



Subject: *EHMUTA - Temporary Maintenance Agreement Request*
To: Parks, Recreation & Culture Committee
Date Prepared: May 8, 2025
Related Motions: C22(120), March 2022 Council In-Camera Direction to Staff, C23(331), C23(381), C24(289), December 2024 Council In-Camera Direction to Staff
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Approved by: Kim Ramsay, CAO

Summary

In December 2024, staff brought forward potential forms of agreements and land management program options specific to the former Dominion Atlantic Railway line (DAR). Direction was given to staff to proceed with a survey review of the DAR Line to provide staff with the information required to manage a DAR easement and encroachment program. Council also gave direction to engage in discussions with the East Hants Multi-Use Trail Association (EHMUTA) to entertain a longer-term agreement following completion of the survey.

The EHMUTA has the opportunity to collaborate with the Driftclimbers Snowmobile Club to reallocate funds from a previous Driftclimbers project to do repair and maintenance work on the DAR. Understanding that the survey work and land management program may not be complete before the timeline for using the funds is up, the group is requesting a 6-month temporary maintenance agreement.

Financial Impact Statement

The EHMUTA confirmed that there is Provincial approval to use \$150,000 in OHV infrastructure grant funds for repair and maintenance work on the DAR provided the agreement includes wording to confirm Council approves collaboration between the EHMUTA and the Driftclimbers.

Recommendation

Staff are seeking Council direction on a 6-month temporary maintenance agreement with the East Hants Multi-Use Trail Association and Driftclimbers Snowmobile Club who are requesting permission to conduct maintenance work on the DAR line from Kennetcook to Trenholm Road.

Recommended Motion

Move that Council gives the CAO direction to enter into discussions with the East Hants Multi-Use Trail Association, in collaboration with the Driftclimbers Snowmobile Club, to establish a 6-month temporary maintenance agreement to conduct maintenance work on an approximately 9km section of the former DAR line from Kennetcook to Trenholm Road, PIDs 45225190 and 45225182.

Background

February 2023 - East Hants acquired the DAR lands from LANDAR Holdings Ltd. running from South Maitland to Mantua with approximately 44km of the entire 58.5km located in East Hants ending in Stanley.

June 2024 - the EHMUTA formed and approached the municipality with the intent of entering into a long-term agreement for the entire former DAR Rail line lands for multi-modal use.

December 2024 - Council discussed land management options and direction was given to proceed with a survey of the former DAR lands within East Hants boundaries and to enter into discussions with a trail group once the survey was complete.

Discussion

Understanding that the survey work and land management program may not be complete before the timeline for using the reallocated Driftclimbers project funds is up, the EHMUTA in collaboration with the Driftclimbers are requesting a 6-month temporary maintenance agreement to complete maintenance and repair work.

The proposed work includes mowing and mulching vegetation, ditching, culvert replacement, grading and resurfacing of the former rail line. The focus will be on an approximately 9km section from Kennetcook to Trenholm Road (see Map A - Kennetcook to Trenholm Road) on PIDs 45225190 and 45225182. The group is requesting a 6-month duration starting June 30, 2025 and ending December 31, 2025.



Map A - Kennetcook to Trenholm Road

Survey Update

Staff continue to implement the survey work via a contractor as per current direction of Council. Fieldwork for the first group of “higher priority” PIDs (45433083, 45225182, 45225190, 45225208) is well underway and survey sketches should be finalized by the end of July. Staff anticipate the second group of sketches to be finalized by end of October. The division of PIDs into two groups permitted a longer schedule and lower project cost. Following analysis of the information received, the easement and encroachment program will likely not be ready to discuss with Council until late 2025.

Agreement Risk

Risks with operations and operating agreements have been previously discussed with Council and municipal staff will take reasonable steps to ensure the group fulfills their obligations under an agreement.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

The 2021-2024 East Hants Strategic Plan speaks of sustainable infrastructure and the goal is to provide infrastructures that meets the needs of the communities throughout East Hants.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The EHMUTA confirmed that there is Provincial approval to use \$150,000 in OHV infrastructure grants funds for repair and maintenance work on the DAR provided the agreement includes wording to confirm Council approves collaboration between the EHMUTA and the Driftclimbers.

There is multi-year funding (\$50,000/year of matching funds for 3 years) currently allocated in the Capital budget (Project #16-017) for the DAR line development. The intent was to match any funding received for maintenance and development dollar-for-dollar with a trails group as part of a future management and maintenance agreement understanding that some of the trails group funding would be work in-kind. There is no request from the groups to use municipal funds at this time.
