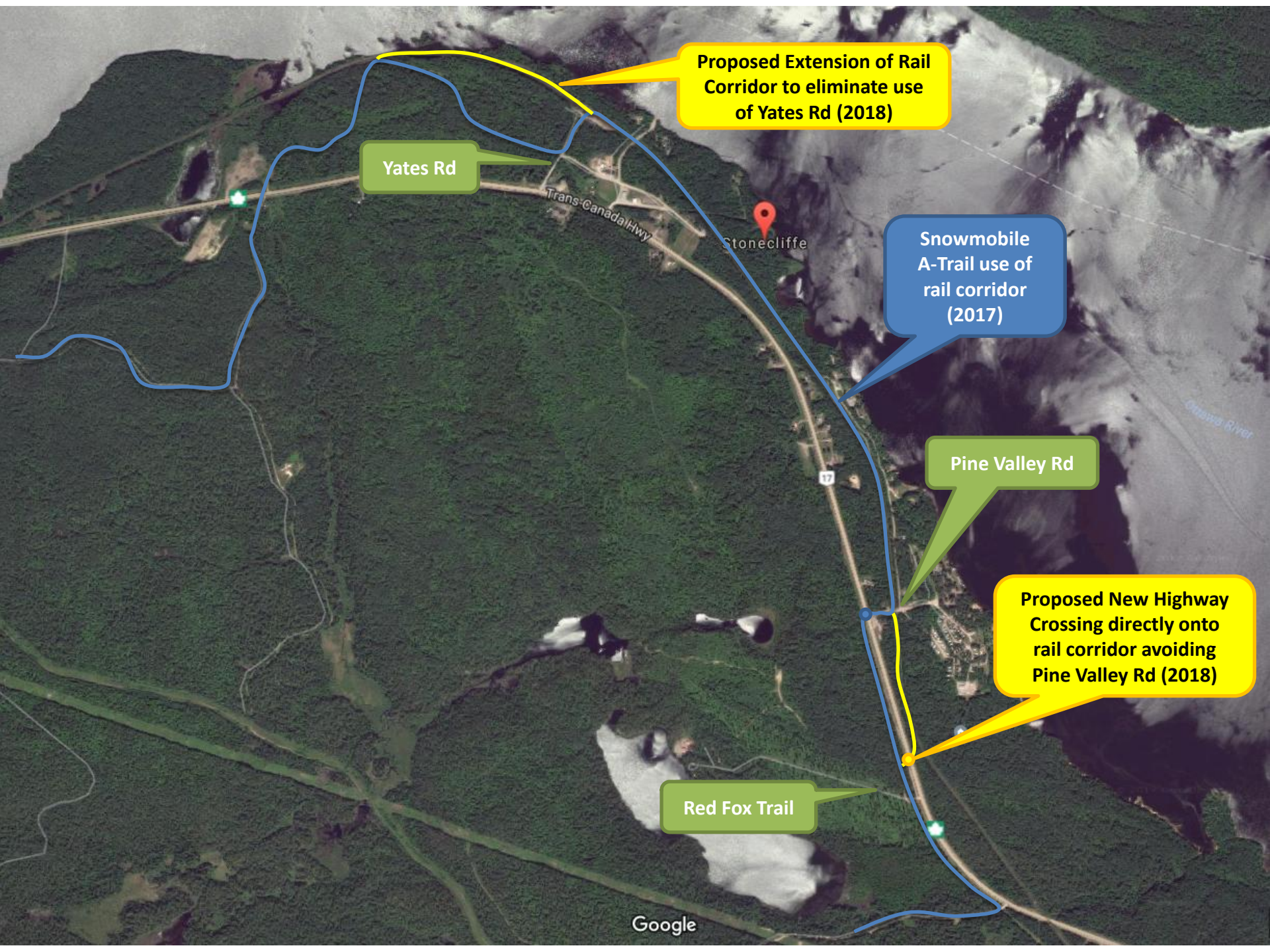
Although this was our preferred approach for the 2018 snowmobile season, it is only a temporary solution and does not address municipal staff concerns about the trail encroaching on municipal roads (at heliport & ball diamond).

Extending Use of the Rail



- As was reported in the May 10th 2017 issue of the NRT, the snowmobile club applied to the county to request an extension of lease for the rail bed
- This application was submitted to county on March 29th 2017 to account for county due process and the associated lead times required to get approvals
 - The snowmobile club indicated at the April meeting of Council this was one option being explored (refer to audio tape of Council meeting)
 - Specifically, this would involve extending the use of the rail east of Pine Valley Road with a new highway crossing west of Red Fox Trail
 - In addition, the club would like to extend use of the rail west of Yates Road to meet up directly with Sesame Street
 - Access to Yates General Store would be via Buckshot Lane
- This would completely remove the trail system from using Pine Valley Road and Yates Road, alleviating a number of municipal & residential safety concerns.

Use of the rail corridor is the only long term option within the town of Stonecliffe and presents the least risk in regards to municipal liability and public safety concerns.



Proposed Extension of Rail Corridor to eliminate use of Yates Rd (2018)

Yates Rd

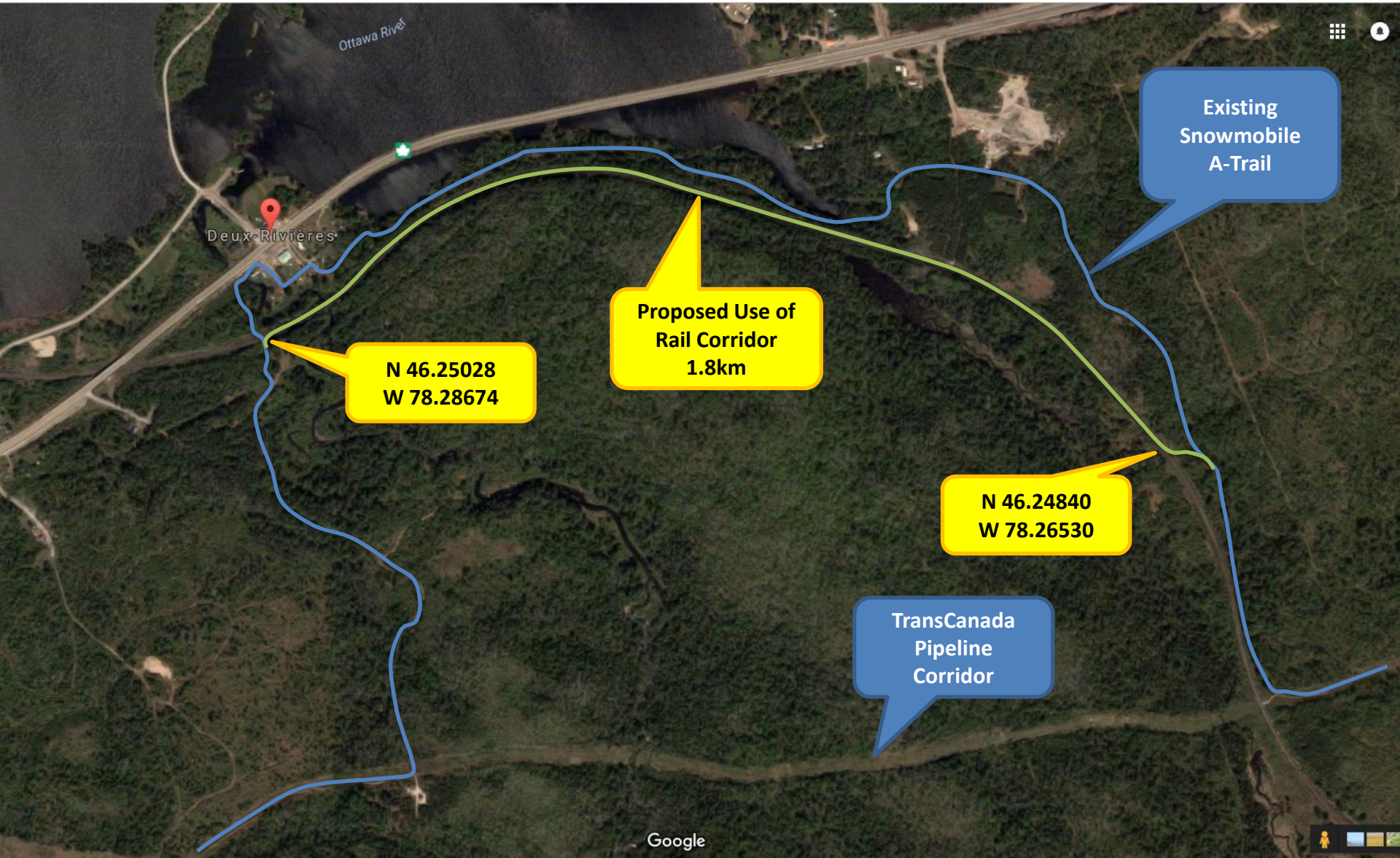
Snowmobile A-Trail use of rail corridor (2017)

Pine Valley Rd

Proposed New Highway Crossing directly onto rail corridor avoiding Pine Valley Rd (2018)

Red Fox Trail

FYI: Deux Rivieres Proposal



Deux-Rivières

Ottawa River

N 46.25028
W 78.28674

Proposed Use of
Rail Corridor
1.8km

N 46.24840
W 78.26530

Existing
Snowmobile
A-Trail

TransCanada
Pipeline
Corridor



Noise = Speed, Speed = Noise



- There was no attempt last season to curb the speed of riders, as it didn't surface as an issue until the end of the season.
 - So let's not assume that attempts to get the speed down will fail
- The bigger question is what innovative steps can we explore to address the speed issue along the rail corridor?
 - Installing oversized STOP signs
 - Welcome to Stonecliffe – Residential QUIET Zone
 - Community Safety Corridor - Speed Limit Radar Enforced
 - Police Ahead – You've Been Warned!
 - Reduce Speed or Lose the Trail!
 - Increased trail patrol presence

The snowmobile club wants to work with both the municipality and the local residents to address these concerns, and is open to suggestions on how to effectively control the speed, while at the same time maintain a safe riding environment.

Additional Actions



- The snowmobile club needs to do a better job of making sure snow is not left on the roads.
 - This will be a primary focus at this fall's Groomer Day when training and procedures are reviewed
- Working with affected landowners, the snowmobile club would be proactive in making sure the intersections are cleared for best line of sight possible.
- Install trail crossing signs on Boat Launch Road or should we consider 4-way stop signs at all intersections?
- Can we build a fence at the end of Yates Road to prevent traffic exiting the trail at that point?
- The snowmobile club would make better use of social media to inform riders of the Community Safety Corridor
 - Potential for additional media coverage to showcase innovative steps taken to address speed/noise issues

What other innovative steps can be taken to address concerns?