

Design Elements

Alternate access route for Hikers

CABOT HEAD TRAIL ACCESS



- Accessing Bruce Trail from Lindsay Road 40 is an **alternate route for hikers**. (no cycling on Bruce Trail). It is one half kilometre closer to the Cabot Head Trail Gate entrance than the Bruce Trail access near the Dyer's Bay Municipal parking lot.
- Hikers would park at Lindsay Road 40 (free parking), then access the Bruce Trail and continue to Harkins Road, then down to Dyer's Bay Road Trail Gate entrance.

Design Elements

Trail Gate entrance at Cabot Head Road



- There will be **controlled access** at the Trail Gate entrance
- Anticipate some people will drive through Dyer's Bay Community to drop off hikers or bikers at Trail Gate entrance; may need to include **turnaround space** if Birch loop insufficient – *approach and exact location is to be determined*
- Consideration being given to a having a **staff attendant** at this location for high season (or a roving "Trail Monitor" moving up and down the trail by bike)

Design Elements

Ensuring safety & reinforcing structure



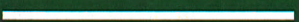
- Conversion to Trail will simplify and reduce the construction requirements for safety and reduce ecological footprint
- Trail is in relatively good shape; current estimate is only ~450m of the ~ 8 km Trail requires construction work
- Key construction activities include hiring a professional trail designer
- *Plan continues to be under review with subject matter experts from the County and Municipality*

Trail Management

Manageable, self-service approach

- Trail would be self-directed with a self-service approach like the Bruce Trail
- Recommend for summer staff (Ambassador) to be present during high season, subject to funding. The ambassador role would be to:
 - Ensure parking fee is paid
 - Report illegal parking to bylaw officers
 - Reporting any incidents to the OPP
 - Remove any garbage along the trail.
 - Engage visitors about conduct and “ethic of care”
- Other operations (e.g., routine maintenance and inspection) would be conducted in conjunction with the Municipality

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Conclusion

Next Steps

As of July 5th 2021

Work Required

- Complete design and engineering components of the plan
- Develop cost projections - both for construction & operating
- Finalize trail management plan and other community protections
- Investigate and plan for mitigations at lighthouse site
- Continue community consultation and incorporation of feedback

Asks of the Municipality

- Request for additional staff time in order to finalize proposal / plan
 - Design (Troy)
 - Financials (Peggy / Ryan)
 - Risk Management (Peggy / Ryan)
- We would envision a manageable series of working sessions over remainder of summer
- Report back to council (and community) in late summer

Note that the accelerated pace reflects that project work must be completed by the end of 2021 or the Trillium grant funding is forfeited

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Thank you!



CABOT HEAD TRAIL PROPOSAL

Initial Draft: May 9, 2021
Minor Revisions July 5 2021

A proposal for transitioning the Cabot Head Road to a wilderness trail for cyclists and hikers, that will create a unique recreational asset that contributes financially to the support and sustainability of three local non-profit organizations.

The Cabot Head Trail project is funded through the Ontario Trillium Foundation and is a partnership between three celebrated local non-profits organizations; namely, Bruce Peninsula Biosphere Association, Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory and the Friends of Cabot Head Lighthouse.



Executive Summary

The Bruce Peninsula has one of Canada's highest concentrations of rare species yet no Conservation Authority. Three registered charities (the **Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory**, the **Biosphere Association**, & **Friends of the Cabot Head Lighthouse**) operate out of the Cabot Head area, and help fill this conservation gap. Each organization relies on unique social enterprise revenues; buildings for research and "rentals" at the Bird Observatory, entrance fees for the Friends of Cabot Head Lighthouse and the Gravel Gran Fondo fundraiser for the Biosphere Association. However, COVID-19 has forced suspension of mission-critical operations, staff work, and volunteer and visitor participation with over 50% loss of revenues to date. Recognizing that the lake-damaged Cabot Head Road provided critical access to the area, the three charities applied for an Ontario Trillium Grant to re-envision the road so it could benefit the local community, and preserve access to the historic Cabot Head Lighthouse and Bird Observatory Research Station. In December 2020, the charities were granted \$124,000 with \$90,000 directed toward the predicted costs associated with transitioning the Cabot Head Road to a wilderness trail.

Consequences of Doing Nothing

- The lighthouse will probably be torn down
- The three charities cannot financially sustain important environmental work
- Vandalism at the lighthouse will persist
- Trespassing on private land will continue
- Illegal and dangerous camping / campfires will remain uncontrolled in the Nature Reserve
- Damage to environmentally sensitive areas will increase
- Garbage will continue to accumulate along private roads
- The economic and social benefits of the \$124,000 grant will be forfeited
- Community is deprived of a world-class recreational asset

Proposal

We, the three charities referenced above, based on stakeholder consultation, propose that the Cabot Head Road be transitioned to a wilderness trail for cyclists and hikers. A wilderness trail will sustain the operations of the three charities and create a unique, world-class recreational asset. With appropriate safeguards, we hope to minimize disruption to Cabot Head Road's private landowners and the Dyer's Bay Community as a whole.

This proposal estimates that visitation volumes to the Dyer's Bay community will be significantly reduced from 2015-2016 levels, and the nature of traffic will have less impact, as users transition from cars to hikers and cyclists.

Cyclists would pay to park their vehicles in the Municipally-owned parking lot at Dyer's Bay and bicycle through Dyer's Bay Village to the gated start of the Cabot Head Trail. Hikers would similarly park, and then hike the existing Bruce Trail to the start of the gated Cabot Head Trail which marks the end of motorized traffic, except for emergency vehicles. The Cabot Head Trail ends at the Lighthouse. It is anticipated that a few trail enthusiasts may wish to be dropped off at the Cabot Head Road Trail gatehouse and so a turnaround point is being considered. An alternate and shorter but less scenic Bruce Trail access route for hikers from Lindsay Road 40 to Harkins Road also exists.

It is proposed that Dyer's Bay parking fees be allocated to cover the costs of trail operation and that the establishment of a reserve for capital repairs and maintenance (parking fees would be waived for local residents) be established.

It is recommended that mechanisms be implemented by the Municipality, parking staff, and volunteers from the charities and Dyer's Bay to address trespassing and littering, for example, added signage in the village for "Dead End and/or Local Traffic Only".

Recommended Guiding Principles of the Proposal:

1. To protect the special environment at Cabot Head and Dyer's Bay, in particular the unique historical landmark of the Cabot Head Lighthouse, which is the last intact lighthouse facing Georgian Bay.
2. To provide environmentally responsible public access to this spectacular shoreline area.
3. To meet the needs of the three charities which require access to the Cabot Head Lighthouse and Bird Observatory in order to fulfill their missions and earn revenue
4. To respect the rights of private landowners by implementing measures such as trail monitoring and appropriate signage to prevent trespassing, littering and unauthorized and damaging use of the Nature Reserve lands and all private property that abuts the Trail and parking areas, and by ensuring appropriate insurance is in place to absolve them of liability arising from the public's trail use.
5. To address the concerns of Dyer's Bay residents related to preservation of their safe and peaceful enjoyment of their community against effects of over-tourism by implementing **specific measures to reduce the volume and nature of traffic** through the community by recommending that the primary traffic through Dyer's Bay will be on bicycle or on foot, and that there be postings and enforcement of no parking on the roads and by perhaps erecting a "Dead End - Local Traffic Only" signs beyond the parking lot at the village entrance. It is recognized that a few people may drop off cyclists/hikers at the gated Trail entrance and that provision for a turnaround zone near the Trail entrance may need to be made if using the Birch Road loop proves to be an impractical alternative. **To limit tourism capacity** it is proposed that there be no expansion of the parking lot thus protecting the adjacent environmentally sensitive Escarpment Meadow and sensitive wildlife corridor. It is recommended that there be no shuttle buses, no marketing by the charities except for the Gravel Gran Fondo event and the annual open house for BPBO members (only), and that the parking staff monitor for trespassing, theft and littering. Further, it is recommended that

a parking reservation system like the Bruce National Park's be considered to address capacity issues, if they should arise.

6. To generate revenue for trail maintenance and a capital reserve for future repairs, it is proposed that parking and entrance fees be charged. It is expected that residents would **not** be charged for parking in keeping with the Municipality's general parking policy.
7. To design and construct the trail, the \$90,000 raised by the charities would be spent locally.

Trail Operation

Limiting trail access to cyclists and hikers (no cars or ATVs) preserves the ecological integrity of the shoreline, is safer and less costly to maintain and is supported by the community of Dyer's Bay, the private landowners and Ontario Parks. It also positions the Lighthouse as a possible tourist "badge destination", where, you have to "earn" it by cycling or hiking out there!

We propose exploring revenue options that include the installation of a staffed booth at the Dyer's Bay paid parking lot and a gate at the Trail entrance "fork" where visitors could be charged a fee to enjoy the Cabot Head Trail and Lighthouse. Proceeds could be directed to the charities and for trail maintenance. **Incorporation of a "trail" review process after one-two years of operation would promote data collection and measurement of visitor numbers, as well as user experiences and feedback.**

Trail Governance

The Steering Committee (three charities) recommends the formation of a new Cabot Head Trail Advisory Committee (CHTAC) that would consist of representatives of the Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory, Friends of Cabot Head Lighthouse, Bruce Peninsula Biosphere Association, Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula, Private Landowners and Ontario Parks, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Dyer's Bay Community Association and a member from the community at large.

The mandate of the CHTAC would be to work cooperatively with the Municipality to encourage safe use of the Trail by cyclists and hikers while ensuring the protection of the natural and cultural heritage assets for future generations. Furthermore, the CHTAC would work to sustain the operations of the three charities and minimize disruption to the Dyer's Bay Community, the private landowners and the Cabot Head Nature Reserve.

Trail Ownership

Ownership is unchanged. The land is owned by Ontario Parks and private landowners. The Trail terminates on a property owned by Fisheries and Oceans Canada. The Municipality has maintained the Cabot Head road as a municipal road for over 50 years and municipal maintenance and insurance is expected to continue when the road is converted to a wilderness trail.

Right of Access

Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Ontario Parks will each reach their own agreements with the respective private landowners to access the lighthouse property and the Cabot Head Nature Reserve.

The hiking and cycling public will have access to the shoreline Cabot Head Trail as they have had for the last 50 years; however, when essential, vehicles for emergency personnel, staff, and volunteers will be permitted access. It is proposed that all visitors will access the Trail via the gated entry.

DRAFT

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1. Background

Cabot Head Road is a unique and cherished part of the Northern Bruce Peninsula. Running eight kilometres along the northeastern tip of the Peninsula, it provides both incredible scenic shoreline views of Georgian Bay and is the sole access route to the historic Cabot Head Lighthouse and surrounding Cabot Head Provincial Nature Reserve.

The Cabot Head Road provides mission critical access for staff and volunteers of the Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory to conduct twice-annual Canadian-significant bird migration monitoring research at the Cabot Head Nature Reserve. Additionally, the Road allows the Friends of Cabot Head Lighthouse to share the area's marine history through the iconic, historically significant Cabot Head Lighthouse. Access is fundamental to the financial viability and sustainability of the aforementioned two charities as well as that of the Bruce Peninsula Biosphere Association, who operate social enterprises that depend on access to the Cabot Head Road route. Equally important is that this spectacular route is an invaluable asset to the community at-large who enjoy it year round.

The Cabot Head road has a long and complex history. Built in the 1960's to give access to Cabot Head Lighthouse, the road has been maintained by the Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula since that time. The first third of the road length, is owned by several private landowners and the balance of the length of the road is owned by Ontario Parks. While the municipality has historically maintained the Cabot Head road, it does not have formal title – leading to concerns from the private landowners regarding its ongoing use and trespassing.

Additionally, prior to the pausing of operations in October 2016, the popularity of the Cabot Head Lighthouse was a tourism destination that created traffic issues for Dyer's Bay community members as vehicles passed each direction through the small hamlet.

In 2019, road damage from record-high water levels and storm-related impacts led the Municipality to close the road. Road closure has threatened the critical environmental and cultural/historical operations of the three local non-profit charity organizations and reduced the local community's ability to enjoy the road's spectacular beauty.

Seeking a permanent solution to these road challenges, and building on an idea from the community, the three charities collaborated to explore how to transition the Cabot Head Road to a Wilderness Trail. In May 2020, the Biosphere Association convened a meeting of representatives from 9 stakeholder groups including the local MP and MPP to discuss a potential solution. In the fall of 2020, the three charities applied and were awarded an [Ontario Trillium Foundation](#) (OTF) grant – as part of its [Resilient Communities Fund](#) – to re-imagine the Cabot Head road as a wilderness trail that would preserve the ecological integrity of the area, satisfy community concerns and consider revenue options that could support trail maintenance/repairs and contribute to the financial viability of the three charities. Approved in December 2020, the OTF funding is available for 12 months only, and is intended to support community consultation, develop possible revenue options for trail maintenance and construction and support and finance the trail design, planning, and construction (if necessary) that may be required to

convert the Cabot Head road to a wilderness trail. The three organizations – Bruce Peninsula Biosphere Association, Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory, and the Friends of Cabot Head Lighthouse – formed a steering committee to oversee the project (hitherto known as the “Steering Committee”). For the last four months, the Steering Committee has met weekly, and held 22 engaging discussions with key stakeholders. The results of these deliberations are reflected in this Discussion Paper. Appreciation is extended to representatives appointed by the Dyers Bay Association who have been attending project steering committee meetings and providing weekly comments on the (draft) discussion paper since March 30th, 2021

This document provides details on the proposed approach for transitioning the Cabot Head Road to a wilderness trail – hereafter referred to as “Cabot Head Trail”. Importantly, the proposal does not include discussion about site and/or capital improvements at the Cabot Head Lighthouse, (trail terminus) as conversations are still ongoing with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, about the site. This document is broken into four sections:

1. **Community Consultation** – summary of the inputs / feedback received
2. **Preliminary Design** – high-level overview of the design of the trail
3. **Operating Model** – description of the operational & financial governance
4. **Implementation Plan** – stages and workplan for developing the trail

This document remains a work in progress - draft. It is to be used by readers to gain a better understanding of the project work completed to date and to provide opportunities for input on the ideas within the proposal. As the project continues to evolve, it will be regularly updated and enhanced.

2. Community Consultation

Consequences of Doing Nothing

The three charities recognized that the longstanding and known concerns regarding uses of the Cabot Head road needed to be addressed as the consequences of continuing to do nothing were devastating. The consequences of doing nothing are enumerated below:

- The historic lighthouse may be torn down
- The three charities cannot sustain important environmental work
- Cabot Head road will continue to deteriorate without remediation, perhaps beyond repair
- Vandalism at the lighthouse will persist
- Trespassing on private land will continue
- Illegal and dangerous camping / campfires will remain uncontrolled in the Nature Reserve
- Damage to environmentally sensitive areas will increase
- Garbage will continue to accumulate along private roads
- The economic and social benefits of the \$124,000 grant will be forfeited

In order to ensure the project best meets the community's needs, it was deemed important to consult the various key stakeholder groups. As a result, extensive community consultations with stakeholder representatives began in May 2020. Once the Trillium funding was approved in December 2020, more detailed consultation began in January 2021, and continues as one of the key priorities upheld by the Steering Committee.

Five stakeholder groups were engaged by the Steering Committee using Zoom technology (January-June 2021):

1. Three Levels of Government

- a. Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula, (manage road maintenance, insurance, etc)
 - b. Province of Ontario - Ontario Parks (manage the Cabot Head Provincial Nature Reserve) and,
 - c. Fisheries & Oceans Canada (manage the Cabot Head Lighthouse and surrounding site;
2. **Community** - focused on those in the immediate area including Dyer's Bay Association representatives as well as the memberships of the three local not-profit organizations who rely on accessing the Nature Reserve
 3. **Private Landowners** – involves the families with ownership claims to sections of the first section of the Cabot Head road

Feedback from these key stakeholder groups was requested regularly and iteratively throughout the project both formally and informally with the goal of developing the project to a point where all parties could provide Approval in Principle. Feedback was primarily received in two phases: (1) Principles and (2) Design.