

State of the  
Waterfront Trail

2013

Leading the Movement for  
**Waterfront  
Regeneration**  
on Ontario's Great Lakes



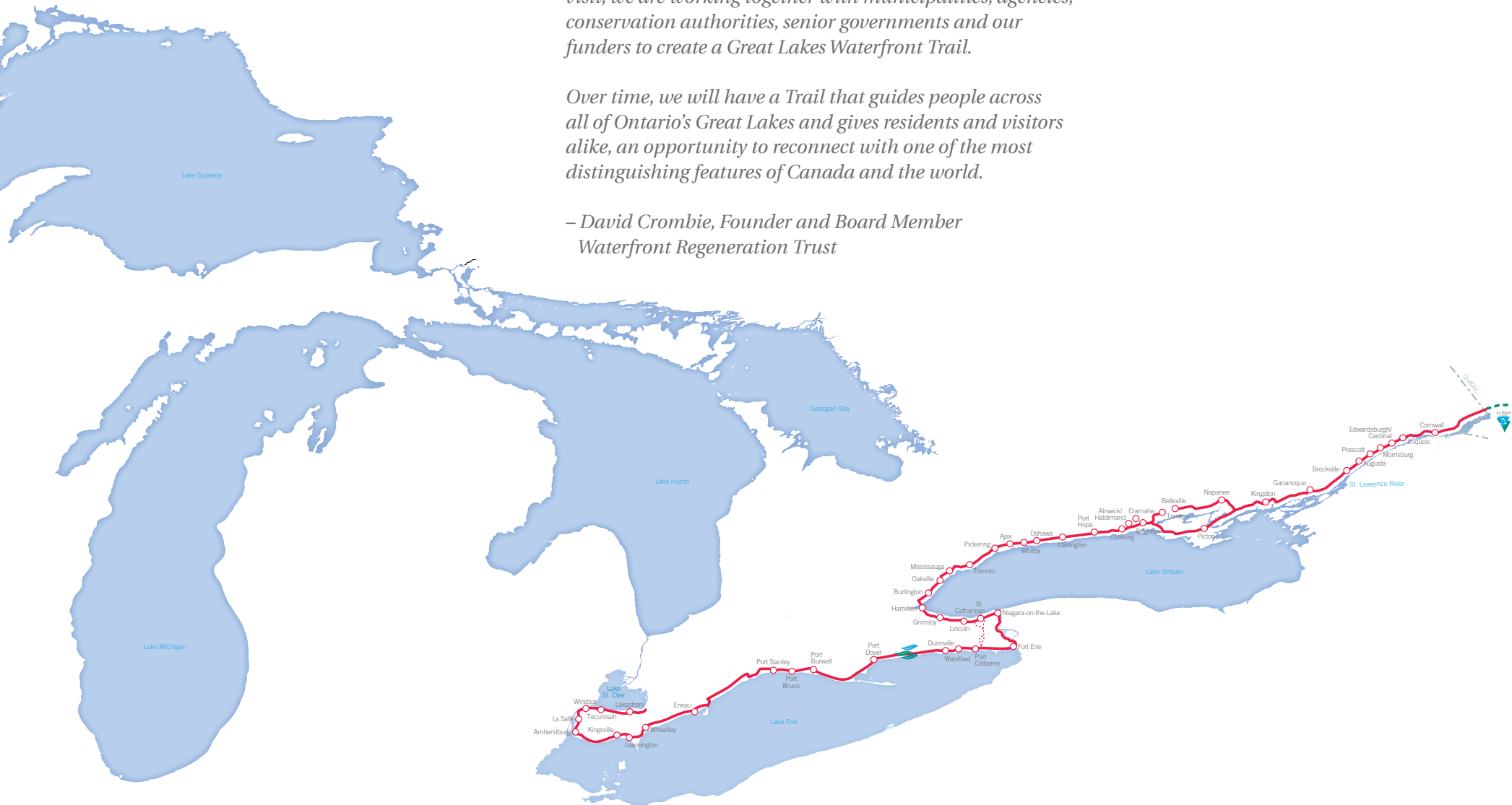
Waterfront Regeneration Trust

*The Great Lakes form the largest group of freshwater lakes on earth, containing 21% of the world's surface freshwater. They are unique to Ontario and one of Canada's most precious resources. Our partnership is helping to share that resource with the world.*

*Driven by a commitment to making our Great Lakes' waterfronts healthy and vibrant places to live, work and visit, we are working together with municipalities, agencies, conservation authorities, senior governments and our funders to create a Great Lakes Waterfront Trail.*

*Over time, we will have a Trail that guides people across all of Ontario's Great Lakes and gives residents and visitors alike, an opportunity to reconnect with one of the most distinguishing features of Canada and the world.*

*– David Crombie, Founder and Board Member  
Waterfront Regeneration Trust*





# Waterfront Regeneration Trust

Inspiration Lakeview, City of Mississauga

## Building Partnerships and Vision for a Great Lakes Waterfront Trail

Established in 1988, the Waterfront Regeneration Trust (WRT) is a non-profit organization leading the movement to build a province-wide Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Waterfront Trail (Trail), working with waterfront communities, agencies, conservation authorities, senior governments, corporations, NGOs and foundations.

Recognizing the tremendous value and multiple benefits of the waterfront to the people of Ontario, the WRT is focused on reconnecting people and communities to the Great Lakes – the largest group of freshwater lakes on earth.

Today the WRT works with 68 communities from the eastern border of Ontario to Lake St. Clair to create the Trail, now more than 1,400 kilometers long. Together, we are building, completing and enhancing the Trail; as well as raising its profile by establishing connections with provincial, national and international trail networks. In addition to waterfront communities, we rely on a diverse group of partners and networks that share a commitment to making the waterfront accessible, clean, green, connected, vibrant, affordable, open, useable, diverse and attractive.

At the provincial level, the Ontario Cycling Strategy, the Ontario Trails Strategy and the Great Lakes Strategy have established a policy framework, which adds momentum to the continued development of the Trail and its expansion to new parts of the Great Lakes. The Pan Am Games in 2015 and the 150th anniversary of the founding of Canada in 2017 will both provide important opportunities to advance major legacy projects.



Through these partnerships, the WRT provides communities with access to expertise, resources, and relationships that will help foster economic development and improve the quality of life for their citizens.

The Waterfront Trail is gaining a reputation as an outstanding tourism experience, thanks in large measure to the Great Waterfront Trail Adventure (GWTA). The GWTA is an annual 5 to 8 day recreational cycling tour organized

by the WRT to showcase the Trail and its communities. The GWTA has attracted other major events to Trail communities, such as the RAGNAR running series and Velo Quebec's Grand Tour. In 2012 CAA joined the WRT partnership by providing support to the GWTA through the innovative Mobile Bike Assist program and app. Their travel services division has introduced the Trail to hundreds of thousands of CAA members through their website and publications.

*"The quality of the course is such an integral part of the Ragnar experience. The Waterfront Trail is destined to be one of our most beautiful North American courses,"*

*– Tanner Bell, Ragnar Relay Series Co-Founder*

# 93%

*agree that the  
Waterfront Trail is a  
tourist attraction*



# 1,400 kilometres of W.O.W. (Wonderful Ontario Waterfront)

## Decades of Trail Extension

The Waterfront Trail has undergone significant change over the past two decades and now runs through 68 communities for 1,400 kilometres. Each community defines the character of its part of the waterfront by drawing from its landscape and history. **The legacy goal for the Trail is to become a dedicated off-road path as close to the water's edge as environmentally feasible.**

The Waterfront Trail was established in 1995 with a 270 kilometre multi-use route from Hamilton to Trenton. In 1996, Niagara Region joined the partnership.

In 2002, work to extend the Trail from Trenton to South Glengarry along the St. Lawrence River began as a result of

federal/provincial/municipal infrastructure investments in 53 projects along the Trail. The expansion increased the total length to 740 kilometres.

The Waterfront Trail expanded to Lake Erie communities in 2013, and now stretches from the Town of Lakeshore to the Ontario/Quebec border, including new sections along the Niagara River, Lake Erie, Detroit River and Lake St. Clair. Discussions with Chatham-Kent and Lambton County are underway to extend the Trail to Grand Bend—another 120 kilometres. Much of this extension is possible thanks to the work of the St. Clair River and Bluewater Trail Associations.

## Great Lakes, Great Rivers, Great Trail!

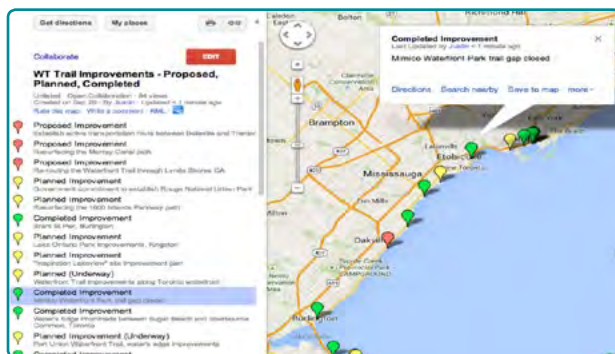
The Waterfront Trail connects Ontario residents and visitors alike to natural areas, parks, cultural sites, main streets and attractions from the Town of Lakeshore (Essex County) to the Ontario/Quebec provincial border, including:

- 2 Great Lakes
- 3 bi-national rivers
- 3 UNESCO Biospheres
- 68 communities
- 19 Provincial Parks
- 3 National Parks, including Canada's first National Urban Park
- 15 National Historical Sites
- 325 municipal parks
- 58 conservation areas
- 90 beaches, including 8 Blue Flag-awarded beaches
- 3 major wine regions
- 25 historical village main streets
- 10 Bicycle Friendly Communities
- 16 Ontario by Bike (formerly Welcome Cyclists) Network Regions, 427 businesses designated as bike-friendly
- 8 international border crossings
- Over 40 major connecting trails

## An Interactive Inventory

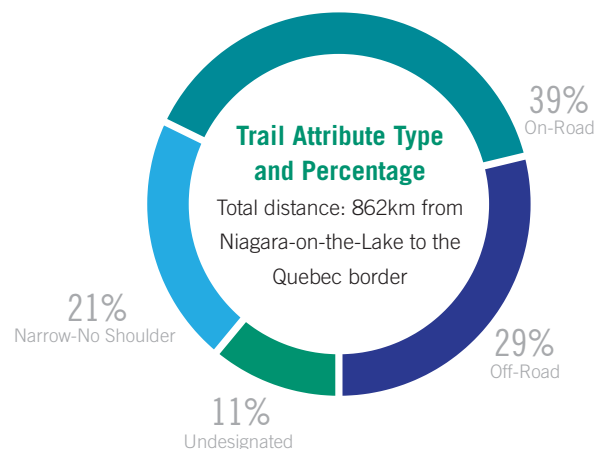
The WRT has set up a new system that enables municipal partners and volunteers to submit updates and information digitally. It also allows the development of benchmarks to measure progress, and an inventory of such things as trail attributes, examples of waterfront regeneration along the route, and upcoming investments.

This information will enhance the safety and quality of experience of the Waterfront Trail.



The inventory is compiled on a Google Maps platform, which was custom-made to measure the entire length of the Trail. The Google Maps allow regional and municipal partners and volunteers to post their feedback, and going forward will be used to update and track changes or proposed improvements to the Trail. **In this way, the inventory platform is a collaborative and dynamic resource.**

### Lake Ontario & St. Lawrence River Section



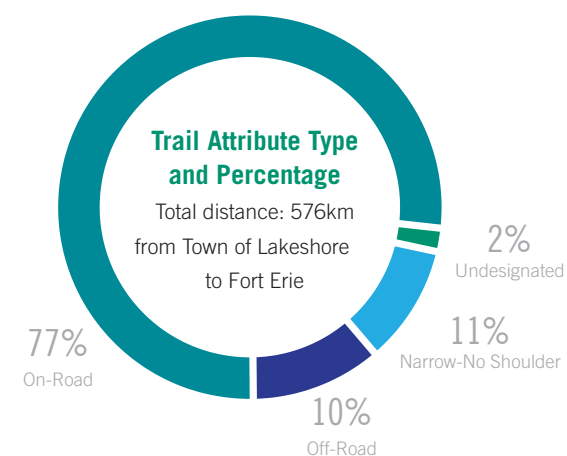
#### Designated Trail Sections (signed, officially recognized)

Off-Road	Trail	Paved or unpaved
On-Road	Residential	50km/h speed limit or less on urban residential roads
On-Road	Main Street	60km/h speed limit or less on "Main Streets" and historic villages
On-Road	Rural	70km/h speed limit or less on rural roads, paved or unpaved
On-Road	Shoulder	1.2m+ wide paved shoulder or municipal bike lane designation
On-Road	Narrow / No Shoulder	Less than 1.2m wide shoulder and more than 70 km/h speed limit*

#### Undesignated Trail Sections (unsigned, unrecognized sections)

Off-Road	Trail	Paved or unpaved
On-Road / Alerts		All road types, no shoulders and 80km/hr speed limit

### Lake Erie, Detroit River & Lake St. Clair Section



The WRT collaborated with a group of volunteer planning professionals to define the Trail inventory categories. As guides, they used the 2007 Lake Ontario Trail Audit results, and the new, Ontario Ministry of Transportation 1.5 metre On-road Paved Shoulder Recommendation. The inventory criteria categorizes some sections as having narrow or no shoulders; however, because of their low traffic counts they are thought to be appropriate for many types of trail users. Further discussion is required on how best to categorize these sections for future trail audits.





# Overview of Trail Attributes and Assets

95%

*would like more paved shoulders*

As of 2013, designated, signed sections of the Waterfront Trail remain largely on-road, representing 60% of the route along Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River, and 88% along Lake Erie. On-road sections break down as follows:

## Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River:

- 11% on residential streets
- 4% on Main Streets (historic villages)
- 14% on rural roads
- 10% on roads with shoulders and bike lanes
- 21% on roads with narrow-to-no shoulders

## Lake Erie:

- 8% on residential streets
- 3% on Main Streets (historic villages)
- 66% on rural roads
- 11% on roads with narrow-to-no shoulders

59%

*would like to see the Trail move off-road*

Utilizing road infrastructure has been essential to connecting Waterfront Trail communities, especially in rural areas.

29% of the Waterfront Trail is off-road along Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River, and 10% along Lake Erie. Continuous off-road and residential street sections include:

- Greater Golden Horseshoe between Hamilton and Ajax
- Niagara Parks Commission's Niagara River Recreational Trail from Niagara-on-the-Lake to Fort Erie
- St. Lawrence Parks Commission's Waterfront Trail between Gananoque and Brockville, and Upper Canada Village to Cornwall
- Friendship Trail between Port Colborne and Fort Erie

*"I just wanted to say how much I and my son enjoyed the adventure. I found lots of beautiful communities that I previously did not know about after 17 years of life in Canada."*

*– Waterfront Trail Cyclist*

# Regenerating Waterfronts; Revitalizing Communities



The Waterfront Trail is more than a walking and cycling facility. It is a catalyst for ecological and community renewal including:

- Revitalizing brownfields
- Green space enhancements and habitat restoration
- Moving the Trail closer to the water's edge
- Improving the Trail
- Making connections

In 2013, there were over 140 small to very large projects (24 proposed, 70 planned/in progress and 47 recently completed), that will transform local and regional sections of Ontario's waterfront.

Below are some of the initiatives that will shape the next phase of Waterfront Trail development and bring more people, awareness and support to Ontario's Great Lakes shoreline. **WRT polls show 94% of respondents see the Trail is an important part of regenerating Ontario's waterfront.**

## Revitalizing Brownfields

There are 10 former industrial sites along the Waterfront Trail that are slated for revitalization – plans include remediation of soil, repurposing of vacant structures, naturalizing the environment, creating new parklands, and integration back into the community. The Waterfront Trail is often a signature element within redevelopment plans.



**Inspiration Lakeview and Inspiration Port Credit, City of Mississauga**

These large former industrial sites in Mississauga are being rehabilitated into public parks and mixed use waterfront properties, including public access to the eastern pier, and a completed Waterfront Trail section along the shore of the Port Credit harbour marina.



**Suncor Lands, City of Oakville**

The Suncor Lands in Oakville are an example of long term planning policies that required new developments to accommodate and/or expand the Waterfront Trail. The regeneration underway includes a children's playground, lookout point gazebo, public washrooms and a tree-planting program for migratory birds.



**Bakelite Thermoset Site, City of Belleville**

The Bakelite Thermoset site comprises approximately 93 acres, including 30 acres of provincially significant wetlands. Years of industrial use left property heavily contaminated with toxins such as PCBs and asbestos. Remediation of the site is expected to cost approximately \$4M, and once completed, the site will be developed as residential. Belleville's Waterfront Trail will extend into the site.



**Centre Pier, Municipality of Port Hope**

As part of the municipality's Master Plan, the Waterfront Trail will be re-aligned along the north shore of Lake Ontario to wind its way around a revitalized harbour, centre pier and neighbourhoods of Port Hope. Formerly the site of a Cameco uranium facility, it will become a new green edge for the municipality including a boardwalk and some residential development.

**Waterfront Park, Town of Prescott**

Construction on a major new waterfront park for Prescott began in Fall 2013 and will be opened in July 2014. Replacing a parking lot, the Park will be a new attraction with links to the heritage Main Street, as well as existing open spaces and attractions such as Fort Wellington. The new facility will cost approximately \$2.5M over 20 to 25 years. Features include a boardwalk, landscaping and play area.





## Green Space Enhancements and Habitat Restoration

There are more than 35 new parks, protected wetlands and habitat restoration initiatives being planned or currently in development along the Waterfront Trail. These improved environments will bring animals, birds, plants and people back to the Great Lakes waterfront.

**89%** *of communities have vision/policy for public waterfront access in planning documents\**



**Windows on the Lake Parkettes,  
Town of Lakeshore**

New lakefront parkettes will soon be opened along the shores of Lake St. Clair at the end of 10 restored public road allowances in Lakeshore (Essex County). The town obtained a grant for 1/3 of the cost and reviewed plans in conjunction with the Essex Region Conservation Authority. The goal is to have include 1-2 parking spots, bike racks, trees, path and benches for each parkette with passive use.



**Rouge National Urban Park,  
Parks Canada**

Rouge Park in Toronto will become Canada's first Urban National Park and a major new gateway for the Waterfront Trail. This achievement is the culmination of years of hard work and dedication by many people including the former Rouge Alliance. The plan for the park will outline the integrated delivery of Parks Canada's mandate for protection, education and visitor experience.



**Kingston Waterfront,  
City of Kingston**

Kingston's Waterfront Master Plan 2014-2015 will build on previous community initiatives such as recently completed Lake Ontario Park in 2010 and Breakwater Park in 2012.



**Ontario Place Park and Waterfront  
Trail, Government of Ontario**

Located along a portion of the east island, the park and Trail will transform a section of Ontario Place that was previously used for staff parking and storage. The Trail will link to the existing Waterfront Trail system. The 7.5 acre park is a Pan Am Games legacy project.



**McGeachy Conservation Area, Lower  
Thames Valley Conservation Authority**

In Fall 2013, construction was completed on a 1,000 metre, multi-use granular surface trail at the McGeachy Pond Conservation Area. A lookout offers views over Lake Erie. This trail construction is coordinated by the hard-working volunteers of South-Kent Trails and made possible through a public/ private land use agreement with the Conservation Authority.



## Moving the Trail Closer to the Water's Edge

90%

*would like the Trail to be closer to the water's edge*

Work is planned or underway to close eight gaps in the Waterfront Trail which will result in a new alignment that is closer to the water's edge. The Town of Ajax's Trail is now 100% at the water's edge—one of the first communities to achieve this legacy milestone. The Toronto Region Conservation Authority is leading a number of major projects that include bringing the Trail closer to the water, for example, Highland Creek to the Rouge River and Mimico Waterfront Trail.



### Lynde Shores Waterfront Trail, Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority (CLOCA)

This new trail is a 2015 Pan Am Games legacy project. Once complete the 3 kilometre section of Trail will link to two provincially significant wetlands and close a hazardous gap in the Trail. CLOCA has invested \$3.3M to acquire the lands that made this route possible. The WRT brokered the provincial investment of \$600,000, and the Town of Whitby is contributing \$217,000.



### Central Toronto Waterfront, Waterfront Toronto

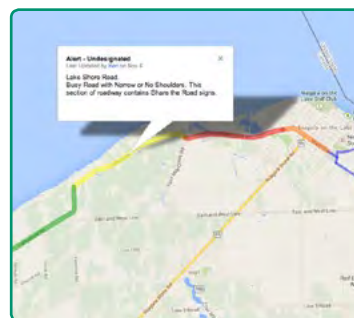
Toronto is the international gateway to the Waterfront Trail. In keeping with the city's important role, there is a major transformation underway along its central waterfront, including an iconic waterfront promenade on Queen's Quay, aquatic habitat restoration, 2015 Pan Am Games legacy projects, and development of the Lower Don Lands.

## Improving the Trail

97%

*would like to see gaps closed in the route*

Along the length of the Waterfront Trail, communities and their government and funding partners are making improvements to trail surfaces and widths to offer a more appealing and positive user experience. There are 18 improvement projects that have been identified and are in various stages of completion.



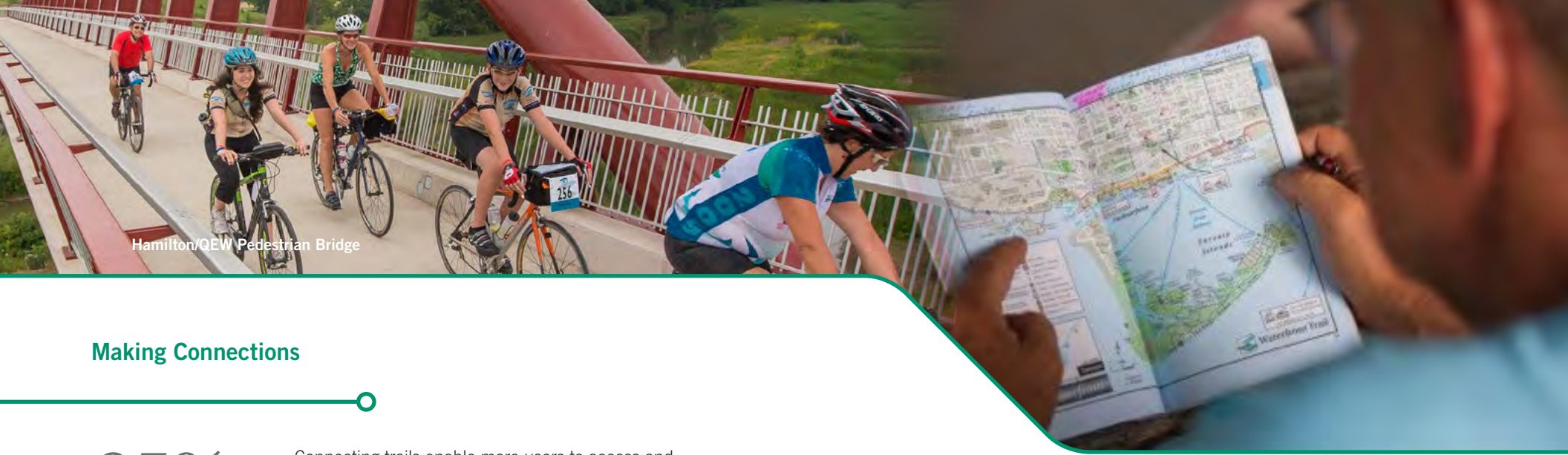
### Lakeshore Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Region

Currently an "undesignated" section of the Waterfront Trail, a section of Lakeshore Road will be rehabilitated, resurfaced and signed in 2014. There are restrictions to major widening, however the improvement project includes narrow paved shoulders for increased cyclist safety.



### 1000 Islands Recreational Trail, St. Lawrence Parks Commission

With \$990,00 in base Federal and Provincial funding, this 36 kilometre section of the Waterfront Trail is being revitalized to accommodate a growing number of residents and tourists. Once complete, the entire trail will be 3 metres wide and barrier-free.



Hamilton/QEW Pedestrian Bridge

## Making Connections

95%

would like to see more connections to other communities and trails

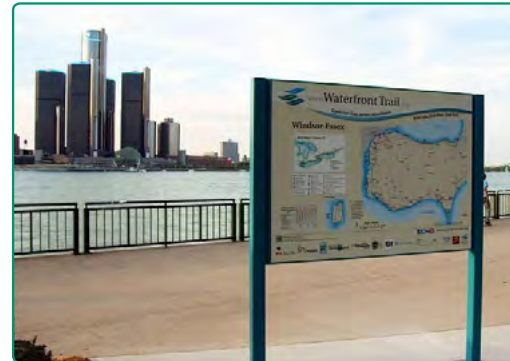
Connecting trails enable more users to access and experience the Great Lakes waterfront, and create a network of routes throughout Ontario to build support and participation in active transportation and tourism. There are more than 40 major trails that currently connect with the Waterfront Trail, with 14 new connections being proposed or built.

### Greenbelt Route



The WRT has partnered with the Greenbelt Foundation to create a new cycling route which connects communities throughout the Greenbelt. The project will establish a signature provincial cycling route from Northumberland to Niagara and connect to the Waterfront Trail, to form regional loops that encompass the watershed.

## Signage and Maps



Consistent directional signs are an essential component of Waterfront Trail branding, awareness and usability. Annual polling of GWTA participants consistently shows that signage is a priority for trail users. Ongoing sign replacement programs are undertaken by the WRT and municipal partners.

Trailhead signs feature new elements including expanded key maps, updated content and taglines and QR Codes

95%

think signage is an important priority

directing smartphone users to [www.waterfronttrail.org](http://www.waterfronttrail.org) to access location specific information, Google Maps and other resources.

Over 90 trailhead signs have been installed along the Trail since 2005, and in 2012 more than 600 directional signs were installed to launch the Lake Erie Waterfront Trail section.



# Partners & Supporters

*The WRT is fortunate to have partners who contribute not only funding but also time, knowledge and ideas. We are grateful to all our donors, volunteers and sponsors for their active support.*

## Waterfront Communities and Agencies

County of Essex	Southwold	Niagara Parks Commission	Durham	Belleville	Elizabethtown-Kitley
Lakeshore	Central Elgin	Fort Erie	Pickering	Hastings	Augusta
Tecumseh	Port Stanley	Niagara Falls	Ajax	Deseronto	Prescott
Windsor	Malahide	Niagara-on-the-Lake	Whitby	Lennox Addington	Edwardsburgh/Cardinal
Amherstburg	Port Bruce	St. Catharines	Oshawa	Greater Napanee	Cornwall
LaSalle	Bayham	Lincoln	Clarington	Loyalist	United Counties of SDG
Essex	Port Burwell	Grimsby	Northumberland	Prince Edward County	South Dundas
Kingsville	Norfolk County	Hamilton	Port Hope	Kingston	South Stormont
Leamington	Port Rowan	Halton	Hamilton Township	Leeds and Grenville	South Glengarry
Chatham-Kent	Port Dover	Burlington	Cobourg	Gananoque	St. Lawrence Parks
Elgin	Haldimand County	Oakville	Alnwick/Haldimand	Leeds and Thousand	Commission
West Elgin	Niagara Region	Peel	Crahan/Colborne	Islands	Parks Canada
Port Glasgow	Wainfleet	Mississauga	Brighton	Front of Yonge	
Dutton/Dunwich	Port Colborne	Toronto	Quinte West	Brockville	

## Conservation Authorities

Conservation Authorities are supporting partners leading watershed environmental protection.

Cataraqui Region	Hamilton
Catfish Creek	Kettle Creek
Central Lake Ontario	Lake Simcoe Region
Halton	Long Point Region
Credit Valley	Lower Thames Valley
Crowe Valley	Lower Trent
Essex Region	Niagara Peninsula
Ganaraska Region	Quinte
Grand River	Raisin Region
	St. Clair Region
	Toronto and Region
	Upper Thames River

## Corporate and Funding Partners



## Thanks to our volunteer Advisors Network

Christina Bouchard  
Ken Forgeron  
David Hunt  
Ewen MacDonald  
Ben MacPherson  
Alan Medcalf

**Source of statistics:** 2013 Great Waterfront Trail Adventure participant survey results.

For updated State of the Waterfront Trail inventory, interactive maps and details visit [www.waterfronttrail.org/stateofthetrail](http://www.waterfronttrail.org/stateofthetrail)