



Staff Report

Operations

Report To: COW-Operations, Planning and Development Services
Meeting Date: November 28, 2023
Report Number: CSOPS.23.033
Title: Pretty River Road Update
Prepared by: Shawn Carey, Director of Operations

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report CSOPS.23.033, entitled “Pretty River Road Update” for their information.

B. Overview

The purpose of this report is to update Council on three items related to the Pretty River Road. These updates will focus on parking restrictions and trail access; new winter snow removal contract; and, proposed road surface treatment for 2024.

C. Background

Parking Restrictions and Trail Access

Managing parking on Pretty River Road has been an ongoing challenge for the Town both from a public safety and operational standpoint. Pretty River Road has a narrow platform and with cars parked on one side or both sides, pedestrians are forced to walk further into the centerline of the road. This poses a safety risk for both motorists and pedestrians particularly given the curves and bends in the road. The Town and neighboring municipalities have experienced serious accidents in similar circumstances where roadside parking is not controlled. In addition, roadside parking in this area can result in challenges for emergency vehicles when there are vehicles parked on both sides of the road with park users milling around their vehicles on the roadway preparing for a hike. When snowbanks are present and plows are active during the winter season, the risk becomes even greater in areas where roadside parking occurs.

The roadside parking restriction on Pretty River Road was approved through the Town’s Comprehensive Parking By-law which was reviewed and approved by Town Council in early 2022. A Public Meeting to review the changes to the By-law was held on March 7, 2022.

No parking signage was erected in November 2022 and enforcement began on November 30, 2022. The area in question is the Pretty River Road between the Osprey-Blue Mountains Townline and The Blue Mountains–Clearview Townline. However, the Town has implemented

roadside parking restrictions in multiple rural areas where there is potential safety risk to road users, emergency vehicles, and pedestrians. Attachment 1 is a map showing an overview. The Town's By-Law team issued 12 parking tickets in December 2022 and 56 parking tickets to date in 2023.

Staff have been working with Ontario Parks (primary landowner in this area) to implement safer and more permanent parking options for visitors. In 2021, the Town made a delegation to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks which focused on parking issues at local trailheads, and asked the Ministry to invest in proper facilities to ensure there was adequate parking capacity for the users of their trail networks.

Prior to the installation of the no parking signs, Town Staff met on site with Ontario Parks staff to review the restrictions and discuss parking options. Ontario Parks has provided a parking area within 500m of the Bruce Trail trailhead, and the Town is directing users of the park to this location for their safety. For the winter of 2022/2023, the Town contributed \$2,000 for snow removal in the Ontario Parks' parking lot.

The Town has received feedback from both ends of the spectrum. Motorists and plow operators have stated that the road feels much safer to them now, and residents and trail users have stated that the lack of vehicles parked along the road is safer for pedestrians to maneuver and access the trails. Other park users have stated that being redirected to the dedicated parking lot is an inconvenience and unsafe as they now have to walk along a portion of the road to get to the trailheads.

Proposed Road Surface Treatment for 2024

During the 2021 budget process, Staff had proposed a \$100,000 capital project to pave the Town Line in coordination with Grey Highlands (i.e. 50% funding of the overall project cost). This project was replaced with a new capital project being the full reconstruction and widening of Pretty River Road at an estimated cost of \$11,500,000. This project was added to the budget at the direction of Council.

Due to the cost and lack of available funding, the Pretty River Road widening project was revised in the 2022 budget to include preliminary engineering only which would allow both Towns to be shovel ready if a grant opportunity became available. Subsequent to the approval of the 2022 budget, Grey Highlands did not receive approval for their portion of the project. As a result, the project has not progressed. Grey Highlands has confirmed they are not proceeding with this capital project.

D. Analysis

Parking Restrictions & Trail Access

Over the last several months, Town staff have collaborated with Ontario Parks, the Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC) and the Blue Mountains Bruce Trail Club to find solutions that promote safe access for hiking and recreational opportunities to Pretty River Provincial Park.

Visitors can park in the existing lot that is located off Pretty River Road and access the Bruce Trail via a new pedestrian crossing. Ontario Parks is currently working to expand the size of the parking lot to accommodate more vehicles.

The following actions have or will be undertaken (see overview map below):

- Plans to expand the existing Ontario Parks parking lot in spring 2024;
- Pedestrian traffic safety study to identify safe pedestrian access to trails;
- Creation of a new BTC trail linkage to the existing parking lot along the Town's right-of-way on Pretty River Road;
- Installation of pedestrian crossing signage and road painting (this item to be applied in the Spring of 2024);
- Installation of culvert crossings to facilitate trail crossing of the Town's drainage ditch; and,
- Realignment of the existing Bruce Trail within the Pretty River Provincial Park.



New Winter Snow Removal Contract

Since the 1970's, Grey Highlands has been undertaking snowplowing and winter road maintenance under agreement with the Town. The Pretty River Road is not easily accessible as it is not directly connected to the Town's road network. Snowplows must travel into Clearview Township or Grey Highlands to access this road. This transit time makes it very inefficient for Town of The Blue Mountain Staff to service this road. In 2022, Grey Highlands Council directed their staff to provide notice to the Town that they would be removing this service.

In response, Town staff reached out to Clearview Township given their proximity to this section of the Pretty River Road. In October of 2023, the Town secured a Winter Maintenance Agreement with Clearview Township to undertake this service.

Proposed Road Surface Treatment for 2024

Town staff have abandoned the Pretty River Road Widening project given that Grey Highlands does not have their own budget approval to proceed and has no immediate plans to proceed further. The Pretty River Road is in need of surface treatment particularly given that the original proposed surface treatment project in 2021 was not approved in favour of road widening. Staff will be bringing forward a surface treatment project for this stretch of road for Council consideration as part of the 2024 budget.

E. Strategic Priorities

1. Communication and Engagement

We will enhance communications and engagement between Town Staff, Town residents and stakeholders

2. Organizational Excellence

We will continually seek out ways to improve the internal organization of Town Staff and the management of Town assets.

3. Community

We will protect and enhance the community feel and the character of the Town, while ensuring the responsible use of resources and restoration of nature.

4. Quality of Life

We will foster a high quality of life for full-time and part-time residents of all ages and stages, while welcoming visitors.

F. Environmental Impacts

N/A

G. Financial Impacts

The following outlines the Town's cost in support of the trail realignment and safe access to the Pretty River Provincial Park:

- Signage to support the new pedestrian crossing of Pretty River Road (from the Ontario Parks Parking Lot) = \$916 plus HST;

- Line painting to delineate the new pedestrian crossing of Pretty River Road is estimated to be \$400 Plus HST;
- Installation of a new culvert for the new BTC trail linkage to the existing parking lot is approximately \$1,500 for the culvert, gravel and installation by Town staff;
- Cost for the Signed/ stamped Engineer's Opinion letter on the pedestrian crossing location and design was \$1,560 plus HST.

Total cost to the Town is \$4,400.

H. In Consultation With

Jim McCannell, Manager of Roads and Drainage

Ryans Gibbons, Director of Community Services

Jason Petznick, Communications Coordinator

Sam Dinsmore, Acting Director of Finance

Debbie Young, Interim of Manager of By-Law and Licencing.

I. Public Engagement

The topic of this Staff Report has not been the subject of a Public Meeting and/or a Public Information Centre as neither a Public Meeting nor a Public Information Centre are required. However, any comments regarding this report should be submitted to Shawn Carey, Director of Operations directorops@thebluemountains.ca.

J. Attached

1. Attachment 1 Overview Map

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Carey
Director of Operations

For more information, please contact:
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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	CSOPS.23.033 Pretty River Road Update.docx
Attachments:	- Attachment 1 Overview Map.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Nov 10, 2023

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Shawn Carey - Nov 10, 2023 - 6:55 AM