

New funding sources sought for Algonquin Trail upgrades through Renfrew County

NEWS Sep 05, 2018 by [John Carter](#) Arnprior Chronicle-Guide



The Ottawa Valley Recreational Trail is now complete from Pakenham through Arnprior to Division Street now that the trestle across the Madawaska River is passable. In Renfrew County, the trail along the CP Rail line is called the Algonquin Trail. - Derek Dunn/Metroland



The Algonquin Trail running west past the ends of Lochiel and Bonnechere streets in Renfrew has been coated by stone dust over the trestle and past Cotieville. As a multi-use trail, it's much wider than the Millennium Trail. - John Carter/Metroland

Renfrew County is looking for alternative sources of funding for Algonquin Trail upgrades after the new provincial government cancelled an infrastructure grant program tied to discontinued cap and trade revenues.

Stone dust, the biggest expense, has been applied to five stretches of the 218-km trail along the former CP Rail line thanks in part to the now scrapped Ontario Municipal Commuter Cycling (OMCC) program. Renfrew County and seven municipalities along the route have upgraded more than 23 kilometres of the trail with money from provincial OMCC and Rural Economic Development programs with still about \$100,000 of the \$800,000 to spend.

The cancellation of the program will cost the county at least \$2 million over the next three years. The 118 municipalities already receiving \$93 million in OMCC funding have until the end of 2020 to complete their projects.

Algonquin Trail advisory committee members are hopeful other funding will become available to replace at least some of the \$2 million. Noting that the Ministry of Transportation is looking for ways to move cyclists off Highway 17, Arnprior Reeve Walter Stack suggested it might be a source of trail funding.

Some of the \$100,000 left will be used for upcoming contracts in McNab/Braeside and Pembroke. The county has tendered out the supply and application of limestone crusher dust for two sections of the trail from Division Street in Arnprior to Wharf Street in Sand Point. The tender deadline is Sept. 12 with the work expected to be complete by end of October.

The county is anticipating having the full Arnprior-to-Renfrew stretch graded and brushed by year's end.

The section from the Lanark County border to Daniel Street across the trestle in Arnprior has been completed, with the one-kilometre section through central Arnprior coated with a repurposed asphalt last year as a test case.

Also covered with stone dust are sections from the K&P Trail junction to McBride Road through Cotieville in Renfrew-Horton and north from Astrolabe Road in Whitewater Region. That municipality is looking to partner with local organizations and businesses to extend the treated section another kilometre to connect with Turcotte Road.

Meanwhile, in Lanark County, the stretch from Pakenham to Arnprior has been finished with the wrapping up of the Waba Road to Highway 417 section by Thomas Cavanagh Construction at a cost of \$142,680. It's part of \$1.5 million allocated by Lanark County for work on the trail this year.

The county has installed four gates along that section of the trail and is planning five stop signs at every intersection.

Lanark County is planning an opening ceremony in late October or November, with progress being made on the controversial route through or around Almonte.

Renfrew County is also dealing with a disputed section, with a farmer north of Cobden laying claim to the land and even putting a temporary fence across the trail at one point.

The county is waiting for the results of court proceedings initiated by CP Rail to clarify ownership. In the meantime, it is working with the Ministry of Transportation to determine a bypass of the disputed area if necessary.

With files from Ashley Kulp

by **John Carter**

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Partners, users boosting Renfrew County Algonquin Trail effort

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A concrete barrier where the Algonquin Trail intersects with Renfrew Avenue hasn't deterred ATVers and other users from accessing the former CP Rail line before it's ready. - John Carter



The Algonquin Trail through Renfrew has been temporarily blocked as BEI uses a portion for storage of gravel, sand and machinery for the downtown reconstruction project. In return, the company is grading and bushing the trail eastward from its site through the town and Horton to River Road. - John Carter/Metroland

The need for community partners and support from the public is growing in importance as uncertainty surrounds future funding for the Algonquin Trail.

At their last meeting, members of the Algonquin Trail advisory committee say they are encouraged that people are already perceiving the former CP Railbed as an important multi-use trail. As well, several user groups are partnering with the county to upgrade the trail.

Jason Davis, Renfrew County's manager of forestry and geographic information systems (GIS), said the committee is leaving the public to decide whether they want to use the 218-kilometre trail before it is finished.

While sections of the trail, especially around the towns, have been treated with stone dust, most of the sections yet to be worked on are covered in rough railbed rock, which is difficult to walk on. Furthermore, staff are still finding metal on the route, so users, including cyclists and horse riders, are urged to proceed with caution.

"It's user beware," Davis said "Some people don't want to use it yet, while others do ... we're leaving it up them."

He noted the committees (there is also an advisory group that includes stakeholder representatives) are stressing open dialogue with all interested parties as they attempt to "manage expectations" of users and landowners.

Given the mix of users, Renfrew County's trail committee agreed with Arnprior Reeve Walter Stack that "significant fines" be considered for speeders. User groups and municipalities will be consulted before final speed limits and fines are finalized.

In an effort to deter unauthorized vehicles, gates being installed on the trail have no hinges, unlike those on the county's Kingston and Pembroke Trail. The gates will remain open during snowmobile season and during maintenance, and be accessible to paramedics.

Open sections include the route through Arnprior, Renfrew to north of Cobden and Pembroke to Petawawa, with the focus this fall on readying the Renfrew-to-Arnprior section.

Next door, Lanark County still has the 'No Trespassing' signs up as it keeps the trail closed until its whole 62 kilometres is ready to be opened later this fall. However, there have been reports of significant numbers of walkers, bicyclists, ATVers and horse riders already using the trail. There have been complaints about riders not cleaning up after their horses on the trail.

Lanark County will receive a report this month recommending it follow Renfrew County's lead and partner with local ATV clubs on the trail. "I think that's going to be very welcome in terms of getting the ATV folks involved because they not only contribute

countless hours to keeping the trail open, but they also have an enforcement role which is important in this enterprise,” said Lanark County Warden John Fenik.

Another example of “good partnerships” enhancing the trail is the county’s agreement with the Calabogie and District Snowmobile Club regarding the bridge over Dochert Creek in McNab/Braeside, said Davis. The county is providing the decking and siding material, and the snowmobilers are providing the volunteer labour to improve the structure.

Just up the line, the county is replacing the bridge over Quinn’s Creek, near River Road in Horton.

Renfrew County has allowed two construction companies to use small sections of the trail in Renfrew and Arnprior for storing equipment and gravel during major projects this year and next. In Renfrew, Reeve Peter Emon reports Bonnechere Excavating Inc. is providing bushing and grading on the trail from Renfrew to River Road in Horton as compensation. While in Arnprior, Thomas Cavanagh Construction prefers to pay rent for the use of a small section close to the downtown.

For more information and a map showing what parts of the trail are open, visit www.Ottawavalleytrail.com.

Updates are also available at www.facebook.com/ottawavalleytrail and www.instagram.com/ottawavalleytrail.

More volunteers to help with the trail effort are welcomed.

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