



# **Credit Valley Trail**

## **State of the Trail Report**

Prepared by: Credit Valley Conservation  
April 2024

## Acknowledgements

With the support of our municipal, community and Indigenous partners, there has been great success achieved over the first five years since launching the Credit Valley Trail Strategy. As we work together to connect trails and communities, and to create meaningful trail experiences, CVC's success is a testament to our strong partnerships across the Credit River Watershed.

We would like to acknowledge the support, enthusiasm, expertise and participation of all who provided valuable leadership and support over the last 5 years since launching the Credit Valley Trail Strategy.

The members of the five municipal CVT chapters continue to be a major driving force for the project. Thank you for helping us to build community support, expand our reach and introduce new partnerships.

As we continue to grow and learn on the journey of Truth and Reconciliation, we sincerely want to thank the Elders, Grandmothers, and members of the CVT Indigenous Roundtable for sharing your time, your stories, your culture and teachings so freely. We are grateful for your enduring leadership, truth, and wisdom.

We'd also like to thank our partners and donors for all of your support, leadership and encouragement for this project, acknowledging the significant contributions of:

407 ETR	Greenbelt Foundation
Canada Community Revitalization Fund	Humeniuk Family Foundation
City of Brampton	Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport
City of Mississauga	Takla Foundation
Credit Valley Conservation Foundation	Town of Caledon
Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario	Town of Halton Hills
	Town of Orangeville

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## Executive Summary

The Credit Valley Trail (CVT) will be a 100-kilometre pathway through the Credit River Valley. From the hills of the headwaters in Orangeville to Lake Ontario in Mississauga, the trail will connect Watershed communities to the beauty of nature, Indigenous heritage and values, rich cultural experiences and the sustaining waters of the Credit River.

In 2017, after years of planning and collaboration with over 100 watershed partners, CVC published the Credit Valley Trail Strategy. This strategy outlines the vision, mission and principles that guide our collective actions to build and connect the trail, expand partnerships, develop unique trail experiences, share cultures, traditions and history of Indigenous communities, and connect people to the Credit River Valley.

In the years since publishing the strategy, we have collaborated with our communities and partners in the towns of Caledon, Halton Hills and Orangeville and the cities of Brampton and Mississauga to make the Credit Valley Trail a reality. We have celebrated our first property acquisition, the creation and launch of the CVT brand and logo, developed our first kilometre of new trail, hiked together through parks and natural areas and gathered with the Indigenous Roundtable for ceremony at our first Indigenous key site—the Crane Gathering Space. We have so much to celebrate, and we do so with gratitude and appreciation for our community volunteers, partner organizations and municipalities—without them, this work would not be possible.

In reflection of where we have come over the last five years, we look towards the future and where we will focus our resources. We will continue this work with renewed energy and excitement as we develop our first trail section in Brampton, build the second and third Indigenous key sites in Caledon and Mississauga and make a critical trail connection in Halton Hills, linking the Armstrong Avenue Property with Upper Canada College. We hope to continue to expand our network of partners, increase capacity within CVC to bring more people to the trail, create more nature and culture-rich experiences, and accelerate greenspace acquisition and trail building projects.

This report serves to summarize our *first steps along the path* and provide guidance on where we travel next.

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## **Message from Elder Carolyn King, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation**

The opening of the first Credit Valley Trail Indigenous key site, the Crane Gathering Space, in the headwaters of Credit River at Island Lake Conservation Area, has been many years in the making and is now open for all people to celebrate.

I'm very pleased and very honoured to be part of its planning and now implementation, from the early ideas and the people involved in the design and those that made it all happen. It's a beautiful project.

Miigwetch [thank you] to the Credit Valley Conservation and all the staff for being part of the project starting from the Indigenous Experience Plan, supporting it and making it happen.

Credit Valley Trail Indigenous Roundtable Chair,  
Elder Carolyn King, MCFN

## 1.0 Introduction

The Credit Valley Trail (CVT) will be a 100-kilometre pathway through the Credit River Valley. From the hills of the headwaters in Orangeville to Lake Ontario in Mississauga, the trail will connect communities to the beauty of nature, Indigenous heritage and values, rich cultural experiences and the sustaining waters of the Credit River.

While Indigenous trails and paths of migration following the Credit River Valley have existed from time immemorial, modern interest in re-establishing such a continuous Credit Valley Trail route was conceptually explored in 1956 through CVC's inaugural watershed report. Renewed interest and a wave of momentum was created in 2014 with the publication of the Credit Valley Heritage Society Project Plan that saw the CVT as a catalyst to showcase the natural and cultural wonders of the Credit River Valley.

CVC's Our Future to Shape, Strategic Plan 2015-2019 directed us to work with our partners to develop a Credit Valley Trail that connects the waterfront to the headwaters, celebrates our shared local history and creates a strong sense of place and emotional connection to the Credit River and its valley. CVC collaborated with project partners over the course of two years to develop the Credit Valley Trail Strategy (CVC 2017) which guides collective actions over the next 25 years to realize a contiguous trail that connects people from the headwaters and mouth of the Credit River.

Since 2017, we have worked collectively with our municipal partners in Orangeville, Caledon, Halton Hills, Brampton and Mississauga, established the CVT brand along existing trails, secured land access and built new trails. We have hiked sections of the CVT with our regional chapters and gathered with the Indigenous Roundtable (IRT) to develop the first key site along the CVT. As we reflect on the last five years, it is important to celebrate and acknowledge our accomplishments. Yet there is far more work ahead of us if we are to be successful in achieving the Credit Valley Trail Strategy's vision and mission. This report serves to summarize our *first steps along the path* and provide guidance on where we travel next.

### 1.1 Credit Valley Trail Strategy

Approved by CVC's Board of Directors in 2017, the CVT Strategy establishes the collaborative vision, mission and guiding principles for the CVT. It defines our shared goals and priorities for the next 25 years and provides a framework for measuring our progress and shared success.

With the support of the many CVT partners, CVC is coordinating implementation of the CVT Strategy, collaborating with over 100 partners to implement the 27 actions under these strategic directions and realize the vision.

The guiding principles of the CVT Strategy provided meaning and direction to the collective work with our municipal partners to plan the optimum route and build the trail over the last five years. As more sections of trail become a reality, further guidance is needed to inform and refine trail routing that respects and protects the natural environment while providing great trail experiences at good value for investment. To support this continued work, CVC has prepared updated Route Planning Principles that outline the factors to be considered for decisions on the CVT Route; these principles are included in **Appendix A**.

## 1.2 CVC Strategic Plan 2023-2027

CVC's new Strategic Plan, approved by the Board of Directors in December 2023, charts a bold new course that seeks to proactively prepare us for the expected changes in the landscape over the next 30 years, towards a vision of a resilient Credit River Watershed where the diversity of all life thrives.

The Strategic Plan sets out principles that guide CVC's approach to the work of conservation in action:

Rooted in Science	Watershed-Scaled	Biases Toward Action
Seeking Co-Benefits	People and Nature in Balance	Living Our Values

These principles also reflect the spirit and paradigm of the Credit Valley Trail project.

Under Pillar 4 of the Strategic Plan—**Nature-Rich Parks and Greenspaces**—priority actions include the acquisition of lands, park development and experiences, inclusivity and allyship with Indigenous partners to undertake Indigenous place-keeping actions and traditional practices on Treaty and Traditional lands stewarded by CVC. This pillar and the actions within it, affirm that the work of connecting the Credit Valley Trail remains a priority for CVC.

The Credit Valley Trail, as a specific CVC led project, will be included in a more detailed and internally facing “Action Plan” document that will provide staff direction on how to implement the plan at the program level and evaluate the plan’s progress.

## 2.0 First Steps Along the Path 2018-2023

The CVT Strategy is a vision, created collaboratively by communities and stakeholders. Achieving the strategy's vision not only requires a commitment from all partners for integrated, coordinated action, there are other critical factors that are essential to accomplishing our mission to build the trail and create a best-in-class trail user experience that were outlined in the CVT Strategy. These include:

- Community engagement through our chapters is essential to see the CVT become part of the fabric of communities along the route.
- Political leadership to champion the trail and overcome barriers to success. The vision, support and leadership showed by our partner municipalities in Peel Region, including Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon, led to the securement of the Orangeville-Brampton Railway into public greenspace.
- Working collaboratively with landowners to facilitate land access. We are grateful to the Town of Halton Hills and Upper Canada College for participating in the legacy of CVT.
- Strategic partnerships help us accelerate accomplishments. Our partnership with the Greenbelt Foundation allowed for the creation of the CVT Strategy and they remain a committed supporting partner today.
- Innovative funding partnerships and government investments are essential to making the trail a reality. Much of our fundraising success to date is because the federal and provincial government, and our first corporate partner 407 ETR, recognize the value of trails in supporting healthy, green communities.



These factors, together with establishing the CVT Brand continues to bring more people and organizations to the trail, to help us overcome challenges and accomplish the vision.

We also committed to track performance and report on our accomplishments, demonstrating that we're moving from vision to action, and action to results. **Figure 1** summarizes key performance measures between 2018 and 2023.

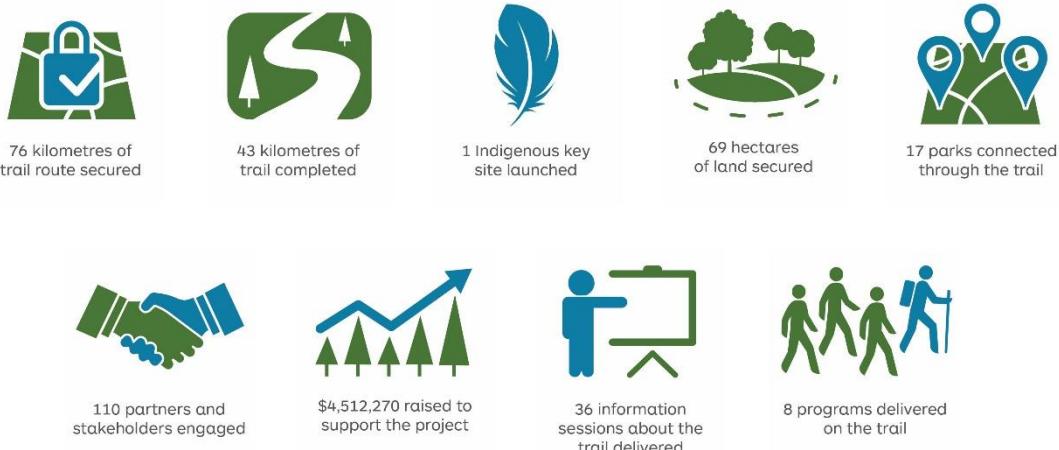


Figure 1: Key performance measures realized between 2018 and 2023.

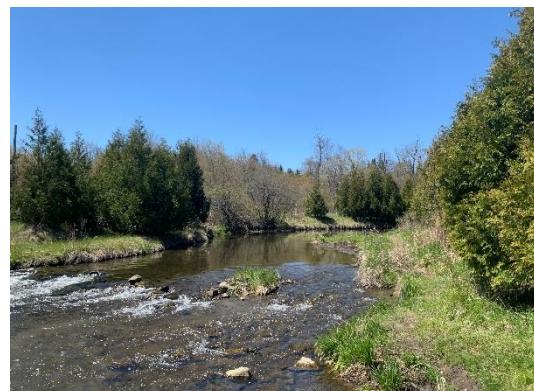
The status of all 27 actions identified in the strategy, and our collective accomplishments, are included in **Appendix B**. Highlights of these accomplishments are summarized in this section.

## 2.1 First Steps: Complete and connect the Credit Valley Trail.

Since launching the project, CVC has onboarded a full-time staff member to coordinate land access, route planning, capital development, experience planning, fundraising and community engagement activities. The CVT project has also been integrated into staff roles and work plans across CVC's Lands Division. Together with our municipal partners, we review and confirm the optimum route annually to respond to new opportunities and challenges, and brand and launch new sections of the CVT along the way. Twice annually, we bring our chapters together to celebrate our successes, discuss challenges, and get out to experience the CVT.

Highlights of our accomplishments under this strategic direction since 2017 include:

- With the incredible leadership and support of our municipal partners, we secured 27.2 kilometres of optimum route, through the acquisition of Capstone and Prazeres properties and transition of the Orangeville Brampton Railway to trail.
- Collectively we built 1.8 kilometres of new trail at Ken Whillans Conservation Area (CA) in Caledon and Upper Canada College in Halton Hills.



Captone Property, Caledon

- We are developing a technical guideline for trails in areas regulated by CVC and within the natural heritage system. The purpose is to ensure that the planning and design of trails minimize impacts to the environment, including natural hazards.

## 2.2 First Steps: Continue to build and expand partnerships, networks, and support.

Our first steps along the path established the CVT governance structure that included a Leadership Council and implementation committees. The Leadership Council included council representation from each of the five municipalities, chairs of each of the five implementation committees, and the Indigenous Roundtable. Their role, primarily, was to serve as visible, positive supporters of the vision of the Credit Valley Trail, acting as champions, forging partnerships and collaborations that build capacity to advance CVT Strategy strategic directions. Today, CVC's Board of Directors serve as our governance body as they do with all CVC projects and initiatives.

Over the past 5 years, the original Implementation Committees have been transitioned into 6 CVT Chapters (5 municipal chapters and CVT Indigenous Roundtable) which better establishes cohesive planning focused on each geographic reach of CVT and Indigenous placemaking along the trail route. This transition is shown in Figure 2.

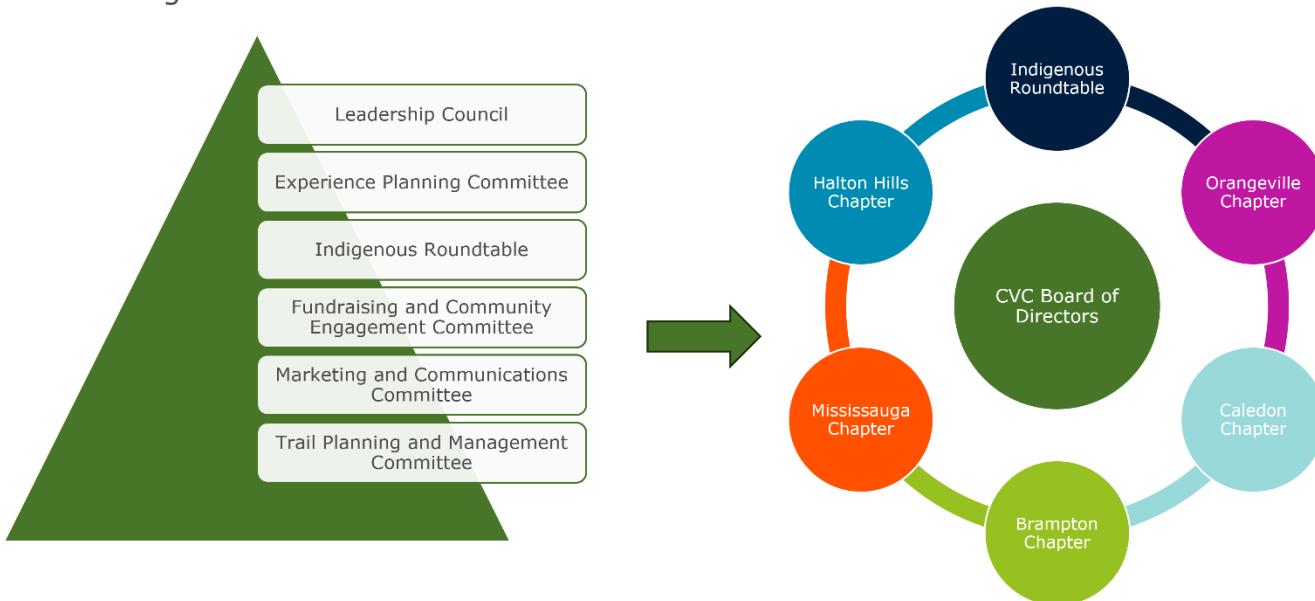


Figure 2: Transition of CVT Governance Structure in 2020.

Highlights of our collective accomplishments under this strategic direction since 2017 include:

- Collaborated with nearly 100 community partners and volunteers, cultivating new relationships with our first corporate partner, 407 ETR.
- Completed the brand strategy and guidelines, launching the CVT logo on September 27, 2019, at the CVT First Steps on the Path Celebration at Glen Williams Park during Halton Hills 'Culture Days' event.
- Raised \$4.5 million towards our \$10 million-10 year fundraising campaign, supporting trail improvements, new trail construction and Indigenous placemaking.
- Attended many community events and hosted presentations at Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation Council, Greenbelt Foundation, Hike Ontario, Ontario Trails Council and conferences hosted by Parks and Recreation Ontario, Trailhead Ontario and Conservation Ontario.



Chapter hike, Upper Canada College, Halton Hills

## 2.3 First Steps: Create a trail user experience that is unique, user focused, and community based.

The CVT is more than just a trail. It will connect communities, greenspaces, people and families, and foster a sense of place and deep connection to the Credit River. The CVT Strategy brings the trail to life through six experiential themes—the focus of the last five years has been on Indigenous Heritage and Values, Recreation and Active Transportation and Social Connectivity and Cohesion themes.

Much of the existing CVT route is a multi-use trail that acts as a pedestrian commuter route and promotes healthy active living. The CVT is recognized in active transportation plans developed by the towns of Caledon and Halton Hills. We continue to work with our municipal partners and other trail authorities like the Bruce Trail Conservancy to promote responsible and sustainable trail use and install trail amenities that provide a safe and engaging user experience.

Highlights of accomplishments under this strategic directions since 2017 include:

- Launched the CVT website and social media accounts on X, Instagram and Facebook.
- 32.6 km of existing sections of the CVT route were added to the interactive trail app 'Ondago' as a wayfinding tool for users to experience the CVT.

- The Town of Halton Hills, in partnership with Upper Canada College, has completed construction on a 1.7 km trail along the CVT optimum route, the first section of trail not owned by CVC to be completed.
- 4.2 km of trail at Upper Credit CA, Ken Whillans CA and Upper Canada College include the CVT logo on wayfinding signage.
- New boardwalks and washroom facility have been constructed at Ken Whillans CA and a new pedestrian bridge has been installed at Upper Credit CA.



Trail wayfinding signage, Ken Whillans CA, Caledon

## 2.4 First Steps: Share the cultures, traditions, history, and aspirations of Indigenous partners.

Indigenous placemaking along the CVT route serves to strengthen Indigenous connections with lands and waters, both traditionally and contemporarily, and connect people to their culture, traditions and teachings. Through our work to realize the vision of the CVT, we are committed to meaningful engagement and respectful collaboration with the watershed's Indigenous partners, empowering Indigenous voices as leaders on this project.

Guiding this work alongside the broader CVT community is the CVT Indigenous Roundtable with representatives from several Indigenous nations in Canada. This includes community members and elders from the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN) as well as community members from the Credit River Metis Council, Cree, Anishinaabe and Huron-Wendat First Nations. Through our collaborative relationship with the IRT, we ourselves have deepened our understanding of Indigenous culture through listening, teachings, ceremony, and gatherings. We'd like to thank our core members of the IRT, Elder Carolyn King, Elder Garry Sault, Grandmother Kim Wheatley, and Dr. Jonathan Ferrier for all their contributions, time, guidance and leadership.

Highlights of our accomplishments since 2017 include:

- The IRT worked with Neegan Burnside Ltd., a majority Indigenous owned consultant, to complete the CVT Indigenous Experience Implementation Plan (IEP). The IEP identifies seven key sites, summarizes their archeological significance, and outlines a preliminary vision highlighting animal dodems and Indigenous experience narratives (key stories, teachings and symbology).

- The IRT worked with Smoke Architecture, an Indigenous owned and operated architecture firm, to develop a conceptual design for the first key site, Crane Site, at Island Lake CA. We then received a federal grant and collaborated with the IRT and Indigenous trades to construct the Crane Gathering Space.
- Led by Elder Garry Sault from the MCFN, the IRT developed digital media on Crane and Fish dodem teachings. These teachings connect trail users to Indigenous ways of knowing and culture. Each of the seven key sites will have interpretive, place-based, and interactive storytelling experiences, interpretive signage, public art installations, trail markers signage, teachings, and art installations to represent Indigenous history and present-day culture.
- CVC unveiled our new head office entrance sign that prominently features a moccasin identifier as part of the Moccasin Identifier Project. The Moccasin Identifier Project was developed by CVT Indigenous Roundtable member Carolyn King in partnership with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and the Greenbelt Foundation to raise awareness of the historical and enduring presence of First Nations, Métis, and Indigenous communities with the use of moccasin identifiers.



First IRT gathering at Crane Gathering Space Island Lake CA, Orangeville

## 2.5 First Steps: Connect people to the natural and cultural heritage of the Credit River Valley.

The CVT provides infinite opportunities and experiences for watershed residents and visitors to foster a sense of place and deep connection to the land, water, and history of the Credit River. Much of our focus the last several years has been to identify and better understand these opportunities so we can connect public spaces along the Credit River Valley with other tourism destinations to create world class trail experiences. The CVT Strategy acknowledges that, while not yet fully connected or accessible to the public, the existing trail provides a tremendous opportunity for CVT partners to work together to brand and promote existing sections of trail under the CVT identity. With three properties and 4.2 kilometres of trail branded CVT to date, we are excited to continue this work with our municipalities and other trail authorities to brand all existing trail in the near future.

Highlights of our accomplishments since 2017 include:

- We completed the CVT Tourism Development Strategy with consultant Brain Trust Marketing and Communications that through market segmentation and analysis, provides recommendations for product and experience development and visual identity and promotion. Three experience clusters emerged as key opportunities: arts discovery, angling learning, and interpretive adventures. These experiences are aligned with our 'ideal guest' preferences, who are nature lovers, knowledge seekers and connected explorers.
- We completed the CVT Natural and Cultural Heritage Destination Experience Plan with consultant Schollen & Company Inc. that outlines an interpretive framework, map, and themes for seven different reaches of the CVT. Three arts, culture and tourism pilot projects were identified that highlight existing sections of the route and that connect to local tourism opportunities in Alton, Port Credit and Riverwood Park.
- CVC has delivered 36 information sessions about the CVT at workshops and conferences while also getting people out on the CVT for interpretive programs.



Dr. Jonathan Ferrier and Joe Pitawanakwat share Indigenous plant teachings at Island Lake CA, Orangeville

## 3.0 The Path Ahead 2024-2028

To mark the five-year anniversary of the CVT Strategy launch, CVC hosted chapter members and supporting partners at a symposium on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Together, we celebrated our accomplishments, and heard from guest speaker Michael McDonald, Bruce Trail Conservancy Chief Administrative Officer, who shared lessons learned in fundraising and landowner engagement. The attendees were divided into small groups to discuss key messages, challenges, and partnerships as it relates to fundraising for land access, trail building and trail experiences.

Using this feedback and the lessons learned over the past 5 years, CVC's internal working group that represents land securement and access, conservation area



Small group discussion at Symposium 2023.

management planning, Indigenous and community engagement and capital projects, prepared high-level priorities for the next five years that reflect where efforts are most needed to advance actions under the five strategic directions. These proposed priorities were discussed with our municipalities to align our actions and collaborate and share resources where we can.

Input gathered from our chapter members and municipalities will continue to help us as we plan the path ahead.

### **3.1 Path Ahead: Complete and connect the Credit Valley Trail.**

We have several trail projects in the planning phase in Caledon and Orangeville that will be constructed in the next 2 years. With funding received through Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP), we are building 5.3 kms of new trail at Charles Sauriol CA, Upper Credit CA, and Island Lake CA. With the goal of connecting Forks of the Credit Provincial Park with Island Lake Conservation Area, much of this section of CVT will be complete in the next 5 years.

Completing and connecting the CVT by 2042 will remain the primary goal, but our focus for the next 5 years will be to develop and implement a landowner outreach plan for critical missing sections of the CVT in Brampton and Halton Hills.

The City of Brampton is going through a planning and development process for the Siemens lands in partnership with CVC which will see the construction of a marquee educational facility in the heart of the Watershed. This property includes the CVT optimum route and an Indigenous key site. Connecting this exciting project site with Eldorado Park and CVC's lands to the south will see much of the CVT in Brampton come to life.

The Town of Halton Hills partnership with Upper Canada College has sparked conversations to connect the trail on the college lands with the Armstrong Property and Barber Dynamo owned by CVC and the section of CVT to the west known as the Credit Valley Footpath. Working with the Town, Bruce Trail Conservancy and Toronto Bruce Trail Club to coordinate planning and resources could see the CVT realized from Norval to Glen Williams.

### **3.2 Path Ahead: Continue to build and expand partnerships, networks, and support.**

One of the key messages we heard from our chapter members at the Symposium in 2023 is the need to better leverage our CVT network to expand chapter membership and bring in new partners with unique skill sets and different areas of influence. We also heard that we need to be develop 'Calls to Action' they can take on to contribute

to advancing the work to connect the CVT. This is something we will work with our chapters on, which will also create new partnerships and opportunities.

The CVC Foundation has been an essential partner in our success. We want to support them in their strategic review and outcomes related to CVT fundraising and profile building. We will work with them to identify specific CVT projects and initiatives that can focus fundraising and key messages and to implement fundraising campaigns and activities for the CVT.

### **3.3 Path Ahead: Create a trail user experience that is unique, user focused, and community based.**

With the support of our chapter members, municipal working groups and volunteers, we will work to connect more people in our communities and watershed visitors with the CVT. We want the CVT to be the destination of choice for trail users, to inspire and cultivate an ethic of care by experiencing the natural and cultural heritage of the Credit River Valley. Priority actions for the next 5 years for trail experiences include:

- Developing a marketing and communications strategy that aims to increase CVT marketing and social media presence, improve our brand awareness and develop engaging content and tools that connect to our audiences.
- Continually refreshing the CVT website and look to develop an interactive mapping application to promote existing sections of CVT.
- Connecting the CVT to more people through community events, pop-ups and walk-and-talks and programs on the trail.
- Working with municipalities to install trail amenities, co-brand existing and new sections of the CVT, and integrate CVT into their active transportation, cycling and trail master plans.

### **3.4 Path Ahead: Share the cultures, traditions, history, and aspirations of Indigenous partners.**

Under the leadership of the CVT Indigenous Roundtable, CVC will help to facilitate the implementation of more Indigenous placemaking sites along the CVT route and activate these spaces with the help of our IRT and Indigenous partners.

This will be an exciting phase where we can invite Indigenous communities and the public to take part in rich, cultural experiences at our first key site—Crane Gathering Space. The Crane Gathering Space will host ceremonies, provide a space for Indigenous communities to gather, share stories, and ultimately have a place to share Indigenous traditions, history, and culture. It will also help educate the public

on the multifaceted history of the MFCN and other Indigenous communities and people with connections to the Credit River Watershed.

We are also excited to continue to work with the IRT to design and plan the next two key sites that will be in focus for the next 5 years:

- Key Site #2 Fish Dodem at Charles Sauriol Conservation Area in Caledon
- Key Site #4 Goose Dodem at Siemens Property in Brampton
- Key Site #5 Eagle Dodem at J.C. Saddington Park in Mississauga

As we continue to plan, build, and activate all future Indigenous key sites, it will be important to expand our network with Indigenous organizations and nations to support the IRT in doing this important work.

### **3.5 Path Ahead: Connect people to the natural and cultural heritage of the Credit River Valley.**

Through the CVT Tourism Development Study, we learned that the ideal CVT users are nature lovers, knowledge seekers and connected explorers. Working collaboratively with our chapter members, CVC's education, and community outreach teams, we want to explore the development of experiences for each of the three experience clusters geared towards the ideal CVT users: arts discovery, angling learning, and interpretive adventures.

We also want to continue to build relationships with educational institutions and develop opportunities for collaboration and delivery of programs on the CVT. This will help us advance the work to develop an Environmental Education Plan, at the appropriate time, to expand our network and capacity to deliver more programs on the CVT.

## **4.0 Reporting on our Success**

### **4.1 Key Performance Measures**

The 2017 CVT Strategy suggested key performance measures to report on the progress of the CVT. Many of these metrics remain important and telling measures of success and are presented in this report as major accomplishments and progress towards achieving the 25-year vision. Based on the manner in which the CVT strategy has been implemented with project partners, not all performance measures have been meaningful indicators of progress, and some metrics cannot be obtained by CVC. Such measures have been changed or supplemented with additional metrics that better communicate performance.

Table 1: Key Performance Measures for Progress Reporting

PERFORMANCE MEASURE	TRACKING INTO 2028
Kilometres of route secured	Yes
Kilometres of trail completed	Yes
Hectares of land secured through acquisition or easement	Yes
Connected trails/parks statistics	Yes
Partners and stakeholders engaged	Yes
Trail Use Statistics	No
Trail Website/Social Media statistics	No, metrics will be used in marketing and communications tactics.
Trail monitoring statistics	No
Funds raised to support the project	Yes
Capital Funds Invested in CVT	Yes, new
Infrastructure/amenities built to support the trail and user experience	No
Indigenous placemaking or # of TRC Calls to Action Supported	Yes, new
Hours of volunteer effort contributed to the development and stewardship of the trail	No
Programs delivered on the trail	Yes
Presentation /Info sessions about the trail	Yes

## 4.2 State of the Trail Reporting

The CVT Strategy calls for reporting on the progress of implementation in a biennial State of the Trail Report. As the project and engagement strategies have evolved, this reporting mechanism was changed into quarterly newsletters to project partners, chapter members, and the IRT to share project updates. We will evaluate if a further transition to an annual State-of-the-Trail newsletter is a better communication product desired by project partners.

The CVT Strategy will continue to undergo formal reviews at 5-year intervals to evaluate its progress and highlight priorities for the next 5-year planning cycle.

## 5.0 In Closing

Our collective journey of 100 kilometres began with a single step. The CVT Strategy has served as our guide, roadmap, and compass over the last five years, and will continue to function as such until the vision of a fully connected pathway through the Credit River Valley is realized.

The CVT is more than just a trail; it is an experience with nature, a legacy for the future stewards of the Credit River, and an expression of actions towards Truth and Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

These first steps along the path have deepened relationships within Watershed communities and brought about exciting new trail experiences for thousands of residents and visitors. Together, we have accomplished so much in the five years since launching the CVT Strategy. From marking the first blaze, to purchasing the first property, constructing the first new section of trail, and creating the first Indigenous placemaking feature, our project champions have been active every step of the way.

As we move forward in pursuit of the CVT vision, many challenges still lay ahead of us, yet excitement and momentum continue to grow. We look forward to seeing where the trail takes us as we together take the *next steps along the path*.

## Appendix A: CVT Route Planning Principles

The Credit Valley Trail Strategy (CVC 2017) outlines a vision for the Credit Valley Trail (CVT) that aspires to be a continuous 100-kilometre pathway through the Credit River Valley, from the Hills of the Headwaters in Orangeville to Lake Ontario in Mississauga. This effort requires the acquisition of lands and access rights along the route, and connections to existing and future planned trails owned and managed by municipalities and other trail authorities.

The decision-making process for affirming the route considers several factors, for example, minimizing impacts to the environment and financial feasibility of one route option over another. These principles, however, are not hierachal - one is not prioritized over another. As trail connection opportunities arise, we also evaluate whether to only pursue the 'optimum route' or to consider an 'interim route' to accelerate access to the CVT.

The guiding principles outlined in the Credit Valley Trail Strategy are intended to guide the development of the CVT and, in all circumstances, irrespective of changes in goals, strategies, and actions. These guiding principles are aspirational and narrowing their scope through more prescriptive route planning principles helps guide decision making that is in keeping with the vision of a connected valley trail, but which also considers and balances important and site-specific factors.

### Route Planning Principles

The qualitative framework for assessing route options and for connecting and building the Credit Valley Trail, is provided by both the CVT Strategy's Guiding Principles and these Route Planning Principles, which will serve as a guide for implementing CVT infrastructure.

#### River Valley Corridor

The vision and mission of the Credit Valley Trail Strategy provides the context of what the CVT is and will become - a continuous 100-kilometre pathway through the Credit River Valley. It is our collective aim to instil a deep connection to the Credit River through access along the CVT.

**Route Planning Principle 1:** Position the trail route within the Credit River Valley corridor as it is integral to achieving the strategy vision and mission.

#### Economic Viability

To ensure that the CVT is completed by 2042, the economic viability of each project element will be carefully considered. Determining the most efficient trail connections, investing in quality materials to extend the lifespan of infrastructure, and minimizing infrastructure costs where possible are key considerations for ensuring economically sustainable approaches to trail development.

**Route Planning Principle 2:** Plan and design trail connections and infrastructure in an economically viable manner.

### **Safe and Sustainable**

Guiding Principle 1: Implementing best practices of safe, sustainable trail infrastructure and amenity design, construction and management that contribute to the responsible use and appreciation of the natural environment.

**Route Planning Principle 3:** The trail route will be planned to minimize risk to public safety as well as minimize impacts to the natural environment, aiming for a no net loss to the natural heritage system.

CVC is developing a technical guideline for trails in areas regulated by CVC and within the natural heritage system. The purpose of this document is to ensure that the planning and design of trails minimize impacts to the environment, including natural hazards. This guideline will not only inform how we plan and design trails on our CVC lands but will be a resource for municipalities and other trail authorities.

The guideline will streamline the review and approval process, help to minimize impacts to the environment and establish consistent design principles for CVC.

### **Indigenous Heritage and Values**

Guiding Principle 2: Engaging in respectful and meaningful relationships with Indigenous partners.

**Route Planning Principle 4:** The trail will be built on the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN), and also part of the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat and Haudenosaunee. We will support the CVT Indigenous Roundtable and watershed Indigenous communities in implementing the Indigenous Experience Plan, and connecting trail users to Indigenous history, values and experiences within parks and public spaces along the CVT.

### **Heritage Preservation and Appreciation**

Guiding Principle 3: Fostering a sense of place, deep connection to the Credit River and appreciation for its significant natural and cultural heritage.

**Route Planning Principle 5:** The route will be planned in a manner that protects the environment, conserves Archaeological resources and cultural heritage features, and connects to the significant places identified in the Indigenous Experience Plan.

### Respectful Relationships

Guiding Principle 4: Inspiring, respecting and working with landowners to encourage participation in a once-in-a-lifetime legacy project.

**Route Planning Principle 6:** Engage local communities and landowners in the planning of the trail, having consideration for their concerns and interests.

### Stewardship

Guiding Principle 5: Encouraging a stewardship ethic in trail users and residents to care for and manage the trail.

**Route Planning Principle 7:** Create a culture of trail stewardship and encourage good trail etiquette by engaging with trail users and local trail authorities for each section of the CVT.

### Connected

Guiding Principle 6: Creating connections to local parks, existing trails and communities that encourage active lifestyles, resident, and visitor trail use, and support the economic prosperity of communities.

**Route Planning Principle 8:** CVC will work collaboratively with our municipal partners to align the CVT with active transportation plans and projects and connect to greenspace and secondary trail networks.

### Reviewed Regularly

The optimum route is the idealistic path for the CVT identified by CVC. New opportunities and challenges continually present themselves and revisions to the optimum route will be considered responding to these.

**Route Planning Principle 9:** The optimum route will be regularly reviewed and revised to reflect new opportunities and challenges as they arise.

### Other Considerations

#### General Approach to Trail Planning

The planning, design, and implementation of the CVT will be undertaken in a manner consistent with CVC values and guiding principles. We believe trails and greenspace are for everyone. The CVT will promote inclusive experiences and consider the watershed's diverse communities.

Where feasible, the CVT will aim to meet accessibility standards and accommodate a variety of users and abilities. Specific trail uses and design, for example nature trail vs multi-use pathway, will be determined by the property owner or manager and will consider a variety of sources e.g. provincial, municipal, partner and CVC strategies, plans, policies and guidelines, environmental conditions, connecting trail uses, and community feedback.

The CVT will contribute to complete and connected communities and greenspaces. Route planning will align with, and consider many other CVC programs and projects, such as conservation area management planning, land acquisition and community outreach and education.

### **Optimum Route, Interim Route and Detours**

The optimum route is the idealistic route of the CVT, as identified by CVC. When the development of the optimum route is not feasible in the foreseeable future, an interim route may be used.

Interim routes are temporary, though sometimes long-term trail re-routes used to maintain trail connections. While the optimum route is still considered the preferred trail corridor, interim routes provide an alternative to maintain trail access.

Trail detours are short-term re-routes used to bypass a specific trail section. Trail detours may be used when part of the trail system is closed for construction or maintenance.

## **Conclusion**

The Credit Valley Trail aspires to be a continuous 100 km path from the Headwaters to the mouth of the Credit River. It will traverse the challenging terrain of the Credit River Valley and Niagara Escarpment, crossing a patchwork of public and privately owned lands and passing through some of the most developed communities in Ontario. Route planning for the Credit Valley Trail is a monumental task.

The route planning principles identified in this technical memo consider several factors to help simplify and rationalize the decision-making process of selecting one route option over another. Route planning is an iterative and judicious process—one that needs to adapt as new opportunities and challenges arise. These principles will ensure that the vision of a connected valley trail remains intact while balancing other objectives and criteria important to CVC.